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THE PERFORMANCE-WITHIN, CREATIVE AUTHENTICITY, AND PRACTICAL
KNOWLEDGE: LINKING THEATRE, FILM, AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE WORK OF INGMAR
BERGMAN

BY

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Abstract

This dissertation offers an analysis of the convention of the “performance-within” in the films of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007). This analysis is practical, aesthetic, and historical. It considers how specific performances-within were devised and presented, the various functions of the performance-within in terms of aesthetic structure and affect, the meanings and implications of the performance-within, and a consideration of the performance-within and its contingent cultural and historical contexts. In the works of Ingmar Bergman, the presence of a performance-within typically occurs in relation with a protagonist’s search for an authentic existence, and is oftentimes related to artistic endeavor. This connection raises the issue of “creative authenticity,” a term coined here in developing an account of the agentic attributes of human aesthetic performance.

A “performance-within” is defined here as an aesthetic feature in an enacted drama, one in which a performance in a medium considered self-standing in an everyday context is included and presented in the course of a larger enacted narrative, and therefore stands apart as an artistic event within the diegetic world of that narrative. The performance-within is frequently used to insert traditional forms of performance into a cinematic narrative, and therefore is a locus for intermedial analysis. Intermediality has constituted a new and robust area in Bergman studies over the past decade. This relatively recent emphasis on the intermedial aspects of Bergman’s work has led to a deeper consideration of the interplay between the “theatrical” and the “cinematic” in Bergman’s dramatic practice and conception, and a consideration of the positive relations between cinema and theatre, aesthetically, practically, and historically.

My purpose in focusing on the performance-within has four components. First of all, the performances-within in Bergman’s films were frequently developed or generated as part of the production process rather than through the screenwriting process. The origins of these performances-

within, their development during the production phase, and the extent to which these performances were shaped by the performers, makes the performance-within an inviting object of study.

Second, the performance-within is typically intermedial; it brings into one medium (film) the attributes of another medium (theatre, puppetry, dance, instrumental performance, etc.). In this transaction between media, which is quite common in terms of historical cinematic practice and increasingly common in other performance media, well-established critical categories are complicated and called into question. This is especially the case with the categories of film and theatre. The purpose here is to use the performance-within as a means of questioning and re-evaluating the traditional distinctions drawn between these two historically related media. The result of such questioning generates a new critical and historical discourse about performance and media.

Third, these original and intermedial characteristics of the performance-within contribute to its status of relative autonomy as an artistic event “within” a fictitious “world,” and distinct from the other activities of that “world.” Thus, the performance-within is a particular way of making and offering meaning. Because of its widespread use in cinema, a closer examination into the function and character of the performance-within is necessary. The continued use of the performance-within by Bergman and other filmmakers indicates a commonly held value that is accorded to aesthetic performance.

The fourth component is linked to the understanding of performance in general as a mode of embodied thinking and discourse. In the case of performances-within in the films of Ingmar Bergman, this entails a consideration of the ideas that these performances-within instantiate, and locating those ideas within each film’s prevailing cultural and historical contexts. This requires looking away from Bergman the *auteur* toward the cultural field in which his work and the work of his collaborators took

place. Of particular interest here are the conditions of the Swedish entertainment industry and arts culture ca. 1950-1970, as well as international trends in theatre and film during this same period.

The first chapter centers on Sawdust and Tinsel (1953), and the performances-within are analyzed in comparison with Martin Heidegger's ideas of anxiety, the they-self, and authenticity in Being and Time (1927) and Konstantin Stanislavski's theories of creativity in An Actor's Work (published in Sweden in 1944). The second chapter concerns The Face (1958), and a comparative analysis is made between the construction of the performances-within and Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of the *regard* in Being and Nothingness (1943). The third chapter focuses on issues of *mimesis* and performance as ways of maintaining identity both on- and off-stage in Through a Glass Darkly (1961). The film's performances-within are compared with Erving Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956) and Gaston Bachelard's The Poetics of Space (1958). The fourth chapter deals with issues of language and meta-theatrical and meta-cinematic commentary in A Passion (1969). The performances-within are a series of extra-diegetic actor interviews included as interludes (*mellanspel*) dividing the film's four "acts." Comparative texts are Antonin Artaud's The Theatre and Its Double (1938) and other writings by Artaud on theatre and cinema, and Jacques Derrida's essays on Artaud in Writing and Difference (1967). The conclusion evaluates the persistence and re-working of the performance-within and existentialist themes in Bergman's work up to the 1970s.

By taking this approach, a different and more intricate history for each film becomes available: a history of personnel, of practices, of aesthetics, and of ideas. Without the device of the performance-within, Bergman and many other filmmakers would have lost the expressive range and narrative diversity that characterizes much of mid-20th-century cinema. Looking at these films through the lens of the performance-within enhances Bergman scholarship, and theatre and cinema studies, in general.

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This work is dedicated to my daughter, Lilian Glynis Smith, and to the memory of my parents, Mary Jane Smith and Lawrence Donald Smith, Sr. Our time here is short, and every moment of it matters. Live kindly, and do one's best.

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Introduction: The Performance-within, Creative Authenticity, and Practical Knowledge

*Alone among the elements
that constitute the stage's semiotic field,
the body is a sign that looks back.*¹

An iconographic image in Ingmar Bergman's Persona (1966) is that of the film's protagonist, Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullmann) in the role of Elektra. This image occurs early in the film, positioned as the inciting incident in the story of Vogler and her decision to reject her career as an actress and the use of spoken language; theatre, speech, and lying are all effectively renounced. Depicted in a close-up in a dark wig and with stylized make-up, and engaged in the performance of her role, Vogler abruptly stops speaking (and acting). We see her face as she turns away from the lights in the background (and presumably from an audience seated beyond a proscenium arch) and toward the camera. The gap between the visage of Elektra and the uncertainty in the eyes of the actress is emphasized; there is confusion, a slight sense of wonder and displacement. There is a momentary resolve to resume the performance, and the face turns away from the camera and back toward the lights and unseen audience; the actress raises her right arm as if to hurl a weapon along with her words. But again, nothing is spoken; the hand is lowered, and the face again turns back toward the camera. The expression of confusion is replaced by one of almost giddy amusement. Elektra/Vogler/Ullmann seems tickled beyond words. This crisis in the life of an actress serves as the basis for a story of identity, and informs each moment of this landmark experiment in art cinema from a director designated as "the greatest film-maker the world has seen so far" and "the one true genius the cinema had produced."²

¹ Stanton B. Garner, Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) 49.

² John Simon, Ingmar Bergman Directs (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972) 41; cf. Irving Singer, Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher: Reflections on His Creativity (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) 1; Frank Gado, The Passion of Ingmar Bergman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986) 240.

A similar image of Elektra, this time staring directly into the camera, occurs near the very end of the film, in a montage sequence concluding the intricate narrative of a battle of wills and identity between Vogler and her nurse and companion, Sister Alma (Bibi Andersson). The struggle has been largely Alma's, however, as she has been intrigued, enamored, seduced, violated, angered, and virtually annihilated by Vogler's silence. In the final sequence showing us Alma, we see her closing up the summer house in which she and her patient have been staying. As she leaves the house and is standing outside, the visage of Elektra flashes again on the screen; so quickly, in fact, that we only recognize the face as "Elektra"—the identity of whomever is playing Elektra is uncertain. It is, in fact, Alma who is seen as Elektra; or it is Bibi Andersson who is in make-up as Elektra; or it is the face of an actress playing a nurse who is momentarily glimpsed as Elektra.

Discussing these instantiations of Elektra in Persona requires understanding the phenomenon of the "performance-within": Elektra is a theatrical performance momentarily presented and contained within the structure of a larger cinematic drama. Acknowledging this fact brings one into a relation between theatre and film; providing an analysis and a history is suddenly complicated: does one write a film history or a theatre history? In fact, such isolated histories need to be abandoned along with the artificial separation between theatre and film scholarship. This dissertation provides a model for such a history, integrating methodologies and strategies from both theatre and film scholarship to provide the best account for the performance-within of Elektra and, by extension, for the film itself. As long as human actors are involved, such an approach needs to be applied, because actors still furnish the majority of content in theatre and feature films. While theatre and film, as well as other performance media, are distinct and do have profound differences, these are no justification for continuing to overlook their historical inter-relationships and instances of aesthetic interpenetration.

The ubiquitous inclusion of the performance-within in Bergman and in narrative film generally is an aesthetic reminder of the fact that production phase of film-making is essentially a theatrical one. Jean-Luc Godard aptly described the process of shooting a film as *théâtre vérité*: “I see no difference between the theater and movies. It is all theater. It is simply a matter of understanding what theater means.”³ As anyone present on a film set or a location shoot will discover, the apparatus surrounding the carefully circumscribed performances recorded by the camera and sound personnel is essentially a “backstage” that, at the moment of shooting, transforms into an audience. The moment of performance, in theatre and film, is one in which all extraneous activities are suspended and a certain mode of attention, hence perception, is privileged. This *théâtre vérité* continues to serve as the ground for the majority of films that are produced and consumed globally. And while it is a valid maxim that a film is made in the editing room, this aspect of production does not exclude the theatrical ground from persisting in the final product, often in a variety of ways. It is the persistence of this privileged space, which is always a momentary space, and the unique capacity of human performance to generate such a space that merits an interdisciplinary approach bridging the traditional academic boundaries between theatre and film studies.

Elektra recalls one of the most familiar kinds of a performance-within, the well-known device of a play-within. But in Persona, we do not receive a formal play-within; we see only a moment of failure in what would have been a play-within: we see the momentary collapse of a performance. This performance-within captures a popular question emerging in philosophy and other fields of critical thinking ca. 1965. The failure of “Elektra” (and her later reinstatement by the film’s end) is a prompt to ask further historical questions, specifically philosophical ones, concerning the instability of a

³ Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998) 14.

signifier, the indeterminacy of the subject, and the failures of language: questions that were being developed with the rise of post-structuralism, but also being developed, even anticipated, in performance practices and theories. The performance-within, straddling the media of theatre and cinema, thus captures a parallel development in philosophy.

II. The performance-within and intermediality

This dissertation offers an analysis of the convention of the “performance-within” in the films of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007). This analysis is practical, aesthetic, and historical. It considers how specific performances-within were devised and presented, the various functions of the performance-within in terms of aesthetic structure and affect, the meanings and implications of the performance-within, and a consideration of the performance-within and its contingent cultural and historical contexts. Bergman frequently used the performance-within as a feature of his film and stage work. This feature has often been noted in critical appraisals of his work, but there is only one extensive consideration of this feature, primarily emphasizing the concept of a “play-within” as a guiding aesthetic conceit in Bergman’s staging and composition choices, and the figure of the onscreen “audience” in terms of spectator affect.⁴

The performance-within is typically used to insert traditional forms of performance into a cinematic narrative. In this respect, the performance-within is almost always intermedial. Intermediality has constituted a new and robust area in Bergman studies over the past decade. This relatively recent emphasis on the intermedial aspects of Bergman’s work has led to a deeper consideration of the interplay between the “theatrical” and the “cinematic” in Bergman’s dramatic practice and conception,

⁴ Maaret Koskinen, *Spel och spelningar: En Studie i Ingmar Bergmans filmiska estetik* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 1993) 155-261.

and a consideration of the positive relations between cinema and theatre, aesthetically, practically, and historically.⁵ Whereas earlier scholarship has been focused exclusively either on Bergman's work in film or, secondarily, on his theatrical career, Maaret Koskinen has assembled a comprehensive study of the work of Ingmar Bergman in both media. Koskinen specifically addresses the intermedial aesthetics in Bergman's work over four decades, from his beginnings in professional theater and film in the mid-1940s up to his final feature film Fanny och Alexander (1982). The contribution made in this dissertation is to expand the intermedial analysis to include contemporary influences, particularly actors and other directors. This demonstrates the broader practice of intermediality in Swedish performance culture and explores the significance of this intermediality.

The performance-within is typically intermedial, and analyzing this phenomenon requires an appropriate methodology. But while intermediality offers a useful theoretical framework that can be applied to the performance-within, it has yet to effectively bridge theatre and cinema studies in general. In Bergman scholarship, this approach has also re-asserted the *auteur* criteria in some respects, however, by limiting the consideration of intermedial aesthetics to a self-reflexive process: Bergman's stage work reflects Bergman's film work reflects Bergman's television work, etc. It is a hermeneutic circle; no new information comes from without, and Bergman's various works are seldom presented as being in dialogue with the works of other directors or dramatists, responding to the works

⁵ See Mikael Timm, "A Filmmaker in the Borderland: Bergman and Cultural Traditions," Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995) 88-98; Egil Törnqvist, Between Stage and Screen: Ingmar Bergman Directs (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); Maaret Koskinen, "'Everything Represents, Nothing Is': Some Relations between Ingmar Bergman's Films and Theatre Productions," Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997) 99-107; Maaret Koskinen, Ingmar Bergman: "Allting föreställer, ingenting är": Filmen och teatern – en tvärestetisk studie (Stockholm: Nya Doga, 2001); Egil Törnqvist, Bergman's Muses: Aesthetic Versatility in Film, Theatre, Television and Radio (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003); Maaret Koskinen, Ingmar Bergman's The Silence: Pictures in the Typewriter, Writings on the Screen (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); Christo Burman, I teatralitetens brännvidd: Om Ingmar Bergmans filmkonst (Umea, Sweden: Atrium Förlag, 2010).

of others, or capable of absorbing the influence of others. As a consequence, the value of an intermedial approach, in general, comes across as being limited to understanding Bergman; its wider significance for the study of film, theatre, and other media, can be eclipsed by the silhouette of the *auteur*. This study of the performance-within builds and expands upon such intermedial analyses, corrects this tendency toward auteurist solipsism, and strives to establish the wider applicability of this method to film and theatre studies.

Defining the “performance-within”

The concept of a “performance-within” developed here derives in part from theatrical scholarship on the convention of the play-within, particularly Robert J. Nelson, from the idea of the “attraction” found in Sergei Eisenstein and developed by cinema historian Tom Gunning, and the conceptual structure of the Container Schema outlined by linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson.⁶ A “performance-within” is defined here as an aesthetic feature in enacted drama, one in which a performance in a medium which could be considered self-standing in an everyday context is included and presented in the course of a larger enacted narrative, and therefore as an artistic event within the diegetic world of that narrative. An example would be a small play performed in part or in whole in the course of events in a larger drama; but a “performance-within” may also belong to a different performance tradition, or to a different medium. Thus a dance or a song may be a “performance-within,” as may a film-within-a-film. Such performances-within are “overt” in a manner similar to the

⁶ Cf. Robert J. Nelson, Play within a Play: The Dramatist’s Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958). Cf. Sergei M. Eisenstein, “The Montage of Attractions,” Writings, 1922-34 Vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996) 33-38. Cf. Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative (London: British Film Institute, 1990) 56-62. Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), and Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought (New York: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 1999) 31-35.

condition of artistic performances in an everyday context. An “overt performance-within” therefore is some recognizable aesthetic activity presented as being observed by one or more characters who comprise a diegetic “audience”; examples include the familiar device of a play-within, but also may include songs, dances, pantomimes, films, etc. in which some characters are “performers” providing an object of attention for other characters who function as an “audience.”

The purpose in focusing on the “performance-within” has four components. First of all, the performances-within in Bergman’s films were frequently developed or generated as part of the production process rather than through the screenwriting process. Whereas dialogue and scenes were more thoroughly described in the screenplays and frequently underwent a process of reduction in the filming phase, the various performances-within were often minimally described, omitted, or appear as one sort of performance in the screenplay and another sort in the film itself. In a certain sense, what were blank spaces or place holders in the screenplays became devised performances in the shooting of the films, which is the “live” performance phase of the filmmaking process. Therefore, the origins of these performances-within, their development in the production phase, the extent to which these performances were shaped by the performers themselves make the performance-within an inviting object of study.

Second, the performance-within is typically intermedial; it brings into one medium (film) the attributes of another medium (theatre, puppetry, dance, instrumental performance, etc.). In this transaction between media, which is actually quite common in terms of historical cinematic practice and increasingly common in other performance media, well-established critical categories are complicated, in some cases calling those distinctions into question. This is especially the case with the categories of film and theatre. The purpose here is to use the performance-within as a means of questioning and re-evaluating the traditional distinctions drawn between these two historically related

media. The result of such questioning generates a new critical and historical discourse about performance and media.

Third, these original and intermedial characteristics of the performance-within contribute to its status of relative autonomy as an artistic event “within” a world, and distinct from the other activities of that world. The performance-within offers a commentary on that world, and constitutes an assertion in relation to that world. In doing so, the performance-within demonstrates the existential nature of performance, in general, as committed action on the part of a performer. Of course, the fact that this “world” is itself already a representation and a performance in itself paradoxically entails that the performance-within is always a metaphor for or reduction of the larger performance. The performance-within is a particular way of making and offering meaning and, because of its widespread use in cinema especially, its function and character merits closer examination. In fact, Bergman and a great many other filmmakers could never make the films that they want to without availing themselves of the performance-within. In this respect, the performance-within indicates the essential dependence of cinema upon other performance traditions. This is because performance itself is an existential assertion. The continued use of the performance-within indicates a commonly held value that is accorded to aesthetic performance.

The fourth component is linked to the understanding of performance in general as a mode of embodied thinking and discourse. In the case of performances-within in the films of Ingmar Bergman, this entails a consideration of the ideas that these performances-within instantiate, and locating those ideas within each film’s prevailing cultural and historical contexts. This is a looking out and away from Bergman to the field in which his work and the work of his collaborators took place. Of particular interest here are the conditions of the Swedish entertainment industry and arts culture ca. 1950-1970, as well as international trends in theatre and film during this period. By taking this

approach, a different and more intricate history for each film becomes available: a history of personnel, of practices, of aesthetics, and of ideas. The very fact of the international reception and reputation of these films limits the significance of many of the biographical details used in constructing *auteurist* interpretations.

Aesthetic features and effects of the performance-within

Without using the performance-within, Bergman and many other filmmakers could never have had the expressive range and narrative diversity that they sought. The performance-within creates new narrative opportunities and expands the register of performance styles available within the piece as a whole. For example, in Through a Glass Darkly, after seeing the female protagonist perform in a play-within exaggerated rhetoric and a demonstrative physical style, the verisimilar acting style used throughout the rest of the film has actually gained a greater range of freedom by comparison; the expressive register for each character has been increased. “Register of performance” is meant to identify a specific degree of stylistic expression that differs from or contrasts with the overall style, or dominant register, of a film or play. Like a form of address in linguistic structure, or a specific range of notes and timbre in a singer’s vocal range, or a temporary shift in key in a musical composition, a “register” has a distinct quality and consequent effect. An example would be a stage play in an overall realistic style that includes an overt performance such as a song sung by a character, a dance performed by a character or characters, or a sequence of actions that are performed without dialogue, etc. Such actions, events or episodes indicate shifts in *register* from the dominant mode of representation (in this case, discursive realism) to song, dance, or mime. In the absence of a single, dominant mode of representation or presentation, there may still be shifts in register or between registers. The register is linked to style, certainly, but it is used to signify the shifts in audience affect that occur in transitioning from one style to another. The analogy is with the voice: one may shift registers in terms of tone,

pitch, rhythm, cadence, prosody, etc., as well as through linguistic tenses or forms of address (past, present, future, imperative, first, second, and third person, etc.), as one may shout, whisper, sing, or sign; all are registers. Typically, a performance-within introduces a new register of expression, and this register then becomes available for other applications within the overall narrative, either in terms of directorial style or character behavior.

There are additional aesthetic implications of the performance-within in film. First, the inclusion of theatrical and other sorts of performances provides a contrast between kinds of media, thus asserting or at least suggesting film as a medium capable of including all others. Second, there seems to be a counterbalancing need or requirement to reflexively acknowledge and assert the presence of the film itself, and thereby establish the film's limits and purview. In some ways, this may be a response to the *mimesis* of the actor; it is a way of asserting the frame, theatrical or cinematic, that contains the performance, but which is also a part of the performance.⁷ Third, art and existence both function within limits. Performances of all sorts (theatrical, cinematic, athletic, etc.) rely upon human limitations as much as upon human capabilities. The possibility of expertise depends upon both capacity and limit; the opportunities for variety, virtuosity, and improvisation reside within such limits, as do the rewards and penalties for observing or breaching those limits.⁸ The performance-within

⁷ This may be explained by our own awareness of patterns in general; it may be simply an attribute of consciousness, which includes one's awareness of being conscious. This moves us toward phenomenological concerns, generally.

⁸ These triumphs and transgressions are small things, in most cases. An actor discovers a new nuance of emotion, movement or speech, a film offers a new visual delight, an athlete sets a new record for speed, distance or height; yet, these remain carefully circumscribed, for the actor has not invented a new emotion, the new spectacle may be an improvement upon previous spectacles yet is still viewed with the eyes, and the athlete has triumphed over a tenth of a second or a quarter of an inch. We as spectators cheer such minute advances within established patterns; innovation relies upon a history of repetition.

brings the fact of such limitations into our conscious awareness. It asserts a performative and aesthetic “frame” within the literal “frame” of the camera.

The concept of the “frame” is at once cinematic, theatrical, and phenomenological. Historically, the idea of a frame links film-making and film exhibition directly to the architectural feature of the proscenium arch developed through theatrical practice. The interconnected practices of Italian Renaissance architecture, perspective painting, and scenic design, including proto-photographic apparatuses such as the *camera obscura*, shaped the aesthetics of drama and established patterns of spectatorship for centuries; these in turn contributed to and influenced the conception and development of cinema in terms of technique, aesthetics, and exhibition. The concept of a frame also informed phenomenology and sociology. One can make the case that the frame aesthetically defines the experience of subjective perception, of sight itself. But there is also another concept that is at work in the “frame,” one that also derives from embodied experience but is arguably prior to the idea of a visual frame. This concept is that of containment, specifically a fundamental conceptual metaphor, the Container Schema.⁹ The relevance of this connection is discussed in the fourth chapter.

Dramaturgically, the performance-within is always a subordinate event within the diegesis; it is an exception to the normal state of affairs of the main story, yet is pertinent to that story. The performance-within may be theatrical, as when a character attends a play or an opera, a circus act, a music performance, a dance, etc. It may also be a film-within-a-film, of course, as movies frequently depict characters attending films. Sometimes the performance-within figures prominently in the plot,

⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* 35. I find that the fundamental character of the performance-within is its “within-ness”—the fact that it is included within a second, greater performance than itself. This reflects the basic structure of what has been identified as the Container Metaphor, one of a relatively limited number of “primitive image schemas” that structure systems of spatial relations in natural languages; the Container Schema reflects embodied experience and has been incorporated over millennia into basic processes of conceptual thinking.

sometimes it is more of a diversion or featured attraction, sometimes a performance-within is embedded in the *mise-en-scène* as a part of the atmosphere of a particular setting, sometimes it is an abrupt distraction or disruption, sometimes it may be a passing incident or peripheral occurrence, etc. All of this activity is not merely a matter of watching ourselves watch ourselves; it is not a case of simple mirroring or representing in some narrow sense of *mimesis*, nor is it simply “meta-theatrical” or “meta-cinematic” to observe, as an audience, a character or characters on stage or in a film watching other performers. Performance is not just a thing that anyone can do; rather, a “performance” is something that we typically treat as atypical, as something out of the ordinary, an event that draws attention to itself and, as a consequence, alerts us to our own presence here and now.

In the context of mid-20th-century drama, the performance-within can be said to have an existential component: it is a knowing, self-determined choice of action on the part of a performer, or at least it holds that potential. The exploration of that potential and its implications is continually presented in the work of Ingmar Bergman, and also in many of his contemporaries. Rather than being merely reflective, performance is presented as agentic. This establishes rigorous criteria for the performer, in most cases, the actor. Without the agentic contributions of the actor, such investigations on the part of the director fall flat.

Bergman as philosopher versus performance and the philosophical

In addition to the biographical *auteur* vein of criticism, and sometimes in tandem with it, have been approaches in Bergman scholarship concerning the expressly philosophical aspects of the films. This seems to have been of particular interest to non-Swedish critics and scholars.¹⁰ One of Bergman’s earliest successes in the U.S. market, The Seventh Seal [Det Sjunde Inseglet] (1957), was famously

¹⁰ Koskinen, Spel och spelningar 7-9.

described as “perhaps the first genuinely existential film.”¹¹ Such passing comparisons with existentialist philosophy are numerous among contemporary reviewers, and there have been substantial essays, articles, dissertations, and books analyzing Bergman’s film work from a philosophical standpoint.¹²

This interest in film and philosophy is not limited to studies of Bergman, however, and has a parallel in the study of theatre and philosophy. The connection in both cases is the nature of enacted drama; embodied performances by actors in fictive circumstances, whether on stage or for film. This basic connection between film, theatre, and philosophy is often made implicitly in analyses of Bergman. One inference is that there are performative aspects of philosophy itself that may be disclosed through enacted drama; another is that there is a dramaturgical structure appropriate to existential phenomenology.

Philosophical implications of the performance-within

The study of the performance-within illuminates the links between dramatic performance and philosophy; how dramatic enactments capture, develop, express, and impart pressing human concerns and ideas. The approach taken here is one that focuses on the role of *praxis* (practical knowledge) in

¹¹ Andrew Sarris, “The Seventh Seal,” Film Culture no. 19 (Sep. 1959) 51.

¹² Cf. Stanley Cavell, The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film, 1971; Robert E. Lauder, “Bergman’s ‘Shame’ and Sartre’s ‘Stare,’” Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 278-285; Amos Darryl Wimberley, Bergman and the Existentialists: A Study in Subjectivity (Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, 1979); Charles E. Ketcham, The Influence of Existentialism on Ingmar Bergman, 1986; Robert E. Lauder, God, Death, Art and Love: The Philosophical Vision of Ingmar Bergman (Mahwah, NJ: The Paulist Press, 1989); John Orr, “Camus and Carné transformed: Bergman’s *The Silence* versus Antonioni’s *The Passenger*” 2007; Irving Singer, Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher, 2007; Paisley Livingston, “On Ingmar Bergman and Philosophy: the Kaila Connection,” Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008) and Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

enacted drama as a means of developing philosophical ideas and contributing to knowledge.¹³ By considering *praxis*, which allows for the interplay of aesthetics, intermediality, biographical histories, and, most importantly, the effects of working collaboratively, a fuller account of the common activities of film, theatre and philosophy becomes available.

This approach is based on an understanding of theatre and film as collective practices as well as individual enterprises. In contrast, many approaches to Bergman rely upon *auteur* theory, including the most recent consideration of Bergman and film as philosophy, which relies heavily on his status as the author of his films, a position emphasized as a corollary to the individual philosopher who produces a treatise.¹⁴ The problem is not that Bergman was a director with a distinct methodology and style, who exacted a significant degree of control over his various productions, or that he frequently wrote his own screenplays; the problem lies in any overreliance upon his statements or his other works as the only measure in accounting for their contents and form. There is something inherently philosophical about enacted drama, and this arises through practices that obtain in both theatre and film.

The philosophical concerns persisting throughout these films, albeit in different ways and with varying emphases, are authenticity, the self, freedom, others, and language and communication. These issues are taken up as explicit subjects, but they also persist in the performance and dramaturgical practices as well. The unique capacity of human performance gives physical shape to these concerns,

¹³ Allan Janik, Theater and Knowledge: Towards a Dramatic Epistemology and an Epistemology of Drama (Stockholm: Dialoger 73-74, 2005) 23-24. Janik's idea of *praxis*, which he takes from Aristotle, has similarities to Livingston's idea of a "meshing condition"; both are acknowledging and trying to account for the meanings that we feel in response to dramatic actions, i.e. the kinds of physical "utterances" or assertions made through character actions as opposed to explicit discursive statements; see Livingston, Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman 99-102.

¹⁴ Livingston, Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman 72-83.

both in film and theatre; these issues become embodied, cognitive experiences through characters and their situations, visual composition, *mise en scène*, etc. Thus, they become available to aesthetic analysis as well as to philosophical consideration because they influence and acquire concrete forms in various ways. In short, one may observe the existential structures in a performance and, inversely, the performance structure of a particular philosophical approach.

Three factors amplify the significance of the performance-within as a site of comparison with existential philosophy. First, the performance-within typically has a kind of autonomy as an artistic event “within” a world; this distinction establishes a different kind of space in the film, a “stage” from which to address the world directly. Second, the performances-within in Bergman’s films were frequently developed or generated as a part of the production process; the performers themselves made agentic contributions to these pieces. In other words, there was a kind of existential participation. Third, through such agentic participation, performance becomes a mode of embodied thinking and discourse. These three factors all derive from the kinds of knowledge generated through performance practices.

The idea of *praxis*, literally “practice,” but also the kind of knowledge that emerges from the behavior of an individual, a knowledge that actors in particular are well-disposed to develop and apply, is central to understanding the links between drama and philosophy. This Aristotelian concept, along with the related ideas of *phronesis* (instantaneous perception of the meaning of situations) and *mimesis* (the pleasure of imitating actions), constitutes the pragmatic argument for drama as a source of philosophical knowledge.¹⁵ The performance-within typically demonstrates *mimesis* on the parts of

¹⁵ Janik 21. Janik also stresses *tragedy* (self-destructive behavior resulting from a lack of *phronesis*, particularly self-deception) and *catharsis* (the concentrated performance of a story such that viewers obtain insights through intense emotional experience).

both the performer and the onscreen “audience,” consistently presenting the actual audience with *mimesis* as a form of learning.¹⁶ The ability to imitate is inseparable from learning and understanding, and is the foundation of imagination; both “understanding” and “imagination” are forms of simulation deriving from the so-called mirror-neuron system: “This deep and pre-reflective level of engagement with others reveals our most profound bodily understanding of other people, and it shows our intercorporeal social connectedness.”¹⁷ In other words, we are equipped through evolution and culture to understand (*phronesis*) through observation and the attendant processes of simulation (*mimesis*); performance as *praxis* is our primary medium for understanding who and what we are.

In this respect, examining the performance-within participates in the classic debate over poetry and philosophy beginning with Plato and Aristotle. *Praxis*, *mimesis*, and *phronesis* each factor in accounting how the performance-within facilitates and instantiates important kinds of thinking. Practice, illusion, and non-verbalized understanding through observation are prominent in Bergman’s films and in his commentaries about his work, and his films generally constitute a vein of *tragedy* and an interest in obtaining to *catharsis*. *Mimesis*, in the sense of seeming, is frequently an aspect of various characters’ behavior. *Mimesis* is often the threshold between performance and the question of authenticity, and is often a kind of play-acting in the life of a character that is intertwined with inauthentic existence, lying and bad faith.

To understand and contextualize the concerns instantiated by the performance-within, comparisons to relevant philosophical texts and performance theories are useful and necessary. Each chapter draws

¹⁶ Cf. Paul Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 115. For Woodruff, *mimesis* occurs both on the stage and in the watching of the drama: “Good watchers of mimetic theater know how to be complicit in *mimesis*.” Cf. 213-214.

¹⁷ Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007) 161-162.

on contemporary texts in philosophy and performance in order to approach and analyze the issues of space and self, freedom and others, and communication, with reference to specific Bergman films and as instantiated by the performance-within. The goal is not to reach a single, harmonious conclusion of any sort, but to develop a clear appreciation and awareness of how these thinkers and films may be used to illuminate one another, and further scholarship in these areas.

The performance-within and the actor: instrument, agent, and embodied history

The actor is a repository of working knowledge acquired through the memorization of various texts and the embodiment of actions and ideas. The performance-within exemplifies “the dramatic moment in practical knowing”; in life as in witnessing an enacted drama, knowledge is acquired through the understanding (*phronesis*) of a situation.¹⁸ This includes the agents who participate in these situations under fictional circumstances, i.e. actors. This is relevant to both theatre and cinema, not only in terms of audience reception, but in accounting for the interactions between actors in fictive circumstances; specifically, the workings between *praxis*, *mimesis*, and *phronesis* in intentional performance and how these develop and instantiate philosophical ideas.

This approach is based on an understanding of theatre and film as collective practices as well as individual enterprises. Bergman consistently credits the value of his actors as collaborators, and there has been much discussion of the so-called “Bergman ensemble.” Yet, despite suggestions for an analysis based on casting and actors’ contributions, scant progress has been made in Bergman scholarship with respect to understanding the significance of the actor.¹⁹ Actors are expert kinds of

¹⁸ Janik 27.

¹⁹ Cf. Birgitta Steene, “A Professional Assessment: The Power of Shadows or How We Study Ingmar Bergman,” Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London; New York: Wallflower, 2008) 221; see also Vernon Young, Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos (New York: David Lewis, 1971) 179.

“knowers” whose embodied knowledge is, proximally and for the most part, in a continual process of improvement and development; this is their expertise, which we often call artistry. An actor’s expertise is not only their mimetic skill, but the result of a personal and social history of inhabiting dramatic situations, a knowledge base that contributes to the articulation of future performances. Participating in a drama (an enacted narrative) is to engage with the most fundamental practices of meaning-making and, arguably, in proximity to the very origins of language.²⁰ It is a form of thinking, of discourse, that takes a scenario for its basis, but that entails the experiences and practical knowledge of the participants: more is always brought into the process of enacting a drama than can ever be completely entailed by a script or scenario. The script does not limit interpretations or content; the agreements and conventions made and adhered to by the participants are what limit and define a collective performance. Furthermore, thought under any conditions is an embodied phenomenon and occurs in a world; this lends enacted drama, even before the interventions of a director, and prior to the effects of a stage or camera, its particular concentration of energy and saliency: it is already meaningful through the agentic participation of the actors.²¹

In the case of Bergman, the actors who participate in the performance-within constitute a link to the wider cultural field, specifically that of the Swedish entertainment industry ca. 1950-1970. The actors

²⁰ Antonio Damasio, The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999) 189; “Telling stories, in the sense of registering what happens in the form of brain maps, is probably a brain obsession and probably begins relatively early both in terms of evolution and in terms of the complexity of the neural structures required to create narratives. Telling stories precedes language, since it is, in fact, a condition for language, and it is based not just in the cerebral cortex but elsewhere in the brain and in the right hemisphere as well as the left.”

²¹ Cf. Johnson, The Meaning of the Body 151; “Since thought is a form of coordinated action, it is spread out in the world, coordinated with both the physical environment and the social, cultural, moral, political, and religious environments, institutions, and shared practices. Language—and all forms of symbolic expression—are quintessentially social behaviors.”

thus bring not only their agentic contributions, embodied knowledge and *praxis* to the films, but also constitute ties between Bergman's work and that of other directors and writers.

The cultural-historical method and the performance-within

A cultural history is also provided through the performance within. For example, in the numerous articles and chapters written about Persona, many critics reference these images of Elektra (though frequently failing to recognize the different actresses playing Elektra) and offer that these signify a statement on Bergman's part about identity and persona along the lines offered here. Many discuss the idea of masks, of theatricality and performing a role, of psychoanalytical associations with Greek myths and drama, or of metacinematic commentary on theatre and film. A few offer intermedial analyses, considering this example as an inclusion of "theatre" or the "theatrical" within the medium of film, and in doing so acknowledge Bergman's diverse career in film, theatre, television, radio, and other performance media. All approaches, in providing a history for this image, will mention that it draws on a Greek source.

A rather neat history is typically results: Bergman the *auteur* was also a theatre director and in Persona he references Elektra from a Greek play. This kind of reflexive account is typical in Bergman scholarship; there is only room for Bergman, cinema, theatre, and the Greeks (possibly by way of Freud and Strindberg) in such a history. The abiding persona is not Elektra's but Bergman's; the mask of the *auteur* against a backdrop of timeless subjective associations.

But Elektra is not timeless, and neither was Bergman. By adopting a cultural-historical approach and asking what "Elektra" might signify in a Swedish context ca. 1965, another history can be offered for this small but influential example from Persona. Does it in fact reference "the Greeks" (neither

Aeschylus nor Sophocles nor Euripides is named in the film or screenplay)?²² Or are there other local and contemporary possibilities? If one were fleshing out a history for this “theatrical” image, what other sources are available?

In terms of terms of actual productions of plays featuring Elektra as a character in professional Swedish theatre in 20th-century prior to the filming of Persona in 1965, there are only two to be found: The Flies, by Jean-Paul Sartre, staged in 1945 and a major staging of Aeschylus’ Oresteia in 1954. Both were at Sweden’s national theatre, both were directed by senior directors and ostensible rivals to a then-young Bergman, and both featured actresses that collaborated with the future director of Persona while he was an emerging but frequently unsuccessful new talent.²³ In sum, there are more potential histories and meta-cinematic commentaries available through the image of Elektra in Persona than have previously been considered or developed. The catalyst for such a history is the performance-within; the incident within the film’s diegesis in which we are shown Elisabet playing Elektra. By looking into the specific history of the performance-within, which is a theatrical history, one is compelled to look up from the film, beyond the persona of the *auteur*, and toward the cultural field in which Bergman was working.

Looking at these films through the lens of the performance-within enhances Bergman scholarship. The dominant model has been biographical criticism; even the more recent and valuable intermedial

²² Cf. Ingmar Bergman, “Persona,” Persona/Vargtimmen/Skammen/En passion (Stockholm: Bokförlaget PAN/Norstedts, 1973) 5-46.

²³ The Flies was produced at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm (commonly called Dramaten) in 1945; the production was directed by Alf Sjöberg, and the role of Elektra was played by Mai Zetterling. The Oresteia was also produced at Dramaten, in 1954; directed by Olof Molander, with Doris Svedlund as Elektra. Both actresses played leading roles in early films directed by Bergman; Zetterling in Music in the Darkness [Musik i mörker] (1948) and Svedlund in Prison [Fängelse] (1949). Zetterling also played the female protagonist in Torment [Hets] (1944), dir. by Alf Sjöberg; screenplay by Ingmar Bergman. This was Bergman’s first professional film credit.

analyses continue this tendency in the sense that Bergman is almost exclusively and reflexively compared only with Bergman. The tendency is to overlook the fact that both film and theatre, and performance in general, are social phenomena. Both the workplaces and the venues of exhibition are social spaces and therefore porous. While the tendency in early Swedish scholarship may have been excessively concerned with matters of influence in its appraisal of Bergman's work, the biographical interpretive models, particularly the *auteur* or otherwise self-reflexive, even solipsistic interpretations of the films (which Bergman in many ways encouraged) are too limited.²⁴ The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to locate these performances-within in appropriate relationship with other contemporary texts in order to more fully understand their historical and cultural field of meaning and, by extension, the ways in which human performance shapes and contributes to that field of meaning.

III. Contribution to the field

Theatre and cinema have a shared history that remains largely under-examined by scholars in both fields. This history includes shared personnel, texts, dramaturgy, aesthetic concepts, architectural spaces, business models, systems of distribution, and audience preferences in terms of stars and genres. This dissertation therefore contributes to Bergman scholarship, and also makes a paradigmatic shift in terms of cinema and theatre studies, in general.²⁵ The performance-within entails the use and reliance upon traditional forms of performance and its inclusion in filmed drama necessarily constitutes historical links between cinema and other performance media, most commonly theatre. This

²⁴ Koskinen, *Spel och spelningar* 5-6, (ftnt. 21).

²⁵ The gaps in terms of acknowledging and researching these histories is due in part to the American context: a legacy of economic competition between the two media (which cinema won handily), an early bifurcation in terms of production centers between New York and Los Angeles, an early split in terms of labor union representation and affiliation between stage and screen workers, and the tenuousness of both theatre and cinema studies as "legitimate" fields of academic research, as well as other differences. The biases of this national legacy have shaped Bergman scholarship in the U.S. and can be ameliorated by a study such as this one.

dissertation contributes to the history and theory of theatre and cinema by addressing the interpenetration of these two media in Bergman's work and his contemporaries.

Looking at these films through the lens of the performance-within enhances Bergman scholarship, and theatre and cinema studies, in general. Examining the nature of the performance-within reveals its aesthetic effects, the links between dramatic performance and philosophy, performance *praxis* as a mode of embodied thinking and discourse, and cultural-historical contexts. It also exposes the dependence of cinema upon theatre and other performance traditions in a *théâtre vérité*. Without the device of the performance-within, Bergman and many other filmmakers would lose the expressive range and narrative diversity that characterizes much of mid-20th-century cinema.

This dissertation offers three major contributions to the fields of theatre and cinema studies. First, it offers a re-thinking of the *auteur* concept by looking at a director working in various media and considering what collaborators import and impart to specific projects. Second, it analyzes certain key concepts in 20th-century philosophy (ones that persist in popular thinking: there's a real me, freedom means freedom from others, words are a waste of time; actions matter, belief (faith) cannot be reconciled with the modern world, etc.) from a complementary perspective: how do embodied performances by actors, facilitated by directors and other personnel, shed light on these key ideas? Answering this question involves assessing how a distinct value continues to be placed on "performance" as an individualized expression or gesture of freedom within and against the "everyday" of modern experience that offers no similar freedom. What this analysis also reveals is that, rather like the *auteur* concept, the idea of the disembodied philosopher is a fiction of isolation. A related contribution is that this analysis sheds light on a primary relationship between theatre (live performance) and cinema in a way that is necessarily related to understanding through drama. Third,

this dissertation uses documents and sources not previously analyzed in other studies of Bergman; it thus tells a different kind of history of theatre and film than has been told in the past.

Analyzing the work of Ingmar Bergman does not necessitate studying him in isolation nor does it necessitate considering his work solely as an aggregation of influences. Rather, it means allowing for influence and effect (give and take) by looking at concrete/actual links between projects by Bergman and others. This can include direct observation or spectatorship (Bergman sees another director's show, for example), knowledge acquired through media (there is newspaper coverage of a show that Bergman arguably was aware of), talk (word of mouth, discourse) about a topic, such as a show, a theory, a performer, etc. that Bergman was privy to. But there is also the experience of collaborators, which in Bergman's case has routinely meant a limited number of actors, designers, technicians, etc., who work together frequently over concentrated periods of time. And in this respect, influences may be included in ways outside of the typical conduits of influence described above. This is especially relevant to the construction of Bergman's films because of his frequent testimony to taking actors into consideration in shaping a film, including his perceptions of the kinds of characters that an actor "contains." It is assumed that influence can and did flow out of Bergman's work into the work of others as much as his work was a receptacle for influences. But even this fact calls into question what one means by a "Bergman" film, because it exposes the ever present phenomenon of *mimesis*, which time and again confounds the interrogation of authenticity; this is pervasive in Bergman's narratives.

Bergman's work particularly magnifies the phenomenon of performance. This is profoundly relevant to the study of cinema and theatre, in general. In a broader vein, this dissertation is a contribution in theatre and cinema studies to Western cultural history by considering individual films in relation to specific texts within a limited historical framework, a glimpse into a shifting cultural *zeitgeist* via cinema, philosophy, and performance theory.

IV. The performance-within as a focal point

Pursuing the performance-within generates a new history for a film such as Persona and its significances. Rather than isolated, self-reflexive, and timeless, this history and the interpretations it makes available is local, social, and contains past and present reference points within a set of actual relations. As in the example of Elektra in Persona, new potential analyses are invited to be made between directors, texts, and actors linked to one another through the role of Elektra in the Swedish context.²⁶ Any of these would be useful in addressing a film globally acknowledged as one of the touchstones of 20th-century cinema. None are possible without adjusting the predominant tendency of analyzing Bergman in isolation, and expanding the history of the film to include its theatrical legacy through the performance-within; in short, a theatre history of cinema, one that addresses both the meanings and the structures of meaning-making in performance.

This dissertation takes just such an approach to specific works by Ingmar Bergman. An even more basic and compelling reason for developing such an approach is the gap in understanding between the fields of theatre and cinema scholarship, in general. What is at issue is the question of embodied dramatic performance, which constitutes almost all kinds of theatrical performance and much of cinema, to the extent that cinema continues to rely on living actors as a component in the making of films, and the practice that such embodied dramatic performances constitute; a practice that is a means of generating new knowledge about human existence.

The performance-within proves to be absolutely critical to the kind of cinema that Bergman wanted to make, and to the work of numerous other filmmakers. Examining the performance-within furthers

²⁶ The relevant directors concerned being Bergman, Sjöberg and Molander; the writers being Bergman, Sartre, Aeschylus, and O'Neill; and the actresses being Zetterling, Svedlund, Ullmann, and Andersson.

our understanding of the aesthetics of drama in film and theatre, prompts us to consider what cultural value or values are assigned to artistic performance, and also to look at “performance” as an action within the world we experience in our day-to-day lives. The performance-within routinely presents this very issue: what relationship does a performance have towards the prevailing order that constitutes the “real” world, i.e. our “lived reality”?

V. Organization of chapters: films paired with philosophical and performance texts

In the works of Ingmar Bergman, the presence of a performance-within typically occurs in relation with a protagonist’s search for an authentic existence, and is oftentimes related to artistic endeavor.²⁷ The first chapter deals with Sawdust and Tinsel (aka The Naked Night) [Gycklarnas afton] (1953), the story of itinerant performers in a small circus. This film is analyzed in comparison with Martin Heidegger’s ideas of anxiety, the they-self, and authenticity in Being and Time (1927) and Konstantin Stanislavski’s theories of creativity in An Actor’s Work, first published in Sweden in 1944. The performances-within are a soliloquy performed onstage and a clown routine; there is also an analysis of the element of improvisation in a substantial sequence between two principal actors. Bergman’s theatrical production activities are considered, as well as his working relationships with the principal actors in the performances-within in the film.

The second chapter concerns The Face (aka The Magician) [Ansiktet] (1958). A self-described “correction” of Sawdust and Tinsel, The Face is about a traveling magic show temporarily impounded in the house of a city councilman and subjected to questions and a command performance before a committee of petty officials. In constructing the screenplay, Bergman drew on the play Magic (1913),

²⁷ This is apparent in Bergman’s first screenplay, Hets [Torment] (1944), directed by Alf Sjöberg, as well as in early directorial efforts such as Till glädje [To Joy] (1950) and Sommarlek [Summer Interlude] (1951).

by G. K. Chesterton, having directed it previously while working as a junior director at Göteborg Municipal Theatre. There are two performances-within analyzed in this chapter: the magic show presented to the committee, particularly a mimed sequence, and the use of disguises, particularly a cross-dressed “breeches part” played by an actress. The contributions by key personnel to the shape, contents and conception of the film are considered, and a comparative analysis is made between the construction of the performances-within and Jean-Paul Sartre’s idea of the *regard* (the “look” or “stare”) in Being and Nothingness (1943).

The third chapter focuses on issues of *mimesis* and performance as ways of maintaining identity both on- and off-stage; as a result, the structures of the world are called into question. Through a Glass Darkly [Såsom i en spegel] (1961) is the principal case study, with comparisons to Erving Goffman’s The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956) and Gaston Bachelard’s The Poetics of Space (1958). Supporting examples are offered from Agnès Varda’s Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962), the story of a pop singer who re-examines her manner of living during an afternoon alone in the city while awaiting the results of a cancer screening. An additional supporting example from Michelangelo Antonioni’s L’avventura [The Adventure] (1960), the story of a young woman who disappears while on a vacation with her fiancé and her best friend and the consequent affair that begins between these two characters as they begin to search for the missing woman, is also considered.

The fourth chapter deals with issues of language and meta-theatrical and meta-cinematic commentary. The primary case study is Bergman’s A Passion (aka The Passion of Anna) [En Passion] (1969), and the performances-within are a series of extra-diegetic actor interviews included as interludes (*mellanspel*) dividing the film’s four “acts,” as well as a series of diegetic events in the film in which an unidentified “madman” uses animals as involuntary performers. An improvised sequence of dialogue between the four principal characters is also analyzed. Comparative texts are Antonin

Artaud's The Theatre and Its Double (1938) and other writings by Artaud on theatre and cinema, and Jacques Derrida's two essays on Artaud in Writing and Difference (1967). Examples from Bergman's stage work as well as choices in programming during his tenure as artistic director at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm (Dramaten) are considered, as are key projects involving his collaborators on the film. Material from other closely related films by Bergman, Persona (1966), Vargtimmen [Hour of the Wolf] (1967/1968) and Skammen [Shame] (1968), as well as a television drama, The Rite [Riten] (1967/1969) is also referenced.²⁸ The conclusion evaluates the persistence and re-working of the performance-within and existentialist themes in Bergman's work up to the 1970s.

²⁸ These films offer similar settings and characters as in A Passion; Hour of the Wolf and Shame were made with the same two actors in the principal roles, and the latter film provided the purpose-built location set used for A Passion.

Ch. I. Anxiety and performance: Sawdust and Tinsel (1953)

*The actor takes us into a world within the world itself.
At bottom, it is not a matter of the illusory, the mimetic, or the representational,
but of a certain kind of actual, of having something before one's vision—and in the theater one's hearing—
to which we join our being.*²⁹

I. Establishing shot

Ingmar Bergman's Sawdust and Tinsel (aka The Naked Night) [Gycklarnas afton] (1953) offers a spectrum on types of human performance: aesthetic, social, and individual. Set in 1910 in a small town in Southern Sweden, this *skillingtryck* (penny print ballad) of a film tells the story of a traveling circus troupe on the skids.³⁰ Compelled to borrow costumes from a provincial theatre company, harassed by the local constabulary, and obliged to perform before the local populace, the world in which this circus troupe operates is one of stratified social groups, each marked by elements of costuming: soldiers, citizens, constabulary, actors, and circus folk. When an individual exceeds or strays from the norms of their group, this typically results in a spectacle, and any one of these groups, or a combination of them, then serves as audience and chorus to the drama of the individual. For example, a regiment of soldiers and contingent of circus performers are witnesses to the humiliation of a clown, Frost, whose discovers his wife, Alma, swimming naked with some of the officers. A theatre rehearsal is disrupted by the arrival of the circus owner, Albert, and his mistress, Anne, who come to borrow costumes and in turn become objects of ridicule and amusement to the director, Sjuberg, while standing onstage surrounded by the full company. The circus performers mount a parade in full costume, drawing the attention of the citizenry, only to be halted by uniformed constables who

²⁹ States, Bert O. States, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 46.

³⁰ The *skillingtryck* is a melodramatic ballad form popular in Sweden ca. 1900 typically concerning a lurid tale. Cf. Frank Gado, The Passion of Ingmar Bergman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986) 165.

confiscate their horses and reduce the parade into a forced march. And the circus performance itself, with Albert as ringmaster, the clowns Frost and Jens, Alma and her dancing bear, and Anne as a “Spanish” rider, draws an audience from every social stratum. But it then exceeds its program of rehearsed acts by devolving into a brutal fistfight between Albert and an actor, Frans, a battle royal that serves as the film’s ultimate spectacle. Human performance has a doubled potential in the world of Sawdust and Tinsel: it defines one as belonging to a particular social group, and it is a means by which to mark one’s individuality. Performance is a way to conform or stand apart.

Sawdust and Tinsel premiered in Sweden on 14 September 1953. Contemporary popular reception by Swedish critics was largely unfavorable. The most notorious review is often cited, namely that by “Filmson” in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*: “I refuse to inspect the vomit Ingmar Bergman this time has left behind him.”³¹ Bergman would maintain that the film is “relatively honest and shamelessly personal.”³² The film received such scathing reviews that the leading actress (Harriet Andersson) recalled, “Ingmar and I wept when we read the reviews.”³³ Critics hesitated before “this mixture of elements” held to be incompatible, such as “a ruthless naturalism, simplifications of morality, psychology, and anti-psychology” that, in combination, “makes the final result differ completely from the sources” of Bergman’s inspiration, namely “nineteenth-century melodrama, Strindberg, and film expressionism of the twenties.”³⁴ The film fared better internationally, in keeping

³¹ Qtd. in Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima, Bergman on Bergman: interviews with Ingmar Bergman by Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, Jonas Sima (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) 81-82.

³² Ingmar Bergman, Images: My Life in Film (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1994) 185.

³³ Qtd. in Robert Emmet Long, Ingmar Bergman: Film and Stage (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1994) 57.

³⁴ Jörn Donner, The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) 101.

with producer Rune Waldekranz's expectations.³⁵ Historically, it is considered by many to be Bergman's first *auteur* masterwork.

The performances-within in Sawdust and Tinsel distill the philosophical concerns of the film, and capture a specific set of histories that demonstrate the links between theatre and film through the figure of the actor.³⁶ The film is set primarily within a series of different performance-oriented work-worlds: a circus troupe, a theatre company, a constabulary, an army regiment, a street corner occupied by an organ-grinder and his monkeys. There appears to be no "real world" separated from performance activities of one sort or another; the closest we come to this is the domestic "backstage" space of a tobacco shop run by the circus owner's estranged wife, Agda. All "life" in the film is related to some strata of working performance.³⁷ The film is organized primarily around groups, or troupes, that provide collective identities: circus performers, theatre performers, soldiers, constabulary, townsfolk, and even animal performers. The nature of this world and its social organization reflects the historical collectivism of post-war policies and the counter-movement toward individualism expressed through the arts.³⁸ It also distills a timely concern in existential phenomenology and performance theory: the individual's relationship to social identity and the question of "authentic" existence.

³⁵ Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius, eds., Regi Bergman (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Max Ström, 2008) 160.

³⁶ Cf. Leslie Fielder, "The Defense of the Illusion and the Creation of Myth," English Institute Essays 1948 76. Fielder asserts that the play-within preserves "a history of itself, a record of the scruples and hesitations in the course of its making, sometimes even a defense or definition of the kind to which it belongs or the conventions which it respects." Qtd in Robert J. Nelson, Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958) 10.

³⁷ This work-world is highly comparable with sociologist Erving Goffman's ideas concerning the presentation of self in everyday living. These are taken up in the analysis of Through a Glass Darkly (1961) in the third chapter.

³⁸ Donner 12. "On the social level, an uninterrupted series of reforms took place; they had been inaugurated when the Social Democrats came into power in the early thirties. Simultaneously, movements appeared in the art world that seemed to oppose in every way the social reforms and the collective ideals of society."

Sawdust and Tinsel evidences overlapping interests with acting theorist Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) and existential phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) with respect to the phenomena of social conformity, anxiety, and an individual's potential for "authentic" action. The various social groups in Sawdust and Tinsel function similarly to Stanislavski's analysis of acting conventions and Heidegger's idea of the "they-self"; the function of "anxiety" in the film is similar to that found in both Stanislavski and Heidegger; and the notion of "authenticity" raised by film is elaborated with respect to artistic performance by Stanislavski and is fundamental to Heidegger's analysis of actual existence. These concerns are practical and not merely theoretical, and were vital topics in Swedish and Western culture in the 1940s-1960s. This is significant to Bergman scholarship, in particular, and theatre and film studies, in general, because it is human performance, in most cases acting, that provides a bridge between the media of theatre and film, and to philosophy.

A. Terms and definitions

The performances-within from Sawdust and Tinsel analyzed here are a soliloquy performed onstage and a clown routine; there is also an analysis of the element of improvisation in a substantial sequence between two principal actors. A "performance-within" is defined here as an aesthetic feature in enacted drama, one in which a performance in a medium which could be considered self-standing in an everyday context is included and presented in the course of a larger enacted narrative, and therefore as an artistic event within the diegetic world of that narrative. A performance-within is "overt" in a manner similar to the condition of artistic performances in an everyday context.

The "they-self" is Heidegger's term for the subject's identity as derived socially through others. "Anxiety" is a complex phenomenon, a mood the source of which is every individual's sense of a personal death. "Authenticity" is a potential in the individual's existence, what one might typically call self-awareness. Heidegger's account and conditions for authenticity include a "call of

conscience,” a consequence of the experience of anxiety and realization that one’s life is a finite and temporal phenomenon. “Inspiration” is Stanislavski’s term for the creative engagement of the actor’s “subconscious” through a complex and rigorous application of one’s conscious attention to a series of tasks or actions. “Creative authenticity” is a working hypothesis being developed here in considering the links between performance and existentialism with respect to agentic action.

B. Philosophy and performance theory: anxiety in Heidegger and Stanislavski

The ideas of Heidegger that are particularly relevant to performance, in general, and to Sawdust and Tinsel, specifically, are the inter-related issues of anxiety, the “call of conscience,” the “they-self,” and “authenticity.” While Bergman specifically identified Jean-Paul Sartre as a prominent influence, Sartre’s indebtedness to Heidegger it is a matter of record, and other critics have asserted valid points of comparison between Heidegger and Bergman.³⁹ Heidegger’s basic premise is that our understanding of ourselves as individuals is inhibited by our social conditioning: “The Self, however, is proximally and for the most part inauthentic, the they-self. Being-in-the-world is always fallen. Accordingly *Dasein*’s “average everydayness” can be defined as “*Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, thrown and projecting, and for which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being alongside the ‘world’ and in its Being-with Others.*”⁴⁰ The discovery of an

³⁹ Charles B. Ketcham, The Influence of Existentialism on Ingmar Bergman: An Analysis of the Theological Ideas Shaping a Filmmaker’s Art (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1986) 9-10. Ketcham argues that while “Bergman does not acknowledge this fellow pilgrim nor give any indication of having read his work, the parallels are important to note. *Independent but concurring claims make a powerful witness*” (emphasis added). According to Ketcham, both Bergman and Heidegger believe that “we appear to be of a world from which God is absent. Our search thus becomes a religious quest without focus or center.” This search abandons traditional answers, and “concentrates on exploring the “fallen” or inauthentic world of human existence itself.” This is done with Heideggerean “care,” or concernfulness, which for both Heidegger and Bergman means accepting “the ‘facticity’ of our ‘being-there’ in the world” with an awareness of “our potentiality for the future” and acknowledging as “fundamental to our identity the moods, understanding, and language which communicate our presence.”

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1962) 225.

individual's potential for authentic existence arises through anxiety: "Being-anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world."⁴¹ Anxiety is not fear, which always has a direct, immediate source; rather, anxiety is symptomatic of an individual existence (Dasein) that lives in denial of its own mortality and, hence, singularity.

The function of anxiety in Heidegger is common to both Stanislavski and to Bergman in Sawdust and Tinsel. In Heidegger's scheme of existence, "anxiety individualizes":

This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of Dasein (and Dasein is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in themselves—undisguised by entities within-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part, Dasein clings."⁴²

This describes an essentially dramatic schema, a tragic moment of perspicuity and choice between authenticity and inauthenticity.⁴³ Heidegger's basic scheme is comparable with Stanislavski's system, through which the actor serves the play while cultivating auspicious circumstances for "inspiration" (what I am calling "creative authenticity"); this condition arises, in part, through the actor's engagement with others, through the use of properties, and other elements of mise-en-scène, i.e. "entities within-the-world," without being subsumed by those entities. In addition, "state-of-mind" is as prominent in Stanislavski as it is in Heidegger. In a broader view, the common opposition that Heidegger identifies as schematic to existence, namely that of authenticity versus inauthenticity is an

⁴¹ Ibid 231-32.

⁴² Ibid 235; emphasis added.

⁴³ See Hubert L. Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Division I (Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press, 1991). While "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" implies a binary (and a good-bad value distinction), Dreyfus points out that Heidegger offers three kinds of existence: authenticity, inauthenticity, and undifferentiated (Dreyfus 27). In Dreyfus' reading, authenticity is an engaged manner of living in the world: "Such perspicuity is a style of absorbed activity. It is the furthest thing from lucid, self-reflective awareness" (Dreyfus 194, emphasis added). This description maps onto Stanislavski's idea of acting as an art of "experiencing," distinct from an art of "representation."

abiding concern for Stanislavski; both seem to strive to reconcile that strife with existing social orders. These same issues and elements are prominent in Sawdust and Tinsel in terms of its story, and are also manifest in the acting and performance practices that generated the film.

Stanislavski

Published near the close of WWII, Stanislavski's study of the actor's creative process, En skådespelares arbete med sig själv [An Actor's Work With His Self] (1944), was contemporaneous with the plays of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in the context of Swedish culture and, therefore, a part of the same historical moment in theatre and film in Sweden.⁴⁴ There is therefore a performance element in the link between existentialism and what I am identifying as "creative authenticity" in the Swedish context.⁴⁵ Stanislavski's practical approach bridged the prevailing conceit in theater at the time dividing art and life into two separate categories, where "art lay on one or many levels over banal reality."⁴⁶ Central to Stanislavski's theories is the role of the creative unconscious or subconscious (the terms are used interchangeably by Stanislavski). The editor's foreword to the 1944 Swedish edition emphasizes that the term "the subconscious" has a broad meaning for Stanislavski and that it means "first and foremost, creativity's naturally organic process, all the actor's psychic and physical

⁴⁴ While the English language version, first made available in 1936 and routinely criticized for its truncation of Stanislavski's ideas, was approximately 300 pages, the Swedish version is approximately 500 pages in length and appears to be more comprehensive.

⁴⁵ Heidegger's Being and Time [Sein und Zeit] was also published in Sweden in 1947, in the original German.

⁴⁶ Anders Järleby, Från lärling till skådespelatstudent: skådespelarens grundutbildning (Skara, Sweden: Pegasus förlag och Anders Järleby, 2003) 50. Järleby states that Stanislavski's practical work methods, as they were written by Schischkin "ville rensa undan den konstnärliga bråte, som säkerligen var legio både inom amatörteater och professionell teater. Han ville at teatern skulle hämta sin jordmån ur rent mänskligt live och det kunde möjligvitis uppfattas som allfär enkelt och okonstnärligt vid den tiden."

endowments freely developing.”⁴⁷ This ambition toward the “free development” of the individual is of a piece with the existential dramas and the cultural zeitgeist of Sweden in the late 1940s.

Bergman made numerous comments that indicate an antagonism toward Stanislavski, and it is a departure from standard Bergman scholarship to claim Stanislavski as a relevant influence.⁴⁸

However, the Russian director’s theories on acting were of particular interest to Swedish actors and other performance practitioners during the 1940s: actor Anders Ek, choreographer Birgit Cullberg, and director Alf Sjöberg, all collaborators with Bergman, were familiar with Stanislavski.⁴⁹ The publication of Stanislavski’s work in 1944 facilitated the broad distribution of his ideas throughout Swedish performance culture and re-shaped actor training in Sweden.⁵⁰

The three case studies analyzed here demonstrate the interwoven strands of existentialism and performance. Three different kinds of acting are presented: the mannered histrionics of 19th-century melodrama, verisimilar “realism,” and clowning. Equally important are the three actors involved:

⁴⁷ Stanislavski, En skådespelares arbete med sig själv: I inlevelsens skapande process (Stockholm: Froléen & Comp., 1944) 8; my translation.

⁴⁸ Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima, Bergman on Bergman: interviews with Ingmar Bergman by Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, Jonas Sima, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) 252; Lise-Lone Marker and Frederick J. Marker, Ingmar Bergman: A Life in the Theater (Cambridge; New York: Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 30.

⁴⁹ Cf. Järleby 49-50. The Moscow Art Theatre had played in Stockholm in 1922, performing Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya and The Cherry Orchard. In addition to the attention that Stanislavski’s ideas received from the Moscow Art Theatre’s touring in Europe and the United States, his ideas had been disseminated in part through the immigration of actors and directors following the Russian Revolution. Per-Axel Branner had gone to study in Moscow in 1931 out of interest in Stanislavski’s handling of Chekhov. Cf. Erik Näslund, Birgit Cullbergs "Fröken Julie" en svensk balettklassiker (Stockholm: Repro Print AB, 1995) 37-38. Näslund suggests that Ek’s performance in Caligula was a synthesis of Ek’s grounding in Stanislavski, Bergman’s direction, and Birgit Cullberg’s influence. Cf. Sverker R. Ek, Spelplatsens magi: Alf Sjöbergs regikonst 1930-1957 (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1988) 118-121. Alf Sjöberg was sent to Moscow in 1935 on the recommendation of Olof Molander; Sjöberg was impressed by Stanislavski’s earlier work, but more enthusiastic over Meyerhold, Michael, and Gordon Craig.

⁵⁰ Cf. Järleby 50. Up until the publication of En skådespelares arbete med sig själv: i inlevelsens skapande process in 1944, the conduits through which Russian and Soviet theatre practices entered the official theatrical institutions of Sweden were limited to a handful of practitioners, primarily Per-Axel Branner, Matvey Schischkin, and Alf Sjöberg.

Hasse Ekman, Åke Grönberg, and Anders Ek. The naturalistic tradition that provided the basis for actor training in Sweden was re-invigorated by the introduction of Stanislavski's methods in the mid-1940s. Bergman's collaborators were seldom unskilled amateurs, and it would be a mistake to assume that their individual views on acting or their practices were shaped solely by their work with Bergman. Bergman acknowledged that his preference for "virtuosi" over "amateur" actors was due to the abilities of the former type to convey human experience: "Actors are trained to express complexities."⁵¹ Each performance and each performer can be read with respect to the plot and themes of the film, with respect to the theories of Stanislavski, to existentialism, and in relation between the media of theatre and film.

II. Existentialism and intermediality: critical reception and interpretations of the film

Whether Sawdust and Tinsel is evaluated favorably or not, most critics make explicit or implicit connections between the film and existentialism, while also acknowledging its intermedial qualities. The dominant mode of interpretation has been *auteur* criticism (Bergman wrote the script, directed the film, and closely supervised the editing process), and Sawdust and Tinsel is widely recognized as Bergman's first "masterpiece." But there is also a remarkable degree of collaboration evidenced in this film. The cast was exceptionally large, and comprised by experienced actors with formal training and stage experience, such as Anders Ek (Frost), actors with practical experience but little or no training who were also entertainers, such as Åke Grönberg (Albert) and Harriet Andersson (Anne), and a large number of circus performers. The cast also included Bergman's foremost competitor at the time, the film and theatre director Hasse Ekman (Frans). The score was composed by a prominent composer, Karl-Birger Blomdahl (1916-1968). Rather than a single cinematographer, this film had three

⁵¹ Björkman, et al 59.

(possibly four).⁵² The scope of the project, including its many locations and financial limitations, required an economical use of raw film stock and a compressed shooting schedule.⁵³ In addition, the company lived together under one roof for most of the location shooting in southern Sweden.⁵⁴ The making of the film was described as “one big happening.”⁵⁵ This heterogeneity in terms of personnel and collaboration imparts diversity not only to the tone and style of the film, but in the very performances that constitute it. This spectrum of performance is the very stuff of the film and catches and develops, in the dynamics between performances and performers, the ideas that hitherto have been attributed exclusively to the *auteur*.

Comparisons between the film, existentialism, and theatre appear throughout discussions of Sawdust and Tinsel. A contemporary French critic made direct comparisons with Jean-Paul Sartre’s The Flies [Les mouches] (1943) and No Exit [Huis clos] (1944), and suggested that the reception of Bergman in France was helped by “a generation raised on Sartre and Camus.”⁵⁶ The same critic attributed an existential and phenomenological framing to the film: “a somber *parenthesis* that represents the theme ‘hell is other people’ reconsidered, however, as a theme more particular and vast” than in Sartre’s No Exit.⁵⁷ A later critic asserts the film “embraces with a vengeance the absurdity pole

⁵² See Björkman, et al 276; cf. Charles Thomas Samuels, Encountering Directors (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1987) 205.

⁵³ Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius, eds., Regi Bergman (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Max Ström, 2008) 149-155. Cf. Ingmar Bergman, Gycklarnas afton: ett skillingtryck på film (Script supervisor’s copy. Unpublished. Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archive, B:205. Stockholm: Sandrew Film and Theatre AB, 1953).

⁵⁴ Björkman, et al 96.

⁵⁵ Ingmar Bergman, qtd. in Björkman, et al 95.

⁵⁶ Jacques Siclier, Ingmar Bergman (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1960) 80-81; my translation.

⁵⁷ Ibid 74; my translation and emphasis.

of the great existentialist debate,” and also expands the comparison between the film and philosophy to include theatre: “One does not feel far removed from the French existentialist mood of the war and post-war eras [...] In Sawdust and Tinsel’s most absurdist moments, we are on the verge of entering the terrain of a Beckett or an Ionesco.”⁵⁸

It is also evident that these tensions are intermedial. In its conceit, the film is a *skillingtryck* (penny print ballad), a melodramatic ballad form popular in Sweden ca. 1900, and a concept that may be described as “metafilmic.”⁵⁹ Bergman’s expertise as a theatre director is evaluated as a rare case of a successful transfer from that medium to film: Bergman “is basically *an artist of live drama* with extensive practical experience in stage production,” but “unlike most theatre people, he is transformed into *an authentic cineaste* the moment he steps on to the set.”⁶⁰ Another critic stresses that the dramaturgical structure of the film is essentially theatrical: Sawdust and Tinsel “marked the transfer to the cinema of the ambitions the playwright [Bergman] surrendered after The Murder in Barjärna; no previous Bergman film [...] is as skillful in its dramaturgy—indeed, it is the best *play* he ever wrote”; furthermore, it is also “a brilliant display of technique and innovation in terms of its application of film theory.”⁶¹ Another commentator finds “a relation to theater,” citing the two scenes in the theatre and the circus in general, “a more rudimentary form of theater.”⁶² And another described the screenplay as

⁵⁸ Marc Gervais, Ingmar Bergman: Magician and Prophet (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) 37.

⁵⁹ Marilyn Johns Blackwell, “Modes of Representation in Ingmar Bergman’s *Gycklarnas afton*,” Journal of Scandinavian-Canadian Studies/Études scandinaves au Canada 19 (2010): 162-184.

⁶⁰ Philip Mosley, Ingmar Bergman: The Cinema as Mistress (London; Boston: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1981) 16; my emphasis.

⁶¹ Gado 163. The Murder in Barjärna [Mordet i Barjärna] (1952) was written and subsequently directed by Bergman as his first production at Malmö Municipal Theatre. The production opened 14 February 1952, nine months before the writing of Sawdust and Tinsel.

⁶² Long 57.

“confusing; constructed like a theatre piece, starting in a state of crisis, but fragmented, full of deliberate obscurities or, rather, oddities. The story is never completely clear, because the events that are recounted, made to be grasped in the instant of their unfolding, cannot be interpreted in a single fashion, not definitively, at any rate, in the moment.”⁶³ What is important in this array of responses is the fact that the combination of theatrical and cinematic practices, as well as the concept of the *skillingtryck*, serves to effectively engage the spectator, in contrast to the typical, pejorative critical associations with “theatre” in film.

This intermediality serves the purposes of narrative and explorations of character; but also engages the viewer with questions of performance and existential authenticity. While the film is widely perceived as gritty and pessimistic, it has affirmative potential. Despite a plot structure based on an almost relentless series of humiliations, critic Jörn Donner finds the film asserts that “life can be loved by him who sees the greatness of the moment, *who manages to reshape existence into something dramatic and full of meaning*. This struggle has no purpose beyond life. Beyond life there is only one certainty, death.”⁶⁴ This emphasis on reshaping existence into a form that is dramatic and meaningful is exactly the aspect of human performance that the other kinds of performers (the circus bear, the organ grinder's monkeys, and other animals in the film) are incapable of generating. This is the existential potential of human aesthetic performance, and its relation to the idea of authenticity. It is the reason why the cinematic medium reflexively includes other forms of performance media: the performance-within provides an occasion for a direct assertion of human agency.

⁶³ Siclier 75; my translation.

⁶⁴ Donner 109; emphasis added.

Donner identifies a positive theatrical influence that serves a dramaturgical and philosophical purpose: “In all respects, the drama has a construction that excludes the accidental, despite its freedom of form. The people in the film are freed from *a part* of their living lie. They have not found the answer, *but they are living*.”⁶⁵ Donner finds that Albert and Anne, having undergone their synchronous disillusionments, “are again thrown at each other, with no prospect of freedom.”⁶⁶ Yet, he also sees in Bergman’s films “a possibility of consolation” that offsets the darkest of critical interpretations, specifically in Sawdust and Tinsel “in which the inner and outer levels of the story achieve a perfect balance.”⁶⁷

There is a dialectic presented by the film between modes of representation, between “art and stunts,” as the theatre director says to the circus owner. This may be read as an argument between theatre and film, or a commentary on achieving a balance in intermedial aesthetics. Marilyn Johns Blackwell finds that the film “is about no less than the conditions of creating, performing, and receiving art, issues that recur (albeit in varying degrees) in virtually every Bergman film after it.”⁶⁸ There is a strong element of retrospection in such an interpretation, as the film is about a number of other concerns, as well. Blackwell sees the film as an investigation into the ontological essence of film and “how that intersects with human subjectivity,” and stresses that this is demonstrated through four features: the number of “metafilmic moments,” the Frost-Alma prologue which “reveals the machinery behind the film and sets up its major trope,” the extensive use of mirrors in the film which explores

⁶⁵ Donner 112; emphasis added.

⁶⁶ Donner 104.

⁶⁷ Donner 107.

⁶⁸ Blackwell, “Modes of representation” 165.

“the conditions of cinematic production and spectatorship,” and the beginning and ending shots of the male and female protagonists, Albert and Anne.⁶⁹ Blackwell sees the *skillingtryck* concept as “metafilmic” and also notes at least “five plays-within-plays in the film.”⁷⁰

The numerous “plays-within-plays” that Blackwell refers to without analyzing only occasionally refer directly to cinema. Rather, through the number and variety of performances in the film (theatrical, circus, animal), Bergman engages with matters of truth and *mimesis*, but also with the issue of medium. The film depicts a battle royal between performance traditions, i.e., between media. Blackwell sees these as “self-reflexive moments” and lists a number of Bergman films that concern performers as protagonists, concluding that “it is only to be expected, then, that these films should be rife with plays-within-plays and with visual framing devices” which highlight that these protagonists engage in role-playing.⁷¹ Like many critics, Blackwell has naturalized the performance-within as a self-reflexive convention of *auteur* film-making.

Bergman claimed that the film “was intended as a conscious reply” to Variété (1925), directed by Ewald André Dupont (1891-1956), with Emil Jannings.⁷² Bergman has said that with his acquisition of a small film projector in 1948, he purchased “Caligari and Variety and The Niebelungs and a lot of Chaplin films.”⁷³ However in Images, Bergman maintains that the film was not influenced by Variété, which “stands thematically in exact opposition” to Sawdust and Tinsel. The key difference is in the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid 167.

⁷² Björkman, et al 82.

⁷³ Ibid 137.

protagonist's actions; whereas Janning's character kills the lover, Bergman's protagonist "transcends his jealousy and humiliations because of an irresistible need to like people."⁷⁴

Despite the plethora of possible influences, the importance of the film is not its claim to any novelty: "It is better to compare [Sawdust and Tinsel] with an essay, a series of questions that emerge from the dramatic form. *In its structure, the picture is open, free, and subject to many interpretations.*"⁷⁵ Taken as an "essay," one of the film's theses concerns the relationship with performance (acting, circus life, social roles, etc.) and authenticity: What is the relationship of performance to existence in terms of an action within a life-world? Can an act of *mimesis* be somehow related to the idea of authenticity?

III. The performance-within: 3 case studies

A. Frans in *Betrayal; or, The Mad Countess*

At a key moment in Sawdust and Tinsel, Anne, a circus performer and Albert's mistress, enters the backstage door of a theatre during an afternoon rehearsal. It is 1910 in provincial Sweden, and a stock company is preparing a melodrama: *Betrayal; or, The Mad Countess* [*Förräderiet; eller Den galna grevinnan*].⁷⁶ The company's leading man, Frans, stands onstage deliberating suicide in a soliloquy. Anne observes him from the stage left wings. She can see, as do we, the stagehand creating the thunder sound effect with a piece of sheet metal. Despite her perspective from backstage, or even because of it, the actor's performance is moving to Anne; she is fearful when he stabs himself, and

⁷⁴ Bergman, Images 185.

⁷⁵ Donner 109; emphasis added.

⁷⁶ Ingmar Bergman, Sawdust and Tinsel (The Criterion Collection, 2007). This is similar in title to a German novel, Tolle Komtess (1889), by Ernst von Wolzogen (1855-1934), published in Swedish in 1912. Wolzogen was a German writer and founded the Cabaret Überbrettel (1889-1905).

tearful at his death. The curtain drops. The actor gets up from the floor and wipes his brow; he has been working, the scene has taken some toll upon him, even if he is merely a second-rate actor. Of course, it is an actor (Hasse Ekman) playing an actor, and an actress (Harriet Andersson) playing the naive Anne who believes in the romantic suicide. The issue of authenticity is presented here not in opposition to the actor's *mimesis*, but as a potential in performance.

Frans's soliloquy is filmed as a self-standing piece of theatre. It was performed onstage, in a real theatre (Uppsala-Gävle Municipal Theatre), and while the camera makes several moves, there are no cuts; the soliloquy is an example of a long take, and lasts approximately one minute and forty-five seconds. It is intermedial, an instance in which the practices of theatre and cinema are combined. This sequence evidences a number of important ideas, explicitly and implicitly, found in the film and throughout Bergman's oeuvre: the nature of human performance, especially acting; the nature of love, ideally and pragmatically; the reliability of perception, in art and in life; and the question of the value and experience of art for the artist and the relation between art and living. The question of personal value and the relation between life and art is individual, social, economic, and ultimately philosophical. It is a concern with authenticity, with the choices in action made with respect to the world in which one finds oneself.

Sequence analysis: Frans' soliloquy (http://youtu.be/xDC1nmm_xBc)

The content of Frans' soliloquy is fraught with references to an indeterminate/dualistic self, anxiety and death: the existential criteria for authenticity presented through the performance-within in the overwrought style of 19th-century tragic melodrama. We hear these lines: "Truly, truly, I am but a poor jester in this farce of dark shadows." Anne comes into close-up behind a peep window covered with mesh in a scene flat. She is observing Frans and seems pleased by either his presence or the text, or both. Frans continues his soliloquy: "Her deceitful heart, her frailty, even her taunting indifference,

Turn my world upside down, from day to day, from hour to hour.” These lines provide a clue to how we are to evaluate Anne as much as the character played by Frans. Anne moves right and the camera tracks right also, the screen becoming obscured by a flat.

This movement allows for a cut in the sequence that is significant with respect to asserting the aesthetic of the performance-within, while at the same time breaking the rules of conventional continuity editing.⁷⁷ For the next minute and forty-five seconds, there are no breaks in the action. We now see Frans with script in hand onstage rehearsing the soliloquy. Again, the question of personal identity is enunciated: “I ask myself, ‘Art thou the Count Badrincourt de Chamballe, or the most miserable of wretches?’” This anxious questioning is immediately linked with death and performance: Frans turns his back on the auditorium, discards his script, and walks upstage, the camera panning right to follow. He turns downstage and pulls out a dagger: “Therefore, O dagger, leap from thy hiding place, / And find a place where thou canst slake thy thirst.” The performance-within is formally established: Frans/Ekman is engaged in “theatre” and Anne is in view as an onscreen audience member.

In positioning both Anne and the camera with a view on the soliloquy from the wings, Bergman offers an example of his basic relationship to the theatrical experience: “The real theater always reminds – the real theatrical experience always must remind the audience that it is watching a performance. [...] The spectator is always involved and he is always outside, at one and the same time.”⁷⁸ The camera now dollies back into what would be a stage left wing, giving a view of Frans in a medium long shot; Anne comes around the edge of the flat and takes a new place in the wings before

⁷⁷ The camera’s track right into obscure darkness with continuity in sound allows for a cut that breaks the 180° rule, and the camera re-emerges in medium tracking shot from the wings of stage left; but it is no longer Anne’s point-of-view.

⁷⁸ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 32.

the camera. In this long shot, we can see Blom, the stage manager, in the background in the wings at stage right, script in hand and at the ready beside a suspended piece of sheet metal for thunder sound effects.⁷⁹ We are “reminded” of the theatre’s presence, but remain engaged with Anne’s “reality” in relation to Frans’ performance-within.

The remainder of this performance-within exhibits the overheated rhetoric of melodramatic love while maintaining the “involvement” and “outside” qualities of the “real theater” and its “reminding.” Frans continues his soliloquy, addressing the dagger in his hand as his “sweet mistress” and stabs himself with accompanying stage thunder. In response, Anne turns and hides her face in her hands. Frans continues: “Farewell, O world” (*Thunder; spotlight; he crosses downstage*). He begins to stagger slightly toward downstage center. We see a table and chair for another scene set between flats in the wings at stage right as Frans makes his way, dying, toward downstage center. He speaks: “Farewell, my sovereign lady, / May thy tears water my poor grave, (*Thunder*) / I die, I . . . die.” (*He collapses onstage. Thunder repeatedly (7X) as the curtain falls*). These histrionics have been tempered throughout by the “reminding” presence of the theatre captured in real time through the duration of this intricate long shot. The intermedial qualities of the performance-within are in full evidence: theatre and cinema are fused through the duration and continuity of human performance.

What is crucial is that the “performance-within” and the attending onstage/onscreen spectator effects a dramaturgical sleight-of-hand. The “performance within” makes the diegesis “real” (credible) to an audience; but as a “performance” it also provides the exhilaration of a non-realistic or extraordinary event. It therefore constitutes an exceptional register of expression within the narrative.

⁷⁹ The composition is of Anne in medium shot in foreground at camera right; Frans at center in a full body, medium long shot; the stage manager at camera left in an extreme long shot. We see the scenery flats and the painted backdrop. The whole scene is slightly out of focus, perhaps due to the challenge of catching the three characters in one shot.

This twofold effect, reinforcing the verisimilar quality of the diegesis while at the same time providing an exceptional rhetorical register, is a basic value of the performance-within.

The performance-within of *Betrayal* serves to advance the plot, to assert an aesthetic, and to pose existential questions concerning the nature of *mimesis*, art, and human performance. Bergman's aesthetic of the theatre as a reminder is clearly evident, and affirmed through Anne serving as interlocutor and an "ideal spectator."⁸⁰ Anne observing Frans onstage is one example of the extensive use of onscreen audiences throughout *Sawdust and Tinsel*.⁸¹ Importantly, the "magical" aspects of observing Frans not only in the role of the Count de Chamballe, but also as an actor "at work" on stage is emphasized. This functions precisely to reinforce our perception of the verisimilar performances (Ekman as Frans and Andersson as Anne) as being "real," while also demonstrating the question of illusion (and the related issue of lying, or bad faith) which permeates the film. The performance-within featuring Frans poses a question: is the actor sincere or insincere?

⁸⁰ Cf. Maaret Koskinen, "'Everything Represents, Nothing Is': Some Relations between Ingmar Bergman's Films and Theatre Productions," *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997) 100. Koskinen observes that Bergman "returns, again and again, to various markers that signal the transition across a boundary or threshold" in terms of the experience of the spectator-as-participant in Bergman's ritual approach to performance" (100). A related "marker" is Bergman's practice of leaving the actor in view before an entrance or after the "character" has exited (103). This is evident both in Frans' soliloquy and the third case study, the clown routine. Koskinen emphasizes that such characteristic beginnings to Bergman's films reveals "an acute awareness of the presence of the audience – one whom Bergman insists on guiding over that magical threshold made visible, and whose attention and presence become the very subject of the *mise en scene*." This contradicts the typical audience in psychoanalytic film theory. Despite Bergman's own emphasis on the hypnotic aspects of film-going, there is a conception here of the audience as a participant who is alert and spatially present, not disembodied, seduced, and/or invisible (103). Examples of Koskinen's second type of "marker," where an actor/character remains in view as an observer of a performance, and therefore a surrogate member of the offscreen audience, may be found in *Sawdust and Tinsel* in a number of instances; Koskinen specifically emphasizes Anne observing Frans in rehearsal. Such occasions are conspicuously theatrical to Koskinen: these are observers "at the curtain" or in the wings, or located in doorways, sometimes looking on past events from a different temporality but in a shared space; Isaak Borg in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* [*Smultronstället*] (1957) is one example. But this shared temporality is not exclusive to Bergman; it is also found in Alf Sjöberg's film version of *Miss Julie* (1951), for example.

⁸¹ The regiment of soldiers and circus folk in the prologue, the townspeople and constabulary attending the parade, children gathered by an organ-grinder with monkeys, the circus performance, and the climactic events in the circus ring that are observed by representatives from all these groups, including the troupe of actors.

Frans' soliloquy offers a critical distinction between styles of performance as well as a contrast between ways of living. Bergman's criteria have unintentional correspondences with Stanislavski's, although Bergman would never endorse Stanislavski's "method." Stanislavski states:

In our business, there are two basic schools of thought, *the art of experiencing* and *the art of representation*. The common background against which they shine is stock-in-trade theatre be it good or bad. It must be acknowledged that in moments of excitement, flashes of genuine creative work can break through the tedious clichés and playacting.⁸²

Not all actors are equal; most can be said to perform "inauthentically." Arguably, Anne "is in awe of what she is too naive to recognize as egregiously bad acting."⁸³ But it is doubtful that we are to dismiss Frans as an actor, as this description following the suicide speech indicates:

Frans or the Count of Chamball lets out his last breath and falls gracefully on the stage floor . . . Frans raises himself and stands motionless for a moment with the dagger in hand. Now he awakens from his trance and walks like a somnambulist away from the stage . . . he is of course a ghost, it is the Count of Chamball who wanders away in the darkness and in the end it is Frans . . .⁸⁴

Whether this describes Frans' experience, Anne's perspective, or Bergman's idea of acting is ambiguous; it can be taken as all three. But this description links Bergman's conception of Frans to Stanislavski's observations on the "art of experiencing," of "representing," and of "stock-in-trade."

Can an act of *mimesis* somehow be considered "authentic"? For Stanislavski, the distinction is that of *experiencing*.⁸⁵ Stanislavski proposes a hierarchy in performance: the art of experiencing, art of

⁸² Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008) 33.

⁸³ Gado 167.

⁸⁴ Ingmar Bergman, *Gycklarnas afton: ett skillingtryck på film* (Unpublished. Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives, B:003. Stockholm: Sandrew Film and Theatre AB, 1953) 70; my translation.

⁸⁵ For an audience, it is a different matter, but nevertheless, there seems to be a cognitive response of some sort that distinguishes not only good from bad, appropriate from inappropriate, pleasing from unpleasant, but also makes a discrimination between the "genuine" from the disingenuous. And the *genuine* need not be *real*.

representation, stock-in-trade, ham-acting, and the exploitation of art (i.e., exhibitionism).⁸⁶ “Stock-in-trade” and the lower categories are treacherous ground, and linked to inauthenticity and self-deception: “Yet, this emoting can reach its goal, can bear a faint resemblance to life, and make a certain impression, since the artistically naive don’t question it, and are satisfied with crude imitation.”⁸⁷ This is captured in Anne’s response to Frans’ “suicide.” In stock-in-trade, the actor’s “speech and bodily expression have degenerated into displays of effect, bombastic nobility, out of which a special kind of theatrical prettiness is created. Clichés cannot replace experiencing.”⁸⁸

This aptly captures the aesthetic and existential contrasts drawn between the theatre and the circus troupes in Sawdust and Tinsel. However, “it is only in theory that art can be divided into separate categories. Reality and practice are not interested in labeling things. They mix all manner of schools together.”⁸⁹ This practical acknowledgment describes the work environment on the film, in which actors as different as Ekman, Grönberg and Ek worked alongside genuine circus performers.

Stanislavski comes to a conclusion compatible with Heidegger’s idea of the they-self, namely, that we are inclined to exist inauthentically: “The secret is that lying is implicit in the stage itself, in the very circumstances of a public performance. [...] *Theatrical lies wage constant war with truth.*”⁹⁰ This is a fundamental concern in Sawdust and Tinsel and throughout Bergman’s work. For Stanislavski, the remedy to this problem in art is learning and applying a “psychotechnique”: “It helps us establish the

⁸⁶ Stanislavski 16-36.

⁸⁷ Ibid 31; emphasis added.

⁸⁸ Ibid 30.

⁸⁹ Ibid 35.

⁹⁰ Ibid 298; emphasis added.

true and destroy the wrong creative state. It helps the actor keep within the atmosphere of a role, it protects him against *the black hole and the magnetic pull of the auditorium.*”⁹¹ Stanislavski’s hierarchy is similar to Bergman’s film and Heidegger’s philosophy in the fundamental phenomenon of anxiety. The ongoing tension between experiencing, representing, and stock-in-trade runs through An Actor’s Work; in fact, it amounts to a metaphysical peril accompanying the struggle with anxiety, which is inherent in the encounter between the actor and the “void”.

The “black hole” and “magnetic pull” function in Stanislavski in the same way that anxiety and death function in Heidegger. Bergman uses similar language in the screenplay, emphasizing the void of the proscenium house as experienced from onstage: “The house of the auditorium *gapes black and frighteningly.*”⁹² Stanislavski’s “void,” the “black hole” of the proscenium, is a primordial anxiety, but there is no final cessation of anxiety. The “art of experiencing” is a self-aware acceptance of anxiety as a basic condition for “authentic” performance, and the “psychotechnique” is an ongoing practice, not a formula; it requires self-awareness and continually renewed commitment.

This void, however, is not a phenomenon confined to the proscenium arch theatre, but the void facing each performer, the emptiness within which one commits to authentic action. This void is akin to Heidegger’s outline of anxiety, in which “anxiousness is a basic kind of Being-in-the-world” as a state-of-mind, one that then becomes available for an “interpretation” of oneself as an individual: “in an extreme sense what [anxiety] does is precisely to bring Dasein face to face with its world as world, and thus bring it face to face with itself as Being-in-the-world.”⁹³ This bringing the subject “face to

⁹¹ Ibid 299; emphasis added.

⁹² Bergman, Gycklarnas afton 30; my translation and emphasis: “Salongshuset gapar svart och skrämmande.”

⁹³ Heidegger 233.

face with its world as world” maps precisely onto the trajectory and conclusion of a film such as Sawdust and Tinsel. We as an audience view and experience a releasing of the characters from the drama of existential anxiety into a “world as world” that seems newly opened and re-vitalized. For Heidegger, Stanislavski, and Bergman, the subject (actor) never transcends the world; authenticity is linked to a deepened awareness of being in the world after having confronted one’s primordial anxiety.

Contemporary influence in Swedish theatre and film: Hasse Ekman (1915-2004)

It is important to consider the casting for the role of Frans in order to understand the full range of significances of this soliloquy from *Betrayal*.⁹⁴ The role was played by Hasse Ekman (1915-2004), a member of a prominent acting family in Sweden and a well-known actor-director. Ekman was in fact one of Bergman’s chief rivals in Swedish cinema at the time. These two directors provided specific commentaries on one another’s films during a period from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s.⁹⁵

While overlooked in all previous analyses of Sawdust and Tinsel, there is a clear and direct example of this rivalry and commentary in the performance-within of *Betrayal*. In the film’s original context for Swedish audiences, the on-stage “death” of the Count of Chamball would recall Hasse Ekman’s earlier performance in The Girl from the Third Balcony [Flickan från tredje raden] (1949), a film that Ekman also wrote and directed. Ekman’s film begins in a high angle long shot (the title character’s perspective from the third balcony) of Ekman standing downstage center delivering a curtain-closing suicide speech in a darkened, hushed theatre.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Cf. Ingmar Bergman, Gycklarnas afton B:205, 2. A frequent Bergman collaborator, the actor Jarl Kulle, was apparently under consideration for the role of Frans; his name is crossed out in the handwritten cast list of the script supervisor’s copy.

⁹⁵ Leif Furhammar, “Rivalerna” (Lecture, Bergman Week, Fårö Island, 2009).

⁹⁶ In the course of The Girl from the Third Balcony, we learn that this onstage suicide references to an earlier offstage attempt over a faithless lover. These elements recall the story of Frost and Alma, as well as Albert’s despair over Ann’s unfaithfulness, in Sawdust and Tinsel.

It is also significant that Ekman had declared The Girl from the Third Balcony to be a rebuttal to Bergman's own film, Prison [Fängelse] (1949). Furthermore, Ekman's cinematographer for the film was Göran Strindberg; Strindberg was one of the three cinematographers on Sawdust and Tinsel (albeit un-credited) and was responsible for the theatre scenes in particular.⁹⁷ Following the onstage suicide in both films, there is a traveling, montage sequence through the backstage of the theatre; and in fact, in both films, the same theatrical mask appears during these sequences. In both sequences, the emphasis is on the silence and emptiness of the theatre; there are no glimpses of faces, no whispers, no hurried backstage work, there is only "a magical, intoxicating stillness."⁹⁸ At the conclusions of both these sequences, there is an encounter between the actor (Ekman) and the young woman who, unknown to him, has been watching his performance. In The Girl from the Third Balcony this clandestine encounter occurs onstage and is magical (the girl is a sort of guardian angel); in Sawdust and Tinsel, the encounter is backstage and devolves into an event of coerced prostitution.

This indicates the degree to which Ekman influenced the construction of Sawdust and Tinsel in ways beyond that of an actor-for-hire. This also accounts in part for the deep cynicism toward performance, especially theatrical performances, in the film.⁹⁹ If the theatre and actors were "magical" or "intoxicating" for Bergman, in Sawdust and Tinsel the theatre hardly offers a benevolent magic.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See Björkman, et al 276; Charles Thomas Samuels, Encountering Directors (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1987) 205.

⁹⁸ Bergman, Gycklarnas afton B:003, 68.

⁹⁹ Cf. Jesse Kalin, The Films of Ingmar Bergman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 36. "The life *this* theater represents is thus one in which ties with others are severed, people retreat into themselves, and pretense replaces true feeling. It is a desert existence in which one is hardly alive," one in which all the company appear similar to Frans, being "actors off the stage as well as on."

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 25; cf. Ingmar Bergman, Jack Among the Actors (Unpublished, 1946) 49-53.

This cynicism indicates the professional competition that Bergman experienced during this time. This competition was institutional and is reflected in the number of social groups, or “troupes” in the film. Belonging to a troupe provides a social identity, but places one at odds with other troupes, and also is related to the they-self and authentic existence. This is particularly emphasized through the circus and theatre troupes, and in the contrast between Albert with Frans, and also with the director of the theatre, Sjuberg. This figure recalls another of Bergman’s prominent competitors, Alf Sjöberg. This relationship is also part of the “theatrical” history of Sawdust and Tinsel.

Contemporary influence in Swedish theatre and film: Alf Sjöberg (1903-1980)

Alf Sjöberg (1903-1980) was a successful and prominent figure in both theatre and film at this time and occupied a superior position to Bergman within the cultural hierarchy of Swedish arts. Sjöberg directed the first stage production that Bergman ever saw, and one that he recalled and cited as a pivotal experience.¹⁰¹ Sjöberg was a director at the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Dramaten) in Stockholm from 1930 until his death in 1980. He was well-established by the late 1940s and early 1950s when Bergman was still working primarily at provincial theatres. Sjöberg directed Bergman’s first screenplay (in fact, providing the dialogue himself for an elaborate synopsis by Bergman) and provided the occasion for Bergman to direct his first film.¹⁰² This paternal status of Sjöberg is manifested in Sawdust and Tinsel in the character of the theatre director, Sjuberg. This relates directly

¹⁰¹ Bergman, Magic Lantern 197; cf. Margareta Wirmark, “Ingmar Bergman och Dramatenträdningen,” Ingmar Bergman: Film och teater i Växlerkan (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 1996) 128.

¹⁰² Sverker Ek, Spelplatsens magi: Alf Sjöbergs regikonst 1930-1957 (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1988) 207. Ek avers that Sjöberg’s authorship and ownership of the dialogue was legally established in 1989. Cf. Bergman, Magic Lantern 141. Bergman’s account of this first work under Sjöberg contains an event that is structurally similar to his famous account of punishment at the hands of his parents. Bergman states that he admired Sjöberg, but made himself “a nuisance and a burden”: “I often forgot my professional rôle and interfered with the work of the director. I was reprimanded and shut myself into a cubby hole and wept.”¹⁰² This description by Bergman contains an important autobiographical narrative trope of reprimand and subsequent isolation in a small space, usually found in his oft-repeated story of being locked in a closet by his father. Bergman adds that he remained on set, as “The opportunities for learning from a master were unlimited.”

to the matter of authenticity in the film in terms of how that idea is treated discursively, but also informs the metaphysical sensibility in the film, one that challenges the idea of authenticity by asserting a model of the world as a site of perpetual performance, an absurd and nihilistic *teatrum mundi*. This idea is one that Sjöberg also vigorously explored.

Sjöberg's aesthetics recall those of Bergman, with a marked emphasis upon the resources of the actor: "their limbs, their speech, their potential for ensemble playing" upon a bare platform "stripped of every technical finesse," the only technical exception being the use of light, "with which we build rhythms and forms, dissolve and transform the thing."¹⁰³ For example, his production of Richard III at The Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1947 was subtitled "The Fool Crowned," and Sjöberg's reading of the title role is consonant with both existentialism and a meta-theatrical worldview: "Without the possibility of finding himself, his own identity, among all the roles he has played, he dies in a climax that reveals both his clown nature and his anguish at never having been loved, not even by himself."¹⁰⁴ This existential clown figure is found in Sawdust and Tinsel in Frost and Jens.

An additional and timely example of Sjöberg's aesthetics was in evidence in 1951 in his production of Amorina, by Carl Jonas Love Almquist (1793-1866). Bergman was employed for the first time at Dramaten as a guest director for The Light in the Shack [Det lyser i kåken], by Björn-Erik Höijer, on the second stage. Bergman's production opened some six weeks before Sjöberg's staging of Amorina. Both were produced on the smaller, second stage at The Royal Dramatic Theatre.

¹⁰³ Qtd. in Frederick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker, The Scandinavian Theatre: A Short History (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975) 271. These views were recorded by Sjöberg in 1982, but were clearly a part of his stagecraft in the 1940s. One can discern the influence of Gordon Craig, as well.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid 272-273.

The mixture of film and theatre in Sjöberg's Amorina had significant potential to influence Bergman's subsequent work, specifically Sawdust and Tinsel. Sjöberg employed a trestle stage-upon-stage, and featured the 19th-century playwright, "in flowing cape and slouch hat," as an onstage narrator to his own "strange, kaleidoscopic theatre tale."¹⁰⁵ Sjöberg navigated the sixty-plus scene changes through lighting shifts, back projections, and moveable screens, employing mime and scenes enacted in silhouette, self-consciously drawing upon Meyerhold's idea of "the grotesque" and Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt*. The element of the stage-upon-a-stage would become a recurring strategy employed by Bergman in his work at the Malmö Municipal Theatre in the 1950s and throughout the remainder of his career.¹⁰⁶

There are additional economic links between Sawdust and Tinsel and two of Sjöberg's films, Miss Julie (1951) and Barabbas (1953), all of which were produced by Sandrews. Sawdust and Tinsel was part of an international marketing strategy developed at Sandrews following the success of Miss Julie, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1951. Sandrews produced nine films in the two years between Miss Julie and Sawdust and Tinsel, but only one of these films had distribution outside of Scandinavia; Sjöberg's Barabbas, which was screened at Cannes, and was also nominated for the Grand Prix.¹⁰⁷ Sjöberg was very much a presence in Bergman's career, both in the theatre and in the cinema.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid 275.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. ibid 267; cf. Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 58; cf. Bergman, Magic Lantern 178; cf. Egil Törnqvist, Bergman's Muses: Aesthetic Versatility in Film, Theatre, Television and Radio (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003) 81-82; cf. Marilyn Johns Blackwell, "Platforms and Beds: The Sexualization of Space in Ingmar Bergman's Theatre and Film," Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts, (London; New York: Wallflower, 2008) 64-65.

¹⁰⁷ Sjöberg's film work shows the same intermedial qualities that Koskinen emphasizes in her analyses of Bergman. Miss Julie (1951) is an adaptation of August Strindberg's seminal drama of the same name, and contains numerous examples of theatrical practices employed in the service of the cinema. Examples include shared space stagings of characters existing in different temporalities, monologues with conspicuous rear-projected backdrops, and a cast of actors who worked both in theatre and film (and later with Bergman).

Given this long-standing relationship between the work of Sjöberg and Bergman, which included mentoring, social status, shared themes and motifs, professional competition, a disposition toward existentialism, and intermediality in terms of their work in theatre and film, one is obliged to look at Sawdust and Tinsel with reference to Sjöberg in a number of ways, including the level of autobiographical allegory. Elements of Sjöberg's staging of Amorina and his own directorial persona may be found in Sawdust and Tinsel in the character of the theatre director, Sjuberg. This is a master-of-ceremonies figure with "a flowing cape" and prominent haberdashery, a figure that presides over a kaleidoscopic, grotesque and alienating sequence in the film, the final battle royal in the center ring between Albert, the circus master, and Frans, the actor.

That likelihood that Sjuberg is a version of Sjöberg has been overlooked in previous Bergman scholarship, and has considerable significance as an interpretive key. Bergman acknowledged that he was inclined to include "malicious portraits" of contemporaries in some films.¹⁰⁸ I find two such "portraits" in the characters of Frans and Sjuberg. The relationship between Frans and Hasse Ekman is performative: Bergman, through chance or design, had a prominent rival play a version of himself, as discussed above. In the case of the theatre director, Sjuberg, the "portrait" is representational, and is modeled on Bergman's early mentor, Alf Sjöberg.

The Sjuberg troupe

Bergman acknowledged in a later autobiography that, "Over the years I have *not intentionally* created a multitude of malicious portraits of people I know."¹⁰⁹ Allowing that Albert, the male

¹⁰⁸ Bergman, Images 164.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; emphasis added. Bergman acknowledges this tendency in his discussion of The Face [Ansiktet] (1958), and points to the characters of the police chief and the doctor as examples of collective and individual caricatures. The police chief is "a consciously calculated target" representing "my critics": "It was a rather good-natured jest with everyone who wanted to

protagonist in Sawdust and Tinsel, is Bergman's alter-ego, the figure of the theatre director in the film, Sjuberg, thus takes on additional significance as "portrait" of Alf Sjöberg.¹¹⁰ There is the assonance between the two names.¹¹¹ Sjuberg is described in stage directions as "fruktade" ("fearsome"), with "a round face like a full moon," wearing "a high hat, cane with silver knob, black gloves, cigar, cleanly shaved."¹¹² In the film, the actor Gunnar Björnstrand wears the costume as described, but sports a beard. The "cleanly shaved" round face "like a full moon" could be taken as a physical description of Sjöberg, however. In a later autobiography, Bergman describes Sjöberg as the Royal Dramatic Theatre's "prince and prisoner," a person with "obvious violent contradictions within himself," whose face was "a puppet's mask, controlled by will and ruthless charm," and who engaged in role-playing: "Like all producers, he also acted the part of a producer; as he was a gifted actor, the performance was convincing."¹¹³ Similarly, Sjuberg is represented as an enigmatic paternal authority, of a higher social rank, and in control of particular circumstances that directly affect Albert: loaning the costumes to the circus, capable of seducing Anne, and directing the battle royal in the center ring.

Sjuberg is also depicted as outmoded, artificial, and aesthetically and empathetically less-deserving than the protagonist, Albert (Bergman's acknowledged alter-ego). Given that the film is set ca. 1910, the play being rehearsed by the Sjuberg company is an outdated melodrama, a hold-over from the 19th-

keep me in line and master me. The drama critics back then saw it as their duty to keep urging me to do this and not that. They probably enjoyed giving me a spanking publicly" (Images 164). The doctor was based on critic Harry Schein.

¹¹⁰ Björkman, et al 94. Bergman acknowledges Albert as a self-portrait: "The first thing anyone making a portrait of himself does is to choose a little chap who is fat and strong, manic-depressive and anti-intellectual."

¹¹¹ Albert pronounces the name differently between the earlier circus scenes and when onstage at the theatre; the pronunciation used in the latter case is distinctly close to the pronunciation of Sjöberg.

¹¹² Ingmar Bergman, Gycklarnas afton B: 003, 30; 33.

¹¹³ Bergman, The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1988) 198.

century.¹¹⁴ This is an indication that Sjöberg's troupe is as close to the margins as is the Cirkus Alberti. The world of the theatre in the film is one of callow pretense; the world of the circus is also one of performance, certainly, but is rough and vital. The circus is also a style of performance where the presentation is informed by and responsive to lived circumstances, even to the degree that the distinction between performance and life are transgressed and conflated; this is the case with the fistfight in the circus ring. The comparison of theatre to circus is a contrast between established and emergent careers (Sjöberg's and Bergman's), theatre companies (Dramaten and Malmö), and can be extended to a contrast between media (theatre-as-theatre versus circus-as-film).¹¹⁵ The sequence depicting the raising of the circus tent in the rain is comparable with the practice of location shooting for a film; both stand in contrast to the sheltered interior of the theatre. While the circus is in desperate financial straits, it is presented as vital, unsheltered, and adaptable.

A direct comparison between Bergman and Sjöberg along these very lines is made in a contemporaneous review of the film: "Here we have a young group of actors full of vitality, who Bergman has managed to mould to a complete and accomplished entity (fittingly laying to rest the myth that Swedish actors cannot act in films). Here is cinema that is beautiful, intensive and brutal by rapid turns – pictorially *Sawdust and Tinsel* is the complete antithesis to the exaggeratedly cold beauty

¹¹⁴ Cf. Mikael Timm, "A Filmmaker in the Borderland: Bergman and Cultural Traditions," *Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey*, Ed. Roger W. Oliver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995) 96: "When Bergman was a young director, there were still actors who worked completely in a nineteenth-century spirit."

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ek 334. Ek also compares the career trajectories of Bergman and Sjöberg, and makes comparisons between Malmö and the Royal Dramatic theatres in the mid-1950s.

of, say, Miss Julie.”¹¹⁶ The reference to Sjöberg’s film is worth noting, particularly the proposal that Bergman is the “complete antithesis” to Sjöberg.

The topic of acting, specifically acting for films as compared (implicitly) with acting for the stage, raises the issue of difference between the two media, but points out the reliance of both film and theatre upon the embodied subject of the actor. The vitality of the life of the circus, comprised by travel, acrobats, animals, and continual effort, is precisely what is lacking from the world of the theatre. But no place is certain, no manner of living is represented as secure. This fundamental uncertainty is in keeping with the scheme of existence offered in Heidegger, and bears a direct relation to the matter of authenticity. In fact, a concern with “creative authenticity” in terms of art and existence permeates Sawdust and Tinsel at every level. The suicide monologue performed by the Sjöberg company’s leading man, Frans provides insight into the relationship between theatre and cinema, the effects of a “performance-within”, and the issue of “creative authenticity.” This is contrasted by the example of Albert.

B. Case study 2: Improvisation, anxiety, and “creative authenticity”

Anxiety and “creative authenticity” emerge as defining elements, thematically, dramaturgically, and practically in Sawdust and Tinsel, as demonstrated by the following case study. In this example, Albert and Frost encounter the possibility of violent death. This episode is actually two separate sequences, the first filmed under studio conditions and the second on location. The scene is remarkable in the film for many reasons, but the emphasis here is on the performance circumstances during the filming of these sequences. These circumstances include production concerns over the

¹¹⁶ Mauritz Edström, Arbetaren (n. d., ca. 1953); qtd. on Ingmar Bergman Foundation website: <http://www.ingmarbergman.se/page.asp?guid=D5BF07ED-B286-45C5-928F-59E32DF5091D> Accessed 4/30/2010.

economical use of film stock, location shooting, the use of real circus performers in the cast, and the work of Åke Grönberg (1914-1969) and Anders Ek (1916-1979). Anders Ek had previously collaborated with Bergman on a number of productions and was directly engaged with existentialism and the performance theories of Stanislavski. Grönberg is a different case, but his performance also evidences link between Stanislavski and existential phenomenology, albeit through the circumstances of performance rather than training or affinity, as in Ek's case.

Albert: alter-ego, character, an actor's creation, or an actor's anxiety?

The role of Albert purportedly was conceived by Bergman as a self-portrait rendered via the form and personality of the actor Åke Grönberg. Discussing Grönberg's performance in 1968, Bergman said: "The first thing anyone making a portrait of himself does is to choose a little chap who is fat and strong, manic-depressive and anti-intellectual."¹¹⁷ It seems clear that something about this "alter-ego" remained with Bergman: "I loved and hated him. I imagine that he had similar feelings toward me. *From that tension a creation sprang into existence.*"¹¹⁸ One source of practical tension was in relation to Bergman's script and Grönberg's memory.

Grönberg's trouble with lines resulted in improvised dialogue in this drunken scene with Frost out on the circus grounds, dialogue that Bergman said he preferred to the original lines.¹¹⁹ Improvisation occurred in the performance of Frost (Anders Ek) as well: "Anders' circus-talk was never quite the

¹¹⁷ Björkman, et al 94. Cf. Bergman, *Images* 185; Bergman offers this remark: "The fact that Åke Grönberg played Albert, and that the part was expressly written for him, has nothing to do with any influence from Dupont's *Variety* with Emil Jannings. It's much simpler than that: if a scrawny director aims for a self portrait, of course he chooses a fat actor to play himself."

¹¹⁸ Bergman, *Images* 185; emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ Björkman, et al 95-96. Bergman recalled: "He'd [Grönberg] got his teeth into the outburst of feeling in that scene. That was the main thing. What else might come out in the dialogue was of secondary importance."

same from one rehearsal to another; so they said things to each other more or less as it occurred to them. It was all one big ‘happening.’”¹²⁰ This is born out by the numerous changes in lines noted in the script supervisor’s copy: typewritten dialogue is frequently crossed out and the improvised changes are noted in bright pink ink. It may well have been the case that Bergman was more or less forced to allow these changes in order to maintain the shooting schedule. The shooting date and time for every scene is also carefully noted in the script supervisor’s copy. Furthermore, the amount of film footage used for each shot is also recorded, as well as the number of takes. This is significant from the standpoint of aesthetics and economics.¹²¹ The noting of takes and meters of film consumed in the script supervisor’s copy indicates that Bergman was being held to working within his budget, given the large scale of the production in terms of locations and personnel. This concern with economic use of raw film stock may have contributed a certain pressure in the filming of scenes that allowed departures from the written dialogue to be tolerated to a degree that was uncharacteristic for Bergman.

This fact highlights the agency of the actor within fictive circumstances to generate and assert an independence from the authority of the director and text, i.e., from convention (social and economic). This raises the possibility of a “creative authenticity.” Such departures generated a new text, and

¹²⁰ Ibid 95.

¹²¹ Bergman, *Gycklarnas afton* B: 205, 89-91. For example, on March 9, 1953, at 4:05 P.M., the director, cast and crew filmed events 481-500; this is the sequence in the film where Frost enters Albert’s wagon, the two men drink, and Albert puts a gun to Frost’s head. The two men, drunk and panicked by the possibility of violence and death, then rush out of the wagon. The notes in the script supervisor’s copy indicate that this sequence was filmed in three takes: the first take consumed only 10 meters of film (approximately 37 seconds) and was interrupted (“bruten”); the second take consumed 140 meters (approximately 5:10) and received a note because a small set piece was knocked off a wall (“hyllan föll nu”); and the third and final take consumed 155 meters (approximately 5:45). This sequence is quite lengthy and while it contains a good deal of actor and camera movement, it was intended to be a single, continuous scene. Hence, these two takes of the scene in its entirety were its first and last live performances, and the filming of these performances did not easily facilitate post-production editing. In the final cut of the film, this sequence is 4:39 in length, and includes only one edit, a match-on-action jump-cut; this edit joins the opening portion (2:52) of the third take with the final portion (1:48) of the second take, in which the shelf fell.

allowed Grönberg and Ek to also become “authors” in a sense. The script supervisor’s copy indicates the many line alterations in this sequence, for both Frost (Ek) and Albert (Grönberg). Albert has a lengthy speech running two pages, for which numerous line changes, interpolations, and cuts are noted.¹²² It is also evident that Ek was adjusting his own responses and therefore generating new lines. These changes are noted in bright pink ink and in what appears to be a hasty handwriting.

For example, one passage in the typewritten dialogue for Albert reads: “Poor Anne! Poor Agda, poor me, my poor little boys and you, you devil, and your miserable wife, poor us, all of us, who live on the earth, but all of us are so afraid, so afraid, so afraid.” The spoken dialogue became: “Poor Anne! Poor Agda, my poor little boys and you, you devil! Your miserable wife . . . It’s a sin that people must live on the earth, it’s a sin that people must live on. Yes! Everyone . . . everyone is so afraid . . . so afraid, so afraid.”¹²³ There are many such instances of improvised dialogue throughout the interior scene and the subsequent exterior one, in which Albert and Frost, having fled from the danger of violence within the wagon to the open air of the circus camp, proceed to drunkenly stagger through the campgrounds while Albert continues to struggle with his jealousy. These improvisations bring into view the matter of “creative authenticity.”

Sequence analysis: Albert’s stagger through the world (<http://youtu.be/Z1FeX9tyZoc>)

Improvisation combines with the performance-within in this sequence to present the possibility of “creative” authenticity in an actor’s performance. This exterior sequence was filmed on-location, May

¹²² Ibid 89-90.

¹²³ Ibid 90-91; my translation. The text reads: “Stackars Anne! Stackars Agda, stackars mig, stackars mina småpojkar och dej din djävel och din arma hustru, stackars oss alla människor, som lever på jorden, men allihop är så rädda, så rädda, så rädda.” Grönberg said: “Stackars Anne! Stackars Agda, stackars mina små pojkarer . . . och dej din djävel! Din arma hustru . . . Det är synd att människor måste leva på jorden, det är synd om människorna som måste leva ut. Ja! Alla . . . alla är så rädda . . . så rädda, så rädda.” See also Sawdust and Tinsel, Criterion Collection.

20-21, 1953. There are numerous line changes, interpolations, re-wordings, etc., evidenced by the notes in the script supervisor's copy. It is clear that Grönberg consistently struggled with memorization but also that he was able (and permitted) to speak in-character from Albert's given circumstances in a manner that, arguably, better served the film than Bergman's own lines. A second, distinguishing characteristic in this sequence is a discrete "performance-within" that is directly linked to the matter of "creative authenticity": Albert/Grönberg sings a song.

Grönberg suffered from anxieties over the scope of the role that resulted in a degree of duality between his situation as an actor and Albert's situation as a character.¹²⁴ At the beginning of this sequence, we see a brace of horses pulling a cart past a table and chair outside of Albert's wagon; some circus children chase after the horses, laughing. Albert leaps out of wagon, with Frost following behind. This abrupt "entrance" by Albert, which is a fleeing from the possibility of death (located within the circus wagon), recalls both Stanislavski and Heidegger. Stanislavski talks about "pure accidents," using an instance where a parallel between the fictional circumstances of the character and an actor's onstage situation: as the character had been thrown into the street, so the actor "had been thrown onto an expanse of empty stage with the terrible black hole before you."¹²⁵ A similar duality is in evidence for Åke Grönberg as Albert, and is physically expressed in this "falling" out of the circus wagon.

Albert sits on the table. From Albert's perspective, we see Alma sitting with eyes closed, sunning herself at camera, and Jens standing by a horse; in the background on a small knoll, there is a group of circus folk, playing music, dancing, and picnicking. We see Albert in a close-up as he says, "I love it,

¹²⁴ Bergman, *Images* 185. As described by Bergman, Grönberg was "first and foremost a comedy actor with an, allegedly, affable chubbiness. As Albert, *he liberated other forces within himself*" (emphasis added).

¹²⁵ Stanislavski 337.

I love it.”¹²⁶ The real threat of death “alerts Albert to a simple truth: although life’s pain may hold no meaning, the prospect of death holds greater terror”; the two men falling abruptly out of the wagon is as though a “magical rebirth” has occurred.”¹²⁷ In Heidegger, a similar “rebirth” is described: “Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—that is, its *Being free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free for (propensio in . . .)* the authenticity of its Being.”¹²⁸ While this scene in the film is an enactment, the dualism of the situation for the actor/character allows for the actor, as an individual, to encounter his own “authenticity” in a fashion appropriate to Heidegger’s analysis.

Åke Grönberg “chose” and “took hold” of himself in the course of his anxiety while playing the role of Albert, appropriately and inconspicuously, through the non-mimetic performance-within that occurs next in this sequence. Albert rises and begins to sing and walk through the camp, with Frost singing after him. They walk toward camera right and the camera dollies backwards, tracking them. We see the cowboy on horseback in the background. They walk past Albert’s wagon, a second wagon, the bear chained to a stake, and then Albert falls to the ground; Frost falls to join him.¹²⁹ This singing is an important assertion; it is, for all its ease and naturalness, perhaps the greatest evidence for the basic nature of performance as a conspicuous, self-celebratory and intentional action in the world. It is also

¹²⁶ Cf. Björkman, et al 95-96. Bergman avers that Albert shouting “I love them!” was “something he [Åke Grönberg] suddenly thought of,” adding that “it must have been in the script somewhere, I suppose.”

¹²⁷ Gado 168.

¹²⁸ Heidegger 232-33.

¹²⁹ Cf. Björkman, et al 95; “So I shoved in a wide-angle lens and said ‘move over here’ and we shoved out a plank where they had to stop.”

autobiographical in terms of Grönberg's own proclivity for song: "When in one of his lighter moods, however, he would sing to us. Folk songs and favorite old pop tunes and obscene ditties."¹³⁰

This singing is also directly linked to the film's conceptual frame of the *skillingtryck*, or penny ballad, invoked in the film's opening titles.¹³¹ The *skillingtryck* is also literally and explicitly invoked in the description of Albert's walk through the campground in the production script. The stage directions state that "Albert sings with full voice a *skillingtryck*, a ballad printed that year about circus, blood and death."¹³² However, the song that Grönberg chose to sing has nothing of "circus, blood and death" in its lyrics. It seems to have sprung from Grönberg's own repertoire, and this may account for the apparent ease of delivery. Unlike the dialogue with which Grönberg struggled, the song seems to come effortlessly. The performance-within of the song was the means through which Grönberg "chose" and "took hold" of himself, and brought the effects of a "creative authenticity" into the film as Albert.

That Frost echoes this singing, trailing behind, is also important. Frost the clown is the representational mode of human behavior, the kind of *mimesis* that copies, apes and exhibits. While Albert and Frost on their knees on the ground, we see another kind of performer: the circus bear

¹³⁰ Bergman, *Images* 185.

¹³¹ Cf. Jerker A. Eriksson, "Gycklarnas afton," *Nya pressen* 20 April 1954; cit. in Donner 96-97 (endnote, p. 249). Writing in 1954, Eriksson stresses the significance of the *skillingtryck*: "Behind the penny print's eloquent text, with its stamp of cheap popular reading matter and stereotyped action, are often hidden bitter tragedies, catastrophes, which sellers dramatized and simplified in order to satisfy the taste of the simple customers and their intellectual need. The fact that Ingmar Bergman has provided a film with the subheading 'A Penny Print' implies primarily an assurance that the characters and the pattern of action externally reflect this world of plain folk literature, but his personal and artistic fashioning of the material naturally possesses a much more multi-faceted and deep tone than that of the direct prototype." Cf. Gado 165. Gado emphasizes the importance to the film of the idea of a *skillingtryck* (penny print), a melodramatic ballad form popular in Sweden ca. 1900, typically concerning a lurid tale.

¹³² Bergman, *Gycklarnas afton* B: 003, 110. Alf Sjöberg also deliberately evoked the *skillingtryck* concept in his film *Karin Månsdotter* released the following year, in 1954; both films were produced by Sandrews.

circling its stake in the background. A spectrum of performance and ways of being-in-the-world are now in view: verisimilar acting/experiencing, clowning/representing, and non-agentic animal performance. Albert stops singing and verbalizes his issues and jealousy over Anne's unfaithfulness. Grönberg was improvising and paraphrasing this dialogue, generating a new text; moreover, this followed the effects of singing via the performance-within. Meanwhile, Frost turns away from the camera, mimicking the bear and making circles; this is a clownish commentary on Albert's circular agonizing over Anne (hatred, forgiveness, wanting to know the details of "the act," etc.). They stand once again and resume singing, walking off screen right. This capturing of a discrete performance-within belonging to "one big happening" demonstrates the historical window that the film provides us with. Its record is not merely diegetic nor only reflexively cinematic: the film documents diverse histories and concerns.

The long take conclusion of this sequence emphasizes the problems of the they-self, anxiety, and authenticity as described in Heidegger. The camera tracks behind as they walk, singing, passing by kids sitting on ground, a portable forge for blacksmithing, men hammering on an anvil, and finally come up to the group of circus folk partying on the hillock. Albert lifts his arms and orders the circus folk to be quiet and to get ready for the show. Frost continues to repeat what Albert says. Albert walks up the slight hill, the camera panning left to follow as he starts ordering various circus performers to hurry. They move, variously, toward camera right and off screen while Albert works his way camera left. The picture composition is in a long shot by this point. Albert spots the circus dwarf (Kiki) asleep on the side of the hillock. He moves toward him, with Frost following and still repeating and echoing Albert's statements; the camera pans left to follow. Albert picks up the dwarf and carries him toward camera, throwing him onto a mattress. The dwarf runs off camera left, Frost following after him, still blathering. Albert moves toward camera into a close-up; he is drunk and sweaty. His eyes are barely

open as he says, “I have to leave them.” This shot captures Albert’s world, his social identity (theyself) and the cracks that are emerging through anxiety and the awareness of death.

In Heidegger’s account, anxiety is ultimately linked to our awareness of our individual mortality and the subsequent disclosure of being in the world: “*That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such.*”¹³³ Dramatically, it is Albert’s increasing awareness of “being-in-the-world as such” that leads him to admit aloud to himself (and the camera): “I have to leave them.” Throughout the shoot Grönberg “was mostly wild and raging since he had moved on to what, to him, was insecure and foreign ground.”¹³⁴ This “insecurity” and “foreign ground” is descriptive of Grönberg’s anxiety within the role, an anxiety that paralleled the actions of the plot. In both Stanislavski and Heidegger, the encounter with authentic existence is incited through anxiety; this is found in Sawdust and Tinsel both in the events of the screenplay with respect to Albert and in the playing of the role by Åke Grönberg. This is also evidenced extensively in the screenplay in Albert’s concerns over survival.

The criticism has been leveled that Bergman “superficially” toyed with doubt, despair, and death, “those now all-too-familiar themes of the existential revolt,” in his early films.¹³⁵ But Sawdust and Tinsel is quite earnestly concerned with the question of authenticity, disclosed as a possibility through the experience of anxiety. Albert is anxious throughout the film (the “obstinacy” of “nothing and

¹³³ Heidegger 230-31. This is further developed: “What is the difference phenomenally between that in the face of which anxiety is anxious and that in the face of which fear is afraid? That in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within the world. That in the face of which one has anxiety is characterized by the fact that what threatens is *nowhere*.” It is the “obstinacy” of this “nothing and nowhere” that leads Heidegger to the conclusion that “*the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety.*”

¹³⁴ Bergman, Images 185.

¹³⁵ Ketcham 4. Ketcham finds that “the existential journey becomes in earnest” with the questioning of God’s existence in The Seventh Seal (5).

nowhere,” per Heidegger). Throughout, there is always a conflict or contest between emotions within and between the various characters. There is never a *single* emotion. This is characteristic of anxiety, but also of realism as practiced by Stanislavski. This is part of the complexity of existence as delineated by Heidegger in discussing moods, and it is also the special skill of trained actors (“virtuosi”) as described by Bergman.¹³⁶ In a broader view, Heidegger and Stanislavski both are concerned with the issue of authenticity versus inauthenticity, yet both also seem to strive to reconcile that strife with existing social orders. This same struggle toward reconciliation becomes increasingly apparent in Bergman’s subsequent films. Furthermore, this concern is both averred and lampooned in the performance-within of the clown routine in Sawdust and Tinsel.

C. Case study 3: the clown routine

Prior to the arrival of the actors at the circus and the ensuing battle royal between Frans and Albert, the film offers its only complete circus act, a clown routine that clearly functions as a performance-within. This highly contrived routine immediately follows the performance of Grönberg discussed in the preceding section, which exemplified fictional and actual anxiety and, arguably, “creative authenticity.” The clown routine deliberately contrasts Albert’s “authentic” anxiety with the spectacle of anxiety.

Unlike the earlier scenes in the theatre, which appear to have been completely conceived beforehand, there is no clown routine in the typewritten script for the film. The stage directions extensively describe events performed for the crowd gathered on the road outside of the circus tent, as well as the incident with Alma’s misbehaving bear, but no routine between Jens and Frost.¹³⁷ This

¹³⁶ Björkman, et al 59.

¹³⁷ Bergman, Gycklarnas afton B: 205, 117-118.

poses questions concerning the source for the routine; whether it was developed by Bergman, by the actors, Anders Ek and Erik Strandmark (1919-1963), by the professional circus performers working on the production, or the collaborative result of all of the above.

Contemporary influence in theatre and film: Anders Ek (1916-1979)

This performance-within exhibits the influence of one of Bergman's prominent early collaborators, Anders Ek (1916-1979) in the role of Frost. Ek engaged with existentialism philosophically and dramatically, and actively explored the ideas of Stanislavski in his career as an actor.¹³⁸ His resume prior to playing Frost included the title role in Caligula, by Albert Camus; Josef K. in Kafka's The Trial, adapt. by André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault; L'Aigle à deux têtes, by Jean Cocteau; Medea, by Jean Anouilh, as well as the title role in Macbeth and Stanley Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire. Unlike Grönberg, who was out of his comfort zone as an actor in the role of Albert, or Hasse Ekman, who was a rival with Bergman and typified Stanislavski's "art of representing," Ek was a versatile and experienced actor, and deliberately pursued the "art of experiencing."

While Grönberg's improvisations were arguably a result of faulty memorization, anxiety, and/or inspiration, Ek's improvisations as Frost were the result of a skilled practitioner working from the given circumstances for the character and the moment-to-moment engagement with Grönberg.¹³⁹ Ek's performance and persona as Frost evidences the potential of "creative authenticity" arising through an actor's practice. This is the existential potential in acting that Stanislavski pursued and is the same potential that Heidegger describes in his analysis of everyday life.

¹³⁸ Näslund 37-38. Näslund suggests that Ek's performance in Caligula was a synthesis of Ek's grounding in Stanislavski, Bergman's direction, and Birgit Cullberg's influence. Cf. Karin Helander, Teaterns korsväg – Bengt Ekerot och 1950-talet (Stockholm: Carlssons Bokförlag, 2003) 20-22.

¹³⁹ Cf. Björkman, et al 95.

Bergman acknowledged that he “came into contact with [existentialism] in the theatre, among other things in connection with my production of *Caligula* with Anders Ek at the Gothenburg City Theatre in 1946.”¹⁴⁰ In the concern with the *auteur* and his influences, it is easy to overlook is the importance of the actor Anders Ek in the title role of this existential drama. But this is an instance of an embodied dramatic history that informs a film via the actor. A palpable link between different productions by one director, or between contemporary productions by different directors and/or playwrights, may be found in terms of personnel. Ek as Frost exemplifies Camus’ notion of the actor: “Of the absurd character the actor consequently has the monotony, that single, oppressive silhouette, simultaneously strange and familiar, that he carries about from hero to hero.”¹⁴¹ In fact, this “silhouette” was a part of Ek’s expertise in existentialist drama.

Sequence analysis of the clown routine (<http://youtu.be/PMQUp2GUzDc>)

The clown sequence lasts 1 minute and 35 seconds, and is comprised by seven shots, followed by an outdoor shot of the two clowns in the campground following their performance. The sequence begins in a medium shot of a three-piece circus band (two men with a female tuba player in the middle; cf. romantic triangle) seated in a loft; the camera pans down to Albert in full ringmaster costume, and a curtain is abruptly drawn back, revealing several circus performers in costume standing in the “backstage” entrance to the ring. The routine begins in a state of anxiety: the clown Jens (Erik Strandmark) enters yelling, running with a ladder; the camera follows, panning left, and Jens lands in a prat fall, losing his hat, a cushion, a bugle, and a bouquet of flowers. Jens hurriedly takes out his “pocket watch,” an alarm clock on a braided length of wire or rope; he bends over anxiously to hear if

¹⁴⁰ Ibid 12-13. It is worth noting that *Caligula*, by Albert Camus, includes two plays-within.

¹⁴¹ Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus,” *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955) 81.

it is ticking. This frantic entrance is an assault of sorts; Jens' anxiety is inexplicable, and the odd assortment of objects that are scattered about a part of the chaos: they may or may not have meanings. What drives apparently Jens is time; the alarm clock recalls an early scene showing Albert reaching to check a similar clock over a sleeping Anne. Love and anxiety drift in and out of the whole of this routine.

There is a peculiar indifference that counterbalances this empty anxiety; an indifference that plays with violence and humiliation. Frost (Anders Ek) walks in holding a wand with a heart on one end, and kicks Jens on the butt; this is a somewhat peculiar kick, because Frost accomplishes it from being slightly in front and to one side of Jens; it is almost like a soccer kick (anticipating Frans' footwork in kicking sawdust into Albert's eyes during the fight). Jens falls, and Frost turns his back on him, wiping his feet as if kicking dust behind him. Jens gets up, and kicks Frost in the butt.

There is a cut to audience responding happily, seated on bleachers (a recurring situation in the film). The film cuts back to the routine: a monkey in a dress is revealed on Jens' back underneath his coat. This strange, swift image recalls a number of other events in the film; the sight of Alma, naked, born on Frost's back during the Passion section of the film's prologue, the two monkeys seen with the organ grinder outside of the theatre immediately after Anne and Frans have had sex, and Albert's "burden" in knowing of the infidelity. But it is also a part of the spectrum of performance, a creature just slightly lower than the clown.

Jens straightens up, and takes off his coat to go to "work" (Albert makes similar preparations for the fight). Jens joins Frost at center, where Frost is stuck between the rungs of the ladder; Jens gives him a kick in the butt/groin area (there's a similar blow to groin in the fight between Albert and Frans). The heart wand is stored in a long pocket sewn along the crotch of Frost's costume, emphasizing the link between the heart and the penis. Symbols aside, there is a deliberate futility that is being displayed.

The hollowness comes from the lack of play and the repetition of clichés. The kick is followed by a familiar ladder bit with Jens bending over to reach for the pail as Frost spins about with the ladder, first counter-clockwise and then clockwise, looking up toward the top of the tent; the bit ends, naturally, when Frost finally knocks Jens on the ground with the ladder. The next shot is a medium close-up of Jens on the ground, bawling (Albert will be in similar position in fight); he rises, still bawling, in order to get back to “work.” Frost leans the ladder over Jens’ head and shoulders, and then walks camera right to give a flower to middle-aged matron; the flower is rigged with break-away stem, so the woman only gets stem and Frost keeps the blossom (cf. Albert’s visit to Agda). Frost returns to Jens, who is still caterwauling; he sticks the blossom in Jens’ mouth, hits him on head with the heart-shaped wand, then walks behind and hits Jens on the butt with the wand; there is a loud fart noise and smoke. Frost sits down in the aftershock of the fart. The subject of body stench comes up earlier in dialogue between Anne and Frans.

There is an unexpected jump cut showing Albert’s back coming in view from opposite side of ring (Bergman breaks with continuity editing in this; cf. the disorientation of camera during the fight). Albert yells at both clowns, strikes them both, orders them back to work (this recalls the constable ordering the circus troupe off of streets and confiscating horses, forcing the circus troupe to push wagon away manually). In fact, work and play are conflated here, as Albert insists that the next act has to come on; this adds an extra dimension of futility to this particular clown routine; their already obscure project is exposed as a routine that is behind schedule. Both clowns are crying as the second ladder bit begins, with Frost climbing up the ladder while Jens holds it; Jens then turns, letting go of the ladder in order to fetch the pail.

This is followed by a medium close-up of Frost frightened on the ladder. This is the one shot in the sequence that is exclusively cinematic: Frost is shown in close-up with no other characters in view, presumably balancing on the ladder, but the shot set-up allows for the ladder to be rigged.

The film reverts to the medium shot, as Jens dashes back with the bucket; he steadies the ladder, passing the pail to Frost; the water pours onto Jens' head (cf. earlier scene of setting up circus in rain, and the despondency of the troupe over their financial situation). In a close-up, Jens resumes bawling with the water dripping over his head as there is a superimposed, cross dissolve to an extreme, high angle, long shot of the circus grounds.

Jens and Frost are continuing their antics (blows and a pratfall, balancing on caravan pole) as they cross the campground and enter one of the wagons, with an audience of townspeople still observing, seated on a rock formation (recalling the prologue). A cry goes out that the actors are arriving, and Jens and Frost run back to the tent in order to meet the carriages.

The idea of a universal performance is implicit in the superimposed transition between the end of the clown routine and the view of the circus camp in a long shot at the moment of the arrival of the actors. The figure of the clown Jens is superimposed over the extreme long shot that contains the clowns, an audience, the campground, and a view of the sea, becomes an ironical assertion. Interior and exterior are both sites of performance, of a kind of hopeless clowning on a metaphysical scale.

Bergman's circus

The narrative of the clown routine is undeniably comprised of an unrelenting series of embarrassments and humiliations. But it is also an elaboration of the inauthentic self; both clowns are a distillation of the they-self. Jörn Donner has stresses that humiliation is "perhaps the nucleus of B's

artistic philosophy.”¹⁴² It is certainly a core principle of his dramaturgy, and one that is linked to disclosure and revelation (i.e., perspicuity). Ketcham sees this humiliation as integral to Bergman's “theater of personal threats” because it is “a part of his existential consciousness, of his awareness of those things which try to prevent him from being himself, from living spontaneously and freely” and Ketcham, like Donner, sees humiliation as “the stimulus for his creative activity.”¹⁴³ Dramaturgically, Frank Gado sees this routine between Frost (Anders Ek) and Jens (Erik Strandmark) as “another dumb show” that precedes “Act V” of the film, and that recalls the film’s “prologue,” the semi-silent sequence that tells the story of Frost and Alma.¹⁴⁴ Jesse Kalin sees this routine as based completely upon humiliation and shame, therefore an expression of collective anxiety and guilt for the assembled audience; the clowns, however, must maintain an ignorance of the contents of their routine. This is necessary if the clowns “are to join in the joke and play their part” because the circus itself “is only possible if everyone is freed from shame”: “In appeasing our fear of humiliation and death and the hatred of life it engenders, the clown gives in to and accepts the base desires of the herd at its most vulgar level. In so doing, he turns life into a kind of obscene joke.”¹⁴⁵ John Simon sees the circus routine as something a bit more straightforward: “We live in a world of sham: the illusions of the theatre, the tricks of the circus merely echo the deceptions and self-deceptions of life.”¹⁴⁶ Frost and the unnamed clown played by Jens are more than mere clowns; they acquire metaphysical stature, and the

¹⁴² Donner 100.

¹⁴³ Ketcham 19.

¹⁴⁴ Gado 168.

¹⁴⁵ Kalin 47.

¹⁴⁶ Simon 93.

allegorical dimensions of clowning (i.e., performance) are brought to the fore by their routines and improvisations.

That this sequence begins with the drawing back of a curtain and that there are costumed performers looking on from the wings is also characteristic of Bergman's theatrical practices. In numerous theater productions, Bergman used "a low platform stage set up on the stage itself"; when asked if that structural element fit with his "concept of the magic point, the focal point of energy on the stage," Bergman responded:

When the actor is standing outside the platform, he is private; the moment he steps toward the platform, he is an actor playing a part. He's someone else; it is a great magic. The platform is ancient. The platform is absolutely the archetypal theater, the very oldest form of theater. You have a wagon or a platform or the steps of a church or some stones or an elevation of some sort on an altar – and the actor stands there waiting. Or a circus ring. And the actors stand there and then they climb up onto the wagon or the platform or whatever it is – and suddenly they are powerful, magical, mysterious, multidimensional. *And that is immensely fascinating.*¹⁴⁷

Here we have the interest in transformation, one that he testifies to having as a child watching an actor in the wings prepare to enter through a door onstage, as well as the interest in the *physical structure* that visually and ceremonially establishes the *dynamics* of a play-within-a-play. "For me it is *the step into the play* that creates the magic of the theatre. It is a step from something ordinary and everyday into something extraordinary."¹⁴⁸ This *step into* is a major structural feature in Bergman's works in general, and frequently informs the behavior of his characters. Bergman's emphasis on the circus ring is of specific interest here; the structural element of the platform is discussed in the third chapter on Through a Glass Darkly.

¹⁴⁷ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 24-25.

¹⁴⁸ Cit. in Koskinen, "Some Relations" 100; qtd. in Henrik Sjögren, Regi: Ingmar Bergman Dagbok från Dramaten 1969 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Förlag AB, 1969) 154.

Bergman's decision to use two actors rather than two professional clowns to perform the routine opens up an interesting, if minor, ontological question: at the moment of performance, were Ek and Strandmark actors or clowns? Can one "authentically" clown? The decision to use "virtuosi" trained to "express complexities" such as Strandmark and, especially, Anders Ek, who was deeply steeped in Stanislavski as well as having previously collaborated with Bergman in numerous stage productions, makes this question important. In fact, Ek and Strandmark, as actors, bring the malaise of their characters' existences into the travesty of the clown routine. Frost and Jens are examples of soulless "stock-in-trade" performances that absurdly continue in their empty antics. They clown in the void.

The clown, literally and figuratively, has served as an enduring motif within Bergman's work, from his early Kaspar production to one of his last works for television, In the Presence of a Clown [Larmar och gör sig till] (1997). Ek's particular performance as Frost in Sawdust and Tinsel, like Ekman's performance as the actor Frans, again recalls Camus' observations on the absurd man, the actor who has "the monotony, that single, oppressive silhouette, simultaneously strange and familiar, that he carries about from hero to hero."¹⁴⁹ This can mean many things, of course, but what seems relevant to the case at hand is its implicit description of a kind of professional fatigue specific to the actor that is also a part of being limited to a single body, as well as the stereotypical or structural similarities between roles. In any case, it seems applicable to the role of Frans in Sawdust and Tinsel, for Frans is a character that we can never come to know: he is always an actor. This might be the quality that Donner finds to be Brechtian: Frost is always a clown, Frans is always an actor, and most performers are what they perform: their Being is bound to their body, which is trained for a specific set of skills.

¹⁴⁹ Camus 81.

This connection seems plausible in light of Camus' observation that, "through an absurd miracle, it is the body that also brings knowledge. I should never really understand Iago unless I played his part."¹⁵⁰ In the case of the circus in Sawdust and Tinsel, this statement seems to have been expanded to include film's ensemble of actors and circus personnel. Bergman used unemployed circus artistes along with actors, and talked about the unity in this ensemble in a 1968 interview:

For four weeks we lived in a pension, down there at Arild, with the entire company. Afterwards we went up to Stockholm and shot the interiors. By then we knew each other like sardines in a tin. We'd eaten and quarreled and got drunk and lived together and had a marvelous time; so the boundary lines between who were the circus artistes and who were the actors and who were film directors or monkeys were by no means clear.¹⁵¹

According to Bergman, it was very easy to hire circus artistes for the film because of economic factors, specifically a decrease in Swedish circus companies from over fifty ca. 1900 (the time of the film's setting), to approximately twenty following WWII, down to only three at the time of the film's production in 1952.¹⁵² This is one indication of the contemporaneity of the film's concerns, namely the social status of theatre and circus performers.

Bergman stressed the continuing social prejudice against performers of all sorts in Sweden in the 1950s, and that "both sorts of entertainment artiste were regarded as scum."¹⁵³ The class distinction between actors and circus artistes, slight as it may have been, is emphasized by Sjuberg earlier in the film. It is noteworthy that in the cast list appearing in the script supervisor's copy, a large number of

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Björkman, et al 96.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid 82-83.

the circus personnel have no telephone numbers, as opposed to the actors, who all have numbers.¹⁵⁴ In his later biography, Bergman still emphasized the ensemble that emerged during the film: “We were on location for quite a long time, filming outdoors in all types of weather. Gradually, *we entered into a higher (strongly aromatic!) symbiosis with the circus people and the animals*. Whichever way you look at it, it was a crazy time.”¹⁵⁵ This “higher symbiosis” is in fact the nature of the troupe, the primary social model offered by the film. Such a distinction actually offers a complication for Heidegger’s idea of the they-self, which is presented as largely homogenous, even monolithic.

The phenomenon of collaboration highlights the common ground established through practice. This links with the necessary conditions for authenticity: “What gets covered up in everyday understanding is not some deep intelligibility as the [philosophical] tradition has always held; it is that the ultimate ‘ground’ of intelligibility is simply shared practices.”¹⁵⁶ In dramatic performance as in the practices of everyday existence, “understanding” is not mere “comprehension” but “an activity involving my openness to the world” to disclosure “of all being whether human or other”; this is the nature or character of truth, which Ketcham asserts is a “clear theme” for both Bergman and Heidegger.¹⁵⁷ This can also emerge in shared practices, particularly performance expertise. The circus world in the film is depicted as an exception to the other social groups: “A person can exist in a place other than the circus but only if they (emotionally at least) disconnect themselves from the fundamental nexus of

¹⁵⁴ Bergman, Gycklarnas afton B: 205, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Bergman, Images 185; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ Dreyfus 157.

¹⁵⁷ Ketcham 10.

relationships and possibilities that a *shared life* with others involves.”¹⁵⁸ At this point in Bergman’s career, the circus life best represented how life felt and was shaped: itinerant, inter-connected, full of diverse performances, and teetering between uncertainties but looking toward possibilities.

IV. Summation

Regardless of method (which is never clarified by Bergman but which may be inferred), the goals of Bergman and Stanislavski were complementary, directed toward an *authentic* encounter between actor to actor, and between the actor and the spectator. “Authenticity” is not a pure state or a thing; it is analogous to inspiration. It can occur in film to the extent that such a phenomenon is manifest at the moment of shooting. It cannot be manufactured in post-production, but this is not to say that a film in its entirety can not still have a feeling of authenticity, post-production elements and all. More importantly, the fact that one medium, such as theatre, is live, and another medium, such as film, is recorded, does not preclude authenticity from being a legitimate topic in any medium; whether or not “authenticity” is present or not, it can be treated thematically.

The exceptional qualities Sawdust and Tinsel that link it to existential phenomenology are not just in terms of the film’s thematic concerns, but in terms of a certain structure common to both: the quality of the bracket or frame, which one early critic aptly identified as a “parentheses.” This is the phenomenological *epoche* that links much theatrical and filmed drama to philosophy: a situation isolated in time and space that provides a telling example of human existence. Its questions emerge through actions and hence remain available to different interpretations, but each interpretation relies upon visual perception, on an emotional correspondence, on cognitive apprehension; in other words, the viewer as an interpreter is also engaged as an embodied subject, not a seemingly detached objective

¹⁵⁸ Kalin 37; emphasis added.

presence that analyzes. Through embodied performances, characters are given to the viewer phenomenologically, as objects in apperception, always with some aspect hidden, beyond view; the mirrors in the various scenes point this fact out to us time and time again: do not mistake what can be seen as the sum of reality. This is why performance as a state of affairs, as a business, a profession, as a way of life, dominates the examples of ways to live in the world provided by the film: they call attention to volition and choice, to patterns and practice, in order to call our attention to how one may live.

The idea of “creative authenticity” has been presented throughout this chapter, stressing the significance of the “performance within”, and emphasizing links between Heidegger, Stanislavski, and Bergman’s Sawdust and Tinsel. Fundamental to all three has been the phenomenon of anxiety. In all three, anxiety has a connection with one’s awareness of mortality and to the “they-self,” which in Stanislavski is linked with inauthentic performance and terror of the “void” of the proscenium. This bridge between authenticity, annihilation and spectatorship is found also in Sawdust and Tinsel. In a move that bears a more distinct resemblance with the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, Bergman de-emphasizes death as the source of anxiety and instead stresses the subject’s relation to Others. In fact, the look or *regard* of the Other links spectatorship with the potential annihilation of the performer/subject. This shift is clearly in evidence in the next film considered: The Face.

Ch. II. Others and Performance: The Face (1958)

*The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting. . . . it appears that the world has a kind of drain hole in the middle of its being and that it is perpetually flowing off through this hole.*¹⁵⁹

I. Establishing shot: Vogler's approach to Spegel

Early in The Face (aka The Magician) [Ansiktet] (1958), an itinerant group of performers, Vogler's Magnetic Health Theatre, stops in the middle of a wood in response to a mysterious cry. The company is comprised of 5 people: the coachman, Simson, the company's manager, Tubal, an old woman named Granny who claims supernatural abilities and who concocts various potions and remedies, the magician and mesmerist, Albert Emmanuel Vogler, and his assistant, a young man named Aman. All are flamboyantly costumed, in keeping with the film's mid-19th century setting. But Vogler and Aman are also in disguise; the magician wears a black wig and beard, and refuses to speak, while Aman is really the magician's wife dressed in men's clothing. The company is on the run from Danish authorities and is trying to return to Stockholm without incident. But the cry has terrified the coachman and the journey has been halted. Vogler ventures out to find the source, and discovers neither a demon nor an animal, but a dying actor, Spegel, who promptly asks Vogler if he, too, is an actor.

Before Spegel poses this question linking identity to performance, the film has already presented this challenge to the viewer through the conspicuous make-up and costuming of Vogler and Aman: Are we to accept these as earnest representations, or anticipate some kind of de-masking? Should we accept things at face value, or be skeptical of what appears before us on the screen? A second such

¹⁵⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956) 255-256.

challenge is embedded in Vogler's approach to Spegel, and relies upon a bit of cinematic sleight-of-hand. Moving toward the cry (which is never actually heard by us), Vogler is shown in a long shot: he leaves the troupe's carriage and moves forward toward the camera, crossing a creek, and then proceeds to walk on land as the camera dollies backwards in a tracking shot. This shot does not cut until after the dolly track has itself been exposed in the frame. It is doubtful that the inclusion was simply overlooked, and therefore odd that the footage was retained; it amounts to less than two seconds of film and Vogler's path and direction have already been well-established by the shot. One could argue that the shot's length is a rhythmical unit and not merely visual or in the service of continuity editing, and that the extra second-and-one-half therefore keeps a certain tempo intact. Bergman was then making a certain kind of aesthetic gamble that no spectator would be consciously aware of the dolly-track being briefly visible. This shot amounts to a challenge of the spectator, a test of how objective one's attention truly is. Bergman (like Vogler or Aman) seems to be begging for someone to call his bluff, to notice what is really going on and respond. The film provokes a comparison between Bergman's idea of the cinema spectator as one who is "hypnotized" with his idea of the theatre spectator as one in the presence of a medium that "reminds."¹⁶⁰

This chapter continues to investigate the relationship between film and theatre via the performance-within and embodied performance. This examination demonstrates the unique attributes of performance as a means of exploring and developing philosophical concerns. The very fact of embodied performance is always emphasized by the device of the performance-within. Here, three performances-within in The Face are analyzed: the cross-dressed performance constituting Aman; an encounter between the dead (or resurrected) actor, Spegel, and Vogler's magic lantern; and a formally

¹⁶⁰ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theatre 32.

devised performance-within called “The Invisible Chains.” As in Sawdust and Tinsel, the performance-within proves an effective means by which to amplify and magnify the concerns of the drama proper. From considering the histories of these intermedial performances, we are able to ask questions and discover answers that otherwise would be unobtainable through conventional approaches to film and theatre scholarship: how were these roles and performances conceived, what commentaries are being offered through them, and how these performances-within instantiate prominent philosophical issues prevalent in the mid-20th-century.

In this chapter, important contributions by collaborators are considered, and Bergman’s direct exposure to existential drama and philosophy is examined, particularly the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre. The Face offers a dramatic instantiation of a key component of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential philosophy, namely the *regard* (look) of the Other. In a development away from the existential structure of Sawdust and Tinsel, death is de-emphasized as the source of existential anxiety; instead, The Face focuses on the protagonist-subject’s relation to Others. While death is certainly present in the film, the emphasis on control of the *regard* in human inter-relations is clearly dominant. In fact, the *regard* of the Other links spectatorship to the potential annihilation of the performer-subject.

Sartre’s influence is evident in the film, but has been largely overlooked in previous scholarship. It is present through multiple channels, particularly the performances-within, as well as the sub-textual interplay between actors, and the manner of filming these phenomena. Bergman emphasized the primacy of Sartre as an influence during the 1940s: “Then came existentialism—Sartre and Camus. *Above all, Sartre.* Camus came later, with a sort of refined existentialism. *I came into contact with it in the theatre.*”¹⁶¹ However, Bergman never directed any play by Sartre, and only directed a single

¹⁶¹ Björkman, et al 12-13; emphasis added.

play by Camus: Caligula at Göteborg Municipal Theatre in 1946. Allowing that Sartre preceded Camus as a philosophical influence acquired through the practice of theatre, productions of Sartre in Sweden prior to 1946, as well as later productions of both Sartre and Camus, need to be considered with respect to Bergman's own conterminous projects. Accounting for the means by which Bergman's work reflects that of Sartre's is to undertake an assessment of how philosophical ideas may be acquired, developed, and imparted through the processes of performance, from one performance medium into another, and through knowledge acquired by embodied performance.

A. Production circumstances and reception of The Face

Eleven years after directing the play Magic (1913), by Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936), at Göteborg Municipal Theatre, Ingmar Bergman used it as a primary source for The Face. While acknowledged by previous critics, this connection has not been fully analyzed with respect to personnel and the influence of embodied performance as addressed in this dissertation. This film project was written hastily, immediately put into production, and completed as quickly as possible. Bergman said that due to his promise of employment for actors from the Malmö Municipal Theatre ensemble, the film "had to be a picture in the round with masses of people in it."¹⁶² The compressed time frame, the reliance upon and requirements for a large ensemble of players, the use of a nondescript source, numerous dramaturgical tropes and conventions, and a fanciful period setting make the film a veritable Rorschach test for any Bergman scholar. The Face is frequently criticized for its theatricality, while drawing a significant amount of critical attention as an allegorical drama of a Christ-like artist, as a theological meditation, and as an autobiographical portrait of an artist in crisis. The significance of these various readings will be addressed in the various subsections of this chapter.

¹⁶² Ibid 123-126.

In sum, virtually every account of the film is informed by an *auteurist* approach. The problem lies not in the facts or issues that are uncovered through biographical research, but in limiting interpretive potentials to fit within a reflexive biographical analysis.

A new interpretation is needed, requiring a different means of analyzing the film. What is missing is any accounting for the existential features of the film, including any substantive analysis of the contributions made to the film or influence upon its content due to Bergman's numerous collaborators. A second point of consideration are the ways in which Bergman's conception of the film may have been shaped by his experience of other directors' stage productions, or knowledge of his actors' roles in such productions. This in turn raises the element of competition between artists, through and between different media, which was also a clear factor in Sawdust and Tinsel. Professional collaboration and competition are present and fundamental to the structure of The Face, as in Sawdust and Tinsel. Purportedly, The Face "corrects" Sawdust and Tinsel.¹⁶³

The Face premiered on 26 December 1958. It was filmed at Filmstaden in Råsunda, Stockholm from 30 June 1958-27 August 1958. It was produced and distributed by Svensk Filmindustri, and received the Special Jury prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1959.¹⁶⁴ The Face has received a good deal of critical attention, moreso as a film that is significant in its relations to other, more important

¹⁶³ Charles Thomas Samuels, Encountering Directors (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1987) 207. Cf. Frank Gado The Passion of Ingmar Bergman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986) 237. Bergman never elucidated how, and there are no critical attempts to provide an account of the "correction." But, certain contrasts between the two films can be discerned. In both films, the director's alter ego is the head of a traveling company. While both depict the performing artist's life as itinerant, Sawdust and Tinsel presents this as an open-ended, even absurd, effort; The Face provides an ironical *perepeteia* by which the troupe is invited to perform for the king of Sweden. In Sawdust and Tinsel, the circus troupe is depicted as subservient to the theatre company; in The Face, Vogler's Magnetic Health Theatre uses a magic lantern, a proto-cinematic apparatus, and offers an inter-medial mixture of magic, mesmerism, health potions, and illusionism. In Sawdust and Tinsel, Anne is unfaithful to Albert; in The Face, the performance couple is steadfastly devoted to one another. More precise explications are offered in the following sub-sections.

¹⁶⁴ Duncan and Wanselius, Regi Bergman 227.

(and successful) works by Bergman. For many critics, the film is difficult to classify, ambiguous in its meanings, and awkward in its execution, but still somehow important. It had a large and distinguished cast, it followed on the heels of major successes such as Wild Strawberries [Smultronstället] (1957) and The Seventh Seal [Det sjunde inseglet] (1957), it alternates between meditations on death and the supernatural and ribald comedy, it suggests a horror film at times, but also offers a prismatic study of marriage through a carousel of different couples. The central activity that occurs throughout all these aspects is that of performance, particularly forms of human *mimesis*, in which at least one person assumes a role and at least one other person observes him or her in an evaluative manner as a critical audience. This persistent feature structurally links it to Sartre's phenomenon of the *regard*.

B. Performance, spectatorship, and philosophy

The Face exhibits an abiding existential concern in Bergman's work, namely the authenticity of individual identity in the context of social relationships with Others, and the relationship between identity and performance. Masks, costuming, uniforms and cross-dressing, role-playing, apparatuses of illusion, staging and spectatorship, conventions and formulae—in short, the arsenal of dramaturgical equipment that we avail ourselves of in our everyday relations to one another is tested, in this film, against the primordial anxiety of an individual being and the accompanying intimation of individual mortality. The Face addresses these concerns through depicting the continual struggle of social interrelations, the perpetual contest between self as subject and self as object in the *regard* of an Other.

This dynamic is particularly Sartrean, and is the result of a confluence of expertise in existential drama on the parts of numerous collaborators, as well as Bergman's experience of existential ideas through the work of other directors. The Face is built upon the structure of the Sartrean *regard*, but also is a product of the *regard*. It is concerned with the performing artist's social rank; with the relationships between a performing artist, critics, and the public; and with the conflict a performing

artist experiences in relation to the nature of performance itself: the aims of a work, the reception of a work, the commercial necessities, and the choice of a medium.

The *regard*

The *regard* is the “look” of the Other; the phenomenological experience of being observed.¹⁶⁵ In Sartre’s scheme, encountering the Other’s *regard* results in one’s simultaneous experience of the social self and the subjectivity of the Other.¹⁶⁶ In The Face, Sartrean *regard* is manifest on a number of levels, particularly with respect to performance. The protagonists, Vogler and Aman, wear disguises through much of the film; these disguises mediate the *regard* of others, establishing, at least in part, an alternative social self. The basic phenomenological encounter and contest between individuals is exemplified in the contest between Vogler and his chief interrogator and nemesis, Dr. Vergéus. The formal presentation by the Vogler troupe before an audience demonstrates how the *regard* of the Other can be humiliating in its ability to see through the efforts of performers to control it.¹⁶⁷ “The Invisible Chains” performance-within magnifies the condition of the *regard* and its capacity to create a “drain hole” that threatens the subject with annihilation. There is also a consideration of the camera itself as an absolute *regard* toward the subject/object of the actor. The very fact of these performances-within indicates the need to bridge the fields of theatre and cinema scholarship.

¹⁶⁵ Sartre, Being and Nothingness 252-302. Of particular interest is Sartre’s example and elaboration of the experience of being apprehended by an Other while peering through a keyhole (259-268). Sartre outlines and describes the *regard* with reference to Franz Kafka’s The Trial and The Castle as he introduces God “as the concept of the Other pushed to the limit” (265-266). Both novels were adapted for the stage and produced during Bergman’s respective tenures at Göteborg and Malmö and featured personnel who collaborated on The Face.

¹⁶⁶ William R. Schroeder, Sartre and his Predecessors: The Self and the Other (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984) 185. “To experience the social self is to experience the subjectivity of Others. One discovers their reality across the alteration of oneself they create.”

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid* 187.

II. The *regard* and the performance-within: 3 case studies

The dynamic of the *regard* informs The Face from throughout, but achieves a particular saliency in the form of the performance-within. The performance-within always captures some aspect of the social observation of a performer by the Other. Additionally, The Face is concerned with the aesthetics of theatre and film, converging in the performance practices of Vogler's Magnetic Health Theatre; the magic lantern is representative of the cinema camera and also an extension of the constitutive powers of the artistic *regard*. Despite its mid-19th century trappings, Vogler's troupe, like the Cirkus Alberti in Sawdust and Tinsel, is a production company using proto-cinematic techniques to deliver a non-discursive series of spectacular events that stand in implicit contrast with the decaying, discursive theatrical tradition represented by the dying actor, Spegel.

Speech and silence are identified respectively with theatre and cinema by the film. Vogler, Bergman's alter-ego and the director of the troupe, has forsaken speech. Ironically, the film often relies on Spegel (Bengt Ekerot) for its success, an reliance that is expressly discursive: Spegel articulates the film's most significant messages, not as an actor from the traditions of 19th-century theatre, which Frans in Sawdust and Tinsel exemplified, but as a character from Beckett might, speaking out within a universal emptiness. Similarly, Aman/Manda, the assistant/spouse, is required to speak for the supposedly mute Vogler.¹⁶⁸ But the ground of the film lies in the performance by a supporting actor as Antonsson; "The Invisible Chains" exhibits the very basics of *mimesis* and demonstrates the primordial foundation of embodied performance (acting) for both theatrical and filmed drama; this performance-within also instantiates the Sartrean *regard* to full effect.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Bergman, Images 167. Bergman claims that "the actual focal point is, of course, the androgynous Aman/Manda. It is around her and her enigmatic personality that everything rotates."

A. Case study 1: Aman/Manda; the performance-within, disguise, and social identity

Theatricality and existentialism combine in The Face through the performance-within: identity is linked with performance, and both are subjected to the *regard*. There are two kinds of performance-within found in the film: a formal presentation by The Magnetic Health Theatre, and the ongoing masquerade by the magician and his assistant/wife. In Aman's case, this disguise seems as much an assertion of an identity as a disguise. Does Aman seek to manage the *regard* through the performance of an identity, or is the performer seeking to conceal him- or herself from the *regard*?

The first image we have of Vogler and Aman is a medium long shot of the pair resting near a gallows. Are we to accept these costumed figures as verisimilar representations, or are we to anticipate the disclosure of something more "real"? On one hand, Aman's cross-dressing is not readily explained, other characters do not directly acknowledge the disguise, as an audience we do not formally "know" that Aman is really Manda until late in the film, and even when a diegetic explanation for the disguises is offered (eluding the authorities), it hardly seems plausible.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, the cross-dressed disguise is apparent from the outset and the actress, Ingrid Thulin, was well-known and recognizable; arguably, no spectator is expected to accept Aman as a male character.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps Aman's cross-dressing is "an intimation of the fluidity of the subject," and Bergman is asserting that if subjectivity and gender is one and the same thing, then "the collapse of one entails the dissolution of the other."¹⁷¹ But Aman/Manda's "subjectivity" is never disclosed in the

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Marilyn Johns Blackwell, "Cross-Dressing and Subjectivity in the Films of Ingmar Bergman," Stage and Screen: Studies in Scandinavian Drama and Film (Seattle: DreamPlay Press Northwest, 2000) 195.

¹⁷⁰ Maaret Koskinen, Ingmar Bergman: "Allting föreställer, ingenting är." Filmen och teatern – en tvärestetisk studie (Stockholm: Nya Doxa, 2001) 89.

¹⁷¹ Blackwell, "Cross-Dressing and Subjectivity" 193-194.

film; rather, Aman asserts an identity, despite the hostility of the Other's *regard*. Aman is an ongoing performance-within in the diegetic world of the film; Aman is performed within the space of the *regard*. Aman is an existential examination of the structural element of performance in social relations.

Masks, de-masking, and ambiguity

The appearance of both Aman and Vogler prompts us to entertain ambiguity toward the characters, the narrative, and even the film itself. This ambiguity is an existential prompting of the spectator, asking one to negate what seems to be “real” in an interrogation of what (if anything) may be called reality. Gender is questioned, but also social relations in general, as is any idea of a fixed identity for one's self or an Other, due to the dynamic of the *regard*. But the fact that Aman's (and Vogler's) conspicuous disguise seemingly passes without comment or overt acknowledgment by other characters raises the matter of historical performance conventions as well as gender; what aesthetics constitute the “rules” of this performance?¹⁷²

The Göteborg period (1946-1950), which included Magic and Bergman's first encounters with Sartre and Camus, seems to have been recalled in numerous ways in constructing The Face. Chesterton's play employs ironic juxtapositions of identity, and a short play presented on the double bill with Magic makes extensive use of wigs for onstage transformations in age and character.¹⁷³ While some Bergman scholars emphasize Molière or Strindberg as sources for Bergman's use of

¹⁷² Spiegel directly comments on Vogler's disguise and it is open to interpretation if the doctor, councilman, and magistrate are skeptical or not toward Aman's appearance.

¹⁷³ The Long Christmas Dinner, by Thornton Wilder, directed by Josef Halfen. This production is discussed in section IV of this chapter.

masks and de-masking, these are present to a degree *absurdum* in the play Thieves' Carnival [Le Bal des voleurs] (1938), by Jean Anouilh, which Bergman directed at Göteborg Municipal Theatre in 1948.

Arguably, the issues of mask and identity are at the core of the film.¹⁷⁴ In The Face and other of Bergman's projects, the concept of the mask and the eventual event of de-masking is "a favorite method in Bergman's theatre practice."¹⁷⁵ With reference to The Face, Bergman speaks of masks and the performer's need to be perceived as exceptional by others:

In the theater profession we often suffer from the delusion that we are attractive as long as we are masked. The public believes that it loves us when it sees us in light of our work and our public persona. But if we are seen without our masks (or, even worse, if we are asking for money), we are instantly transformed into less than nothing. I am fond of saying that we in the theater we fulfill our 100 percent capacity only when we appear on stage.¹⁷⁶

This statement links identity, performance, and the *regard* of Others, specifically the public. Fulfilling one's "100 percent capacity" is always only passing, performative, and momentary; recognizing both the potential and the limit is an existential awareness.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Ketcham 95: "Without metaphysical proof, without faith, without innocence or sentimental humanism, Vogler is depicted as a man cut adrift, lost, unable to establish any point of reference and, consequently, any genuine identity. The result is a Janus-like character who cannot decide which of his personae is the real one." Ketcham offers no explanation for Aman/Manda.

¹⁷⁵ See Koskinen, "Allting föreställer, ingenting är" 84. De-masking is "något av ett favoritgrepp i Bergmans teaterpraktik." In the theme and creative principle of the mask and de-masking, Koskinen finds a link to "the twinning-, doppelgänger- or mirror-motif." ["I mask/demaskeringen som tema och gestaltungsprincip ligger också ett annat framträdande drag i Bergmans framställning av *dramatis personae*, vilket manifesterade sig redan tidigt i hans verksamhet, nämligen twilling-, dubbelgångar- eller spegel-motivet."] Koskinen finds sources for this practice on Bergman's part both in Strindberg and Molière, and points to Bergman's use of both in stagings of Erik XIV, Don Juan, and Ur-Faust, and also in The Seventh Seal (ibid 85). Cf. Young, Cinema Borealis 179. Young also identifies this doubling practice, highlighting its apparent relationship to casting.

¹⁷⁶ Bergman, Images 164. The remainder of this passage concludes: "When we step off the stage, we are reduced to less than 35 percent. We try to convince ourselves and most of all each other that we remain at 100 percent. That is a fundamental mistake. We become victims of our own illusion. We subject ourselves to passion and marry each other and forget that our starting point is our profession and not how we appear out in the street after the last curtain."

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Kenneth Tynan, "Winter Journey," Tynan Right & Left: Plays, Films, People, Places, and Events (New York: Atheneum, 1967) 58-59. This emphasis on masks was not unique to Bergman. His mentor and contemporary, Alf Sjöberg, was also concerned with the metaphor of the mask, and articulated this to Tynan while discussing his 1961 production of

The disguises of Vogler and Aman establish a type of false-playing from the outset, a “deceptive visibility.”¹⁷⁸ But however obvious they may be, the problem with such “deceptive visibility” is the ambiguity that an audience experiences in relation to these disguises: How are we expected to take them? Ought we to accept them? Based on the conspicuous wigs and make-up used in other Bergman films from the same period, such as Smiles of a Summer Night [Sommarnattens leende] (1955) or The Brink of Life [Nära livet] (1957/58), the intended meaning or guideline for interpretation is ambiguous. What enables the idea of “deceptive visibility” is an audience’s tolerance for “theatricality”: such disguises as Vogler’s and Aman’s belong to established traditions of performance reception; one may accept them and enjoy the deliberate fantasy, one can also anticipate a de-masking, or one can reject the pretense altogether. But beyond this, the disguise disrupts our *regard*; it resists definition.

Contemporary influence in Swedish theatre and film: Ingrid Thulin (1926-2004)

The case of Aman/Manda as performed by Ingrid Thulin is more complex and requires a more complete consideration than has hitherto been provided in any study. Aman is a creation of theatre history, a fact largely overlooked in most Bergman scholarship. Aman recalls the tradition of “breeches parts” in Western theatre, from the English Restoration into the 19th-century, as well as the refashioning of Shakespeare in casting women in roles originally played by boys, particularly Rosalind in As You Like It and Viola in Twelfth Night. Of particular relevance in the film’s original context is the androgynous character Tintomara in Carl Jonas Love Almqvist’s The Queen’s Diadem, and Alf

Sartre’s Altona [Les Séquestrés d’Altona] at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, with Max von Sydow and Gertrud Fridh, both of whom appear in The Face. Sjöberg stated that all drama has to do “with an exchange of masks—with an attempt, conscious or not, on the part of one character to take on the image of another.” Such an effort to “exchange” and “take on the image” of the Other is central to the action of The Face. At the film’s conclusion, Vogler has discarded his earlier disguise and taken on the costume of Spegel.

¹⁷⁸ Koskinen, “Allting föreställer, ingenting är” 86-88; “*bedräglig synlighet*.”

Sjöberg's contemporaneous staging of that novel in 1957. This kind of oversight is symptomatic of *auteurist* interpretative approaches to Bergman.¹⁷⁹

Rather than the magician, or “that which cannot be explained,” Bergman held that “the actual focal point of the story is, of course, the androgynous Aman/Manda,” emphasizing that it was “around her and her enigmatic personality that everything rotates,” and furthermore stressing that, “Manda represents the holiness of human beings.”¹⁸⁰ Both film and magic show are “the cheapest kind of theater,” knowingly full of “by now meaningless hocus-pocus” that has to be hawked for its “usefulness and quality.”¹⁸¹ But how is Manda, or more importantly, Aman, held in reserve? And how did such a character come to be in The Face? The matter at hand is how a spectator is intended to *take* Thulin's performance and to interpret such conspicuous costume and cosmetic flourishes in a period film that is filled with such elements.

Aman is a manifestation of the “breeches part” or trouser role, a theatrical convention arising in the 17th century and continuing into melodramas and operas of the mid-19th century, the ostensible setting for The Face. As a “breeches part,” the “real” gender of the performer will likely be disclosed. But the interval between is one in which ambiguity opens the spectator to the presence called “androgynous” and “holy” by Bergman. There are scant examples of breeches parts in Swedish theatre productions

¹⁷⁹ For example, biographer Peter Cowie acknowledges Almqvist as an abiding influence on Bergman and adds that Tintomara is similar to Aman/Manda in The Face. But Cowie still omits the fact of Sjöberg's 1957 production of The Queen's Diadem, despite its conspicuous presence and close relation to The Face. See Peter Cowie, Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982) 41. Blackwell attributes the cross-dressing of Aman in The Face to modernist literary practices, omitting theatre and film (and even Almqvist) altogether. See Blackwell, “Cross-Dressing and Subjectivity” 193-194.

¹⁸⁰ Bergman, Images 167. Bergman adds that, “If Vogler is the magician” worn-out but still repeating “his by now meaningless hocus-pocus,” Tubal is the exploitative salesman, “Bergman, the director,” trying to convince the producer “of the usefulness and quality of his latest film.”

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

ca. 1940-1960, with three notable exceptions: the role of Tintomara in The Queen's Diadem [Drottningens juvelsmycke], by Carl Jonas Love Almqvist (1793-1866); roles in Shakespeare, such as Rosalind in As You Like It and Viola in Twelfth Night; and plays that dealt with Joan of Arc, such as Joan of Lorraine (1946), by Maxwell Anderson, or Let Man Live by Pär Lagerkvist.¹⁸²

While there has been no previous critical consideration of links between the two productions, The Queen's Diadem offers an immediate (and competitive) spur to the creation of a breeches part in The Face. Originally a novel written by Almqvist in 1834, it was adapted and directed by Alf Sjöberg for production in the studio space of the Royal Dramatic Theatre, opening on 15 May 1957.¹⁸³ The enormous cast of 38 included Bengt Ekerot, who would work with Bergman on The Face, and Anders Ek, who was in the original cast of Magic. The breeches part of Tintomara was played by the prominent actress, Anita Björk (b. 1923), whose performance was described as “unforgettable as the androgyne, romantically set apart from her fellow beings” in a production “shimmering with fantasy”. Björk’s Tintomara “was poetic, sad, evasive,” and introduced a “tantalizing figure, only then seriously discovered” in Swedish theatre.¹⁸⁴ This recalls Bergman’s description of “the androgynous Aman/Manda” as the film’s “focal point” and his emphasis that “it is around her and her enigmatic

¹⁸² Many critics identify a streak of Molière in The Face, and both Max von Sydow and Gertrud Fridh appeared in Bergman’s production of The Misanthrope at Malmö prior to their performances in The Face. Von Sydow’s make-up is similar in both pieces, and there is a sexual tension between the characters played by both actors in both pieces. But to account for both a Molière influence and the cross-dressing Aman, it is worth noting that in January of 1955, Bergman’s production of Molière’s Don Juan ran concurrently with Lars-Levi Laestadius’ staging of Twelfth Night at Malmö.

¹⁸³ Sjöberg’s adaptation followed a successful production of the same novel at Teatern i Gamla stan in 1953. The production was adapted and directed by Bengt Lagerkvist and received 108 performances. See Tomas Forser and Sve Åke Heed, Ny svensk teaterhistoria, vol 3, 250-251.

¹⁸⁴ Henrik Sjögren, Stage and Society in Sweden (Uddevalla, Sweden: Svenska institutet and Bohuslänningens AB, 1979) 46.

personality that everything rotates.”¹⁸⁵ Tintomara’s gender is absolutely ambiguous: both men and women fall in love with this figure in response to her/his presence as mediated by gender-specific clothing. This seems to have a direct relation to Bergman’s identification of Aman/Manda as representing “the holiness of human beings.”

Additional sources for a “breeches part” are found in the personnel assembled for The Face. Recalling that it was to be “a picture in the round with masses of people,” and that Chesterton’s Magic was the prototype for this vehicle, it is important to consider the potential influence of the actress Gertrud Fridh (1921-1984). In addition to playing ostensibly similar roles in both Magic and The Face, Fridh played “breeches parts” on no less than four occasions in the 1940s and 50s prior to Bergman’s conception of such a role in The Face. Most notably, and again in association with Bergman’s tenure at Göteborg Municipal Theatre, Fridh played the title role in Joan of Lorraine (1946), by Maxwell Anderson (dir. Knut Ström, 7 February 1948).¹⁸⁶ Bergman was certain to have seen Fridh in this double role in which she played both Joan and a modern actress playing Joan.¹⁸⁷ Bergman also had a later opportunity to see Fridh in another “breeches part” as Rosalind in As You

¹⁸⁵ Bergman, Images 167.

¹⁸⁶ The play is by the American Maxwell Anderson (1888-1959), translated by Herbert Grevenius, directed and designed by Knut Ström. Gertrud Fridh played Mary Grey/Joan. The play opened one day before Bergman’s own Dans på bryggan in the studio (8 February 1948) and was followed on the main stage by Bergman’s production of Macbeth (12 March 1948), with Anders Ek and Karin Kavli. Anderson’s play was also produced the same year at Riksteatern (dir. Sandro Malmquist) and the following fall at the Royal Dramatic Theatre (3 September 1948, dir. Olof Molander). Grevenius’ translation was used for all three productions, but was the play never published in Swedish. There was likely considerable national and popular interest in the piece, as Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman starred in the original Broadway production and subsequent film, winning the 1947 Antoinette Perry award and being nominated for the 1949 Academy Award for Best Actress.

¹⁸⁷ Fridh played Joan of Arc a second time in Pär Lagerkvist’s Let Man Live [Låt människan leva] (1949), also at Göteborg.

Like It at Malmö Municipal Theatre, directed by Lars-Levi Laestadius. That production opened on February 13, 1953, as Bergman was beginning to film Sawdust and Tinsel.¹⁸⁸

What is particularly relevant, in addition to the fact that Anderson's piece, like Bergman's film, centers on the fortunes of a theatre company, the decision of the leading actor whether to perform or not perform based on personal ethics, and the over all structural importance of the play-within, is that Joan is a trouser role, and was played by an actress who would later be a collaborator on The Face. Bergman's long term association with specific actors includes the long term memory of those actors in various roles. In constructing new roles for these same actors, their previous performances likely served as reference points and sources for Bergman's writing. The Face, as many have acknowledged, was precisely such a project, designed to accommodate a large ensemble of company regulars, such as Fridh. The resemblances between certain roles merit serious consideration and can provide a fuller understanding not only of Bergman's processes, but the interrelatedness of Swedish theatre and film production. In constructing a vehicle for Fridh, Bergman had reason to recall the sorts of roles that the actress had played beforehand; these performances link to other productions by other directors, but even more importantly demonstrate the agentic contributions made by actors, who are typically considered as interpreters, or even instruments, rather than sources.¹⁸⁹

The allure of a beautiful actress dressed as a young man was not only a dramaturgical innovation in Swedish cinema in 1958, but also a marketable commodity with promotional punch. The film's

¹⁸⁸ Bergman also stated that Ansiktet "corrected" Gycklarnas afton; see Gado The Passion of Ingmar Bergman 237 and Samuels 207.

¹⁸⁹ Fridh's role in Magic, the primary source for the film, has received no critical consideration up to this point. That her influence would include her performances in other plays is very likely; that these could be used as models to construct a role for another actress working on the same project is quite plausible. Cf. 56-57; 251: Bergman offers comments on the actor as an "instrument."

poster uses a still photo of the troupe's first appearance before their interrogators, showing these four characters in an array of period costuming.¹⁹⁰ What is most conspicuous is the central position of Thulin dressed as Aman. The poster emphasizes the cross dressing by positioning it at the center of the composition. Purely in terms of iconic popular culture, one should not overlook the clear precedent and commercial appeal of cross-dressing female stars (Marlene Dietrich or Arletty, for example) as reference points for this marketing decision.¹⁹¹

The dynamic of the *regard* is applicable to both character and actress. Thulin's success in Swedish film was just beginning; she had been in both Bergman's Wild Strawberries and a "semi-pornographic film" that encountered censorship problems, Never in Your Life [Aldrig i livet, dir. Arne Ragneborn], both released in 1957.¹⁹² While the character of Aman/Manda is presented as chaste in the film, the advertising of the cross-dressing implies a star persona comparable with a figure such as Marlene Dietrich, and may be construed as a way of capitalizing on Thulin's notoriety as well as her "legitimate" success.¹⁹³ While Bergman avers her qualities as a heavenly androgyne, Aman/Manda also embodies the mistress/wife dichotomy that Bergman (in)famously pronounced in 1950: "The theatre is like a loyal wife, film is the big adventure, the expensive and demanding mistress – you

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Duncan 227. The poster is reproduced; fig. 3.052.

¹⁹¹ Marcel Carné's film Les visiteurs du soir (1942) features the French actress Arletty in a "breeches part" and this film bears a number of structural similarities to both The Seventh Seal and The Face. Both The Face and Les visiteurs du soir concern a pair of entertainers who arrive at an aristocratic household and who are linked to supernatural phenomena; both are dressed in male clothing, but one is a female; and in both films, these entertainers are presented as a heterosexual couple concealing the true nature of their relationship to outsiders. Bergman availed himself of both 19th-century and medieval settings in his films at this time and claimed a similar creative affinity for both periods; cf. Björkman, et al 128.

¹⁹² Björkman, et al 126.

¹⁹³ Thulin went on to play the "breeches part" of Viola in Twelfth Night in 1962 at Stockholm Municipal Theatre, with Toivo Pawlo as Malvolio. This was her last stage role, although she would play a stage actress in Bergman's After the Rehearsal [Efter repetitionen] (1984).

worship both, each in its own way.”¹⁹⁴ In performance, Aman is the attractive androgyne that facilitates the artist’s creativity; as Manda, she is his loyal wife, but also a potential concubine to the predatory doctor and police chief.

The history for this role is cinematic and theatrical; it requires bridging these disciplines in order to analyze this manifestation of the performance-within. “Breeches parts” such as the role of Tintomara in Alf Sjöberg’s landmark 1957 production of The Queen’s Diadem, as well as Gertrud Fridh’s roles in Shakespeare and as Joan of Arc, and the iconic example of Marlene Dietrich, must be weighed as contributing factors in the construction of the androgynous Aman/Manda as a vehicle for Ingrid Thulin. Aman/Manda may well be “an early acknowledgment by Bergman of the mutability of the self,”¹⁹⁵ but it derives from a considerable theatrical legacy.

B. Case study 2: Spegel and the magic lantern

There is a veritable battle between theatre and film aesthetics undertaken by The Face.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, the representatives of theatre and film, Spegel the actor and Vogler the director, share a particular intimacy. Vogler initially seeks Spegel out, and Spegel immediately sees through Vogler’s disguise.¹⁹⁷ Spegel confides his darkest observations and experiences to Vogler. And in an exchange of *regards*, Vogler watches the arrival of death in Spegel, twice. This resurrection seems a parable on

¹⁹⁴ Philip Mosley, Ingmar Bergman: The Cinema as Mistress (London; Boston: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1981) 7.

¹⁹⁵ Blackwell, “Cross-Dressing and Subjectivity” 195.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Young, Cinema Borealis 186. Young stresses that despite its mood, gloom and mysteries, the film “is just as much about theatre, even as it calls theatre into question.” See also Samuels 201.

¹⁹⁷ It has been widely noted that Spegel immediately recognize Vogler’s disguise upon meeting him for the first time. But as noted, Vogler’s initial approach to Spegel exposes, however briefly, the very artifice of film-making.

the afterlife of the actor in the medium of cinema. This aesthetic phenomenon is the substance of Spegel's encounter with the magic lantern.

The encounter between Spegel, Vogler and the magic lantern (a forerunner to the film projector) is a key scene in The Face: a sublimated, intermedial performance-within on the topic of embodied performance. Spegel, the archetypal "actor," becomes the gathering point of theatre history, cinematic theory, and celebrity allegory. On one level, this scene offers a meditation on the actor in cinema and the mediation of an actor's presence. On an allegorical level, it is a contrast between theatre in the form of the dying but discursive Spegel and cinema in the figure of the vital but non-discursive Vogler.¹⁹⁸ In terms of its contemporary context, it presents a fantasized encounter between two prominent figures in Swedish entertainment: the actor-director Bengt Ekerot and Bergman. It demonstrates the historical and practical inseparability of cinema from theatre via the actor.

Sequence analysis: Spegel and the magic lantern (<http://youtu.be/hYkbxyo9kIw>)

This scene also instantiates the Sartrean *regard* on two levels; inter-subjectively, as Vogler continually watches and follows Spegel; and symbolically, as both actor and director consider the effects of the magic lantern, captured by the camera proper. The sequence begins with a medium shot of Vogler seated on a mock coffin; he is preparing his magic show for the mandatory performance. Vogler rises and moves toward his magic lantern, leaning against it, looking troubled. Spegel suddenly crosses behind him from off-camera right to left and stands a moment, holding onto a jug of brandy. Vogler hears him inhale and turns quickly to look at him. Spegel explains: "I didn't die. But I've already started to go back. In fact, I make a better ghost than a person. I have become . . . convincing.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Graham Petrie, "Theater Film Life," Film Comment 10; 3 (May/June 1974) 43. "Bergman is raising, in a highly sophisticated manner, the whole problem of the reality of the screen image that he and other directors were to explore more fully in the following decade."

I never was as an actor.” These lines serve a plot purpose: Spegel was presumably dead but now has reappeared. But they are also a comment on the actor-in-film: a “ghost” that is an improvement over the living actor who was never “convincing.” This connection is then affirmed through action: Spegel notices the lens on the magic lantern, moving his right hand before it and looking to the effects on the curtain.

The shadow of a hand passes over the projected portrait of a man; the shadow hand is moved and a skull appears where the face had been. Spegel says, offscreen: “A shadow . . .” The film cuts back to the medium shot of Spegel with his hand near the lens of the magic lantern as he continues, “. . . of a shadow.” The “shadow of a shadow” may be taken as the filmic record of the actor’s *mimesis*: the word “spegel” means “mirror” in Swedish, and has longstanding theatrical associations. Spegel laughs as though in agonized identification with the image, and turns back to Vogler, saying, “Don’t harbor any concern for my sake, Sir. I am already in disintegration.” He turns away and walks off-camera left, toward the screen; Vogler steps into center frame for a moment, and then follows him. Vogler is tracking Spegel’s “disintegration”: a directorial *regard* toward the actor, the cinema observing the decline of the theatre, the necessary “disintegration” of the actor transferred into a new medium.

Affirming this association, Spegel presses his face to the curtain where the death’s head had been projected. This curtain is both a part of the troupe’s equipment (“the cheapest kind of theatre”) and a screen; this usage reflects the shared exhibition practice between theatre and cinema of using a functional curtain. Vogler stands in the foreground, and the camera is shooting over his left shoulder; character and camera share the same point-of-view. Spegel seems in extreme distress: “I have prayed one prayer in my life. Use me. Wield me.” Spegel turns away from curtain, and the light from the lantern is full upon him; at this point the performance-within is fully underway: Spegel has entered the light of a new medium, the magic lantern, projected onto the theatrical curtain. Spegel continues: “But

God never understood what a strong and devoted slave I had become. So I was never utilized.” He looks at Vogler and laughs wretchedly, and then says, “That’s a lie as well.” This is a complex assertion, but may well capture the essence of The Face: any pretensions to theological reflection in the film are an illusion. Spiegel utilizes the rhetoric of religion to describe the actor’s practice, but quickly deflates his claim through the very nature of that practice: dissemblance.¹⁹⁹

What ensues is generally acknowledged to be a key thesis statement in the film. Spiegel embraces Vogler, whispering into his ear: “One goes step by step by step by step into the darkness. The actual movement is the only truth.” Spiegel pulls away, and steps past Vogler, offscreen. The camera remains in a close-up on Vogler in nearly in silhouette, looking after Spiegel. Then Vogler moves camera right, still “tracking” the actor through the directorial *regard*.²⁰⁰

Spiegel: the actor in film and theatre

Spiegel’s assertion to Vogler that “the only truth lies in motion” is a key one and, arguably, “the most disturbing text in the film.”²⁰¹ There is a nihilistic dynamism to this assertion, and it is convincingly articulated by the actor, Bengt Ekerot. Ketcham argues that Spiegel and his relationship to death in the film indicates that Vogler’s “search for meaning, purpose, truth, and ultimacy is a religious quest which involves a kind of death and resurrection”; if what Spiegel asserts is true, and “truth resides in motion, then life must be understood as myth, not logic; drama, not fact; history, not

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Egil Törnqvist, Bergman's Muses: Aesthetic Versatility in Film, Theatre, Television and Radio (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003) 91-92. Törnqvist cites Bergman’s view circa 1960 that “art lost its basic creative drive the moment it was separated from worship.” Törnqvist attributes Bergman’s interest in ritual drama to his longstanding concern with “the intermingling of psychological and metaphysical issues.” Examples include Sawdust and Tinsel, The Face, The Ritual, and Bergman’s rendition of Euripides’ The Bacchae. Cf. Bergman, Four Screenplays xxii.

²⁰⁰ The scene concludes with Spiegel placing himself in the coffin and saying to Vogler: “When I believed I was dead . . . I was tormented by ghastly dreams.” He has a sudden convulsion and dies immediately. Vogler holds him closely for a few moments, and then lowers him into the coffin, underneath a rubber membrane with a long slit in it. Vogler lowers the lid.

²⁰¹ Young, Cinema Borealis 180.

principle.” Ketcham emphasizes that “truth” is to be discovered through action, not words, just as existentialism must be lived, not just academically construed; to experience a Bergman film is to have “participated” in existentialism.²⁰²

But a statement such as “the only truth lies in motion” is also appropriate to the phenomenology of acting. It also describes the fundamentals of cinema, film’s metaphysical first principle: movement. Spoken by a dying actor to a despairing proto-cinematic director, “The only truth lies in motion” requires a consideration of the relationship between the living actor and the cinematic reproduction of that actor, the content inherent to an individual actor that complements this participation, as well as exchanges between actors. The existentialism one “participates” in through the film is the phenomenon of creative action as communication. This is complicated by the requirements of mimetic or verisimilar representation, but paradoxically may only be approached through the condition of *mimesis*. This is why the actor, Spigel, is doppelganger and nemesis to the director, Vogler, the director who would be a mesmerizing healer.

Two links are made through Spigel/Ekerot to Swedish theatre; one link is historical and the other reflected conditions ca. 1958. Spigel identifies himself as a former member of the historical Stenborg acting company (fl. 1780-1800). Given that the film is explicitly set in 1846, the reference to the Stenborg troupe verges on anachronism. Spigel (Bengt Ekerot) is not really old enough to have belonged to this troupe.²⁰³ Is this just a whimsical inclusion to lend an historical flavor to the character of Spigel, or is there some significance to this reference? If Spigel is simply representative of a

²⁰² Ketcham 110-111.

²⁰³ This exclusion extends to the company under the elder Stenborg’s son and successor, Carl Stenborg, as it continued in relation to the Royal Dramatic Theatre. Historically, Spigel could only possibly be connected to the Stenborg company’s last associations, via the Royal Dramatic company, with a place of performance, the theatre at Mankalos, which caught fire in 1825.

generic Swedish theatrical tradition, then the anachronism may be overlooked as a somewhat benign flourish. But given the Stenborg troupe's historical links to the development of the Royal Dramatic Theatre, there are more interpretive possibilities. Bergman may again be indulging in allegory and offering a "malicious portrait" through the casting of Ekerot as that institution's representative.²⁰⁴ As with Sawdust and Tinsel, film is being used to provide a commentary on theatre not only as a medium, but also as an institution.

The link between the contemporary production at the Royal Dramatic Theatre of The Queen's Diadem (1957) and The Face (1958) has been established through the "breeches parts" of Tintomara and Aman, discussed above. Bengt Ekerot's participation as a leading actor in both The Queen's Diadem and The Face functions as an additional bridge between Sjöberg's production and Bergman's film. The Queen's Diadem is set in 1792 during the assassination of Gustav III, the monarch credited with establishing theatre in Sweden. This helps to account for the anachronistic presence of an actor from a late 18th and early 19th-century theatre company in a story ostensibly set in 1846.

Though previously overlooked or omitted in Bergman scholarship, the relationship between Vogler and Spigel also captures a very real tension between Bergman and Ekerot, both of whom were leading figures in 1950s Swedish entertainment. Recalling that The Face "corrects" Sawdust and Tinsel, and that in the latter film, the actor, Frans, defeats and humiliates the director's alter ego, Albert, what "correction" does this new encounter between actor and director offer?²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Bergman, Images 164. Bergman acknowledges this tendency in his discussion of The Face [Ansiktet] (1958), and points to the characters of the police chief and the doctor as examples of collective and individual caricatures. Cf. Björkman, et al 126.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Young, Cinema Borealis 175. Young compares The Face to Sawdust and Tinsel, "to which it is indebted as much as to any extrinsic work," asserting that in the latter, Bergman had "split his protagonist into the two aspects of Frost and Albert" while in the case of The Face, "the fission is even more drastic and complex." In Young's analysis, Spigel is the "mirror face" of Vogler, "who begs, in his half-delirium, half-reminiscence" for dissection, and the health official,

Contemporary influence in Swedish theatre and film: Bengt Ekerot (1920-1971)

Bengt Ekerot was a director and actor enjoying particular prominence in Sweden in the mid-1950s. A graduate of the Royal Dramatic Theatre's famous acting school with a reputation as "the young intellectual" for his "intense, soul-searching performances."²⁰⁶ Ekerot played the title role in Hamlet, directed by Alf Sjöberg, filmed and broadcast on Swedish television on 4 December 1955. He subsequently directed the world premier of Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night in 1956.²⁰⁷ The selection of Ekerot to direct Long Day's Journey Into Night on the national stage while Bergman was working in Malmö affirmed Ekerot as Bergman's most eminent competitor since Hasse Ekman; Bergman himself had anticipated a position at The Royal Dramatic Theatre starting in 1952.²⁰⁸ The play's premiere at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, attended by the king and queen and reported by the international press, was a national and a world-class cultural event. The performance received a

Vergéus, who performs the autopsy, is the face of "that other colder self, ready to oblige" (185). Young interprets The Face by using a quasi-Jungian analysis of the artist's personality expressed through the masks of major and minor personae: "The self-mutilation of the artist has seldom been pictured with such audacity and in such a spirit, that of a desperate carnival. The progressive self-division of Bergman, dating theatrically from those early primers, like *Jack Among the Actors*, here reaches a kind of climax" (186).

²⁰⁶ Brenda Murphy, O'Neill: Long Day's Journey Into Night (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 94.

²⁰⁷ Ekerot had previously directed at Malmö from 1947-1950, including a production of Sartre's Dirty Hands [Les mains sales/Smutsiga händer] in the Malmö studio theater (1949-09-03). He worked under his mentor, Stig Torsslow, at Göteborg from 1950-1953, and subsequently followed Torsslow to the Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1953. Ekerot's directorial debut in the Royal Dramatic's studio was Strindberg's The Father in 1953; his main stage directorial debut was Macbeth 1955-04-03. He then directed regularly at Dramaten from March 1954 to December 1965, his most famous accomplishment being the world premier of Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night, which took place at the Royal Dramatic Theatre on 10 February 1956.

²⁰⁸ Bergman, Magic Lantern 176. "I had been promised a post at the Royal Dramatic Theatre during the 1950s, something that made me happy, but then there was a change of regime. The new director [Karl Ragnar Gierow] did not consider himself tied to any promises, but told me in humiliating terms that I hardly came up to the standards of our national stage." The two main directors from Bergman's peer group to gain posts at Dramaten at this time were Rolf Carlsten and Bengt Ekerot. Carlsten was the son of one of the current resident directors, Rune Carlsten, and joined the company in 1952-53; Ekerot joined the company the following season. Bergman may have felt he was displaced by either competitor. Cf. Ek 334. Ek comments on Gierow's goal of promoting young directors such as Ekerot upon the national stage.

standing ovation that extended to almost thirty minutes and included over ten curtain calls. The production remained in Dramaten's repertory until 1962, concluding in a tour to New York and the Seattle World's Fair. Ekerot's accomplishment was arguably "the greatest success in the history of the Royal Dramatic Theatre."²⁰⁹ Following Long Day's Journey Into Night, Ekerot directed the Stockholm premiere of Bergman's play The Wooden Painting [Trämålning] (1955). This play, developed by Bergman while at the Malmö City Theatre, was the basis for the internationally successful The Seventh Seal [Det sjunde inseglet] (1957). Ekerot's iconic personification of Death in the film achieved international acclaim. Ekerot subsequently played Spegel in Bergman's The Face.

Ekerot's performance in The Face is generally regarded as outstanding, although he was never a member of the so-called "Bergman ensemble." Ekerot brought to The Face a remarkable performance and an existential perspective cultivated throughout his substantial career. Spegel is central to the film, for which "Bengt Ekerot is in no incidental way responsible; he is almost unbearably outstanding; he is in such a convincing state of disintegration that you fear for his, Ekerot's, life before the film is well under way; you swear he will break up before your eyes and that someone else will have to play the part in the later stage of the story."²¹⁰ Spegel provides a link to both the characters of Death in The Seventh Seal and Frost in Sawdust and Tinsel.²¹¹ In fact, Bengt Ekerot and Anders Ek (Frost) were classmates together at the Royal Dramatic acting school, and were noted for their intellectual curiosity, leftist politics, and interest in existentialism, as well as for their Stanislavski-inspired immersion in the

²⁰⁹ Murphy 100.

²¹⁰ Young, Cinema Borealis 183.

²¹¹ Ibid 180. Young offers that Spegel "has nothing of the aloof dignity of death" but has "undergone a radical treatment from Naturalism" and "is not the thing itself" but "death's creature," and is thus "more closely comparable to Frost, vis-à-vis Albert, in [Sawdust and Tinsel], a forecast of what another might become."

roles they played.²¹² This is a fact worth noting in the development of this doppelganger figure from Frost in Sawdust and Tinsel to Spegel in The Face. A certain kind of actor, not merely a conceit on the part of the *auteur*, was critical to that development.

By all accounts Ekerot, like Anders Ek, was an independent actor conceiving of himself as an artist in his own right. Ekerot's performances as Death and Spegel descend from Ek's performance as Frost; it also recalls the actor, Frans, in Sawdust and Tinsel, played by another of Bergman's competitors, Hasse Ekman.²¹³ In Sawdust and Tinsel, the director is beaten and humiliated by the actor. In The Face, a "correction" is made: Vogler (Bergman's alter-ego) appears unmasked by the end of the film, but clad in Spegel's tattered costume. Vogler has discarded his disguise and has begun to speak once again; in a word, Vogler has stopped "acting." But this proto-director has also laid claim to all that is left of the actor; the "mirror" (*spegel*), the former focal point of the exhausted tradition of theatre, is replaced and "resurrected" as the director in cinema: "the only truth lies in motion."

C. Case study 3: The *regard*, the actor, and Nothingness in "The Invisible Chains"

The performance-within of "The Invisible Chains" posits that performance alone has the potential mediate the *regard* of the Other, an option otherwise unavailable to the subject. The source for performance is the subject's existential Nothingness. This performance-within corresponds with a similar event in Bergman's primary source for the film, Chesterton's Magic. While presented in the film as a display of mind control and mesmeric suggestion in which a manservant, Antonsson (Oscar Ljung) is bound by "invisible chains," this section of the performance-within in fact relies on the most fundamental of theatrical practices: mime. The performers simulate the presence of an object on the

²¹² Karin Helander, Teaterns korsväg – Bengt Ekerot och 1950-talet (Stockholm: Carlssons Bokförlag, 2003) 20-22.

²¹³ Young, Cinema Borealis 180.

basis of realistic details, and not the more aestheticized practice of pantomime. The metaphor of “nothingness” is tangible and applicable to the actual world of experience. Thus, this performance-within is a demonstration of the subject’s “nothingness,” the source of freedom in Sartre’s existential phenomenology.

At the outset of this performance-within, Vogler and Aman suffer persecution through the actions and, importantly, under the *regard* of their audience; the doctor, the police constable, and the councilman.²¹⁴ This audience, which includes Mrs. Eggerman and the constable’s wife, as well as the assembled household staff, has ridiculed a levitation trick, its wires exposed by the daylight performance conditions and the intervention of the constable, who opens the curtain concealing the stagehand (Simson) running the apparatus. This results in Aman falling from the “levitated” table; Vogler quickly helps him/her in a manner that recalls the Frost/Alma “passion” sequence at the beginning of Sawdust and Tinsel.²¹⁵

This incident demonstrates the vulnerability of live performance, that the space of performance, particularly theatre, “has a special feature: in many cases, it cannot be violated and remain as theater

²¹⁴ Cf. Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theatre 25-27. This scene recalls Molière’s “humiliation” at the hands of his aristocratic audience, which Bergman recounts in discussing his use of actors as onstage interlocutors and observers in his productions of Molière. Bergman’s staging was inspired by the practice by actors at the Comédie Française of sitting in close proximity to the stage during performances, and the historical practice of seating aristocratic audience members onstage. Cf. Cowie, Ingmar Bergman 178; Cowie points out that the demonstration given by the Vogler company is a “play within a play” and that the film is rife with “theatricality”: “The lighting appears theatrical, the acting courtly; the dialog sports the sardonic quality of Molière or Marivaux.”

²¹⁵ Cf. Bergman, Images 163. Bergman emphasized the social separation between the theatre company and townspeople in Malmö: “The audience to whom we played but with whom we spent no time is represented in *The Face* by the consul Eggerman’s family” in The Face. Bergman adds that earlier in his career, at Hälsingborg Municipal Theatre, relations were friendlier and the company “was invited to castles and mansions if we in turn would sing, read, or act.”

space.”²¹⁶ While the rationale for respecting sacred space is based upon belief, one respects performance spaces for practical reasons, to preserve the integrity of a performance: “Theater may have begun in spaces made sacred by holy ritual, but in a secular culture the holiness is no longer felt.”²¹⁷ This tenet could be applied to the “audience” for Vogler’s theater, and conforms with readings of the film that emphasize religious imagery and themes, and to Bergman’s own intertwining of ritual and performance.²¹⁸

But the “performance-within” of The Face inverts this logic; the violation of the theatrical space by Starbeck has repercussions, as Vogler and Aman subsequently hypnotize the constable’s wife who, under interrogation by Aman, reveals her infidelities and her disgust with her husband. This is a variation on a typical effect of the performance-within, namely the apparent influence of theatrical playing upon the “real” events of the diegesis. It is as though transgression of the “inviolable” space, rather than halting the performance, opens a conduit between “real” and “make believe” that confuses social order and behavior. This may be wishful thinking on the part of dramatists, but it is nevertheless a function of the performance-within and emphasizes a conceptual feature: its within-ness is a doubling of the traditional boundary surrounding performance. Perhaps the performance-within is a specifically modern phenomenon, one that endures in the dramaturgy of cinema as well as theatre, not merely

²¹⁶ Woodruff 117. Woodruff gives an example of a football fan getting onto the field and attacking one of the players: “The moment the fan crosses onto the field, he has interrupted the game, and the young victim is no longer playing wide receiver. There is no game at all now, and he cannot be playing any part in it.”

²¹⁷ Woodruff 118.

²¹⁸ Cf. Törnqvist 91-92. Törnqvist cites Bergman’s view circa 1960 that “art lost its basic creative drive the moment it was separated from worship”; cf. Bergman, Four Screenplays xxii. Cf. Gado 223. Gado asserts that Vogler is a Christ figure, or “the paradoxical meaning of Christ.” Cf. Ketcham 93. Ketcham finds that the film may be studied on many levels, as “an interesting study of socio-cultural patterns of nineteenth century Sweden,” as “an expression of the artist’s struggle to communicate meaningfully with society” while also preserving “his own integrity and self-respect,” as “an intricate psycho-spiritual struggle of a man to resolve the paradoxes of truth and illusion, knowledge and faith, belief and non-belief, life and death,” and as “a further attempt by Bergman to explore the mythology of our times.”

because of its value as spectacle or diversion, but because of its assertion of the primacy of performance and the necessity to acknowledge the space of performance as delimited and exceptional.

This is the final explicit assertion made in The Face; that the director's craft is legitimate, his instruments valuable, and his place in the world ought to be respected, even if everything is, ultimately, emptiness and illusion. Vernon Young similarly observes that the film hinges on the opposition of the question "Is that true" to the reply "Nothing is true," an exchange that occurs early in the film between the dying actor, Spegel, and the magician's androgynous assistant, Aman. Young finds that, "Whatever alternative answers Bergman hopes to imply through one character or another, this, it seems to me, is the key and burden of the whole film."²¹⁹ But the performance-within of "The Invisible Chains" specifically demonstrates this paradox, a fact overlooked in previous analyses.

Sequence analysis: "The Invisible Chains" (http://youtu.be/j1e_uPxY1yM)

"The Invisible Chains" performance-within is the conclusion of the Vogler Magnetic Health Theatre's performance-within, and has its own aesthetic boundaries. It begins with Tubal, the company manager, standing in Orientalist costuming by a window with drawn curtains, shaking a rattle as he announces the final trick. Vogler is seated is staring directly at Mrs. Eggerman; she returns his *regard*. Tubal announces, "Our last trick is called the 'Invisible Chains'. Which of the gentlemen will volunteer? The stronger the better." Starbeck is glaring in the direction of Vogler as Mrs. Eggerman looks in a sidelong glance toward the police chief. This opening exposes the contest of *regards* now between audience members and performers; the ground has shifted and the boundaries between performance and life have slipped.

²¹⁹ Young, Cinema Borealis 180.

Vogler returns Starbeck's *regard* with defiant satisfaction. The magic lantern is quite prominent in the composition, as is the curtained backdrop decorated with zodiac signs ("the cheapest kind of theatre"). The shot duration is very brief, but this emphasizes the directness of Vogler's *regard* and, implicitly, the power of his apparatus. Councilman Egerman notes Vogler's defiance and then says, "Antonsson." The camera swivels right as Antonsson (Oscar Ljung) steps into the doorway. He says, "I don't want to, Mr. Councilman," to which Egerman quickly responds "It's an order." Antonsson hesitates and then steps forward.²²⁰ From this point forward, Antonsson serves as the focal point and principal performer. This shift is significant, as it redirects everyone's *regard*: the Vogler company's, the onscreen audience, and our own.

In this shift, Antonsson emerges as the Sartrean subject; perhaps even "Man."²²¹ Having been watching in obscurity as a character, and having been a peripheral presence as an actor in the film, Antonsson/Ljung now literally assumes "center stage." As a result, this obscure, reticent subject is now the object of the collective *regard*. Antonsson begins to experience "a fixed sliding of the whole universe" and "decentralization of the world" that the subject experiences in response to the presence of the Other.²²² He is vulnerable to shame and objectification through the power of the *regard*.

The next shot establishes the essential dilemma of the *regard*; does one attempt to return it or deflect it? Tubal says, "Bravo my good man, bravo my good man," as Antonsson steps into frame in a

²²⁰ Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 259-261. Antonsson's entrance from a hallway into the scene proper shares in the quality of abrupt discovery by an Other found in Sartre's example of the keyhole to illustrate the phenomena of the *regard* and shame.

²²¹ Cf. Donner 12-13. "Man was analyzed, not as a product of his class and surroundings, of the concrete circumstances under which he lived. Mankind was transformed into the abstract collective concept. Man, a Sisyphus, a K, a suffering Mankind. This is reflected in B [Bergman], so that persons of completely different background and upbringing still seem to possess the same conceptions. They are abstract shapes, part of the infinite idea, Mankind."

²²² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 255-256.

partially silhouetted close-up. Tubal steps forward, circling Antonsson, saying “Nothing shall be dangerous, nothing that shall hurt. Just breathe calmly.” Tubal stands with his right hand on Antonsson’s shoulder as he continues speaking to the onscreen audience. Antonsson is looking camera left toward Vogler, Tubal toward camera right and the audience. The effect is that of a Janus figure, but also captures the intricacies of the *regard*: Antonsson, the subject, is looking toward that Other (Vogler) whose *regard* threatens to usurp his very existence; Tubal seeks to manipulate the collective *regard* of the audience/Other through the mask of a social performance. Tubal also plants the seeds for Antonsson’s disintegration: “Antonsson is a hefty man, but his physical prowess is nothing compared with Mr. Vogler’s spiritual powers.”

In the next shot, the “invisible chains” are established on screen through sheer *mimesis*. This is accomplished collectively, as three actors handle the “chains.” The *regard* is maintained through action, composition, and *mise-en-scène*: Vogler seated at center, Tubal standing to his right and Aman to his left, with the magic lantern in the background. Tubal changes his tone of voice, turning to Aman: “Assistant . . .” Aman quickly crosses his hands across his breast, “. . . tie-up that man with the invisible chains.” Aman bows and then steps backwards to Simson who is holding the “invisible chains.” Aman lifts the “chains”, and then carries them toward Antonsson. Aman proceeds to raise the “chains” over Antonsson’s head and lay them over his shoulders, pressing them down to affirm their presence. Aman then lifts Antonsson’s forearms up, wrapping the “chains” about his wrists. Aman then looks into Antonsson’s eyes and says: “Your hands are linked together”; Aman then kneels down, disappearing from view, and says from off-screen, “But your feet are also bound.” We see Tubal looking directly at Antonsson while Vogler remains seated with his eyes downcasAman then presses his hands together in a ceremonial prayer-like position, and steps backwards offscreen to left while maintaining his *regard* toward Antonsson. We see Vogler again, still seated, but his eyes are

now lifted and his *regard* is directed toward Antonsson. While the performance-within simulates a mesmerist's act, its structural principles are those of the Sartrean *regard*.

The remainder of this performance-within exemplifies Sartre's idea of theatre, while at the same time contradicting his distinction between cinema and theatre. Sartre argued that theatre "*presents* action by a man on the stage to men in the audience," a fact that is being demonstrated on-screen and to the actual audience, and that, "*through this action*, both the world he lives in and the performer of the action." Antonsson is, in fact, playing himself in his master's salon, yet through the *regard* as mediated by performance, he is also being seen in new ways. Aptly, the simplicity of the performance-within of these "invisible chains" highlights Sartre's theoretical goal "to show by the action of a human body upon itself the determining circumstances, the ends and means." But the intermedial nature of the performance-within contradicts Sartre's contention that: "In the theater action is gesture, but not in the film."²²³

In the next section, the full impact of the *regard* and the knowledge made available "by the action of a human body upon itself" are demonstrated through the performance-within of Antonsson and the "invisible chains." Now "bound" by the "chains," Antonsson slowly turns counterclockwise toward the camera, which dollies backward slightly. Antonsson seems to be almost pleased at first, and then moves his wrists apart to break the "chains"; his motion stops abruptly and his face turns to concern in response to their evident strength. He tests them again, and again his motion is stopped. He draws his arms slowly together a third time.

The collective *regard* is now re-established. The film cuts to a match on action medium long shot of Antonsson, standing to far camera right, with Vergéus, Mrs. Eggerman and Starbeck seated, Mr.

²²³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theatre* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) 61.

Egerman in the background behind them, and Sanna and the cook (seated) also in the background to the right; Simson, Tubal, Aman all stand to the left of Vogler, who is seated and maintaining his *regard* upon Antonsson. Antonsson tries for a third time to snap the “chains” and fails. Antonsson looks back over his shoulder toward Vogler, and then turns awkwardly to face him, hampered by the weight of the chains about his ankles. The onscreen “audience” is amazed. Antonsson attempts to raise his arms and lunge toward Vogler, but he falls instead, bound by the chain fastened to the wall. Simson steps in quickly to catch him and pushes Antonsson back into a standing position, and then quickly steps away. Antonsson drops to one knee; he has begun to breathe heavily. He raises his wrists up quickly, and there is a cut to a match on action medium shot (from Vogler’s perspective) of Antonsson as he brings his wrists down together swiftly two times in an attempt to “break” the chains over his left knee. He attempts this again, his panic increasing, and then starts to stand; (there is a match-on-action cut to the medium long shot). He raises his arms above his head and seems to attempt to bring the chains down upon Vogler, but falls instead upon the ground, still bound by the ankles and to the wall. The intricacy of the staging in this shot, the coordination of movement, the sustained miming of the chains, and the shot’s duration make patent the “theatrical” practices that remain basic to film-making; it is the performance-within of “The Invisible Chains” that make these practices visible.

Antonsson is now in danger of annihilation through the power of the *regard* and the phenomenon of anxiety. There is a match on action close-up of Antonsson’s face looking up as he falls on his back to the floor. The camera re-frames and tilts slightly to maintain the close-up as Antonsson raises his head, and then rolls slowly over to his left, his face now pointing down toward the floor as he looks at the “chains” holding his wrists. He slowly looks up toward the camera (in the direction of Vogler) as he raises himself up on one knee; Vergéus and Mrs. Egerman are visible in the background.

Antonsson stands with his face framed by his raised wrists; his eyes are panicked. He falls toward camera, again in a seeming effort to attack the viewer (Vogler). This cuts to a match-on-action high-angle medium close-up of Vogler that dollies in quickly maintaining Antonsson's perspective on Vogler; this camera movement simulates Antonsson's perspective as he falls down. The camera work is amplifying the typical practice of shot-reverse-shot meant to maintain characters' perspectives in order to simulate the effects of the Sartrean *regard* and the vertiginous quality of anguish.²²⁴

The performance-within is, of course, contrived; but it is used to convey meanings and even to assert a value. In this case, the *regard* is represented as trans-subjective; through it, one may know something of the Other's subjectivity. This is demonstrated through the on-screen audience. There is a cut to Mrs. Egerman watching, seemingly rapt, perhaps by identifying with Antonsson. This is followed by a close-up of Antonsson on the floor at Vogler's feet. He turns himself over on his back with great effort, looking up at Vogler; his eyes are wide and distressed. He struggles feebly to break the "chains" about his wrists. This cuts to Egerman, who seems perturbed and about to intervene. Antonsson's world as a subject has "flowed off" through the "drain hole in the middle of its being" created through the *regard*, and he is becoming a sheer object in the eyes of his audience; but the performance-within has made his masters understand something of Antonsson through its mediation of the *regard* and augmentation of the social self.²²⁵

²²⁴ Cf. Pamerleau 27; cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 29. Pamerleau emphasizes Sartre's claim that "Anguish is distinguished from fear in that fear is fear of beings in the world, whereas anguish is anguish before myself," and stresses the quality of "vertigo" that one experiences when standing at the edge of a cliff. In fact, Sartre is quoting Kierkegaard.

²²⁵ Cf. Schroeder, *Sartre and his Predecessors* 185. Antonsson's condition recalls Albert in *Sawdust and Tinsel* by the end of his fight with the actor, Frans, in the circus ring. It may be one of the purported "corrections" between the two films. In both cases, with respect to the diegesis, human agency is reduced to the status of a non-volitional performer, such as a trained animal.

Performance is demarcated by temporal and spatial limitations, and time is now introduced into the performance-within, ostensibly as a chance incident, but formally in order to bring “The Invisible Chains” to its conclusion. The next shot is a low angle medium close-up of Vogler, somewhat from Antonsson’s perspective, as Vogler maintains his *regard* toward Antonsson.²²⁶ The clock chimes (an offscreen sound effect) and Vogler’s *regard* is broken as he looks toward offscreen camera right in the direction of the clock. The next shot is of a clock; it is half-past ten.²²⁷ The clock chime is presented as a disruption of the mesmerist’s spell, the breaking of the *regard*, but its formal purpose is to conclude the performance-within.

One of the aesthetic effects of the performance-within is the new possibilities that it creates for subsequent actions by characters within the “reality” of the diegesis. This is precisely what happens next in The Face. The collective *regard* mediated through the performance-within has been disrupted, and there is now a re-establishing shot: Antonsson is stretched out on his back on the floor, Vogler is seated looking down at him, Aman and Tubal are standing behind with arms crossed, and the magic lantern is featured in the background. The connection between human performance and the apparatus of the magic lantern (theatre and film) is established in this composition, and linked again to time, as we hear the clock’s single chime fade. Vogler slips from his chair to kneel over Antonsson; his motivations are ambiguous, but he is again looking into Antonsson’s eyes. Antonsson lifts his hands and seizes Vogler by the throat, and the two roll over in the direction of the camera. Antonsson

²²⁶ The implied connection between Vogler and Antonsson is at odds with the actual shot composition because Vogler does not return the camera’s point of view, i.e., he is not looking into Antonsson’s eyes (or into camera).

²²⁷ The clock has a sun with a face above the face of the dial proper. This image recalls the sun-face near the crotch of Frost’s costume in Sawdust and Tinsel. The chiming of the clock has symbolic value, but is a ruse as, supposedly, Vogler has anticipated this event, and even wills Antonsson’s subsequent attack in order to effect the switching of places with Spegel. (That is, if we are to take the plot as being something other than negligent dramaturgy and deliberate mystification).

proceeds to attack Vogler, apparently through strangulation, although this is never explicitly shown. Aman and Tubal quickly intervene, blocking the struggle from our view as they attempt to pull Antonsson off of Vogler. Antonsson suddenly stands and takes a step away from Vogler and Aman, the camera swiveling to follow him. He turns and starts to run away toward the door, pushing Starbeck aside and knocking over a chair. Antonsson reaches the doorway. There is a match on action cut to a close-up on Antonsson's face in the doorway facing camera right as he stops in a moment of panic and indecision; he looks to camera left, then right, then left again. This is followed by a reverse match on action shot as Antonsson proceeds to run out the doorway to camera left. Antonsson has been transformed from servant to fugitive: the performance-within has transformed character behavior and created new opportunities within the plot.

The total duration of the performance-within of "The Invisible Chains" is approximately 2 minutes and 18 seconds, beginning with Tubal's directive to Aman to fetch the chains and ending with the breaking of the spell by the chime of the clock and Antonsson's subsequent grabbing of Vogler's throat. The gap in discursive dialogue is 2 minutes and 16 seconds. Aman's instructions to Antonsson, "And the chain is fast to the wall," are the last words spoken in the scene. The next sound heard, apart from Antonsson's silent struggle with the chains, is the clock chime; the next human vocal sound is Mrs. Egerman's scream; and the only spoken dialogue is Starbeck's imperative, "After him!" These durations are noteworthy because, while there is certainly editing involved, the whole of the film rests upon a cinema audience's willingness to engage with a mimetic performance; it is an essential example of theatre in film, one that confronts us with the dependency of both upon the agentic abilities of the actor.

How should this performance-within be interpreted relative to the carefully constructed logic of the scenario? Antonsson's free will is already compromised by his subordinate response to his employer;

he is already chained. Aman convinces him of the strength of these chains, by establishing their existence through performance, articulating their powers of limitation, and maintaining steady and superior eye contact with Antonsson; it is Aman who mesmerizes while seeming to act as a conduit for the power of Vogler's indirect *regard*. Antonsson is convinced to perform what he already knows to be true, namely that he is bound to the house where he is employed. The audience that watches this demonstration, astonished and fascinated by Antonsson's helplessness within the invisible chains, is also the source of those chains, and their collective *regard* maintains the chains' strength.²²⁸

In terms of how a philosophical idea may be elaborated through drama, this performance-within is remarkable because it uses the most basic kind of *mimesis*, physical make-believe, in effecting the crisis of the plot and to instantiate the film's primary idea: that all we create for ourselves is done out of our existential Nothingness. "The Invisible Chains" performance-within effectively stages the Sartrean *regard*, and the desperate effort on the part of the subject/object to wrest his autonomy from that *regard*. Under the *regard*, first of Aman, then Vogler, and ultimately the assembled onscreen audience, the manservant is reduced to an object; even his own Nothingness is reduced to the "invisible chains" that render him fixed and immobile, a thing rather than a freedom. This performance-within demonstrates the social hierarchy that the players and servants are chained to, and which may be said to "fix" their social superiors, as well. This *coup de théâtre* also demonstrates the power of *mimesis*, the actor's ability to make something out of, through, and with Nothing, an ability that is the basis of virtually all verisimilar performance and its manifestations in cinematic and theatrical products. The "invisible chains" thus demonstrates the creative agency of human

²²⁸ Cf. Ketcham 97. Ketcham makes an explicit connection between Vogler's condition and Sartre's view on "human identity": "We are what other people say that we are, whether we like it or not. So hell is other people." This is forcefully enacted in Antonsson's case.

Nothingness; the existential fact that we are not fixed “beings” but unfixed subjects with a radical potential for freedom, even within the most circumscribed of conditions. “The Invisible Chains” relies upon the basic principle of *mimesis* and discloses the very foundation of the film’s metaphysics.

What must also be recognized here is that the role of performance, in this case *mimesis*, is made overtly conspicuous within the events of the film. The entire film’s success as a film rests upon this undeniably “theatrical” event. The work is performed primarily by Aman and Antonsson, and there is no other sound or dialogue apart from ambient noise while Antonsson struggles against the “invisible chains.” “The Invisible Chains” demonstrates the fundamental dependency of all drama, cinematic and theatrical, upon the Nothingness of the actor. The implication is that, as actors do, we choose ourselves within our situations.²²⁹ Performance discloses our radical potential for freedom. This is why performance and existentialism are profoundly related during the mid-20th-century.

Embodied performance and the Camus connection

A consideration of the casting in “The Invisible Chains” sequence exposes significant ties between The Face to a play by Albert Camus, The Misunderstanding [Le Malentendu] and, through the actors involved in both pieces, the work of other directors at Malmö theatre; these influences reside in the performances of the actors playing Aman and Antonsson. At the time of the film’s release, the roles of Vogler, Vergéus, and Aman/Manda were interpreted within Swedish entertainment circles as “Max von Sydow plays [Bergman], Gunnar Björnstrand plays Harry Schein, and Ingrid Thulin plays Ingrid Thulin.”²³⁰ Taken for its implications of a self-reflexive performance by Thulin in the role of

²²⁹ Cf. Sartre, Sartre on Theatre 48.

²³⁰ Torsten Manns, qtd. in Björkman, et al 126. One might take the quip as merely referencing the tug-of-war between Bergman and critic Harry Schein over Ingrid Thulin (Schein was married to Thulin and purportedly wanted her to quit acting).

Aman/Manda, it becomes apparent that this portrayal was in many ways the end product of a series of creative engagements with roles, plays, and other directors Thulin experienced while working at Malmö. The result was the development of a star persona that persists from role to role, rather like Camus' idea of the actor as an example of absurd man, having "the monotony, that single, oppressive silhouette, simultaneously strange and familiar, that he carries about from hero to hero."²³¹

The creative process for Thulin as an actress involved explorations of the ingénue and young wife roles as these were theatrically expanded upon and complicated by playwrights such as Jean Anouilh, Jean Giraudoux, Albert Camus, and Hjalmar Bergman. That these earlier undertakings could result in a role that allegorically represents existential ambiguity (what Bergman calls the "androgynous" character that is "central" to the film) requires consideration.²³² At the time Thulin joined the Malmö theatre company, she was considered "unstable and untalented" within the Swedish entertainment industry, and there were rumors that she intended to abandon her career.²³³ Thulin's premier at Malmö was as Helena in The Tiger at the Gates [*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*], by Jean Giraudoux, directed by Lars-Levi Laestadius (26 October 1956). Laestadius was the head of Malmö Municipal Theatre during Bergman's residency there. An "autocratic" director, Laestadius was "descended in a direct line from a great revivalist preacher" and was "well read, reckless and manically vain, a

²³¹ Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" 81.

²³² Similar concerns emerge not only in Sartre and Camus, but also in French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). This is not to aver a direct link between Bergman and de Beauvoir; this is a phenomenon by which a contemporary woman who is an actress in Sweden in the 1950s comes to a role via her experiences in previous roles exploring ambivalence, women's social positions, and the existential aspects of identity and performance during the same period that such issues were also being addressed by a preeminent female philosopher. It is not a matter of causality, but rather the manner in which an idea receives synchronic consideration via cultural performance media.

²³³ Björkman, et al 126.

combination not to be despised in a theatre director.”²³⁴ Laestadius subsequently directed Thulin in the title role of Eurydice, by Jean Anouilh, (1 November 1957), which was immediately followed by a production of Albert Camus’ The Misunderstanding [Le Malentendu] (17 December 1957), with Thulin as Martha, and with Naima Wifstrand as the Mother.

Thulin’s performance as Martha in The Misunderstanding is significant for a number of reasons. Camus’ three-act, existential chamber drama was staged by Laestadius in the Malmö studio theatre just six months prior to the writing and filming of The Face.²³⁵ Bergman could easily have seen Thulin in this production; it was her largest role to date at that theatre and Bergman claimed direct responsibility for her being hired at Malmö. As noted earlier, Bergman stated that “Camus came later, with a sort of refined existentialism. I came into contact with it in the theatre, *among other things* in connection with my production of Caligula.”²³⁶ In fact, apart from Bergman’s production of Caligula in 1946, and the 1948 and 1957 Malmö productions of Le Malentendu, there were only two other productions of Camus in Sweden between 1946-1957.²³⁷ It is reasonable that the 1957 production of The Misunderstanding at Malmö, featuring his protégé and collaborator under another’s direction, may be included in

²³⁴ Bergman, Magic Lantern 177.

²³⁵ The Misunderstanding had been produced only once before in Sweden, also at the second stage at Malmö, in a production directed by Stig Torsslow, premiering on 30 October 1948.

²³⁶ Björkman, et al 12-13; emphasis added.

²³⁷ Both of these were of same play, Les justes. This play was first produced at Stadsteatern Norrköping-Linköping on 1950-10-19, under the direction of Johan Falck; and shortly thereafter at Göteborg Stadsteater in the studio, in a production directed by Helge Wahlgren, premiering on 1950-11-25, featuring Bengt Ekerot, Annika Tretow, and Erland Josephson. Both Ekerot and Josephson appear in The Face, and Tretow also worked quite frequently with Bergman in the 40s and into the early 50s, most notably as Agda, the circus owner’s estranged wife in Sawdust and Tinsel.

Bergman's "among other things."²³⁸ In terms of Thulin's career, Martha seems to have been an exceptional development; the same may be said for Aman in terms of her film roles.²³⁹

"The Invisible Chains" sequence in the film is performed primarily by Aman and the manservant, Antonsson. It is noteworthy that Antonsson was played by a relatively anonymous actor, Oscar Ljung (1909-1999).²⁴⁰ Ljung was a mainstay at the Malmö Municipal Theatre from 1945 until 1963, playing primarily supporting roles, with some exceptions, most notably that of the male protagonist in the first Malmö production of The Misunderstanding (dir. Stig Torsslow, 1948).²⁴¹ It is remarkable that both Thulin and Ljung should have previously played the leading roles in Camus' play, if only in terms of background experience that may be considered as a certain kind of cultivation of expertise within an expressly "existential" drama. It is also worth recalling that such opportunities were extremely limited: Camus was produced only 5 times in Sweden during the 1940s and 1950s.

These performances indicate the role of theatre, especially in Sweden in the mid-20th-century, but also in general, as a means of elaborating philosophical concerns. They also evidence the unique position of the actor as a potential source for the elaboration of this kind of knowledge through *praxis*.

²³⁸ Bergman purportedly was to direct a film scripted by Camus and the two exchanged letters on the project, but it was never realized due, in part, to Camus' premature death. See Björkman, et al 26-27.

²³⁹ Like the title role in Caligula, Martha is an existential anti-hero/non-conformist. As in The Face, there is a sense of empty, monumental space as the play is set in a largely empty hotel/inn. Finally, there is a silent man servant in the play who is similar to both Vogler and Antonsson, and who serves as a meta-theatrical/metaphysical *deus ex machina*. These features are also found in Thulin's subsequent film with Bergman, The Silence [Tystnaden] (1963).

²⁴⁰ Ljung began his career at Malmö playing Claudius in Hamlet and concluded with the role of Edgar in Strindberg's Dance of Death. He worked with Bergman on at least nine productions, but his most prominent stage role under Bergman at Malmö was as the Knight in Bergman's play Painting on Wood [Träsmålning] in 1955; this play was the precursor to Bergman's film, The Seventh Seal [Det sjunde inseglet] (1957). Ljung attended the acting school at the Royal Dramatic Theatre from 1931-1934.

²⁴¹ Bengt Ekerot (who played Spegel in The Face) was also in residence at Malmö during this time, working as Torsslow's assistant.

In the case of The Face, these examples offer insights into the construction and contents of the film, and improve our understanding of how actors may establish intertextual links between productions, and how their knowledge bridges distinctions between media.

III. Sartre and The Face

Through its actors and the performances-within, The Face exemplifies Sartre's *regard* of the Other, demonstrates the performative aspects of Nothingness, and offers a meditation on ontological status of the actor in film. While the tendency in film criticism would be to treat the camera as constitutive of the *regard*, the *regard* is a phenomenological encounter between humans, not merely an apparatus. This condition is maintained by the actors in their interrelations with one another, and is coordinated with, not created by, the use of the camera. "The Invisible Chains" sequence clearly evidences this coordination between movement by the actors and camera, recalling the cinematic *théâtre vérité* described by Godard.²⁴² In The Face, Bergman offers an approach to performance and cinema that complements Sartre's phenomenology.²⁴³

This demonstrates the need for a bridge between theatre and cinema studies. This affinity with Sartre was cultivated through Bergman's experiences in the theatre. Furthermore, it was not as a director, but as spectator, that Bergman developed his understanding of existentialism. Bergman

²⁴² Godard 14: "I see no difference between the theater and movies. It is all theater. It is simply a matter of understanding what theater means."

²⁴³ Robert E. Lauder, Lauder, "Bergman's 'Shame' and Sartre's 'Stare,'" Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 283. Lauder sees parallels between Sartre's phenomenology, "his letting-reality-appear-as-it-is" and Bergman. Acting as a phenomenologist, "Bergman is letting-reality-appear-as-it-is" with the result that his phenomenology "is one pervaded by the silence of God," a silence that "makes the world a disordered place, a land in which it is impossible for a man to discover his personal identity." As a result, "real communication is hopeless" and "intersubjective relationships are precluded." What is missing from Lauder's account is any consideration of the camera as constituting a *regard*, or of the role of the *regard* in the playing and/or photographing of scenes. Lauder's idea the *regard* remains on the metaphysical level, not the inter-relational, practical, or aesthetic levels, i.e. the pragmatic implementation and instantiation of the *regard*.

learned about Sartre through performance and the *regard* of the spectator. This knowledge provided the content for The Face, a content that was supplemented by the practical knowledge of existential drama by collaborators such as Ekerot, Thulin, and Ljung. This demonstrates the links between theatre, film, and philosophy via the embodied knowledge of the actor. This affirms the need for the methodology developed here to study these processes.

Sartre was well aware of the link between performance and existential action, as evidenced in his idea of “*a theater of situations*”:

But if it's true that man is free in a given situation and that in and through that situation he chooses what he will be, then what we have to show in the theater are simple and human situations and free individuals in these situations choosing what they will be. . . . The most moving thing the theater can show is a character creating himself, the moment of choice, of the free decision which commits him to a moral code and a whole way of life.²⁴⁴

Through the actor and the performance-within, in the characters of Aman, Spegel, Antonsson, and ultimately Vogler, we see the “character creating himself, the moment of choice, of the free decision which commits him to a moral code and a whole way of life.”

By the end of the film, Vogler (a proto-cinematic director) has assumed the tattered clothing of the deceased and dissected Spegel: Vogler is both heir to Spegel and the superior artist, but is now obliged to live his role. This bears a resemblance with Sartre's description of the existential condition of the actor, “the reverse of the *player*, who becomes a person like anyone else when he has finished his work,” and instead “‘plays himself’ every second of his life”: “It is both a marvelous gift and a curse; he is his own victim, never knowing who he really is or whether he is acting or not.”²⁴⁵ This conflict is implicit in Vogler's inheritance from the actor.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Sartre, Sartre on Theatre 48.

²⁴⁵ Ibid 240. Sartre, speaking specifically of the 19th century tragedian Edmund Keane, sees this tendency as “the Myth of the Actor incarnate” that of “the actor who never ceases acting; he acts out his life itself, is no longer able to recognize

Bergman continually exposes the performative links between film and theatre while at the same time wrestling with the aesthetic differences between the two. Sartre argued:

The theatre is not concerned with reality; it is only concerned with truth. The cinema, on the other hand, seeks a reality which may contain moments of truth. [...] By seeking truth through myth, and by using forms as nonrealistic as tragedy, the theater can stand up against the cinema. Only thus can it avoid being swallowed up.²⁴⁷

The “performance-within” demonstrates this resistance to being “swallowed up” while at the same time being contained within the medium of cinema. This is the same tension that Sartre stresses in analyzing the *regard* between subject and Others, and the underlying topic between the dying Spegel (mirror) and Vogler. The “death” that Spegel contemplates is not only physical death, but the relationship between theatre and cinema: that of the actor whose image and performance is absorbed into the cinematic medium.

Sartre in Swedish theatrical production 1945-1961

The 1945-46 theatrical season in Sweden offered opportunities for Bergman to directly encounter Sartre in performance due to a considerable concentration of production and media coverage. This was primarily in connection with Alf Sjöberg’s productions of The Flies and No Exit at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, as well as through productions at the Göteborg Municipal Theatre. In fact, the theater was the main conduit for Sartre's existentialism into Swedish culture at this time.²⁴⁸ Sartre's

himself, no longer knows who he is. And finally is no one” (243). This is the irony of Vogler’s triumph at the close of The Face.

²⁴⁶ It is also found in different forms and guises throughout Bergman’s work. Cf. Bergman, Images 226. Bergman comments on his fatigue with artistic pretending in giving an account of After the Rehearsal.

²⁴⁷ Sartre, Sartre on Theatre 123.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Bengt A. Roos, Fröken Julie i regi Alf Sjöberg teater- och filmversionen (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2002) 9.

plays were frequently published in Swedish following major productions, beginning with The Flies in 1946, and including No Exit, Dirty Hands, and The Respectful Prostitute, through Altona [Les Séquestrés d'Altona] in 1961. Thus, theatrical production and the attendant publication of scripts, newspaper reviews and articles, and program notes, as well as the “word-of-mouth” that is a part of theatre-going and public discourse, generally, may be considered as potent sources for the distribution of existentialist ideas in the 1940s and 50s in the Swedish context.

Even if Bergman had no opportunity to see The Flies at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Sjöberg described the opening night to him in a letter that evidences several things, including the international attention that the production attracted, Sjöberg’s irritability with critics (a trait shared by Bergman), the competitive nature of Swedish theatre, and Sjöberg’s tendency to self-dramatize through imagery borrowed from his most recent project: Sjöberg describes every bush in Stockholm as “swarming” with books, plays and ideas, as the town in The Flies is also “swarming” with an excess of negativity, manifested in the flies themselves.²⁴⁹

In the case of No Exit, Sartre's visibility was further augmented by coterminous productions of that play in Stockholm and Göteborg. Sjöberg staged No Exit in the spring of 1946 on the second stage of Dramaten as part of a double bill along with Jean Cocteau’s Vox humana. Bergman was still working at Hälsingborg Municipal Theatre at the time, but his production of Rabies, by Olle Hedberg, arrived in Stockholm for a special run at the Blanche Theater at the same time that Sjöberg's production of No Exit opened at the Royal Dramatic. A review of Rabies appeared in one Stockholm newspaper the day before all the major papers carried coverage of the No Exit openings.²⁵⁰ Thus, whether or not

²⁴⁹ Personal correspondence dated 28 September 1945. Stiftelsen Ingmar Bergman.

²⁵⁰ PGP, “Hälsingborgare på Blanche-visit,” Aftonbladet, no. 79, 21 Mar 1946, p. 13; PGP, “Sartre på dubbel fronter,” Aftonbladet, no. 80, 22 Mar 1946, p. 11.

Bergman saw either of Sjöberg's productions, he was undoubtedly aware of all this activity during the 1945-46 theatrical season.

It is a matter of record that Bergman was familiar with a 1946 production of Sartre's The Unburied Dead, directed by Torsten Hammarén, during his first season at Göteborg Municipal Theatre. In an interview from 1979/80, Bergman references this production in connection with the topic of unseen or offstage/offscreen violence. He acknowledges using this method in The Seventh Seal [Det sjunde inseglet] (1957) for the death of a plague-ridden antagonist, calling it one of "a few small tricks" in common between his theatre and film work.²⁵¹ The reference is almost a passing one, and this interview omits considering the possible thematic connections, as well as choices in staging, between Bergman's later film and Sartre's play via the work of another director.

In the absence of any direct work on Sartre in production, one has to allow that it was this "theatre," namely the work of directors Sjöberg and Hammarén, through which Bergman first began to develop his understanding of Sartre and existential drama.²⁵² It is also worth noting that Hammarén's production of The Unburied Dead opened on 26 October 1946 and that Bergman's production of Caligula followed on 29 November 1946. This was a significant concentration of existential drama at a single theatre. And it was at Göteborg that Bergman directed Magic, the original model for The Face.

IV. A double premiere at Göteborg: the performance source of The Face

²⁵¹ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theatre 23-24.

²⁵² Reviews were available in the major papers, and the Royal Dramatic Theatre's program for The Flies contains a lengthy author's note by Sartre, "A Defense for a Responsibly Aware Literature" ["Forvarstal för en ansvarskännande litteratur"]. Reviews, photographs, program notes, even the illustration of the Parisian scene at the Café de Flore can be considered potential sources of influence, along with Sjöberg's staging and correspondence. These may seem superficial compared with reading Being and Nothingness, but such influences are far from irrelevant. Bergman's tendencies seem always to have been toward practice and self-reflexivity, not academic.

A. Gilbert Keith Chesterton's Magic (1913)

Chesterton's play is readily dismissed by nearly every critic who has written about The Face. There are a number of reasons why this is a mistake. First of all, most critics who have actually read the play (and few have) note the similarities in setting between it and Bergman's film, namely an aristocratic home. They also note that the character of the magician in the play, variously called The Stranger and The Conjuror, demonstrates his routine to a skeptical audience, consisting of a doctor, a clergyman, and a young Americanized business entrepreneur (Morris). The story is inaugurated by an argument that opposes science to religion. Their host, the Duke, is largely absent from the "serious" proceedings, and is instead relegated to popping in and out for the purposes of comic relief. There is also a young lady of the house (Patricia) who believes in the powers of magic. The magician is typically described as having lost faith in his ability to perform magic (Young and Cowie). Frank Gado has given the play more attention than most. The general consensus is that Chesterton's original was a slight affair and that Bergman invested his re-working with considerably more intellectual heft. In fact, Chesterton labeled his anomalous script a "comedy," as did Bergman.

But the play merely begins as a comedy and rather quickly devolves into an eccentrically-contrived metaphysical drama. The Duke has a niece and nephew, both of whom were born and raised in Ireland and, therefore, apparently nationally- and genetically-inclined toward perceiving fairies, "mental trouble," and "family madness."²⁵³ The young woman has met the magician on the grounds of the estate (their first encounter is presented as something of a prologue to the play proper) and, apparently, has accepted that he is a supernatural being. Therefore, when the magician appears in-of-doors and

²⁵³ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Magic: A Fantastic Comedy (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914) 60; 64.

removes his cloak and hood (which, it is explained, provided an inadvertent disguise), the niece feels that she has been duped. Her brother, however, who has been living and working in the United States, is presented as the mentally unstable one. He has a mania for rational explanations, and when the magician begins to incite phenomena that are inexplicable, the young man lapses into a feverish dementia that renders him invalid. In fact, following the magician's "show," this character becomes an off-stage presence, even though the remainder of the play is ostensibly concerned with restoring to him his health and senses. What is disclosed as the magician's crisis is his mistrust of the supernatural forces that he, we are told, truly has access to. These forces are made palpable to the other characters, including the man of science and the man of religion, and Chesterton actually stages a kind of exorcism rather than a comedy.

Class issues in the play, as in Bergman's film, are also an issue, formulaically contrived in the romance between the niece and the magician. The niece is willing to enter into marriage with The Stranger, who abjures on the basis of his own parent's mismatched relationship. But, at the play's end, and with the same succinct and arbitrary flavor that ends The Face, the niece announces, through a discourse on the nature of fairy tales, that she and the magician will enjoy a happy ending together. If there is comedy in the play, it is that each ideological position is ultimately demonstrated as untenable; yet there is, apparently, such a thing as supernatural evil.

No critic seems to have previously stressed this point, but both pieces rely on terror to convince their characters and audiences of a certain seriousness of purpose. Chesterton relies on actors to convey a sense of supernatural presence, accompanied by stage effects that (as the earlier magic show has demonstrated) we know to be contrived and belonging to the apparatus of theatre. Similarly, Bergman's post-autopsy "horror" sequence is dependent on the creation of supernatural effects that transcend the illusionism demonstrated by Vogler in his earlier demonstration. Both pieces seek to

ground their own illusion-making in plausible cause-and-effect, however. Chesterton's magician informs the mentally-afflicted nephew of a 'natural' explanation for the phenomenon that has induced the young man's crisis; however, neither the audience nor any onstage character is informed of this secret: our knowledge is that this effect was in fact the result of supernatural intervention. In Bergman's film, Vergérus offers his own explanation for his terror; rather than instilling a belief in the supernatural, all that Vogler has accomplished has been a "fear of death, nothing more"; this admission is followed by a brief pause however, as the enormity of the confession suddenly registers with both men. The key distinction, therefore, is the recognition of individual mortality (as in Heidegger) as opposed to finding a "rational" explanation for the presence of the supernatural.

But there is also a dramaturgical irreverence on the authors' parts with respect to this seriousness, particularly toward their protagonists after they have been de-masked. Bergman has Vogler begging from both Mrs. Egerman and Vergérus, an arbitrary shift in demeanor that seems more conceptual and demonstrative on Bergman's part, rather than motivated by Vogler's personality or circumstances. Similarly, when seeking an emotional demonstration from a hitherto restrained protagonist, Chesterton seems to ironically abdicate any authorial responsibilities with a stage direction to the actor playing The Conjuror: "*Doing whatever passionate things people do on the stage.*"²⁵⁴

While this stage direction describes a comically written *perepeteia* in which two overwrought examples of late Romanticism discover their mutual attraction, this recognition is accomplished through a de-masking that places both characters in a new relation not only to one another, but also to themselves. The mask that the subject assumed the Other had accepted is proven ineffective. This de-masking that proposes a new existential situation for the subject is a staple of Bergman's dramaturgy

²⁵⁴ Ibid 77.

and philosophy. In Chesterton's play, this de-masking creates a new social potential, one that is affirmed by the end of the play and that also corresponds with The Face. The Conjurer, while "*doing whatever passionate things people do on the stage*," declares that, "I am a man. And you are a woman. And all the elves have gone to elfland, and all the devils to hell. And you and I will walk out of this great vulgar house and be married."²⁵⁵ The promise of a new marriage, or a re-marriage, is literally enacted in the film: Vogler and Manda, and the coachman Simson and the maid Sarah, depart as new couples, freed from their status as social inferiors within the "great, vulgar house" of the councilman and his fellows, the doctor and the constable.

While it is certainly legitimate to consider The Face in relation to Bergman's production of The Misanthrope, this also favors the critical inclination to affirm comparisons between Bergman and a major playwright, a bias maintained at the expense of dismissing an aesthetically inferior playwright who may have been just as influential. Why should Magic have persisted in Bergman's memory and serve as the primary source for a later creative project?²⁵⁶ The answer is not only in Bergman's work at Malmö during this time, but also in the collaborative relationships that gave shape to the Göteborg production in 1947, and the re-surfacing of this project and relationships in The Face in 1958. The fact that Gertrud Fridh plays an analogous role in both the play and the film has to be considered as a source of influence; Fridh was a direct, physical, and agentic link between the two productions. There is also the re-casting (or correction) of Max von Sydow in Anders Ek's role as the magician; and there

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Gado 230. Gado thinks the reason for the appeal of the play for Bergman is clear: "Not only does it strike directly at the problem of faith that had been one of his abiding concerns but also, in the figure of the magician, it presented him with a perfect metaphor for himself as an artist." He also notes that Bergman's first references to himself as a "conjurer" in terms of filmmaking coincide with his work on The Face, and stresses the historical associations with magic and cinema, including Méliés and the fact that Sweden's first cinema houses were apparently built by a Danish magician of the name of Jansson.

is the development of a dramatic persona that was initially attached to Ek but which was transferred to a new actor, Bengt Ekerot.

Anders Ek also played Frost in Sawdust and Tinsel, the doppelganger to that film's protagonist and, as the two films supposedly are part of a commentary by Bergman, one can argue that Spegel and Frost, as doppelgangers, mirror Vogler and Albert, the protagonists (and Bergman's acknowledged alter-egos). Additional factors supporting this reading are the similar structuring found in the roles of Death and the Knight in Bergman's The Seventh Seal (1957); Death was played in clown whiteface by Bengt Ekerot and von Sydow played the Knight. One can trace backwards, from Spegel to Death to Frost linking the persona of death to that of a clown.²⁵⁷ This particular subset of doppelgangers was developed through the work of two actors, Ekerot and Ek, both of whom were similarly invested in existentialism and Stanislavski. The actors provided expertise and content in excess of the requirements of the text and director.

B. A Critical Adjacency: The Long Christmas Dinner, by Thornton Wilder

Bergman's production of Magic was part of a double bill that also featured a one-act play by the American playwright, Thornton Wilder, The Long Christmas Dinner, a debut directorial effort by Josef Halfen.²⁵⁸ The pairing of these productions has been overlooked, and Wilder's play is noteworthy in comparison with Bergman's later film, particularly with respect to the degree of theatricality employed in both The Face and Wilder's play.

The Long Christmas Dinner depicts a series of Christmas dinners within a single family over a period of ninety years. The stage directions indicate that it is to be performed on a proscenium stage,

²⁵⁷ Young, Cinema Borealis 179-180.

²⁵⁸ Henrik Sjögren, Ingmar Bergman på teatern (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell/Gerbers Förlag AB, 1968) 58.

but without a curtain. There are two “*portals*” placed to each side of the proscenium; these “*denote life and death*” and are deliberately “*strange*.”²⁵⁹ Actors are provided with conspicuous wigs which they carry and wear to indicate the aging of their specific character “*simply and without comment*.” The play also requires actors to engage onstage with invisible objects, including food, silverware, and pouring and drinking beverages, and also deal with other, invisible characters onstage, typically servants and newborn children. Throughout the play, characters disappear toward death through the stage right portal; the first such exit is something of a magic trick in itself: an old woman is seated in a wheelchair that, “*without any visible propulsion, starts to draw away from the table, turns toward the right, and slowly goes toward the dark portal*.”²⁶⁰ At one point, a newborn child is wheeled in a perambulator from the birth portal; the young mother says, “Oh, what an angel! The darlingest baby in the world. Do let me hold it, nurse,” but the stage directions indicate that “*the nurse resolutely wheels the perambulator across the stage and out the dark door*.”²⁶¹ The young mother immediately exclaims: “Oh, I did love it so!” and is then comforted by a female relation, who place her arm about the mother’s shoulders and the two “*encircle the room whispering*”; this same pattern is then repeated, the young mother accompanied the second time by her husband “*who conducts her on the same circuit*.”²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Thornton Wilder, “The Long Christmas Dinner,” The Long Christmas Dinner and Other Plays in One Act (New York; New Haven: Coward-McCann, Inc.; Yale University Press, 1931) 1.

²⁶⁰ Ibid 4.

²⁶¹ Ibid 13.

²⁶² Ibid 14. The specific image and device of two women whispering out of the audience’s earshot occurs in Bergman’s later film Cries and Whispers [Viskningar och rop] (1973).

All of these elements appear in Bergman's The Face: the grieving mother of a dead child, the crone figure, the exposed theatricality, the rigged moving objects, the use of wigs, the emphasis on the portals of life and death, and the meta-theatrical demonstration of mimed objects. And these elements are conspicuously absent from Chesterton's play, with the exception of rigged objects. What previous scholarship has overlooked is the fact that that the double bill on stage at the studio in Göteborg was a single performance, a combined event.

Rather than treating Bergman's direction of Magic as a discrete event and ignoring Josef Halfen's direction of The Long Christmas Dinner, it appears that the latter production served as a source for Bergman's re-fashioning of elements from this combined performance in 1947 for The Face in 1958. Moreover, it demonstrates something significant about performance and the nature of a theatrical event; namely, that as an event, it transgresses the boundaries between its discrete components (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). This also demonstrates the power of the *regard* of the Other (in this case, Bergman's *regard* as spectator/Other) to re-fashion or re-constitute the performing-subject (the performance of The Long Christmas Dinner).²⁶³

V. A new *regard* toward The Face

In looking at the factors that influenced Bergman's work, it is only appropriate to look at the work that surrounded Bergman and not just his own projects. Bergman's residency at Malmö Municipal Theatre began in the autumn of 1952. Bergman's account indicates that there was no offer until the

²⁶³ A final link between the 1947 production of Magic and The Face is almost peripheral; the translation of Chesterton's play was made by Karl-Ragnar Gierow, who later became the head of the Royal Dramatic Theatre and reneged on providing Bergman with a position at that theatre in 1952. This was a factor that led to Bergman to write the script for Sawdust and Tinsel and then take the position at Malmö; cf. Bergman, Magic Lantern 176. Again, The Face is purportedly a "correction" to the earlier film, and bears a direct relation to it. Bergman later replaced Gierow as head of the Royal Dramatic Theatre; cf. Bergman, Magic Lantern 189.

fall of that year.²⁶⁴ While Bergman's tenure at Malmö was certainly significant, this period is often described by Bergman scholars in a manner that depicts Bergman as running the theatre single-handedly and engaged in every aspect of production.²⁶⁵ The theatre was headed by Lars-Levi Laestadius, and Bergman happily acknowledged that “I was not burdened with administrative worries.”²⁶⁶ Bergman joined the company for the 1952-53 season and left mid-season 1958-59. While Bergman directed 19 productions during his tenure at Malmö (undeniably prolific given his equally busy film schedule), the Malmö Municipal Theatre produced 144 events during these same seasons, from 1951-1959; 125 productions during the period covered by Bergman’s consecutive contracts. Also during this period, Bergman frequently traveled to Stockholm in connection with film projects.²⁶⁷ He therefore was well aware of theatre productions in Stockholm and had ample occasions to see them. To continually study Bergman’s work in isolation is to omit understanding important contexts and influences.

Personnel, especially actors, furnish embodied connections between productions staged by different directors. Actors, such as Bengt Ekerot, Ingrid Thulin and Gertrud Fridh, and their performances were part of a collective carrying forward of existential ideas from piece to piece, and directly shaped The Face. Bergman often acknowledges the influence and contributions of actors, but in his fascination with personalities and his own “mesmerist” approach to cinema, he need not have been aware of all the implications of an individual actor's performance. Nevertheless, actors did provide this sort of content

²⁶⁴ Bergman, The Magic Lantern 176.

²⁶⁵ See Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theatre 57.

²⁶⁶ Bergman, The Magic Lantern 177.

²⁶⁷ Ibid 178-179.

to The Face, through their absurd “silhouette” perhaps, “simultaneously strange and familiar” as Camus described it, but more palpably in terms of their working knowledge and lived experiences.

Summation

The significance of casting is not only a matter of structural interpretation but of the agentic contributions made by an actor. These include the influence of the original cast of Magic as models for the characters in The Face, the performance histories of the actors involved in The Face and how these shaped the conception of the film through memory, association, and extrapolation, and their actual performances in the film proper, which include their performances as characters, their cultural prominence, and the “absurd silhouette” that accompanies them from role to role.

The Face is not concerned with God, let alone the “paradoxical meaning of Christ,” despite all the religious associations and allegorical possibilities. The Face is primarily concerned with the social position of the artist and the binary crisis of being both a producer and a director, a crisis that comes from the parallels between artist/businessman in a sacred idea of art that derives from religious dualities such as soul/flesh, God/man, and the spiritual/temporal.²⁶⁸ The film is very concerned with living in the world, however. In the fulfillment of the *deus ex machina* concluding the film, for example, as the carriage carrying the troupe hurtles away with a police escort to a vibrant, non-diegetic orchestral accompaniment, this soundtrack drops out and the screen is occupied only by a swaying lantern and the comparative silence of an empty street. This is the very emphasis that the film has been making throughout with respect to performance, media, and the scale of human action: the hurly burly can disappear in a moment and the actual state of affairs is a banal emptiness. Like Spegel embracing

²⁶⁸ Cf. Björkman, et al 80. Bergman is challenged concerning his “romantic” versions of the persecuted artist.

the projected image of a death's head, or Antonsson's "invisible chains," human performance occurs in a void, continually in opposition to and concert with illusion.

It was daring to risk filming "nothing" but an actor imagining himself bound with "invisible chains," surrounded by an ensemble of other actors who collectively supported this imaginative demonstration. This exposes the very dynamic of theatrical performance in general, that of collective "belief" and commitment to the performance. It also makes visible the fact that "theatrical" make-believe undergirds filmed drama. The existential quandary that acting and other forms of artistic performance raise time and again in Bergman's work calls into question the foundations of any other form of social and subjective "reality". This particular demonstration in The Face, coming out of 1958, hearkening to the experience of other works, particularly by Camus, Sartre, and Wilder, provides a document attesting to the currency of existentialist performance in the theatre and cinema of Sweden during the 1940s and 50s.

These issues achieve new clarity in Through a Glass Darkly [Såsom i en spegel] (1961), discussed in the following chapter. While the issues of faith and familial relations are the explicit subject of that film, the practices through which these concerns are developed and expressed remain intermedial (theatre and film). In particular, the mechanism of the performance-within, the phenomenon of *mimesis* in performance, and the idea of a *deus ex machina* are crucial to the development of the film's plot and existential perspective.

Ch. III. Performance, self, and space: Through a Glass Darkly (1961)²⁶⁹

*A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability.
We are constantly re-imagining its reality:
to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house;
it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house.*²⁷⁰

*The real logic has to do with atmosphere:
for the movement from room to room of the same house,
or from the interior to the outside,
is a merciless commentary on human possibilities.*²⁷¹

I. Establishing shot

In this chapter, Bergman's Through a Glass Darkly [Såsom i en spegel] (1961) is analyzed in terms of the performance-within and theatrical practices applied in the medium of film; understanding the film requires bridging the fields of theatre and cinema studies. The overt performance-within consists of a short play-within enacted by three of the characters for a fourth character.²⁷² This play-within has a theatrical history of its own, and has far-reaching implications for how we are to view the female protagonist, Karin, and the film itself. Karin (Harriet Andersson) is an instantiation of the phenomenon of social performance. Similar to the characters of Aman/Manda and Vogler in The Face, Karin is capable of adopting diverse personae in managing her relations with Others. Karin's existence is a sublimated performance-within, continually shifting in its contours and eventually unraveling in an existential tragedy. Other theatrical practices are found in terms of staging, concept,

²⁶⁹ Portions of this chapter have been previously published in "Play-within-a-play or theatre-in-film? Ingmar Bergman's Through a Glass Darkly," *Theater Symposium*. Vol. 19 (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011) 91-110.

²⁷⁰ Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) 17.

²⁷¹ Bert O. States, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of the Theater (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1987) 71.

²⁷² The "play-within" is a particular manifestation of the "performance-within" that is the subject of this dissertation. While the term "play-within" will be used liberally throughout this chapter, it is to be understood that the "play-within" still falls within the classification of a performance-within.

dramaturgical structure, intertextual influences (including scripts and productions), and the construction of both practical sets and diegetic space, particularly with respect to the interior spaces of a house. Such practices enabled Bergman to construct this self-described metaphysical “reduction” in ways that overlap with two contemporary concerns in sociology and philosophy: the social construction of identity and the phenomenology of fictional or “poetic” space.

These two concerns successfully combine in Through a Glass Darkly to offer insights on “self” and “space” in a manner comparable with two prominent, contemporary texts: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956), by Erving Goffman (1922-1982), and The Poetics of Space [La poétique de l'espace] (1957), by Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962). The play-within, the social construction of identity, and the spaces (actual and represented) in the film are examined through the lenses of these two texts. While Through a Glass Darkly is widely recognized as the first of Bergman’s “chamber plays,” there has been no serious consideration of the spatial construction in the film apart from the chamber play aesthetic.²⁷³ These spatial elements need to be considered for their philosophical implications; they provide a phenomenological encounter with space in a manner that is both theatrical and cinematic, one that discloses the film’s specific cultural sensibilities as well as broader concerns prevalent in the mid-20th-century.

A. *Parados* and play-within

The film begins with a series of images that one would not characterize as theatrical in any sense, but rather as cinematic: a shot of the sea, an establishing shot of a house, and then a long shot of four people emerging out of the sea, laughing and splashing one another. The laughter seems to be forced

²⁷³ See Marilyn Johns Blackwell, “The Chamber Plays and the Trilogy: A Revaluation of the Case of Strindberg and Bergman,” Structures of Influence: A Comparative Approach to August Strindberg (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981) 49-64.

somehow, and while the voices seem jovial, there seems to be a straining after merriment. Yet, the image of the four figures emerging from an otherwise empty sea is arresting, even archetypal.

Bachelard observes that, “the poetic image is an emergence *from* language, it is always a little *above* the language of signification.”²⁷⁴ Here, the language is visual, but also referential: these four figures are the drama itself arriving in a sort of *parados* from the sea to the site of the tragic performance that will be played out on land, specifically the house.²⁷⁵

The links between the family home and performance are established early in the film; first through formal composition, and subsequently through the performance-within. Following their emergence, the four characters proceed up an embankment and stand discussing their supper plans; the house stands in the background. This exposition providing us with the characters’ names, relationships, and concerns through a discussion of domestic affairs in proximity to their home is a familiar dramaturgical method. There is also something personal in this exposition, particularly in terms of the setting. Bergman claimed to experience an immediate affinity with this site on the island of Fårö: “I told [the cinematographer] I wanted to live on the island for the rest of my life and that I would build a house just where the film’s *stage house* stood.”²⁷⁶ Bergman’s emphasis on this “stage house” evokes its historical theatrical legacy, and places the film in an uncanny and timely relationship with Bachelard’s idea of the “oneiric house” in The Poetics of Space. In Bachelard’s phenomenological account, the architecture of the house in fiction evokes associations with the memories of dwelling spaces in the imagination of the reader/spectator. This is of a piece with the function of the house in

²⁷⁴ Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) xxvii; emphasis added.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Ingmar Bergman, Images: My Life in Film (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1990) 243. The decision to “compress the drama” through “four human beings” coming out from the sea “appearing from nowhere” is “immediately apparent.”

²⁷⁶ Bergman, The Magic Lantern 208; emphasis added.

Through a Glass Darkly, elaborated in the second half of this chapter. This establishment of the house in terms of cinematic convention, its presence in the exposition, and its personal significance to the *auteur* all combine to invest the house as an abiding presence, subsequently born out by the film's action. The house has a spatial doppelganger in the *lusthus* (play house) that serves as the site of the formal performance-within.

B. The self, the performance-within, and social space

Space and human performance are presented as inseparable by the film. In this respect, Through a Glass Darkly and Erving Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life both reflect a set of concerns appropriate to the late 1950s and early 60s. Goffman's landmark sociological study became one of the foundational texts of performance studies. Goffman's deliberate borrowing from the basics of practical space in theatre, namely front stage and backstage, as well as other dramaturgical conceits, including the play-within, in order to analyze social interactions in everyday encounters offers numerous affinities with the plot and construction of space in Bergman's film. Goffman's study was based largely on observations of workers in tourist hotels in the Shetland Islands, and Through a Glass Darkly depicts a summer home on the Swedish island of Fårö in the Baltic, itself a community that oscillates between a year-round population of locals and large numbers of summer vacationers.²⁷⁷ Through a Glass Darkly is not concerned with tourism, of course, but with these four dramatic personae emerging from a seemingly primeval sea, which then proceed toward the house of the drama.

Goffman identifies an issue that is particularly prominent in Bergman's work, in general: "All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify."²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid* 207. Bergman said that he originally intended to shoot the film in the Orkney Islands following a vacation there.

²⁷⁸ Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Anchor Books, 1959) 72.

Goffman's work identifies "some of the dramaturgic elements of the human situation," including "shared staging problems; concern for the way things appear; warranted and unwarranted feelings of shame; ambivalence about oneself and one's audience."²⁷⁹ These issues clearly emerge in Bergman's film. In particular, the "shame" and "ambivalence about oneself and one's audience" are cloaked within the matter of Karin's religious faith. While the question of the existence of God, and of whether religious belief is a form of *mimesis*, is provocatively foregrounded, the basic concern is with authentic existence and seeming-to-be (inauthentic existence). This issue is examined through the phenomenon of mimetic performance, specifically with respect to the central figure in the drama, Karin.

Such thematic concerns point out the need for a methodology to bridge theatre and cinema studies. To explore identity, faith, and performance, Bergman uses the performance-within and theatrical practices, in various forms, within the diegetic "everyday" of the lives of his characters; in short, he applies theatre, in different measure and at different points, to the medium of film. This approach to filmed drama is "interartial," a deliberate blending of other "pure" media, and "an eminent, *if not unique*, example of a transgressional aesthetic project," requiring an intermedial methodology.²⁸⁰ As stressed in preceding chapters, it is not only a matter of Bergman's practice being "not unique," but moreso as representative of the ongoing interpenetration between film and theatre in the Swedish context; this is amply evidenced in the work of Alf Sjöberg, Hasse Ekman, and others. But Bergman was particularly effective within his cultural milieu, "a multi-art creative persona who has always worked with coordinating set design, lighting, costumes and sound, so that verbal and auditory text and

²⁷⁹ Ibid 237.

²⁸⁰ Maaret Koskinen, "Out of the Past: *Saraband* and the Ingmar Bergman Archive," Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008) 20; emphasis added.

visual space are reinforced by various interart sensations.”²⁸¹ In the case of Through a Glass Darkly, the impetus to combine theatre and film was clearly tied to Bergman’s other major directorial project at the time, his stage production of Anton Chekhov’s The Seagull, and in more ways than have previously been considered in Bergman scholarship.

Glancing at Through a Glass Darkly

The film has been primarily considered as a transitional step between Bergman’s 50s work and his “truly cinematic” emergence in the 60s. It is classified as the first of the chamber play films and the first of the “trilogy”; this is complicated by Bergman’s revised classifications for the film and which “trilogy” he was talking about. In its status as an *auteur* work, it is a milestone in Bergman’s relationship with cinematographer Sven Nykvist, a reunion of sorts with actress Harriet Andersson, and the first of Bergman’s films set on the island of Fårö. But the film’s reputation has suffered in retrospect. The film merits a new consideration for its construction of space, for the quality and implications of Andersson’s performance, and in resisting the seduction of the story’s isolation (and its attendant *auteur* mythologizing) to look at its relations to other prominent works concerning performance, identity, and phenomenological space.

II. Film and theatre: Through a Glass Darkly and The Seagull

Through a Glass Darkly was filmed and subsequently released during the same time period as Bergman’s production of The Seagull. The film was shot on the island of Fårö and at the film studio, Filmstaden i Råsunda, from 12 July – 16 September 1960.²⁸² Bergman’s work in the theatre at this time was concentrated on his upcoming production of Anton Chekhov’s The Seagull. This production

²⁸¹ Steene, “A Professional Assessment” 220.

²⁸² Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius, eds., Regi Bergman (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Max Ström, 2008) 275.

opened on 6 January 1961 on the main stage of the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Dramaten) in Stockholm.²⁸³ Through a Glass Darkly premiered on 16 October 1961.²⁸⁴ The shooting schedule of the film thus preceded the play's rehearsal period and premiere, and significant similarities exist between the two projects, including the device of the play-within.

The two projects met with different critical receptions. The Seagull was given 42 performances as a part of the repertory of the Royal Dramatic Theatre.²⁸⁵ On the whole, however, The Seagull did not fulfill critical expectations, receiving primarily disappointing reviews from the Swedish press, with a few, perhaps exaggeratedly ecstatic reviews written by foreign critics, such as Kenneth Tynan.²⁸⁶ Bergman himself was unsparing toward his direction in retrospect, saying that the production was "dreadfully unsuccessful, tired and flabby" and that he was "unhappy at the theatre and thought everything was wrong."²⁸⁷ In contrast, Through a Glass Darkly premiered on 16 October 1961, garnering excellent reviews in Sweden and internationally; it received the Academy Award for best foreign film in 1962.

²⁸³ Bergman's apparent disinterest in Stanislavski did not prevent the program for The Seagull from featuring a reproduction of the Moscow Art Theatre seagull logo on the first page above the title of the play. In 1988, IB was invited by the Moscow Art Theatre to contribute some words for the 125th anniversary of Stanislavski's birth, specifically "if Stanislavsky's ideas on the art of acting did play any role in your theatrical and cinematographic practice, and share with us your opinion of the Stanislavsky's theory for the modern world theatre" (Professional correspondence from Vladlen Davidow, manager Stanislavsky Museum, Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives, K: 1129).

²⁸⁴ Other work by Bergman during this period included a radio production, broadcast on 22 January 1961, of Leka med elden [To Play With Fire] by August Strindberg, with the actors Gunnar Björnstrand and Max von Sydow, both of whom were also in Through a Glass Darkly. Bergman also directed The Rake's Progress, by Igor Stravinsky, at the Royal Opera, Stockholm, which opened on 22 April 1961.

²⁸⁵ The Seagull was followed at Dramaten by Alf Sjöberg's production of Altona [Fångarna i Altona], by Jean-Paul Sartre. The cast included Lars Hanson, Anita Björk, Gertrud Fridh, Bengt Eklund, and Max von Sydow (P: 001:02, Dramaten program for The Seagull, p. 2).

²⁸⁶ Steene, A Reference Guide 597.

²⁸⁷ Björkman, et al Bergman on Bergman: interviews with Ingmar Bergman by Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, Jonas Sima, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) 150.

The play-within: linking histories

A prominent feature in both works is the play-within, which in both works may be said to serve as a symbolic or metaphysical reduction of the larger drama. Bergman's treatment of the play-within in The Seagull elicited specific praise as a "nocturne" working as "pure stage imagery": "What this ingeniously composed spectacle deals with is, of course, nothing but love's impossibility in a world where all are unfortunate in love, and where little Nina will fall into destruction like a seagull."²⁸⁸ Bergman keeps a seagull motif present in Through a Glass Darkly: Karin is awakened by the cries of a hungry gull ("en sjöfågels hungriga skri").²⁸⁹ In both Chekhov's play and Bergman's film, the young playwright's work is viewed with skepticism by an older, established artist and parent. Both plays-within occur outdoors, at twilight. And in both, a young woman appearing in the early play-within emerges as a tragic protagonist by the end of the drama proper; thus, the play-within in both pieces is used to reveal something supposedly incidental that later proves to be fundamental. In both dramas, the space of the outdoor stage is linked with the interior life of the family home, thereby linking performance and domestic space.

Writing about the convention of the play-within a few years prior to Bergman's film, Robert J. Nelson stressed that the play-within a play is a uniquely modern phenomenon: "Conscious of all doubt, man becomes self-conscious. Not only the meaning of action but the meaning of meaning is examined. [...] The use of this technique *implicates within the work of art* those considerations which

²⁸⁸ Nils Beyer, "Ingmar Bergmans 'MÅSEN'" Stockholms Tidningen 7 Jan. 1961: 4; my translation. Bergman also keeps the seagull motif present in Through a Glass Darkly: Karin is awakened by the cries of a hungry gull ("en sjöfågels hungriga skri"); B: 028 p. 53, and Film trilogi 28.

²⁸⁹ Ingmar Bergman, Film L-131 (Såsom i en spegel) (Unpublished regim Manus, Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives, B: 028. Stockholm: Svensk filmindustri AB, 1960) 53; see also Ingmar Bergman, En filmtrilogi (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1963) 28.

usually remain prior and external to the work.”²⁹⁰ Through this implicating, the play-within captures “a history of itself, a record of the scruples and hesitations in the course of its making, sometimes even a defense or definition of the kind to which it belongs or the conventions which it respects.”²⁹¹ Applying these observations to Through a Glass Darkly compounds the potential “implications” and “considerations” by asking what a play-within-a-film captures: What history or histories does it have to offer, of itself and of the film that contains it? To what “kind” does a play-within-a-film belong and what conventions does it “respect”? Answering these questions requires a consideration of the aesthetics used in constructing the play-within and a consideration of the theatrical history that informs the film.

Bergman’s directorial debut of The Seagull on the main stage of Sweden’s national theatre was his first effort at Chekhov. Expectations were quite high due to Bergman’s earlier successes at Malmö Municipal Theatre, as well as his growing international stature as a cinematic *auteur*.²⁹² While at Malmö, Bergman began to routinely employ the device of a stage-upon-a-stage in order to counter the effect of the enormous playing space of the theatre at Malmö and to help focus the audience’s attention more exactly.²⁹³ The platform stage, which Bergman saw as “absolutely the archetypal theater, the

²⁹⁰ Robert J. Nelson, Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958) 10; emphasis added. Nelson emphasized the Aristotelian idea that our pleasure in things imitated is inseparable from imitation itself, and that while there are formal characteristics shared by drama and ritual, the imaginary world of the play “is not discovered, but created” (5). In analyzing the convention of the play-within and its relationship to the play that contains it, Nelson argues that a play’s formality in terms of structure, language, and “the indispensable formality” of occasion or event, is what distinguish it for the spectator; furthermore, it is only the off-stage spectator, as a witness to a “double action,” who defines the play-within (6-7).

²⁹¹ Leslie Fielder, “The Defense of the Illusion and the Creation of Myth,” English Institute Essays 1948 76; qtd in Nelson 10.

²⁹² Henrik Sjögren, Lek och raseri: Ingmar Bergmans teater 1938-2002 (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2002) 231.

²⁹³ Marilyn Johns Blackwell, “Platforms and Beds: The Sexualization of Space in Ingmar Bergman’s Theatre and Film,” Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London; New York: Wallflower, 2008) 64-65.

very oldest form of theater” informed his practice in theatre and film into the 1980s.²⁹⁴ Bergman explained his attraction to the use of the platform as a stage-within-a-stage: “And the actors stand there and then they climb up onto the wagon or the platform or whatever it is – and suddenly they are powerful, magical, mysterious, multidimensional. *And that is immensely fascinating.*”²⁹⁵ In fact, this is the type of stage Bergman used to present the play-within in both The Seagull and Through a Glass Darkly.

The play-within on a rudimentary stage offers a point of comparison between Chekhov and Bergman. Both may have been critiquing the practices and ambitions of younger contemporaries through this literal platform. Chekhov’s play-within may have parodied the Norwegian playwright Bjørn Bjørnsen.²⁹⁶ Chekhov criticized Bjørnsen’s Beyond Human Power as having “no meaning because the idea isn’t clear” and faulting Bjørnsen: “It’s impossible to have one’s characters perform miracles, when you yourself have *no sharply defined conviction as to miracles.*”²⁹⁷ Similarly, in an interview titled “Underground theatre is self-indulgence,” printed during the filming for Through a Glass Darkly, and in which Bergman talks about his enthusiasm for directing The Seagull, he states:

I care very much for young talents and young enterprises. But this business with small theatres is altogether wrong. It trains neither actors nor audiences. None of them get the right perspective on the theatre as art when they sit in each other’s laps. *Underground theatre is some kind of spiritual masturbation.*²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 24. Cf. Blackwell, “Platforms and Beds” 64-85; Blackwell offers an interesting study of Bergman’s use of beds as “stages.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 25.

²⁹⁶ Laurence Senelick, Anton Chekhov's Selected Plays (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005) 132. Senelick observes that the aspiring playwright in The Seagull “seems unable to find an original play to express his nebulous ideas” and suggests that one source for Treplev’s play may have been Bjørnsen’s Beyond Human Power.

²⁹⁷ Qtd. in Senelick 132-133; emphasis added. Chekhov made this observation shortly before the debut of The Seagull.

²⁹⁸ Qtd. in Steene, A Reference Guide 781; emphasis added.

For both Chekhov and Bergman, the play-within may serve as an antithesis to the aesthetics of the larger drama, despite its symbolic affinity with the events of that same drama. It records historical performance practices that the authors were critical toward, yet at the same time preserves the trace of such practices within itself.²⁹⁹

This performance-within also preserves a personal history and a critique. Minus claims to have written “thirteen full-length plays and an opera” in the film; Bergman was also an aspiring playwright in his youth, writing a dozen plays in the course of a summer in 1942.³⁰⁰ Minus may reasonably be interpreted as a variation on Bergman’s younger self. But the play-within of “The Artistic Haunting” also shapes the subsequent action of the film and serves to convey the subjective spatial organization of the film. This “theatrical” inclusion establishes the film’s aesthetics.

III. Case study: “The Artistic Haunting” (http://youtu.be/ylwTO_WmQ6M)

The phenomena of the actor’s *mimesis* and role-playing are central to Through a Glass Darkly and also inform the construction of space in the film. Early in the film, the four characters gather for an outdoor performance of a play. The father, David (Gunnar Björnstrand), an established author, is the sole audience member to an original play composed by his adolescent son, Minus (Lars Passgård). Minus and his elder sister, Karin (Harriet Andersson), perform the short piece for their father, while Karin’s husband, Martin (Max von Sydow), serves as an onstage interlocutor, accompanist, and prompter. The play-within is entitled “The Artistic Haunting; or, The Tomb of Illusions.” It is about a young man with artistic ambitions who promises undying love to the ghost of a Castilian princess, but

²⁹⁹ Cf. Lurana Donnels O’Malley, “Plays-within-realistic-plays: Metadrama as Critique of Drama in Pirandello and Chekhov,” *Theater Studies* 35 (1990): 45-46. Stanislavski thought that the play-within was “an exhortation to a new style of theatre,” rather than the critique that Chekhov intended.

³⁰⁰ Peter Cowie, Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982) 12.

balks at accompanying her to the afterlife, and instead abandons her to the tomb. It begins in a conflation of Elizabethan and Romantic styles (Martin tells David: “It is almost like Shakespeare”), and concludes in ironical Modernism, as the would-be artist contemplates turning his encounter into an opera, poem, or painting: “Although the ending has to take a more heroic turn. Let’s see: ‘Oblivion shall own me and only death shall love me.’ That’s not bad.” This gibe is intended by Minus for his father, a self-absorbed novelist and a distant parent.

A. Aesthetic effects of the performance-within

“The Artistic Haunting” is a parody, a critique, a summary, an intermezzo, but also a work of theatre-in-film. Even in its deliberate excesses, it reflects what has been noted in Bergman’s full-scale theatre work, namely an “unusual visual and acoustic creativity”³⁰¹ as well as an awareness of “the auditory and spatial dimensions” of the play.³⁰² Observing this performance-within introduces us to the idea of dual realities, which in the film proper is tied to religious faith and basic human relationships.

This performance-within calls our attention to the father, David, and his responses to the play. This demonstrates what Goffman called a “fundamental asymmetry” in human communication in which, given that every person seeks to present a favorable impression, the observer must always gauge the veracity of the other’s performance.³⁰³ In “The Artistic Haunting,” it is clear that the players are

³⁰¹ Steene, A Reference Guide 563.

³⁰² Steene, “A Professional Assessment” 218.

³⁰³ Goffman 7. “Others may divide what they witness into two parts; a part that is relatively easy for the individual to manipulate at will, being chiefly his verbal assertions, and a part in regard to which he seems to have little concern or control, being chiefly derived from the expressions he gives off. The others may then use what are considered to be the ungovernable aspects of his expressive behavior as a check upon the validity of what is conveyed by the governable aspects.”

seeking to present a favorable impression; but so does the audience member, who goes largely unobserved, except by us. David applauds enthusiastically and calls out “Author! Author!” at the end of the play, but we have seen his “expressive behavior” while watching the play, which has indicated amusement, disdain, boredom, and an awareness that the play-within is, on one level, an attack on his own artistic sensibilities. In short, David’s responses are not unlike Bergman’s criticisms of “underground theatre”; thus these are an “implication” of “considerations” that otherwise would be “prior and external” to the film.

We also watch the performance-within itself, ostensibly “a record of the scruples and hesitations” encountered in the film’s making. Through “The Artistic Haunting,” Bergman stresses what one takes to be defining characteristics of theatre: a platform stage, stylized language and gesture, and costuming that is simultaneously makeshift and symbolic. These prove to be aesthetic features of the film itself. As a form of dramaturgical shorthand, the play-within constitutes “a defense or definition” of the film’s “kind” and “conventions.” These prove to be so close to “theatre,” and so pervasive in the film proper, that Bergman later disavowed the film.³⁰⁴

B. Karin and *mimesis*: existential aspects of the performance-within

The space of the *lusthus* and the activity of a summertime comedy, or *lustspel*, link the film with Swedish cultural practice; it replicates domestic performance practices familiar to its original audience. This establishes an affinity between audience and the onscreen actors; the *lusthus* and the *lustspel* are a space and activity one may feel “at home” with on-screen. In fact, what is most revealing about this cinematic play-within is the degree to which the protagonist, Karin, seems fully at home in it. She seems radiant in the role of the Castilian princess, who has died in her “thirteenth year in childbirth.”

³⁰⁴ Björkman, et al 163-164; cf. Bergman, *Images* 247-248.

But she is also adept within the production on a number of levels, providing a number of offstage effects, such as ringing a bell and imitating a cock's crow.³⁰⁵ While performing her role, Karin crowds her husband, Martin, toward stage left at one point, seemingly oblivious to his presence. When Minus goes up on a line, Karin "prompts" the prompter (Martin again) with a discrete kick, and then literally prompts Minus; this is a humorous moment, but interesting also because the duality of the actor's onstage existence is made transparent. Near the end of the play-within, the Castilian princess retires to the interior of her tomb (the *lusthus* that Minus has converted into a theatre) and waits for the poet to join her, saying "I am waiting" ("Jag väntar") twice from offstage/offscreen. While the poet remains onstage having second thoughts, the princess quietly announces "Jag väntar" a final time, and then "I wait no more" ("Jag väntar inte längre").

These lines, spoken by Karin as she stands looking out a broken window, are exceptional for a number of reasons—per the layout of the *lusthus*, she is at an interior window in a corner of the *lusthus*, a window that is never emphasized in any shot other than these two medium close-ups. The only point at which this window can even be discerned is in those shots of the play-within where the camera is positioned at center, per the ideal perspective of the ducal seat in Renaissance stagecraft.³⁰⁶ Thus, Karin is playing out-of-view, ostensibly from "backstage"; we see her still "in character," but no longer from the perspective of David (her father and audience); for that audience, she is an offstage voice. Karin is thus playing privately, as she does later in "real" life, when she is alone in an upstairs

³⁰⁵ Bergman, *Film L-131 (Såsom i en spegel)*. Bergman makes a note "Gong Gong" for Karin's bell cue in the shooting script (34); he also cut lines and emphasized Karin's crowing in notes: "Gal Karin" (41).

³⁰⁶ This is "god-like" in its perspective. Karin's mutual desire to perform for both her father and God the Father is significant. That this specific camera position is used recurrently in the film makes it not only an aesthetic choice, but a thematic one as well. The "ducal seat" which constitutes the perspective for an "ideal subject" is a motif in this film. It is used to develop Bergman's existential investigation of the self in performance, the relationship between subject and Other.

room of the house, communicating with invisible voices and awaiting the “entrance” of God. This is a point in the play-within where cinematic privilege is re-asserted, following the spatial logic of the *lusthus* rather than classical continuity editing. The view that we have of Karin in this shot belongs to no one; it is not constituted as belonging to her father’s point-of-view, and has not been established in any way prior to this usage. It seems to belong solely to Karin, in some way, and demonstrates a certain sincerity she has in relation to her role in the play-within.

Goffman emphasizes that for a performance to succeed, an audience must perceive the player as sincere, and that many social performers are in fact sincere, but that “affection for one’s part is not necessary for its convincing performance.” The risk for a “sincere” performer is that “a rigid incapacity to depart from one’s inward view of reality may at times endanger one’s performance”; the implication being that “an honest, sincere, serious performance is less firmly connected with the solid world than one might first assume.”³⁰⁷ There is therefore something quite significant in seeing Karin play the role of the princess from off-stage, as her “sincerity” indicates her disconnection from the “solid world.”

This moment also undermines our conventional notions of acting as a performance primarily for others. As Goffman noted: “There is the popular view that the individual offers his performance and puts on his show “for the benefit of other people”; but he suggests reversing this accepted notion and “looking at *the individual's own belief in the impression of reality* that he attempts to engender in those among whom he finds himself.”³⁰⁸ This strikes at the core of personhood and identity, and this proves to be the same project that Bergman is undertaking in the film. The appearance of this shot is jarring,

³⁰⁷ Goffman 71.

³⁰⁸ Goffman 17; emphasis added.

and it demonstrates the link between this play-within and the “real world” of Bergman's cinematic *kammerspiel*. This link is material and formal, not just conceptual; and the conclusion of the play-within demonstrates an interesting aspect of how this link establishes itself within the diegetic “reality” of the film proper.

Ironically, Bergman’s ideas on acting prove to be fundamental to expressing the conflict of the protagonist: “When you are acting a part, *you are not an I, you are always a you. You must concentrate not on yourself but always on your fellow actors. And you must do so all the time, even when you are not on the stage.*”³⁰⁹ Considered in relation to Through a Glass Darkly, Bergman’s observation on acting seems to suggest an abdication of one's self or ego (“I”) to the status of a representation of a self, or a self as an object (a “you”), not an identity. This is the very crisis of the protagonist (Karin), which Bergman presents in a comparison of religious faith with mental illness. But the real issue is this question concerning what it is to be a *role* (existence in the second person) versus an *authentic ego* (existence in the first person). Theatrical practice and performance thus prove to be central to the conceptions of self, space, and existence in the film.

Karin’s performance as the Castilian princess provides us with a first glimpse into her capacity for *mimesis* and the existential observation that, “Confronting man, woman is always play-acting.”³¹⁰ This mimetic ability proves to be inseparable from Karin’s religious belief, from her relationships with the

³⁰⁹ Marker and Marker A Life in the Theater 30-31; emphasis added.

³¹⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1953) 543; qtd. in Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Anchor Books, 1959) 112-113. De Beauvoir continues: “These histrionics require a constant tension: when with her husband, or with her lover, every woman is more or less conscious of the thought: ‘I am not being myself’: the male world is harsh, sharp edged, its voices too resounding, the lights are too crude, the contacts rough.” Karin's acute hearing and sensitivity to light conform to de Beauvoir's descriptions.

three men in her family, from her position as a woman in the world, and from her inner life.³¹¹ Karin, played by Harriet Andersson, seems luminous in her role as the princess from beyond the grave; of all the participants in the performance, she alone seems to live within the play, to be a part of its creation, to be at home within its fiction. In the course of the film's action, we also see Karin in her roles as a sister, as a daughter, and as a married woman. Karin can play all of these roles convincingly, at times, but they weigh on her, they seem imposed from without, she suffers in her effort to exist within the boundaries of these roles and at the same time to sustain a single persona, and she finds that she can no longer continue to shift between these various roles or the realms in which they are performed. The performance-within captures Karin's existential condition, which is then amplified by the film's subsequent action.

C. After-effects of the performance-within

The play- or performance-within routinely informs the subsequent actions of the main plot. Following "The Artistic Haunting," the characters take up the house lamps that have served as footlights, and proceed back to the house, laughing and chatting about the play and who will perform the after-dinner chores. But this is also a formal procession, noted as "the promenade with the paraffin lanterns" in the director's shooting script.³¹² Karin leads the way, still in costume as the Castilian princess with her crown, bearing a lamp; the others follow. This procession continues, maintained in a long shot that tracks its unbroken movement in a swivel pan, from the stage of the *lusthus* through the

³¹¹ This may have a particular resonance in the Scandinavian context, from the idea of God as a silent spectator in Kierkegaard to Dreyer's version of St. Joan, through Bergman here, and into Lars von Trier's female protagonist in Breaking the Waves, who also communicates privately with God but conspicuously performs the voice of God.

³¹² "Promenaden med fotogenlamporna." Ingmar Bergman, Film L-131 (Såsom i en spegel) (Stockholm: Svensk filmindustri AB, 1960; Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives, B: 028) 42, e.f. Bergman also uses "promenad" to describe the family's initial movement toward the *lusthus*, as well (ibid 32, e.f.).

garden to the door of the house, which Karin and Martin enter. This shot is followed by a medium shot of the house with the father in the foreground and Minus in costume in the background, fencing with his player's sword. Karin appears, still in her Castilian princess wardrobe, at the window of her bedroom to say goodnight. Through this procession and as emphasized by this subsequent shot, the play-world has entered into the domestic life of the house. I find this to be a basic characteristic of the performance-within in film: it is a reduction of key elements of the diegesis, it stands out as an attraction in a manner that reinforces the everyday reality of the diegesis, but it also subsequently affects the behaviors of the characters in their "reality"; the elements of performance suffuse the everyday.

In this respect, there are also connections between the *lusthus* and the "house" proper; the promenade not only brings the qualities of role-playing and *mimesis* into the home, but opens up the house to a full range of phenomenological possibilities. The interior of the house starts to become available to us, primarily through Karin, following the performance-within. Acting (performance) and the space that it establishes for itself prove to be inseparable. These connections are elaborated in the second section of this chapter.

The concepts of social masks and play-acting in life clearly had a viable currency at this time, and it is evident that Bergman's film participates in considering this issue. Alf Sjöberg addressed the issue of social and dramatic personae in an interview with Kenneth Tynan early in 1961. After attending Bergman's production of The Seagull, Tynan saw Sjöberg's production of Sartre's Altona [Les Séquestrés d'Altona]. Sjöberg told Tynan that all drama has to do "with an exchange of masks—with

an attempt, conscious or not, on the part of one character to take on the image of another.”³¹³ Goffman also stressed the idea of masks and that the link between *persona* and *person*, “is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role . . . It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves.”³¹⁴ Through a Glass Darkly also demonstrates these tensions; the mask is evidenced by the role-playing of the performance-within.

The matter of social masks and performance does not reside wholly within the diegesis; it underlies the entire construction of the film. Through an *auteur* lens, one may look at the four personae that initially emerge from the sea as representations of a single consciousness. But, as a dramatist, Bergman is always dependent upon collaborators, in this case, actors. Birgitta Steene identifies “Bergman’s self-modeling as a human strategy aiming at integrating inner and outer worlds: himself as a consciousness and himself as the Other”. This strategy maintains a parallel between “outer and inner layers of directorial or authorial self-representation and Bergman’s use of an actor in his theatre productions in both an active role and as a silent witness on stage.” Steene advocates paying attention to Bergman’s use specific actors “and the double role he often assigns them as both a play text character and a symbolic presence, that is, both a speaking role player and voyeuristic Other.”³¹⁵ This

³¹³ Kenneth Tynan, “A Winter Journey: Stockholm, Warsaw, East Berlin,” Tynan Right & Left: Plays, Films, People, Places, and Events (New York: Atheneum, 1967) 58-59. Tynan found the production to be “magnificently directed with the benefit of three month’s rehearsal” (59). Max von Sydow, Gertrud Fridh, and Lars Hanson led the cast at Dramaten.

³¹⁴ Robert Ezra Park, Race and Culture (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950) 249; 250; qtd. in Goffman p. 19-20.

³¹⁵ Steene, “A Professional Assessment” 221. Steene is speaking of individual actors within ensembles, but the same principle seems applicable to Bergman’s use of social groups as choruses, as in Sawdust and Tinsel. Applying Steene’s suggestion to an individual such as Gunnar Björnstrand, one sees this actor in the roles of both character and observer in Sawdust and Tinsel and Through a Glass Darkly. The two characters (or masks) are radically different (Sjuberg the actor-manager versus David the author) but both are authority figures and both are professionally and personally detached observers. But their functions and trajectories are nevertheless similar, in certain aspects. Sjuberg supervises rehearsals and the battle royal, while David watches son’s play and, later, the disintegration of his daughter’s mental state.

is clearly a component in Through a Glass Darkly with respect to David, but the film also emphasizes in Karin the existential condition of a perpetual “actor” living as an object of performance. It is the Sartrean nightmare of God as a perpetual *regard*, recalling the problem of Others discussed in the second chapter with respect to The Face.³¹⁶

While the play-within and the *lusthus* offer literal examples of theatre, acting, staging, and a backstage, there are other stages and backstage areas in the context of the film’s “everyday.” All of these spaces are linked together through the figure of Karin, for whom “performance” is an existential condition. Goffman defined the “backstage” of everyday life as a place relative to the “front” of a given performance “where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course.”³¹⁷ But in Karin’s case, whether she is literally on-stage performing for her father, talking with her husband in their bedroom, or communing with otherworldly voices in an upstairs room in the house, virtually every space remains a site of performance; she is never truly out of view, or entirely “backstage”. Karin imagines herself before a range of invisible spectators, including God, who usurp the spectatorial roles of her father, husband, and brother. In fact, the one space where she is out of view, or backstage, in any subjective sense is when she seeks refuge in a wrecked fishing vessel; this site becomes a symbolic abyss, a “cosmic cellar” in the spatial scheme of the oneiric house of the drama.³¹⁸ In this “cosmic cellar,” the consummation promised between the artist and Castilian

³¹⁶ Cf. Robert E. Lauder, “Bergman’s ‘Shame’ and Sartre’s ‘Stare’,” Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 282; “If God existed He would be an infinite stare” and thus, “God’s stare would destroy me as freedom. Sartre’s phenomenology, his letting-reality-appear-as-it-is, reveals to him that God is a metaphysical impossibility. Human reality’s freedom demands the death of God.”

³¹⁷ Goffman 112.

³¹⁸ Bachelard 118.

princess in the play-within of The Artistic Haunting is realized as an act of incest between brother and sister. This later scene is included in the discussion of “poetic space” in Section VI of this chapter.

IV. The performance-within, *auteur cinema*, and *théâtre vérité*

A full consideration of the use of the performance-within in cinema is needed to expose the many contradictions and critical biases in both film and theatre scholarship, and to develop a better appreciation of the necessary relationship between cinema and other performance media. But a brief consideration of examples of mimetic performances-within from two films that are contemporary with Through a Glass Darkly provides an improved appreciation of the pressing interest in performance and identity ca. 1960. Bergman was not alone in his use of the performance-within and other theatrical practices within the medium of cinema.³¹⁹ One may find additional examples of similarly overt performances-within in the work of Bergman’s *cineaste* contemporaries such as Agnès Varda (b. 1928) and Michelangelo Antonioni (1912-2007), and similar dramaturgical structures concerning performance and identity. These performances-within involve the depiction of both performers and spectators, and are typically related to the existential concerns of the protagonist.

A particularly relevant case is Agnès Varda’s Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962). While awaiting the results of a cancer screening, a female pop singer, Cléo, undergoes a crisis of identity: leaving behind her handlers, she ventures out into the streets of Paris on her own. Varda combines on-location shooting with real time: the action of the film falls between the hours of 5 till 7. In doing so, the neoclassical unities of time, place, and action (as well as a protagonist of high station) are maintained. While the medium is

³¹⁹ Cf. Maaret Koskinen, “Out of the Past: *Saraband* and the Ingmar Bergman Archive,” Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008) 20. Koskinen emphasizes that Bergman’s practice clearly forms “an eminent, *if not unique*, example of a transgressional aesthetic project” in which the conventions and practices of theatre (stage plays, opera, vaudeville, puppetry, ballet, etc.), and filmed drama frequently inform and shape the other.

film, the dramaturgical sensibility derives from French neoclassical theatrical practices. Cléo de 5 à 7 excels in realizing those criteria through a skillful interweaving of performances-within and cinema.

Varda began her career, in fact, as an official photographer for the Théâtre National Populaire in Paris from 1951-1961.³²⁰ Varda's work, as well as that of other directors in the French New Wave with which she was associated, provide ample case studies for what may be described as an "interart" approach to analyzing filmed performance. In keeping with the ideas of intermedial analysis, many of these films "play with several strategies of media representations," removing the traditional oppositions of film to theatre, photography to painting, film to literature, and the like, "blurring the established borderlines between the apparatuses."³²¹

Cléo de 5 à 7 relies on a firm sense of realism and identification with the protagonist while at the same time questioning the "reality" that shapes that protagonist's identity. But Varda is less concerned with *mimesis* than with ideas of performance and the performative. Cléo, in addition to being a performer herself (and performing her "self"), is also witness to several different kinds of performances-within in the course of her journey. These include being surrounded by masked revelers, seeing a short silent film, observing an artist's model, and happening upon two street performances: a frog swallower and a body-piercer.

Cléo, who as a performer and a woman has been an object in the *regards* of Others in the earlier portion of the film, is now shown in the position of spectator. But the performances-within by the frog swallower and a body-piercer that she witnesses, and feels revulsion toward, also offer potential information to and about her. Bulimia and self-mutilation are the foundational practices underlying

³²⁰ Alison Smith, Agnès Varda (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998) 3.

³²¹ Jürgen E. Müller, "Intermediality: A Plea and Some Theses for a new Approach in Media Studies," Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997) 301-302.

these performances; both are directly linked to the career ambitions of male performers for the benefit of a popular audience. Their inclusion in the film hints at modes of self-abuse that might accompany Cléo's celebrity, and may be symbolical extensions of her career. These two performances-within also demonstrate the malleability of the body, however grotesquely, via the action of performance. The protagonist subsequently exercises this potential for herself in a solitary performance-within in which she is "at play."

Cléo performs alone, like Karin in the empty upstairs room in Through a Glass Darkly. She improvises a follies staircase number on a flight of steps in Parc Montsouris and, reaching the bottom of the stairs, drops the "act" in order to resume her solitary sojourn. As is typical, the performance-within stands in contrast with the everyday; but, being undertaken by the protagonist, this performance-within instantiates an alternative to her habitual manner of existence (including the previous kinds of performances that she has given). In her performance-within as a make-believe follies dancer, Cléo seems to have genuine fun and expresses in an extraordinary physical fashion the experience of freedom that she has achieved through her walk alone. As is typical of the diegetic actions following a performance-within, Cléo seems more "real" to us and herself; she walks rather than dances, and continues along her way. This overt performance-within will affect the subsequent action of the drama.

Like the play-within in Through a Glass Darkly, these other kinds of overt performances-within consistently bear a relation to the existential condition of the protagonist. Another aspect of these performances that deserves further consideration is the degree to which these derive from and impact upon the actual performer playing the character-at-play. Corrine Marchand, who played Cléo, said of this performance-within: "It's the dream of any singer . . . I would have loved to be the lead in a revue, with feathers everywhere, descending the stairs. I realized that dream here." As this statement

indicates, such performances can have existential implications for the actual performer as well as the character.³²²

A second contemporary example of a performance-within is found in Michelangelo Antonioni's L'avventura (1960). In this film, there is no play-within or otherwise overt mimetic performances, but the female protagonist, Claudia, still engages in various forms of *mimesis* and private "play." Like Through a Glass Darkly and Cléo de 5 à 7, L'avventura is concerned with identity, specifically with a search for identity on the part of a female protagonist, and the attendant question of surrogate or mimetic role-playing. Claudia experiments with elements of costume, wigs, and engages in a brief episode of play, making faces before a mirror during an evening of anxiety and insomnia.³²³ As slight as this performance-within may seem, this character-at-play still functions in the same manner and achieves a similar effect as the overt performances-within in Through a Glass Darkly and Cléo de 5 à 7. In this case, Claudia performs for herself via a mirror; she is simultaneously both actor and spectator. And as with Karin's and Cléo's performances-within, when Claudia's "performance" is concluded, the "reality" of that character's "life" and, by extension, the diegesis as a whole, is re-asserted for the spectator; the performance-within intensifies the effect of the verisimilar plot and acting.³²⁴ This small, sublimated performance-within in L'avventura thus poses the same question as the performances-within in Cléo de 5 à 7 and Through a Glass Darkly: it questions everyday reality by

³²² See Corrine Marchand, "Interview," Cléo de 5 à 7 (The Criterion Collection, 2000).

³²³ It is worth noting that this event evokes comparison with another bit of foolery before a "mirror" in the Marx Brothers vehicle, Duck Soup (dir. Leo McCarey, 1933), which in itself is an example of an "interart" approach in which the cinema subordinates itself to a performance deriving from vaudeville.

³²⁴ A crucial difference lies in the framing that Antonioni uses to capture this return to the everyday; the camera remains focused on the mirror and it is in the mirror's reflection that we see Claudia return to her bed and sit down, still restlessly anxious. One possible implication of this use of the mirror is that Claudia's return to the everyday is really just the resumption of a false reality, one that is based upon an illusion, and the subsequent plot events bear this out.

providing alternative potentials for existence through performance. In doing so, it necessarily transgresses the purely cinematic by including other performance media.

In each of these films made ca. 1960, the performance-within demonstrates the element of choice in constructing identity, specifically with respect to their female protagonists. The performance-within demonstrates a fundamental distinction that we make between “performance” and the “everyday”; the performance stands out, it is conspicuous and short-lived, a contrast to “reality.” The performance-within captures something basic about its container in the work of all three filmmakers; it also discloses something basic about enacted drama and the manner in which the drama is delivered. It would be erroneous to dismiss the presence of the theatrical within Bergman’s work as anomalous; in fact the aesthetic transgressions in Through a Glass Darkly are both timely and revealing of the longstanding relations between theatre and film.

A. Redefining boundaries: *théâtre vérité*

These overt performances-within constitute a separate “register” of performance; they augment the expressive potentials of the work as a whole. The irony, of course, is that such phenomena should emerge within a larger “performance” that seeks, in most cases, to represent a dramatic narrative that is also plausible and therefore acceptable as “real” to its audience. In this respect, it is curious that a performance- or play-within should appear at all within a verisimilar play or film. In terms of this ability to include other performances within itself, the performance tradition that narrative cinema seems to have the greatest similarities with is theater. Yet, these two media seem to have a troubled relationship, and theatre and cinema scholarship maintain a substantial distance from one another despite the fact that there is clear interpenetration of the two media historically, and that both rely, in most instances, upon actors playing characters, i.e. human beings pretending to be other human beings.

As emphasized in the introduction to this dissertation, director and critic Jean-Luc Godard aptly described the process of shooting a film as *théâtre vérité*: “I see no difference between the theater and movies. It is all theater. It is simply a matter of understanding what theater means.”³²⁵ The challenge is to reconsider what is meant by theatre, as well as entrenched views of cinema as an activity wholly distinct from the theatrical. This artificial distinction has had a long life in terms of film theory and criticism. Theatre and film scholars overlook the live performance that makes the cinematic performance possible. Formal analyses of editing, discussions of absence and presence, debates over “live-ness,” a preponderance of studies of the “gaze,” and a host of other modes of criticism nevertheless routinely overlook the dependence of these phenomena on the constitutive practices of live performance, such as acting, singing, dancing, or even frog swallowing. Understanding the connections between theatre and film in the mid-20th-century is a means of addressing contemporaneous questions concerning identity and performance in philosophy, sociology, psychology, and linguistics. The performance-within provides an object through which to develop this understanding.

The inclusion of the performance-within is a way to supplement, and even elevate, the main drama, filmed or staged, by including a register of overt performance.³²⁶ This sleight-of-hand makes the diegesis “real” while also providing the exhilaration of the non-real or extraordinary, i.e. performance. The very persistence of the performance-within in cinema, be it a formal play-within, a sidewalk

³²⁵ Godard 14.

³²⁶ Cf. Maaret Koskinen, “Everything Represents, Nothing Is”: Some Relations between Ingmar Bergman's Films and Theatre Productions,” *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997) 99-107. Koskinen observes an important contradiction in Bergman's oft-professed concern with total cinematic illusionism: “It is remarkable how often in his films this is turned into a sort of *investigation of the necessary counterpart in the creation of that illusion* – the audience. This acute awareness of an audience is, arguably, the key to Bergman's aesthetics both in theatre and in film” (104).

attraction, or even a behavioral performance-within as seemingly innocuous as making faces in a mirror, reveals something basic about the character of performance itself. Despite the degree of development or formality (the play-within arguably is more aesthetically complex than the street performance of a frog swallower, which in turn is more structured and socially complex than a few moments of making faces before a mirror), these events are all extraordinary in terms of effort; they must be consciously undertaken by the performer(s) and can only be maintained for a certain duration.

This demonstrates that the nature of performance is limited and circumscribed, that it is an action requiring a unique degree of energy and concentration that affects our (performer and spectator) experience and perception of time and space. As aspects of a larger performance, such as the play of The Seagull or the film of Through a Glass Darkly, events such as a play-within appear as a kind of excess. It is as if the discreet mode of verisimilar representation sustaining the larger performance required some additional, more conspicuous register of play or signification as a kind of aesthetic release or outlet. In addition, the repeated presence of performances-within demonstrates attests to a basic cultural value apparently attaching to performance as a means of individual expression, a way of standing out and apart. This value is, by turns, affirmed and contested through the inclusion of the performance-within in such films as Cléo de 5 à 7 and Through a Glass Darkly.

V. Other theatrical sources for Through a Glass Darkly: O'Neill and Ekerot

The aesthetic interpenetration between film and theatre, the fact that cinema and theatre are used to respond to and comment upon one another, and the additional fact that personnel work together, compete, and influence one another through these media are pressing reasons to study the two together. The ties between theatre and film in Through a Glass Darkly are clear in relation to Bergman's

production of The Seagull.³²⁷ But another influence lies in Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night (1940-41), bringing again into play the relevance of other directors' work to Bergman's practice. Theatre and cinema are social in nature and, as seen in the development of The Face and Sawdust and Tinsel, the work of collaborators and competitors plays a role in the shaping of an individual work. Both the text of Long Day's Journey Into Night as well as its prominent production history in the Swedish context provides insights into the construction of space and character in Through a Glass Darkly.

Both dramas are set in a family's summer home during August near the sea; both houses face east and have windows looking out on the water and a road between the home and the water; there is a formal symmetry emphasized in the represented design of both houses; and both feature the presence of a foghorn.³²⁸ Moreover, the central action in both dramas is based on the female protagonist undergoing recidivism, slipping into an illness that is at once her own and a product of her relationship to the three men in her life; and both dramas happen within the span of a day. Significantly in both dramas, the female protagonist goes to a separate room upstairs to isolate herself from the others and it is in this space that her "illness" develops its strength.³²⁹ Both dramas concern the development of a young artistic son who stands in contrast to the settled success of an artist father. And both dramas are

³²⁷ Chekhov's play, a 19th-century American short story, Strindberg, and a deleted scene from an earlier Bergman film are all recognized as relevant influences. See David F. Holden, "Three Literary Sources for *Through a Glass Darkly*," Literature/Film Quarterly II, no. 1 (Winter) 1974: 22-29. Holden identifies Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," and August Strindberg's play, Easter, along with The Seagull, as evident sources Bergman's screenplay. Cf. Jörn Donner, The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman 211; Donner acknowledges Gilman's story, Strindberg, and a deleted scene from an earlier Bergman film, Prison [Fängelse] (1949). Cf. Björkman, et al 162-163; in a deleted scene from Bergman's Prison [Fängelse] (1949), the female protagonist encounters an artist; a similar episode involving wallpaper and hallucinations ensues in his room. Cf. Gado, 272; Gado offers additional details on Gilman, Prison, Strindberg, and another possible autobiographical source.

³²⁸ Eugene O'Neill, Long Day's Journey Into Night (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955) 11-12; 66.

³²⁹ Ibid 38-39; 55-57; 123.

concerned with faith, particularly the religiosity of the woman. Finally, in both dramas, the artist-son has a privileged bond with the female protagonist, the implication being that she is fundamental to the development of the artist.

There are additional, historical links between the two dramas in the Swedish context. The world premiere of Long Day's Journey Into Night took place at The Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm on 10 February 1956. The production was directed by Bengt Ekerot (1920-1971).³³⁰ In an interview for *Teaterkonst*, Ekerot said that he saw Long Day's Journey Into Night as “the end of the Ibsen-Chekhov line,” and that there was no way to “proceed further within this style” that O'Neill's play had “consummated.”³³¹ This statement proposes an intertextual tangle that deserves at least cursory attention here. O'Neill's debt to Strindberg was self-professed, and the *kammerspiel* concept may well be applied to his last play. Given the similarities between O'Neill's family drama and Through a Glass Darkly, and considering Bergman's later remarks that the film was “a surreptitious stage-play” attributable to his unrealized desire to be a playwright, perhaps Ekerot's statement spurred Bergman's ambitions in writing the script.

Ekerot's direction of the world premiere of O'Neill's drama, plus Bergman's other engagements with Ekerot during the late 50s (discussed in the previous chapter), are therefore part of the creative circumstances surrounding the composition of Through a Glass Darkly.³³² Allowing collaboration and

³³⁰ Cf. Helander 127; Gustav Molander was to direct the production, but bowed out, and Karl Ragnar Gierow, the head of the theatre, appointed Ekerot. It was therefore a remarkable career opportunity for Ekerot.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² The fact that Ekerot played the title role of Hamlet in 1955, which has the famous play-within of *The Mousetrap*, is also worth noting. Bergman himself would later direct Long Day's Journey Into Night at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1988 (premiered 16 April), directly after staging Hamlet in 1986 (premiered 20 December). Cf. Steene, Reference Guide 824. The sequence of these two productions recalls that of Ekerot's performance in Hamlet in Sjöberg's production, and then his subsequent direction of Long Day's Journey Into Night; furthermore, Bergman had Hamlet (Peter Stormare, who also would play Edmund in the O'Neill play) dressed like Bergman himself in his typical director's “costume”; see Janet Staiger,

competition as factors in an individual's creative output, not only should the text of O'Neill's play be considered as an influence on Through a Glass Darkly, but specifically Ekerot's direction of the world premiere of Long Day's Journey Into Night.

There is an additional reason to consider the influence of Ekerot and O'Neill on Through a Glass Darkly. Speaking in retrospect some thirty years after the making of the film and twenty years since the death of Ekerot, and with no apparent prompting, Bergman claimed that he had miscast Lars Passgård in the role of Minus and that "it should have been a young version of the actor Bengt Ekerot."³³³ It is also noteworthy, given the similarities in construction between the roles of Minus and Chekhov's young playwright, that Ekerot played Treplev in The Seagull early in his career.³³⁴ Ekerot's dual role as a competitor and collaborator with Bergman (like Sjöberg and Ekman), once again requires consideration as a potential influence, particularly with respect to the construction of Through a Glass Darkly. These connections arise through careers that straddle theatre and cinema, and illustrate the necessity for an expanded methodology to analyze both media.

VI. Performance and space: Revisiting the site of "The Artistic Haunting"

The play-within and the role of the Castilian princess were explicitly invoked in a later scene in the screenplay of Through a Glass Darkly. Returning to the family home following the events in the hold of a wrecked ship, Karin passes through the garden and stops beside the *lusthus*. She sees something

"Analysing Self-fashioning in Authoring and Reception," Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts (London; New York: Wallflower, 2008) 97-98. This would place Bergman both onstage as Hamlet and as director to Long Day's Journey Into Night, mirroring the positions that Ekerot enjoyed.

³³³ Bergman, Images, 256.

³³⁴ The production was at the New Theatre in Stockholm [Nya Teatern, Stockholm, Regeringsgatan 111], and directed by Per-Axel Branner. The cast included other future Bergman collaborators such as Karin Kavli, Erik Strandmark, and Gunnar Björnstrand, among others.

in the grass and picks it up; it is the tinsel-paper crown that she wore as the princess in Minus's play, now wet with rain and falling to pieces. She throws it aside and continues on toward the house.³³⁵

This moment was not included in the final print of the film, but it indicates the significance of the play-within in Bergman's conception of Karin and the story as a whole. The *lusthus* was intended to be a "station" (such as the crown of thorns) in Karin's "passion."³³⁶ In addition, its placement parallels the structure of events in The Seagull in which Nina returns in the last act and views the abandoned stage that she had once played upon from a new perspective: "I went to look at the garden, to see if our stage was still there. And it's standing to this day. [...] And so, now you're a writer. You're a writer, I'm an actress. . . . We've both fallen into the maelstrom."³³⁷ That this deliberate reference to Karin's role in the play-within was not included in the film is not surprising. In terms of continuity, we have already seen Karin wearing the crown within the house; also, Bergman may simply have curbed what would have been a dramaturgical excess. The significant thing, in addition to the structural similarity to Chekhov's play, is that Karin's performance in the play-within, like Nina's, clearly bears a direct relationship to these two characters' subsequent condition in their worlds.

The *lusthus* stands not only in relation to the play-within, but also as an element in the ordering of space in the film; it is one of a number of small outbuildings comprising the environs of the *sommarhus* (summer home) belonging to the family. The *lusthus* also invites a consideration of the "house" in the film, just as the play-within establishes a relation to the actions of characters in the

³³⁵ Ingmar Bergman, "Såsom i en spegel," En filmtrilogi (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1963) 59.

³³⁶ Cf. Gado 164; 278-279. Karin's movement from the shore to the house recalls Frost's "passion" in the prologue of Sawdust and Tinsel.

³³⁷ Anton Chekhov, "The Seagull," Anton Chekhov's Selected Plays (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005) 180.

“world” of the diegesis. In the organization of space in the film, one finds many similarities between Bergman and the contemporary work of the French phenomenologist, Gaston Bachelard. And as with the film’s dramaturgy, there are strong theatrical models applied in constructing the space of this cinematic *kammerspiel*.

A. Exteriors: the *lusthus*, the *skene*, and the metaphor of the “house”

The “stage house” was purpose-built, and was based on a design found on the neighboring island of Gotland. It was constructed with the labor of local carpenters and masons, who were unaccustomed to building a house strictly for the short term.³³⁸ This in itself is characteristic of set construction for both theatre and film: one builds for short-term purposes, for representation, presentation, and play; in short, for ludic activity. While the medium, period, and cultures differ, the trans-historical record indicates a great deal of human effort invested in the construction of temporary arenas for make-believe play and exhibition. Included in this activity is the more typical sort of set construction within permanent structures such as theatres, opera houses, or film studios.³³⁹ In terms of production, film and theatre (as well as circus, opera, ballet, etc.) build with a sense of impermanence; there is always an element of the makeshift that accompanies the kinds of construction related to performance. Permanence is reserved for the infrastructures of distribution and exhibition, not for the world or worlds that are represented. This is not just something in common between theatre and film; this is something that originates in theatre and continues into film.

³³⁸ Fårö Tour lecture, Bergman Week Festival June 2010.

³³⁹ One might object that theatre and film differ in that the spaces in which film sets are built are not designed to accommodate public audiences. But the intended site of distribution for films throughout most of the 20th-century was in fact a “theatre” based on the model of the 19th-century proscenium playhouse.

The purpose-built house on Fårö was a theatrical edifice in the tradition of the Greek *skene*. It served as backdrop, but also as an implied interior; we see characters enter and exit the house, for example, but the camera is never situated so as to capture both the exterior and the interior; the house is a space into which characters disappear and re-emerge. The sole exception is when, at the conclusion of the “promenade” after the performance of the play-within, we see Karin still in her costume as the Castilian princess saying goodnight to her father from the window of her bedroom. This action alone, with Minus fencing in the foreground, still in costume, links the purpose-built house to the “tiring house” of the Elizabethan theater. The “stage house” built on Fårö derived from and exhibited its links to theatrical traditions; therefore, the house and the literal “theatre” in the film, the *lusthus*, clearly complement one another.

The film also provides us with a subjective experience of space, specifically that of the house, through the person of Karin. This is dependent not only upon seeing spaces cinematographically, but by witnessing the actor’s encounter with space, an encounter which “takes us *into* a world within the world itself,” and is not really due to “the illusory, the mimetic, or the representational” but to “a certain kind of *actual*” visually and aurally, “to which we join our being.”³⁴⁰ The primary structures presented in this manner are the house and some of its interior rooms, the *lusthus*, and a wrecked shipping vessel.³⁴¹ The interior spaces are David’s study, Martin and Karin’s bedroom, the house’s

³⁴⁰ States 46; original emphasis.

³⁴¹ Other exterior spaces represented include a second outbuilding located between the *lusthus* and the house, and a fishing shack by the shoreline. The first structure, a sort of storage shed near the *lusthus*, seems particularly significant and is linked to theatre practice. This building is distinguished by a feminine masthead that stands by the door; this feature recalls the statue in the stage design for the first act of Bergman’s production of *The Seagull*. In the film, this outbuilding serves as a backdrop *skene* to a scene between Minus and Karin associated with language (Latin), sex (pornography), cigarettes, and secrets. This is a space that is never opened, but seems to belong, as does the *lusthus*, to the relationship between Minus and Karin. When Karin returns to the house after the incest in the wrecked ship, Minus hides behind the second outbuilding.

front foyer, the kitchen, Minus' small bedroom, the interior back entrance, and a staircase leading to the unused second floor of the house. We also see a hallway on this floor, some exposed attic space, and a wall-papered room (possibly a former nursery).

This spatial experience is delivered cinematically, but is derived from theatrical practice and precedent. Furthermore, through the actor, it is phenomenologically constructed, drawing on our experiences of space and spatial perception. This quality of space in the film has been a source of criticism; one critic complained that the film was “bone-pared: a drab house, drab people, a stony seascape,” that was “all very disciplined and renunciatory and carefully composed,” and expressly theatrical.³⁴² But this construction of phenomenological space is clearly an expression of Karin's being.

Through a Glass Darkly was filmed between 12 July and 16 September 1960. Approximately 40% of the shooting schedule was devoted to interior settings that were filmed at the Svensk Filmindustri studios in Råsunda; the other 60% of the schedule was devoted to exterior scenes shot on-location on the island of Fårö. Bergman has related, in different interviews, an immediate affinity with the island of Fårö upon his first visit there scouting locations for Through a Glass Darkly.³⁴³ Bergman said, “If one wished to be solemn, it could be said that I had found my landscape, my real home; if one wished to be funny, one could talk about love at first sight. I told Sven Nykvist I wanted to live on the island for the rest of my life and that I would build a house just where the film's *stage house* stood.”³⁴⁴

³⁴² Vernon Young, “Two Swedish Casualties,” Film Quarterly 15, no. 4 (Summer 1962) 53. Young adds that, “there's little that's cinematic in this movie, which could as well have been a play. [...] I'll re-insist that the aesthetic self-sufficiency of an art is the unarguable principle of its impressive existence.”

³⁴³ Bergman, Magic Lantern 207-208.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*; emphasis added.

There is an important correlation to the idea of a *théâtre vérité* in this, one appropriate to describe the ludic activity linking theatre and cinema to the basic phenomenon of performance. There is a taking up of real space and sites for the purposes of enactment as well as the augmentation of such spaces by temporary construction and playing. The *lusthus* typifies this activity and makes it conspicuous. Similarly, the purpose-built house on Fårö needs to be considered as a phenomenon in its own right, not merely as a location, or a set, or as just an element of a *mise-en-scène*. The house is a pervasive presence in the film in a manner that is unitary to the drama.³⁴⁵

The exterior “stage house” and the interior settings need to be considered as spheres of performance in their own right. There is also the fictive “house” as it is aesthetically established, represented, and experienced through viewing the film, and the relations that this phenomenon has to theatrical practice. In terms of spectator affect, the “house” in the diegesis of the drama may still be described as a unitary phenomenon, much as the “house” in a production of Chekhov, Ibsen, or Miller might be described and analyzed, or a “house” as it is available to the reader of a novel, short story, or poem. In this respect, Bergman’s “house” bears a remarkable similarity with the phenomenological analysis of the house in literature presented by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in The Poetics of Space.

B. The “poetics of space” in Through a Glass Darkly

Bachelard’s text and Bergman’s film both indicate a desire for psychic wholeness through the experience of the unity of space; however, this unity eludes the performative identity of the social self. Bachelard considers the house “a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values

³⁴⁵ It is important to note that the house built on Fårö was used for exteriors, whereas the interior scenes were filmed in the studios of Svensk Filmindustri at Råsunda. While one must acknowledge these as separate sets for the playing of specific scenes, each one was nevertheless a “stage.”

of inside space” when taken “in both its unity and its complexity.”³⁴⁶ It is safe to say that the “house” is a setting as well as one of the most pervasive metaphors employed in 20th-century Western drama. Its significance as a metaphor must not be underestimated: “The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.”³⁴⁷ Bachelard finds the house to be primordial in its associations with the shell and the hut.³⁴⁸ Similar associations are evoked by the emergence of the four characters from the sea at the beginning of the film. The need for shelter is implicit as the characters stand before the stony edifice of the *sommarhus*.

While the house is used in a fairly typical manner for a cinematic establishing shot near the beginning of the film, the full dramatic potential of the house is reserved for a moment of dramatic crisis. Having discovered Karin undergoing a deeply perturbed psychical episode in the hold of a wrecked ship, Minus races on foot back to the house to fetch a blanket for her. In a low angle long shot, we see him run through the rain to and into the house; the camera is placed in perfect parallel with the plane of the house, centered on the doorway, thus presenting the house for the first time in the film in full view, exposing its complete symmetry. The summer home is disclosed in this framing as the *skene* of classic tragedy, a composition as formal as that used in “The Artistic Haunting” when the perspective on the play-within shifted from that of David to the “ideal spectator.” The house in its full tragic structure dominates the figure of the young man racing toward it. This shot is followed by an interior shot where Minus, still viewed from behind, rushes into his small bedroom adjacent to the kitchen, grabs a blanket off the bed, and then abruptly falls to the floor and silent prays, almost in a

³⁴⁶ Bachelard 3.

³⁴⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* 22.

³⁴⁸ Bachelard 30; 132.

fetal position. He lifts himself up and says, or mouths, “God” a single time. The drama moves on, and this frontal symmetry is never replicated again; but, its selective employment testifies to the influence and power of theatrical effect in cinema.

Performance space and Conceptual Metaphor

To appreciate the significance of the house in drama or poetry, it is important to account for its effect as a metaphor. This was part of Bachelard’s project in undertaking a phenomenology of the imagination and this is what undergirds the emotional and “theatrical” effect of the house in Through a Glass Darkly. Accounting for this lies in the fundamental presence of dwelling places in human cultures, and how these experiences have informed conceptual structures in language, specifically conceptual metaphors. This has been treated exhaustively in the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. In discussing common conceptual metaphors that are present in everyday speech, Lakoff and Johnson stress that the BUILDING metaphor, which would include the house as described by Bachelard and as constructed (literally and figuratively) in Through a Glass Darkly, is unique. In the BUILDING metaphor:

The surface is the outer shell and foundation, which define an interior for a building. But in the BUILDING metaphor, unlike the CONTAINER metaphor, the content is not *in* the interior; instead, the foundation and outer shell *constitute* the content.³⁴⁹

In other words, the BUILDING metaphor, such as the house, is impregnated with meaning; hence, we use it in everyday ways such as “The foundation of your argument does not have enough content to support your claims” and “The framework of your argument does not have enough substance to

³⁴⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh 99-100.

withstand criticism.”³⁵⁰ The artistic elaboration of metaphor is a development in thinking. Metaphor “is not merely a matter of language,” but “a matter of conceptual structure,” and conceptual structure is not merely intellectual but “involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: color, shape, texture, sound, etc.,” dimensions which structure both mundane and aesthetic experience.³⁵¹ The house in Bergman’s film and the longstanding presence of “the house” in drama evidence this claim, and demonstrates how theatre and film may be said to think through images in a manner related to language but not reducible to semiotic analysis.

The CONTAINER and BUILDING metaphors are the foundation of Bergman’s sense of theatre and metaphysics: it is why there is so often always a performance-within his work on some level, which discloses the greater performance that is presented as “reality.” Lakoff and Johnson see language and physical experience as inseparable: “*In actuality we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis.*”³⁵² Similarly, Bachelard argues that only “phenomenology—that is to say, a consideration of the *onset of the image* in an individual consciousness—can help to restore the subjectivity of images and measure their fullness, their strength, and their transsubjectivity.”³⁵³ Taken together, these provide a starting point in accounting for why the metaphor of the “house” in drama, in general, and specifically in Through a Glass Darkly manages to be at once powerfully resonant but still never didactic, an *experience* as opposed to a *sign*.

³⁵⁰ Ibid 100.

³⁵¹ Ibid 235.

³⁵² Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By 19. Due to embodied processes, the numerous spatial metaphors used in everyday speech remain cognitively salient; the same areas of the brain that are activated in actual sensorimotor endeavors are similarly active in the employment of spatial metaphors.

³⁵³ Bachelard xix. Bachelard adds: “These subjectivities and transsubjectivities cannot be determined once and for all, for the poetic image is essentially *variational*, and not, as in the case of the concept, *constitutive*.”

Looking to the necessity and message of the house in Through a Glass Darkly, one can see both its function as a playhouse and its gravitas as a tragic *skene*, as well as its primordial conceptual structure. It is home to both artist and to seer, Minus and Karin, brother and sister. The isolated house of the film and the relationship between these two figures reflect what Bachelard sees a loss to contemporary existence owing to a slackening of the “anthropocosmic ties” and their “first attachment in the universe of the house.”³⁵⁴ In fact, Bergman’s film specifically addresses this “lack,” participating in a similar project as Bachelard’s.

Through a Glass Darkly is pre-eminently concerned with shelter, extending from the individual through the social to the metaphysical. While certainly troubled by the idea of God, the film also hesitates before the idea of existential atheism. This hesitancy corresponds with Bachelard’s criticism of what he sees as a surfeit of “abstract, ‘world-conscious’ philosophers who discover a universe by means of the dialectical game of the I and the non-I.”³⁵⁵ These same (among whom it seems safe to include Sartre) “know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting-place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I.”³⁵⁶ Through a Glass Darkly is far less confident, however. The protective “non-I” (the Other, especially the Other-as-parent) seems exactly what both Minus and Karin languish after. To understand this more fully, it is necessary to consider the interiors, both as sets and, ultimately, as aspects of “the house” as we experience it through the film.

³⁵⁴ Ibid 4.

³⁵⁵ Ibid 4-5.

³⁵⁶ Ibid 5.

C. Interiors

Bachelard's observations on the house in literature have an uncanny correspondence with the values and properties of the house in Through a Glass Darkly, and the idea of the house in drama generally. In the film, the interiors of the house, in particular, are intimately connected with the space of the *lusthus* as disclosed in the performance-within of "The Artistic Haunting"; the link between each of these spaces is the figure of Karin. The interior spaces of the house are not effectively open to us until after the performance-within, and it is primarily Karin who makes these interiors available to us.

Bachelard emphasizes that the fictional house, which evokes autobiographical associations from our common experiences of houses, distills the "house" most effectively: "Through poems, perhaps more than through recollections, we touch the ultimate poetic depth of the space of the house," which he maintains is "one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind."³⁵⁷ Bachelard identifies two basic, connecting themes in representations of the house in French literature: "1) A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality. It is one of the appeals of our consciousness of verticality. 2) A house is imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality."³⁵⁸ A key component, and one that is found in the film, is a sense of verticality that "is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic, the marks of which are so deep that, in a way, they open up two very different perspectives for a phenomenology of the imagination."³⁵⁹ "Verticality" was purportedly a guiding concept for the film; it was to be "a story that moves vertically, not horizontally" and "a film that went into an untested

³⁵⁷ Ibid 6.

³⁵⁸ Ibid 17.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

dimension of depth.”³⁶⁰ The axis for this vertical movement is comprised by the poles of the upstairs room and the “cosmic cellar” of the wrecked ship; the embodied mind, which reflects our experience as vertical creatures, is the source of this verticality.

The upstairs room

An interior setting directly linked to the idea of verticality and to performance is the upstairs room where Karin goes to speak with oracular voices and to await God. The working title for the film was “The Wallpaper” [“Tapeten”], and Karin communicates with her voices through a pronounced gash in the wallpaper of what would be the northern wall of the room; this scenic feature was used in both the film and a later stage version. The shooting schedule also identifies the room as “tapet-rummet” [“the wallpaper-room”].³⁶¹ However, there is also an idiomatic expression in Swedish, “vara på tapeten” translatable as “to be the topic of discussion.” This suggests that the events in this room are the thesis of the film itself; the wallpaper may simultaneously be taken as suggesting an idiomatic phrase and as part of the *decor*. In performance, the conceptual acquires physical presence, even in the case of a film, which afterwards offers a reproduction of that presence.

Bachelard is concerned with the poetic image in literature, but what obtains for the image evoked and conveyed cryptographically can also be true for the visual and aural metaphor: “The poetic image places us at the origin of the speaking being. Through this reverberation, by going *immediately* beyond all psychology or psychoanalysis, we feel a poetic power rising naïvely within us.”³⁶² This description

³⁶⁰ Bergman, *Images* 249.

³⁶¹ Document, Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives B:028; bilaga.

³⁶² Bachelard xxiii; original emphasis.

of the reader's experience of "the voice" of a poem may be applied to Karin's experience of divine communication. Bachelard continues:

The image offered us by reading the poem now really becomes our own. It takes root in us. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we *could* have created it, that we *should* have created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses: in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. *Here expression creates being.*³⁶³

This is, in effect, a description of Karin, but also of Minus, the aspiring playwright, and even their father, David, who continues to struggle as an author despite his many successes. Bachelard's phenomenological description of poetry proves to be a performative and existential analysis appropriate to characters in a drama, and to the work of artists in general. It also attests to the performative affect of the poetic image encountered phenomenologically.

The upstairs room as a stage: sequence analyses

How does the space of the wall-papered room function theatrically? First of all, in terms of the theme and content of the drama that occurs in this space, it bears associations with contemporary productions of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1953); it is a space in which Karin literally awaits the arrival of God. It is a small, spare space, an empty playing area represented as being limited by four walls with a single door. This arrangement and confinement also recalls Sartre's No Exit. But the action that occurs in this space is considerably more forceful, even primal, than these two earlier plays.

1st visit: Karin and the embedded stage (http://youtu.be/Vch9_QtbQQc)

In the first scene played in this space, Karin enters in a simple white nightgown in her bare feet; she is filmed in a low-angle long shot that emphasizes her movement through the space and her bare feet

³⁶³ Ibid; emphasis added.

on the heavy wooden floor. She crosses the room from camera right to camera left to look out of the east window; she turns and walks back across the room again, leaning on the west wall, near the door to the hall. We see her in a medium close up and hear whispering voices; this shot cuts to a close up of the tear in the wallpaper on the north wall, through which voices seem to be emanating. Reflected light, presumably from the sun rising over the Baltic, is coming through the eastern window, wavering over the wallpaper and the camera slowly zooms toward the gap as the volume of the voices increases. This occasions a somewhat anomalous transgression of the 180° axis-of-action rule; the next shot is a reverse shot of the room, as if from the perspective of the gap itself. In effect, this is a point in the film, as when we saw Karin playing at the window “offstage” in the play-within, where Bergman violates a rule of continuity editing in order to pass “as through a glass darkly,” the “glass” being the medium of cinematic representation itself. We see Karin framed as before in a low angle long shot, but now she moves from camera right to camera left, away from the wall to the center of the room; there is a dirty window behind her, facing the west. She stops in the center of the room and undergoes an episode of religious ecstasy that is, by turns, supplicating, penitent, arousing, painful, masturbatory, violating, disappointing, and draining.³⁶⁴

This room is a conflation of domestic and performance space. This episode is filmed very simply, with the emphasis maintained on the actress, center-stage, as it were, as if this were a modern dress staging of a protagonist in a Greek tragedy, such as Cassandra in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon. The empty space aesthetic bears comparison with Peter Brook, and the physicality of the actress (here and in the third scene played on this “stage”) invokes comparison with contemporary approaches to acting found

³⁶⁴ Cf. Bergman, Through a Glass Darkly, adapt. Jenny Worton (London: Nick Hern Books, 2010) 35. Worton retains this in her stage directions for the stage adaptation: “There is something both sexual and deeply devotional in the way she holds her body.” In the live performance, the actress spoke the following lines at the end of this scene: “I’m sorry Daddy” (Almeida 6 July).

in the work of Jerzy Grotowski, or Julian Beck and Judith Molina at the Living Theatre: ritualistic, highly physical, and “holy.”³⁶⁵ Furthermore, the floor of this room is rough, exposed boards, recalling the platform stage of the *lusthus*. Bergman frequently uses “platforms to suggest a delimited space of ritual,” including the use of the matrimonial bed in his film work, a “connection between bed spaces and platform spaces” attributable to the idea of “the fundamentally sexual quality of stage space.”³⁶⁶

This scenic evocation of an embedded platform stage is significant for two reasons. First, at the end of this episode, Karin curls up on the floor. In framing, posture, and composition, she is collapsed at center stage. This affirms the space as one of sacred performance; furthermore, the camera position replicates the same “ducal seat” perspective that occurred during the play-within. Second, in the arrangement of space within the house, this room is significant also because it lays directly above the bedroom that Martin and Karin share. Thus, while Karin prays, experiences orgasm, and finally seems to sleep, she does so directly above a second variation of a “platform stage” commonly used by Bergman, namely the matrimonial bed. There are, in effect, two stages evoked: one *inferieur* and one *superieur*. This maintains the “verticality” that Bachelard identifies as characteristic of the “oneiric house.” It also demonstrates the link between the film and contemporary theatrical practices.

Bachelard argues that, in poetry, the house “furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time” and asks if it is possible to “isolate an intimate, concrete essence” in images of the house, one that could account for “the uncommon value of all of our images of protected intimacy.”³⁶⁷ Bergman’s filmed *kammerspiel* relies on this sense of “protected intimacy” that is a part of our

³⁶⁵ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1996) 59-63.

³⁶⁶ Blackwell, “Platforms and Beds” 67; 70.

³⁶⁷ Bachelard 3.

expectations from a home, but clearly demonstrates the failure of the house (i.e., the father and, by extension, all the male members of the family) to safeguard the female visionary. The crucial question here is the relation between faith and performance, both of which are tied to sexuality, at least for Bergman.³⁶⁸ This will be further called into question by the act of incest between brother and sister later in the drama, but the issue is presented in this scene explicitly by the “performance” before God, but also implicitly, even subliminally, by Bergman's adherence to the spatial construction of the “house”: the wall-papered room lies above the marital bed, and Karin sleeps with God rather than with her husband. For Bergman, faith and theatre are inseparable, and this is taken up here in the medium of film.

2cd visit: Karin and Minus (<http://youtu.be/228eSuWMbL8>)

The second scene in the tapet-rummet is between Karin and Minus. In handwritten notes in the director's copy, Bergman divided this scene into sections indicated by ritualistic or ceremonial titles written in uppercase lettering: I OFFRET, SMÄRTAN, ABSENSEN, TRÖTTHETEN [In Sacrifice, The Suffering, The Absence, The Fatigue].³⁶⁹ This is the same style used in denoting PROMENADEN MED FOTOGENLAMPORNA [The Procession with the Paraffin Lamps] following the play-within, and is also used to distinguish the staircase in the director's script.³⁷⁰ The religious and ceremonial significance is bound up in the architectural features and the physical movements; the

³⁶⁸ See Maaret Koskinen, "Allting föreställer, ingenting är" 25. Koskinen cites Blackwell quoting Harry Schein concerning, "Bergman's demonstrative lack of interest in anything social other than sex and theatre."

³⁶⁹ Bergman, Film L-131 (Såsom i en spegel) 88-91, e.f.

³⁷⁰ Ibid 42, e.f. This style of notation is applied to the architectural component of the staircase as well (93, e.f.), indicating to me that this structure also has a ritualistic significance.

ritualistic content pervades the everyday. Furthermore, it is the conspicuous activity of the performance-within that inaugurates these rituals.

In this second scene, Karin leads Minus to the room and tells him about her religious conversations with the voices. Minus states that it is different for him and that he cannot believe. Karin is overwhelmed with fatigue and, as in the first scene in this room, lies down to sleep in a fetal position on the bare floor. The movement between Karin and Minus is dance-like in its coordination; again, the room with its exposed plank floor is a site of stylized movement, just as the scene has been marked by the director into ceremonial units. Minus leaves Karin asleep in the room, returning only after a few seconds; just as he is about to open the door, Karin pops the door open herself, seemingly alert and behaving as if nothing had occurred. This cuckoo-clock timing with the door and transition between behaviors recalls the play-within and keeps alive the question of play-acting within the house and in human relations.³⁷¹

3rd visit: Karin and the play-within re-framed (<http://youtu.be/QzZYTWCLOYA>)

The third scene in the *tapet-rummet* replicates numerous elements of the earlier play-within in terms of staging, roles and relationships; it is notable also for its employment of a *deus ex machina*. As in the play-within, David, the father, plays the role of spectator to his daughter's powers of imagination and manipulation, the synthesis of which may be the phenomenon of religious faith. In the play-within, Karin is an actress who is compelling and credible while at the same time capable of managing various production roles (stage manager, prompter, sound effects); but, in addition to this, she seems to have a personal investment in her role as the entombed ghost of the Castilian princess, playing the role

³⁷¹ It also recalls a similar action in an earlier Bergman film, *Summer with Monika* [*Sommaren med Monika*] (1952). This moment was between a young married couple and also involved a doorway, this time to a bathroom, and an abrupt transition in behavior on the part of the woman, who deliberately play-acts because of the presence of her mother-in-law. Interestingly, this action was performed by the same actress, Harriet Andersson, in both films.

with conviction even from “offstage” when she is out of the view, but not the hearing, of her fellow players, her brother and husband, and the on-screen audience, her father.

This is a very important element, for this final scene in the wall-papered room is initiated by David hearing Karin’s voice speaking to someone from the “backstage” regions of the house proper, whose everyday life plays out on the ground floor. David follows the sound of Karin’s voice upstairs, down the hall toward the tapet-rummet, and then stands observing her, standing barefooted in her pale dress on the bare planks of the empty room, addressing her invisible auditors, saying repeatedly, “I understand.”³⁷² The husband, Martin, has followed behind David, but he enters the room (or stage) and participates in the ensuing drama, partly a player, partly a failed interlocutor between Karin’s “performance” of metaphysical reality and the “everyday”; this replicates his role from the play-within. When Martin seeks to intervene, Karin maintains her performance while physically pushing him offstage, as in the play-within. When God appears in the form of a spider, Karin becomes hysterical, knocking down her husband and fleeing the room. Halted on the staircase by Minus, forcibly restrained by her father, and sedated by her husband, Karin explains that this “spider god” had tried to crawl up inside of her. “I have seen God,” she tells all three men.

A multi-tiered performance-within: *mimesis*, platforms, and history

It is crucial to recognize that Karin’s response to the spider is virtual celebration of the powers of the actress. It is an act of *mimesis* that we accept without hesitation: no spider is ever seen or mentioned in this sequence, yet we know absolutely that Karin is terrified. It is the product of the actress imagining a spider in the room and the camera recording an actor’s make-believe; the spider is no more present or real than God. Dramaturgically, the emergence of the spider is synchronous with

³⁷² There are numerous moments in Bergman where this kind of staging occurs. Cf. Koskinen, Spel och spelningar 191-199.

the arrival of a medical helicopter; thus, Bergman employs a literal *deus ex machina*, and to extraordinary effect.

The space of the wall-papered room is a manifestation of the platform stage as employed by Bergman during his tenure at Malmö, and also as it was regularly celebrated in the work of Alf Sjöberg. This site also heralds the minimalist “empty space” aesthetic that will figure so prominently during the 1960s in the work of theatre directors such as Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, both of whom take up as theatrical subjects the soul, religion, sacrifice, and the expressive range of the human body as a signifier. Like Bergman, these two directors challenge the primacy of the spoken word in drama.³⁷³ Bergman was never as avant-garde as these two directors, but their interests are compatible and they share the same historical moment.

It is again worth recalling that the play-within necessitates examining “the meaning of meaning,” and that this technique “*implicates within the work of art* those considerations which usually remain prior and external to the work.”³⁷⁴ Through this implicating, the play-within captures “a history of itself, a record of the scruples and hesitations in the course of its making, sometimes even a defense or definition of the kind to which it belongs or the conventions which it respects.”³⁷⁵ Recall also that in an interview including a discussion of Through a Glass Darkly and The Seagull, Bergman had made the comment that, “Underground theatre is some kind of spiritual masturbation.”³⁷⁶ This excess is captured in both the play-within and the “empty space” of Through a Glass Darkly, along with the

³⁷³ Cf. Brook 48-52; cf. Jerzy Grotowski, Towards a Poor Theater (New York: A Theatre Arts Book/Routledge, 2002) 17-18; 32; 55-58.

³⁷⁴ Nelson 6-7.

³⁷⁵ Ibid 10. Nelson is citing Leslie Fielder.

³⁷⁶ Qtd. in Steene, A Reference Guide 781.

apparently basic human impulse that mandates such “spiritual masturbation,” evidenced in Karin’s solitary performance in the upstairs room. What has arguably been parodied is also preserved and implemented.

D. The “cosmic cellar”

The “house” in Through a Glass Darkly conforms to Bachelard’s analysis of the oneiric house in poetry, as well the BUILDING conceptual metaphor in language. It is also clearly a playhouse, and participates in the long tradition of building for theatrical purposes. Each of these constructions reflects embodied experience: “Such a house, constructed by a writer, illustrates the verticality of the human being. It is also oneirically complete, in that it dramatizes the two poles of house dreams.”³⁷⁷ The “oneiric house” is most aptly constructed with three stories, “a cellar, a ground floor, and an attic”: “One floor more, and our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topoanalysis only knows how to count to three or four.”³⁷⁸ The house in Through a Glass Darkly has a ground floor, a second floor, and an attic; but the second floor and the attic are open to one another, as the ceiling has deteriorated. But if it is to be “oneirically complete,” what functions as its cellar?

A wrecked ship makes an unannounced appearance at the moment of crisis in the film. It is a space that no one has previously acknowledged in the film, and it is never discussed by way of any expository dialogue; yet no character in the film seems to be surprised by its presence. Furthermore, no critic has ever seemed to object to its appearance, or to find its presence extraordinary.³⁷⁹ There

³⁷⁷ Bachelard 25. “Verticality is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic, the marks of which are so deep that, in a way, they open up two very different perspectives for a phenomenology of the imagination” (17).

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Young, “Two Swedish Casualties” 53. While objecting to the film’s theatricality, Young lauds the scenes in the wrecked ship as “cinematic” without pausing to reflect on why this setting is readily acceptable to the viewer: “Apart from

seems to be a non-discursive logic from which this image arises and a corresponding logic that accepts its emergence.³⁸⁰ The emergence of the wreck is in keeping with the aesthetic established by the unanchored point-of-view used to depict Karin playing “offstage” in the window of the *lusthus*, and with the departure from the axis-of-action rule in standard cinematic practice which converts the wall-papered room into a theatrical site of worship.

This wreck completes the oneiric scheme of Bachelard quite consistently, namely a house complete with “watery depths” seeping into the cellar and an “attic” of blurred dreams, a house in which the protagonist undergoes “an anthropo-cosmic fear.” In his analysis of one such oneiric house, Bachelard emphasizes that it extends from a cavern with stagnant water to the sky: “It possesses the verticality of the tower rising from the most earthly, watery depths, to the abode of a soul that believes in heaven.”³⁸¹ This effectively describes the spectrum of space in *Through a Glass Darkly*; furthermore, this cohesion of space is a *dramatic* one; there are no extraneous or irrelevant spaces, in keeping with the *kammerspiel* aesthetic.

Bachelard offers some examples of “ultra-cellar” that demonstrate his contention that “the cellar dream irrefutably increases reality.”³⁸² The last of these is from the novel, *L'Antiquaire*, by Henri Bosco, which Bachelard presents as “a house with cosmic roots,” a “stone plant growing out of the

the incest scene-or rather, its inception and aftermath-which takes place in the wonderful oceanic womb-setting of a beached hulk, there’s little that’s cinematic in this movie, which could as well have been a play.”

³⁸⁰ Bachelard xvii; “To say that the poetic image is independent of causality is to make a rather serious statement. But the causes cited by psychologists and psychoanalysts can never really explain the wholly unexpected nature of the new image, any more than they can explain the attraction it holds for a mind that is foreign to the process of its creation.”

³⁸¹ Ibid 25.

³⁸² Ibid 20.

rock up to the blue sky of a tower.”³⁸³ The protagonist hides in the cellar, which first is presented as a “labyrinth of corridors in the rock” suddenly ending in “a murky body of water”: “At this point [...] a long dream that has an elemental sincerity is inserted in the story. Here is this poem of the cosmic cellar.”³⁸⁴ The house in Through a Glass Darkly conforms to this description: rising out of the craggy terrain of Fårö, made of stone, with a cellar that is labyrinthine and leaking with “a murky body of water”. Furthermore, the location, function, and events of the sequence within the “cosmic cellar” of the wrecked ship have the effect of a “long dream that has elemental sincerity” that conforms to Bachelard’s analysis. A similar “anthropo-cosmic fear” certainly shaped the fictive space in Through a Glass Darkly.³⁸⁵

E. The house’s foyer as a theatre set

The pre-eminent French film critic of the 1950s, André Bazin, stated that a key distinction between theatre and film lay in the priority of the actor: “The human being is all-important in the theater. The drama on the screen can exist without actors.”³⁸⁶ This statement omits any consideration of those occasions when characters disappear from view and an audience is essentially “left alone” in the theatre before an empty stage; such moments are not infrequent in theatre. For example, in Henrik

³⁸³ Ibid 22.

³⁸⁴ Ibid 22-23.

³⁸⁵ It is also worth noting that Bergman’s employment of the interior of a shipping vessel as the site for two characters involved in an existential drama has a precedent in Agnès Varda’s film La Point-Courte (1954). Here it is a husband and wife and the sexual relationship is not incestuous. And here the ship is a new one that is under construction rather than the leaking “cellar” of Bachelard’s “oneiric house.” But there is a connection to Bachelard himself, as Varda had studied with the philosopher at the Sorbonne. Varda’s work, particularly Cléo de 5 à 7, came to be discussed in the Swedish film journal Chaplin in 1963. See Mark Shiva, “Agnès Varda,” Chaplin (no. 3, 5:36, 1963) 72-75; Torsten Manns, “Flickan och döden,” Chaplin (no. 3, 5:36, 1963) 75-77.

³⁸⁶ André Bazin, “Theater and Cinema—Part Two,” What is Cinema? vol. 1 (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2005) 102.

Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879), the first act begins with the living room in Helmers' apartment in full view, but empty of any characters.³⁸⁷ At the beginning of the third act, Mrs. Linde leaves the room to answer the front door and we hear footsteps and dialogue from offstage, but there is no one in view onstage.³⁸⁸ One can argue that these moments are merely passing, and that the actor or actors will quickly come into view again. This may be true, but that criteria applies to the majority of films as well as stage productions: in both cases, despite Bazin's contention, we are seldom left for a long interval during a play or a film without having *someone* to look at; even when we are left looking at *something*, we are frequently either anticipating seeing a character of some sort appear on the stage or screen, or we are attending to some off-stage or off-screen event that we hear but do not see.

Bergman uses the setting of the foyer in Through a Glass Darkly precisely in such a manner, which clearly derives from theatrical precedent and practice, and does so to good cinematic effect. The foyer is a set constructed and used for filming at the SF studios at Råsunda, Stockholm. It is the site of a deliberate "onstage" and "offstage" within the film, and is used for the first time when Minus searches for his missing sister in the house. In a manner that recalls Ibsen, the character leaves the setting to search "offstage" while we, as audience, remain with an "empty" set before our eyes, listening to and imagining the "offstage" action. The camera remains fixed in a low-angle long shot, and the perspective is identical with that of an ideal seat in a proscenium theatre. This shot is 20 seconds in length, 11 seconds of which are comprised by an "empty" set and offscreen action.

The foyer is employed again for an "offstage" conversation following Karin's apocalyptic encounter with the "spider God." Following her account, while she is seated and sedated on the staircase, there is

³⁸⁷ Henrik Ibsen, "A Doll's House," Four Major Plays (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998) 1.

³⁸⁸ Ibsen 62.

a knock at the front door and her father crosses the foyer to answer, the camera swiveling in a panning motion to follow, but remaining stationary. David opens the door and converses with the helicopter ambulance pilot, or perhaps a paramedic: we never see this character or distinctly hear a voice; we only see and hear David speaking to someone “offstage.” This use of the foyer for an offstage event lasts 21 seconds.

In the final usage of this setting, Karin makes her last exit from the house. Again, the camera is in a low-angle, fixed long shot, offering an ideal proscenium perspective. She wears an overcoat and has put on dark sunglasses; she stands in the doorway, briefly, and then goes out without a word. Her husband and then her father, carrying her suitcase, follow behind, the front door closing behind them. Minus remains alone in the foyer; he goes to the door, opens it, looks “offstage” for a long while, then closes the door, goes to “stage right”/camera left, and collapses, sobbing against the wall. After several seconds, we hear the helicopter motor start up. Minus gets to his feet and crosses to the door, opens it, and then steps outside. This usage lasts 46 seconds. This exit recalls the departure of Nora in Ibsen’s Doll’s House, but is also consonant with Bergman’s treatment of Nina in The Seagull during the same work period. Critic Kenneth Tynan commented: “Above all, I remember the moment in the last act when Bergman showed us Chekhov’s Nina, as opposed to the hysterical chit we normally see; [the actress], when she made her final entrance, had changed from child to woman.”³⁸⁹ This emphasis on a transition to self-knowledge bears comparison with the Karin’s exit in Through a Glass Darkly.

³⁸⁹ Tynan 58. Tynan adds that, “One knew that [Nina] would survive ... and then go on, thus fledged, to become a good actress.” There may be autobiographical factors influencing this girl-to-woman reading of Karin and Nina by Bergman. The actress Harriet Andersson and Bergman had been romantic partners in the early 1950s. It had been several years since their last collaboration, and Andersson had married and born a child shortly before the filming of Through a Glass Darkly. Such factors may account for particular qualities in Andersson’s performance as Karin.

The camera in the first and last of these sequences remains fixed; all action is dependent upon actor movement, and most of the affective qualities of all three sequences (the searching, the conversation, the looking out) are solely dependent upon actors establishing a continuation of the play-world “offstage.” Tynan remarked upon attending *The Seagull* that, “Swedish directors bring to their movies experience gained in the theatre. *The two forms are constantly enriching one another.*”³⁹⁰ Given that theatricality and the issue of identity go hand-in-hand in this film, it is interesting that Tynan asserted at this same time that, “the Swedish theatre today is perhaps the most eclectic in Europe, with all the variety and *lack of identity* that that implies.”³⁹¹

An additional element contributing to the “theatricality” of this setting for Karin’s exit is the stone wall that is visible through these center doors: this wall constitutes a horizon line, and seems identical to the stone walls that we have seen throughout the film in numerous exterior sequences filmed on location in Fårö. But, in terms of actuality and continuity, the scale of this wall is out of proportion: it appears to either be much closer to the front doors of the house than anything previously established in the film, or it is a much taller wall than the wall that was used in the exterior shots. It is an aesthetically balanced design, a wall that looks “as it should” to the eye observing the “theatre” of the foyer.

³⁹⁰ Ibid 57; emphasis added. Tynan immediately identifies Ekerot, Sjöberg, and Bergman as examples of this, adding that these three “are generally regarded as Sweden’s best *metteurs-en-scène*.”

³⁹¹ Ibid 58; emphasis added. Tynan also remarks that “Sweden’s real luck consists in never having had a Shakespeare or a Racine; its only classic—Strindberg—is a modern, for whom no traditional style exists to inhibit adventurous directors. Being thus uncommitted, it has been able to pick and choose, selecting what it needed from the production methods of Russia, France and Germany” (ibid). In Tynan’s opinion: “The Swedish performing arts are homogeneous in personnel, flexible in technique, contemporary in outlook and international in scope, to an extent that would scarcely be possible in a bigger country with a strong and ancient theatrical tradition of its own” (ibid).

But why does this “theatrical” wall work rather than distract? It uses one of the strongest cultural constructions of spectatorial vision, the “ideal subject” perspective developed in painting, architecture, and theatre for centuries in Western art. Furthermore, the camera position in these shots replicates its position during the “play-within” at the *lusthus*, when the perspective associated with the diegetic spectator (David) is abandoned in favor of the centered “ideal subject” perspective on the drama. This same use of perspective occurs at other key moments in the film, such as Karin’s first “performance” alone in the wallpapered room and Minus’ race to the house in the rain, discussed above. Rather than a static, “theatrical” use of the camera, Bergman and cinematographer Sven Nykvist developed a *motif* based on this longstanding cultural practice.

VII. Summation

Ultimately, it can be argued that Karin deliberately and self-consciously chooses to live within that subjective reality that best suits her, the one that seems to her most real and sustainable. The Artistic Haunting; or, The Tomb of Illusions proves, by the end of the film, to have been a metaphor encapsulating Karin’s place in the world, as well as the relationships of each of the male characters to Karin’s illness; in short, an existential reduction. This quality of reduction (bracket, *epoche*, parentheses, etc.) is inevitable, as any enacted drama ostensible presents a metaphysical model. Or, as Goffman observed: “Scripts even in the hands of unpracticed players can come to life because life itself is a dramatically enacted thing.”³⁹²

In the case studies examined above, the performance-within serves as an existential demonstration; it is an affirmative gesture that contests the everyday, thereby disclosing different potentials for being in the world for both performer and spectator. It also makes conspicuous the effect that performance

³⁹² Goffman 72.

has upon space and place, both in terms of pragmatics (preparation for production, set-building) and perception (poetic space). It also makes apparent the double character of performance that verisimilar representation seeks so often to cloak; and this in turn bares the relation between performance and language, not merely in terms of semiotics, but as an intrinsic component of existence: we know that we are here, we know that we make meanings, and this calls meaning into question. Hence, the aesthetic desire for unity in terms of place, time, and character reflects a longstanding desire for continuity (or homeostasis) for Karin in terms of dwelling, faith, and self.

Bachelard states in his introduction that he found it necessary to set aside “scientific prudence” in his project to “found a metaphysics of the imagination” because that prudence refused “to obey the immediate dynamics of the image.”³⁹³ The result was “a split in one’s thinking” with “great psychic repercussions,” that contained the “entire paradox of a phenomenology of the imagination”:

How can an image, at times very unusual, appear to be a concentration of the entire psyche? How—with no preparation—can this singular, short-lived event constituted by the appearance of an unusual poetic image, react on other minds and in other hearts, despite all the barriers of common sense, all the disciplined schools of thought, content in their immobility?³⁹⁴

This crisis, which concerns trans-subjective communication, is of a piece with the dramatic crisis studied in Through a Glass Darkly. It is evidenced in the appearance of the “cosmic cellar” or the wrecked ship, and is also symptomatic of Karin’s illness and her symbolic affinity with Minus, as seer to artist. The wrecked ship, the wall-papered room, and the *lusthus* are all linked in this respect: taboo desire, religious vision, and dramatic art.

³⁹³ Bachelard viii.

³⁹⁴ Ibid xviii-xix.

Bachelard, like Lakoff and Johnson after him, sees a need to go beyond objectivism and subjectivism (“facts or impressions”) in order to discover “primary virtues” that can “reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting”; one way to do this is by locating “the original shell” in every kind of dwelling.³⁹⁵ Lakoff and Johnson see Western culture as bound by two competing myths: the myth of objectivism and the myth of subjectivism.³⁹⁶ Lakoff and Johnson see this as an entrenched cultural binary in the West, an historical “tension” between truth and art, “with art viewed as illusion and allied, via its link with poetry and theater, to the tradition of public oratory.”³⁹⁷ Their alternative to these two camps is disclosed through metaphor, and they propose an “experientialist synthesis” in which metaphor is recognized as “*imaginative rationality*”:

Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality: since they use metaphor, they employ an imaginative rationality.³⁹⁸

Bachelard anticipates this movement in his analysis of “the essential newness of the poetic image” and the attendant “problem of the speaking being’s creativeness”: “Through this creativeness the imagining consciousness proves to be, very simply but very purely, an origin.”³⁹⁹ This “creativeness” is a variant of authenticity, which has been a central issue in each film undertaken in this study: a performative “creative authenticity” that accommodates and incorporates precedent, pattern, influence,

³⁹⁵ Ibid 4.

³⁹⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh 186-189.

³⁹⁷ Ibid 189.

³⁹⁸ Ibid 193.

³⁹⁹ Bachelard xxiv.

inter-textuality, etc., but which also allows for the quality of originality, that is to say, “the essential newness” (disclosure) that seems at once immanent in the image and immediate to perception.

The “speaking being’s creativeness” and the problem of “origin” are dramatized in a series of Bergman films following Through a Glass Darkly, from The Silence [Tystnaden] (1963) and Persona (1966) up through A Passion [En passion] (1969). In these films, the idea of speech is opposed to what is original or creative (authentic) in human existence. Looks (*regards*) may tyrannize, but language is presented as the greatest barrier. In the same vein, the problem of front- and back-stage behaviors discussed by Goffman persists in Bergman. What changes in terms of presenting these matters is a new variation of the performance-within and its implied metaphysics to include the exposure of the film itself. This effort derives from Bergman’s own ideas of *verfremdungseffekt* in tandem with an interest in alienation via language comparable with Antonin Artaud’s writings on theater. There is a corollary in the rise of post-structuralism and deconstruction at this time. This is not to suggest that Bergman was directly influenced in any way by someone such as Roland Barthes or Jacques Derrida. Rather, through exposure to the practice of theatre-making, and through the development of views that were influenced, at least in part, by Sartre and the implications of existentialism, Bergman was well-positioned to offer commentaries through his work that were contemporary and complementary with the trends in Continental philosophy during the 1960s.

The Poetics of Space, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, and Through a Glass Darkly, produced within the same five year period, capture a timely fissure between the experience of self, which is social, fragmentary, performative, etc., and the awareness of continuity phenomenologically experienced through space and memory. A tension in expectations between 19th-century Romanticism, especially with respect to art and identity, and the consequences of existentialism and phenomenology in a movement toward what will become post-structuralism. This tension accounts for the dramatic

pathos of Through a Glass Darkly: Bergman paradoxically embraces a religious attitude toward performance while at the same time asserting his own atheistic existentialist skepticism. It is a confrontation between nostalgia and the moment as experienced through the exquisite pressure of movement (requisite action) in the endeavor to play-make something original, to be “creatively authentic.” This is the basic artistic tension and historical question evidenced in the play-within of “The Artistic Haunting.” The resolution for Bergman lay in the development of tactile metaphors such as the “house” in Through a Glass Darkly.

The Poetics of Space stresses the sense of well-being that the house offers in everyday experience: “Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.” Therefore, “the conscious metaphysics that starts from the moment when the being is ‘cast into the world’ is a secondary metaphysics,” one that “passes over the preliminaries, when being is being-well, when the human being is deposited in a being-well, in the well-being originally associated with being.”⁴⁰⁰ Through a Glass Darkly clearly treats of the tension between these primary and secondary metaphysics, proposing that religious faith, at least for modern people, may arise from that tension. Bachelard seems to rebut the existentialists, but does not really deal with the conflicts that cannot be assuaged by reverie. Bergman’s cinematic *kammerspiel*, on the other hand, observes the same architecture that Bachelard identifies, but offers an existential reduction in the form of dramatic poetry.

Through a Glass Darkly may be justly faulted for its seemingly timeless preservation of bourgeois isolation, and its trope of woman as mad muse. In many ways, it seems to be the last of Bergman’s 1950s dramas, even though the *kammerspiel* idea is a new one.⁴⁰¹ But in the play-within, it heralds a

⁴⁰⁰ Bachelard 7.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Gado 279. Gado finds that the film is the last of Bergman’s films “to employ a ‘closed’ structure of meaning.”

generational conflict in domestic and international theatre that will soon be a major crisis in Sweden, one that Bergman found himself at the center of by the late 1960s. The nostalgic image of the *auteur* as a young writer with over a dozen plays and an opera tucked away in his room next to the kitchen, the allusions to Chekhov's Treplev and O'Neill's alter ego in Long Day's Journey Into Night, plus Bergman's comments disparaging underground theatre, signal an effort to reconcile opposing political and social trends through aesthetic means. This was an effort that Bergman would continue to attempt throughout the 60s, but without achieving satisfactory results. Bergman's last film during this decade, A Passion [En passion] (1969), aptly captures these tensions, and it is this film that is considered in the concluding chapter.

Ch. IV. Language, being, and the boundaries of performance: A Passion (1969)

*As soon as I am heard, as soon as I hear myself, the I who hears itself, who hears me, becomes the I who speaks and takes speech from the I who thinks that he speaks and is heard in his own name; and becomes the I who takes speech without ever cutting off the I who thinks that he speaks.*⁴⁰²

Words . . . are . . . always . . . difficult.

Now we're back to the beginning.

*The musician writes notes on a score, which are the most perfect signs that exist between creator and performer. But words are a very very bad channel between writer and performer.*⁴⁰³

I. Establishing shot

Language and speech are intimately related to human performance, and the role of language of speech in theatre and film was a defining concern in the mid-20th-century. The degree of discursive speech utilized in an enacted drama is often a criterion for distinguishing between the “theatrical” and the “cinematic.” But while critics and practitioners in both media wrestle over the aesthetic employment of speech and the necessity for language, theatre and cinema have been analyzed and theorized as “languages” in their own rights. The phenomenon that bridges these two fields of study is that of human communication and meaning-making; in performance, this brings one back to the embodied actor as the locus of this phenomenon. How does speech arise in the actor? Is it merely memorized, is it reconstructed, or does it somehow emerge “originally” in some way? Who is speaking: the actor, the character, the author, or “language” itself? How is an actor’s speech any different than any one else’s speaking? These questions are captured (but not explicated) in a unique set of performances-within found in Bergman’s final film of the 1960s, A Passion (aka The Passion of

⁴⁰² Jacques Derrida, “La parole soufflée,” Writing and Difference (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 177-178.

⁴⁰³ Ingmar Bergman, qtd. in Samuels 190.

Anna [En Passion] (1969). Exploring possible answers to these questions requires an approach that takes human performance in both theatre and film into account.

A Passion belongs to a group of Bergman films that are deeply imbricated with one another in terms of themes, aesthetics, and personnel: Persona (1966), The Hour of the Wolf [Vargtimmen] (1967/1968), Shame [Skammen] (1968) and A Passion [En Passion] (1969).⁴⁰⁴ Each of these “island” films are set in contemporary Sweden. All, with one exception, were filmed on Fårö.⁴⁰⁵ What develops quite starkly through these films is not only a concern with the subjective experience of reality, but the subject’s growing inability to articulate that experience; this extends to an inability to apprehend any understanding of an Other via language, in particular, speech. This anxiety (or interrogation) of speech extends into the *auteur*’s cinematic “language.” As one critic has stressed, A Passion is perhaps the most “deconstructive film” in Bergman’s oeuvre, the “ultimate disintegration.”⁴⁰⁶ In developing this “deconstructive” tendency toward “disintegration,” A Passion and the other films in this group reveal numerous intersections between theatre, cinema, and philosophy through the person of the actor.

Each of these projects is characterized by a quality of meta-performance that uses various media as self-reflexive referents: theater, cinema, puppetry, opera, and television. In terms of contemporary theatrical practice and theory, these bear comparison with the widespread application and development

⁴⁰⁴ Bergman wrote and directed a made-for-TV film, The Rite [Riten] (1968/1969), during this period.

⁴⁰⁵ Through a Glass Darkly, Persona, Shame, and A Passion were all filmed on the island of Fårö; The Hour of the Wolf is depicted as taking place on an island, although the location shooting was on the Swedish mainland at Hovs Hållar. In terms of contemporary settings, this also applies to Winter Light. One might argue that Through a Glass Darkly, as well as The Silence (set in the fictional country of Timoka), both feel suspended in time and alienated from their historical moment in a manner that the more fantastical and surreal The Hour of the Wolf and Shame are not.

⁴⁰⁶ Marc Gervais, interviewed by Greg Carson in “Disintegration of Passion” (MGM Home Entertainment LLC, 2004).

of the ideas of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) during the 1960s, including the work of directors such as Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) and Peter Brook (b. 1925). These films also function in ways that reflect the theory of language and complement the deconstructionist arguments of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). The performances-within in A Passion reflect and capture these contemporaneous developments, particularly with respect to the actor and speech.

Theatre and cinema in the 1960s share a common pool of theories and practices. Artaudian Theatre of Cruelty, linguistic “alienation effects” achieved through an evident schism between signifier and signified, occasions of a semantic meltdown in terms of language: these are some of the characteristics found in Bergman’s performance practices during this time, but also reflect trends in European theatre and film. However, scant attention has been paid to such connections or currents, and Bergman, as is often the case, is studied in isolation, an approach that risks mistaking a broader cultural movement for an exclusively individual concern or practice.

A. The performance-within and the Container Schema

The “performance-within” and the attendant questions of identity, authenticity, and creative agency are evidenced in A Passion through a set of actor interviews, an improvised dinner conversation, and a peculiar subset of animal “performances.” In each of these examples, the capacity for discursive speech is particularly emphasized, and in many respects, fails. These failures, whether aesthetic, critical, or affective, still reveal something valuable with respect to the nature of the performance-within and its grounding in Conceptual Metaphor. While the limits and reflexive capacities of the cinema are perhaps more elastic than those of the theatre, the concept of a performance-within is

essentially the same. In fact, it is an elaboration of a basic conceptual metaphor, namely the Container Schema, one that is fundamental to human reasoning.⁴⁰⁷

The Container is one of a relatively limited number of “primitive image schemas” that structure systems of spatial relations in natural languages; the Container Schema reflects embodied experience and has been incorporated over millennia into basic processes of conceptual thinking.⁴⁰⁸ Specifically, the Container Schema is a spatial-relations concept, a means of making sense of space, and such concepts function largely unconsciously most of the time. The Container Schema is structured by an inside, a boundary, and an outside; it is a gestalt structure to the extent that the parts make no sense without the whole.⁴⁰⁹ While conceptual (spatial relations are not entities in the world but describe relations between entities in the world), the Container can obviously be physically instantiated as a concrete object, but also as a bounded area in space: a garden, a sports field, or a stage. As a concept, the Container Schema is cross-modal and can be applied to a visual scene, sound, or movement.⁴¹⁰ The important thing is that the Container Schema is understood *through* the body, and the body itself is a container: for breath, blood, organs, food, etc., one that can be filled and emptied; we engage with containers throughout our lives, such as buildings, beds, rooms, bags, etc., and we project the concept of the Container upon space, as well as upon our sense of self and our relationships with others.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh 31-32.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid 35.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid 32.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid 35-36.

In its acute application, the Container Schema is what distinguishes drama as drama, as well as the structure of a performance-within. This recalls the dramaturgy of Pirandello and Sartre, which have been discussed in previous chapters, and also that of the American playwright, Edward Albee. Bergman directed two Albee plays in the 1960s, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf in 1963 and Tiny Alice in 1965; while neither production was particularly well-received, their chronological position prior to the films discussed in this chapter is significant.⁴¹² Bergman also directed, for the second time, Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author in 1967; this was his first production in a second language (Norwegian), and featured the actress Liv Ullmann (b. 1938), who was central to all four of the "island" films listed above. In addition, Max von Sydow (b. 1928), who is featured opposite of Ullman in three of these films, was engaged in a Pirandello play, Enrico IV, during the filming of A Passion.⁴¹³ In all of the above texts, the Container Metaphor is foundational: it is instantiated as a metaphysical structure underlying and surrounding, "containing" the actions of the human characters "within" the larger drama (typically an existentially-themed "tragedy"). Thus, language, being, and the boundaries of performance are of particular relevance to Bergman's work at this time.

In two formal ways, the actors are offered unique opportunities to improvise linguistically in A Passion: in a collectively improvised dinner conversation occurring within the diegesis and in

⁴¹² Tiny Alice opened on 4 December 1965 on the Main Stage of the Royal Dramatic. Bergman had taken over the production from Bengt Ekerot, who had withdrawn due to poor health. As with Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Bergman was criticized for seizing upon textual suggestions of sexuality and violence to an exploitative degree (Steene A Reference Guide 611). Bergman scholars typically avoid discussing this production, as with other less-than-stellar works, usually stressing his replacement of Ekerot and the lack of pre-production planning as implicit reasons for the production's lack of success. However, as problematic as Albee's plays are, both Tiny Alice and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? seem to have been significant sources for Bergman's development of a modernist, cinematic drama that synthesizes bourgeois realism with absurdism and "theatre of cruelty". This seems amply evident in The Silence, Persona, and the subsequent island trilogy, and is strongly in evidence (almost an homage) in Scenes from a Marriage.

⁴¹³ Max von Sydow had developed a certain expertise in meta-theatrical performances by this point in his career. Leading up to his simultaneous roles in Henry IV and A Passion, von Sydow also played the lead in Arthur Miller's After the Fall (November 1964) and Pirandello's unfinished The Giants of the Mountain (April 1964).

individual, non-diegetic interviews in which they comment on the characters that they are playing.⁴¹⁴ These improvisations were considered exceptional to Bergman's standard practice by several of the principal actor-collaborators on the film. Curiously, the means through which the actors are encouraged to exercise their freedom is speech. In improvising the dinner conversation, all apparently felt at ease; in talking about their roles, most were apparently at a loss for words, even though all were presumably accustomed to being interview subjects by this point. Both the improvised dinner sequence and these interviews (called *mellanspel*) constitute different stylistic registers in the film; the *mellanspel* are a new variety of performance-within.

In stark contrast with these discursive performances, the film also is structured around a series of synchronic acts of terrorism by an unidentified "madman" who tortures and kills animals. These events are also, in fact, "performances-within," although they are typically considered as aberrant actions within the diegesis. In a manner recalling the strata of performances and performers in Sawdust and Tinsel, Bergman's "madman" is a kind of paratheatrical terrorist, one that hangs a dog, slaughters sheep, and sets a horse on fire for the express purpose of creating a form of horrifying spectacle for the "audience" that will ultimately discover these "performances." The performances-within of the "madman" need to be considered in relation to the metacinematic actor interviews with respect to the ideas of speech, *mimesis*, and agency.

B. Review of literature

Little has been written about the actor interviews that formally divide A Passion into its four "acts." In an interview conducted at the American Film Institute in 1973, the actress Liv Ullmann (Anna) was

⁴¹⁴ Bergman uses a film-within-a-film device, as well as a film-shoot-within-a-film, in Prison [Fängelse] (1949). Footage from that film-within reappears in Persona, and the device of a film-shoot-within-a-film is also used again, albeit briefly.

asked if Bergman had written the actor interviews (called *mellanspel* in the film). Ullmann recalled that the film was originally “broken” in four places by monologues in which the “characters sort of came out and spoke as the character.” However, Bergman was unhappy with that effect and instead, during the post-production phase, “he asked us to come to the studio and to speak as actors.”⁴¹⁵ The question posed by the interviews is precisely that of “speaking as actors”: whether authentic speech is a possibility, or if “speaking as actors” is an inescapable limitation for each of us.

This has not been discussed in other opinions on the film. Peter Cowie finds the actor interviews “to be an error on Bergman’s part,” that they appear “stilted and self-conscious,” and while Brecht may have aspired to alienation, these “artificial caesuras” flatly “fail to influence one’s reaction to the characters in any shape or form.”⁴¹⁶ Maaret Koskinen considers A Passion in relation to Bergman’s subsequent stage production of Woyzeck; both projects premiered in 1969 and the latter was Bergman’s return to the theatre after a two year absence. Woyzeck was unique in that the public was allowed to attend a number of so-called “open rehearsals” during its development and there are arguable similarities between the productions, conceptually and dramaturgically. In Woyzeck and A Passion, there is the conceit that “*the public will be allowed, even assumed to participate during the so called actual rehearsal.*”⁴¹⁷ In this view, the interviews in A Passion are the cinematic equivalent to the “open rehearsals” for Woyzeck.

⁴¹⁵ Liv Ullmann, “Working with Bergman: Excerpts from a Seminar with Liv Ullmann”, Ingmar Bergman: An Artist’s Journey (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995) 46-47.

⁴¹⁶ Cowie, Ingmar Bergman 260.

⁴¹⁷ Koskinen, “Allting föreställer, ingenting är” 65; original emphasis; my translation. “[...] en impuls liknande den i En passion: publiken tillåts, ja, förutsätts att delta under så att säga pågående repetitionen.” Cf. Steene, Reference Guide 619. Steene finds this production “a crucial step in his conception of the symbiotic relationship between stage and audience.” The production received approximately twenty rehearsals before moving to the arena setting, whereupon “open rehearsals” continued for one month. Theatre students, critics and entertainment industry professionals were allowed to attend these rehearsals, held twice daily at 11 am and 1 pm. These audiences were limited to 60 in number.

In identifying this link between Woyzeck and A Passion, Koskinen invokes connections with philosophical deconstruction and an increased concern with the “meta-theatrical” and “meta-cinematic”: “Naturally it is possible to find the impulses to these *deconstructive works* in a purely theatrical context, but that does not exclude that some of the most decisive impulses most likely can have emanated from either the accelerated film activities which most closely preceded the production”—specifically, A Passion.⁴¹⁸ While astutely linking A Passion to Woyzeck, Koskinen makes both productions typically self-reflexive and omits the prevailing trends in performance in both theatre and cinema during the 1960s. Doing so omits the trend toward “meta”-awareness in performance in the late 1960s, as well as Bergman’s incentives to participate in this trend due to his *auteur* status in both film and theatre.

Comments in a contemporary interview indicate Bergman’s awareness of post-structuralist criticism. In connection with A Passion, Bergman was asked if his resistance to critical analysis was a response to the patterns that emerged in his creative process: “They disturb your view of yourself and what you are expressing as being in a ceaseless state of flux.” Bergman responds that the “search for motifs” is a form of criticism “inherited from the study of literature, where it’s reached the lunatic stage.” He adds: “They fit any work into its historical context, until in the end every piece of the puzzle fits so perfectly there’s nothing to be added for the chap who’s actually created the work.”⁴¹⁹

This is not only an objection to post-structural criticism ca. 1969, but typifies Bergman’s reaction to

⁴¹⁸ Ibid; my translation and emphasis: “Naturligtvis är det möjligt att söka impulserna till detta demonteringsarbete i en ren teaterkontext, men det uteslutar inte att några av det mest avgörande impulserna lika gärna kan ha emanerat från eller påskyndats av den filmiska verksamhet som närmast föregick uppsättningen – i synnerhet som också denna innebar en nyorientering och i både tematik (seendet, synligheten, voyeurism) och i detalj ordinerade grepp med likande syfte: att synliggöra och ställa ut de invanda konventionerna till beskådande.”

⁴¹⁹ Björkman, et al 246.

the critical discourse of Others, generally. There is a similar tendency in Artaud's relationship to language, explored further, below.

Bergman's institutional position in Swedish theatre during the 1960s is as relevant to A Passion as is his cinematic output. Mikael Timm has stressed Bergman's lifelong career within institutional theatre: "Through all his crises and doubts, he has been faithful to institutional theaters."⁴²⁰ Timm also emphasizes the effect that experimental theatre had on Bergman's film-making during the 1960s, and finds the roots for this in the earlier existentialists: "This coincided with experiments in European theater and literature; Sartre and Camus were both dramatists and passionately interested in the cinema."⁴²¹ Timm also finds that, despite his institutional background (or perhaps because of the challenges to such institutions during the 1960s), Bergman's stage work at this time also evidenced "a great familiarity with experimental theater," noting Bergman's production of Woyzeck in 1969 as one such example.

In theater as in film, Timm sees Bergman consistently exploring two traditions, with "almost naturalistic productions" aiming at "the greatest possible degree of reality" and productions, such as Woyzeck, "that are directly linked to twentieth-century experimental theater, abrupt, quick contrasts, daring set design, stylization, and brutal rhythm." The result, in Timm's view, is an oscillating tension, "on the borderline between a harmonic approach to culture and a dissonant one," that Bergman negotiates through craft: "He is sufficiently skilled as a professional to succeed in holding together almost every film; the disunity of his vision is apparent only when you compare his films to each

⁴²⁰ Mikael Timm, "A Filmmaker in the Borderland: Bergman and Cultural Traditions," Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey, Ed. Roger W. Oliver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995) 96.

⁴²¹ Ibid 97.

other.”⁴²² This debt to 20th-century experimental theatre is deeply embedded within the “almost naturalistic” surface of A Passion. But the relationship to “institutional theatre” is also explicitly commented upon in the improvised dinner sequence contained in the film through dialogue generated by the actor Erland Josephson (1923-2012), who was Bergman’s successor as head of the Royal Dramatic Theatre.

C. The dinner party: *mimesis*, speech, and actor agency (<http://youtu.be/MGkbxVfy4lA>)

In the dinner party sequence as in the actor interviews, the issue of “speaking as actors” gains peculiar prominence in the film. Both sets of improvisations, one located within the diegesis and the other set “outside” of the drama, function as performances-within: they are at once exceptions to the prevailing aesthetics of the larger performance and yet expand and influence the expressive opportunities within the larger performance. What is exceptional, in terms of Bergman’s practice, is that these performances-within provide a new degree of agency for the actor through expressly discursive means. While one can argue whether these efforts succeed or not, these improvisations, in the manner of the performance-within, capture a unique history of performance, a record of the “scruples and hesitations” that informed the larger project of A Passion. What are displayed by these performances within are the issues of language, agency, and mimesis; what is disclosed is a concern with the metaphysical limits of performance. These limits were being treated with a particular vehemence in theatre, cinema, and philosophy appropriate with the film’s historical moment in 1969.

An important distinction between acting for film versus acting in the theatre is the degree of technical manipulation afforded in the former. Most of the dialogue for A Passion was subject to post-production matching: “We prepared the camera work, set up the camera, and the recording engineers

⁴²² Ibid 93.

took up a supporting soundtrack. Then we did all the sound afterwards. These actors are virtuosos at it.”⁴²³ An important exception to this sort of manipulation is the conversation between the four main characters during a supper scene; this dialogue was improvised and the sound was not matched in post-production.

This marks an important difference between the improvisations and the rest of the film, and opens up a window on the phenomenon of speech for an actor. In most cases, the dialogue is found in written form and memorized; even in this, there is a question as to who is actually speaking: the writer or the actor? After all, all words are learned; everyone’s vocabulary derives from the lexicon of a culture that precedes one’s existence. In the case of improvised dialogue, the matter is further complicated: Whose speech is it? As Bergman described it:

The whole thing was perfectly simple. The script told them more or less what to talk about—the devil knows whether they did, though! The evening before, we met and went through what each of them should talk about. [...] Each actor had a clear idea of where he or she stood in the film. Then the camera was turned on, first on one, then on the second, then on the third, then on the fourth, and the conversation was allowed to take whatever course it liked.⁴²⁴

This scene was among the last shot for the film, and Liv Ullman (Anna) took particular advantage of the freedom: “Really good actors—who know their parts inside out and have a pretty good idea of what it’s all about—can make up their own words. It works fine. And it doesn’t have to be nonsense.”⁴²⁵ Discussing this improvisation in 1973, Liv Ullmann said, “We had complete freedom. But we had to stick to the character.”⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Björkman, et al 258.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ullmann “Working with Bergman” 46.

The actors' "freedom" to "make up their own words" is dependent upon their knowledge of character, situation, and the trajectory of the project as a whole ("what it's all about"). But the opportunity to improvise was an exception to Bergman's practice that he would later recant as "traces of the 60s." In the Swedish context, one such "trace" leads to the Polish avant-garde director Jerzy Grotowski. The foundations for this kind of improvisation in A Passion reflect the view that "no real spontaneity is possible without a score" and the advice to actors to "improvise only within [a] framework of details" provided by the director: "This will give you *an authentic improvisation* – otherwise you are building without foundations. When playing the role, *the score is no longer one of details but of signs.*"⁴²⁷ This advice comes from a seminal speech delivered by Grotowski at a workshop held in Skara, Sweden, in 1966.

While the styles between the discursive dinner party in A Passion and a Grotowski performance are certainly different, Grotowski's methodology derived from Stanislavski, and the idea of an "authentic improvisation" based on circumstances and character relationships is clearly a common goal. Furthermore, the idea of "signs" emerging through such a performance is also at work. For Grotowski, "the actions of the actors are for us signs":

Often we can see, during the play, things we do not understand but which we perceive and feel. In other words, I know what it is I feel. I cannot define it but I know what it is. It is nothing to do with the mind; it affects other associations, other parts of the body. But if I perceive, it means that there was a sign.⁴²⁸

The goal of intuitive perception of the "sign" through the actor in performance was part of the rationale for the staging and recording of the dinner party as an improvisation rather than as a piece of scripted

⁴²⁷ Grotowski 234; emphasis added.

⁴²⁸ Ibid 235. Grotowski is combining Stanislavski's ideas of action with Artaud's aspiration to the hieroglyph as a model for the actor's body in performance.

dialogue that could (and would) be re-mixed in post-production. It was an effort to allow on-camera a degree of freedom for the actor typically reserved for the theatre, as well as an opportunity to “authentically” improvise. It was a radical goal, and a part of Bergman’s participation in the experimentation of the 1960s, even if carefully circumscribed.

The “complete freedom” that Ullmann describes was that of actors within their roles, in contrast with the attempt at “freedom” that resulted in the restraint and reticence of the *mellanspel*. In the dinner improvisation, the actors embody and are seemingly at home in what Jacques Derrida describes as the “original elusion” of speech. The actor exemplifies the self-conscious “I,” the objective, social first-person “I,” who “speaks and takes speech” from the subjective “I” who “thinks that he speaks and is heard in his own name.” The social “I” manages this “theft” of speech “*without ever cutting off the* [subject] who thinks that he speaks.”⁴²⁹ What Derrida is describing is the fact that speech is a social performance and that language provides a script that effectively robs the speaker of any authentic utterance; furthermore, this “theft” contains an element of self-delusion. This dissociation in speech that Derrida describes is basic to Bergman’s idea of acting: “When you are acting a part, you are *not* an *I*, you are *always* a *you*.”⁴³⁰ The primordial “elusion” of language is the fundamental phenomenon of speech for the actor.

The improvisations are a curious variation on the performance-within; an aesthetic departure from the fact of scripted dialogue, and thus a different register of actor performance. This stylistic shift was evident to all working on the film. Bergman later regretted such “traces of the 1960s,” saying that the actor interviews should have been cut and that the dinner party “should have been vastly different,

⁴²⁹ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 177-178; emphasis added.

⁴³⁰ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 30-31; emphasis added.

much tighter.”⁴³¹ Erland Josephson also found the dinner improvisation stylistically discordant: “It is two different languages, artistically and also thematic. [...] that part in The Passion of Anna is a little bit—it’s foreign.”⁴³² Bibi Andersson implicitly acknowledged the I/you “elusion” of the actor: “I was thinking of who I was, in this film. And out of that, I was telling stories.”⁴³³ Liv Ullmann saw both the dinner party and the interviews as linked to Bergman’s uncertainty and his desire for some new mode of expression: “And each would have their time, a close-up of saying about what they thought about their character. Or what they thought about God, or whatever. And the one who was to speak would get some glasses of wine so that they would feel really free.”⁴³⁴ Taken as “performances-within,” these improvisations and the *mellanspel* capture and make conspicuous other elements in the film that would otherwise remain securely enfolded within the dominant style of the piece.

These stylistic interruptions offer a certain kind of history of the film proper, essentially “a record of the scruples and hesitations in the course of its making,” and even “a defense or definition of the kind to which it belongs or the conventions which it respects” that resists even the disavowals of the auteur.⁴³⁵ For a “certain sort of freedom” does seem to occur through at least a portion of this experiment. Liv Ullman seems to have been the sole actor who sought a different kind of “speaking” through the improvisation, taking it as an opportunity to speak “the truth”: “When it was my turn, I

⁴³¹ Bergman, Images 306.

⁴³² Interviewed in Carson, “Disintegration of Passion.”

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid. Cf. Bergman, Images 306: “It is regrettable that I frequently became so worriedly didactic. But I was scared. You are scared when you have, for a long time, been sawing off the branch upon which you sit. *Shame* was truly not a success. I worked under the pressure of a firm demand that my film be comprehensible. I could possibly defend myself by saying that, in spite of this, it took all my courage to give *The Passion of Anna* its final shape.”

⁴³⁵ Leslie Fielder, qtd in Nelson 10.

wanted to tell [Bergman] how important truth was and that I even believed that the character I was playing was trying to tell the truth and . . . what truth means in life or whatever.”⁴³⁶ What is noteworthy is the sequence and content of these improvised dialogues, particularly those by Josephson and Ullmann. In the case of Josephson’s improvisation, this implicating includes a commentary on public art institutions. As with a formal “play-within,” this improvised performance-within “implicates” certain “considerations which usually remain prior and external to the work.”⁴³⁷

II. Artaud in Bergman

Speaking as the character Elis Vergéus, Erland Josephson ironically echoes the critiques made against the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm during Bergman’s tenure as artistic director and Josephson’s current position as his successor.⁴³⁸ In Josephson’s improvised dialogue as Elis, he describes his current architectural project in “a huge city full of incredibly ugly, common, repulsive people,” a populace that “will be given the opportunity of cultural activity” in the form of a new cultural center, “a formidable monument to cultural affectation.” While the city named is Milan, it could be any modern European city, including Stockholm. When asked, “What does a cultural center involve?” Josephson/Elis replies that, “It’s a grand monument erected to the utter meaninglessness in which our kind of people live.” This rebuke of institutional culture and the architect’s complicity and contempt in creating such an edifice is multi-valenced. It was precisely this critique that led to self-

⁴³⁶ Interviewed in Carson, “Disintegration of Passion.” Ullmann maintains that her turn to speak in the improvisation was deliberately inhibited by Bergman, and that she was cut off prematurely, whereas the other actors were allowed full liberty. Bergman offers a different account, praising Ullmann’s improvisation in particular; see Björkman, et al 258. In the final edited product, Eva (Ullmann) actually speaks as much as any other character.

⁴³⁷ Nelson 10.

⁴³⁸ This also reflects the anti-establishment rhetoric against art institutions that was part of the 1960s in general. Cf. Timm, “Borderland” 96. See also Bergman, The Magic Lantern 199.

consciously “experimental” productions at the Royal Dramatic Theatre during the 1960s, such as Peter Weiss’ Marat/Sade and The Investigation, and, following the release of A Passion, Bergman’s production of Woyzeck.⁴³⁹ Josephson’s improvised dialogue is also a commentary on the film’s characters and their lives of “utter meaninglessness.”⁴⁴⁰

A. Erland Josephson in the role of successor and sadomasochist

Josephson’s participation in A Passion brings together a number of influences and histories within Swedish performance culture during the 1960s. Josephson was an actor at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, and became its executive artistic director 1966, succeeding Bergman in that position.⁴⁴¹ In particular, Josephson played the Marquis de Sade in Marat/Sade [Mordet på Marat], by Peter Weiss, directed by Frank Sundström at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm. The production opened in May of 1965, with Bengt Ekerot as Marat. Jerzy Grotowski’s essay, “Towards a Poor Theatre,” was published in the program at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1965, and Grotowski conducted seminars in both

⁴³⁹ Cf. Edward Lucie Smith, “Northern Lights,” London Sunday Times (14 April 1969). Woyzeck’s position within contemporary Swedish theatre is discussed at length. The play had been “deliberately chosen because of its radical overtones” as a “response to a new social and political situation in Sweden” and Bergman was “imitating the small radical theatre companies which were until recently his bitterest critics and opponents.” This is followed by a full paragraph offering examples from three such companies (Arena Teatern, f d Teatern, and Fickteatern). The result is that Woyzeck was a “reproduction”: “But Bergman’s production, though physical, is not rawly immediate, as is the phenomenon it imitates. Like certain English directors—Brook and Richardson come to mind—the established Bergman seems to feel a nostalgia for a youthful radicalism which was never truly his.”

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Björkman, et al 261; Bergman soon afterwards said that he was done with such characters, that he regarded them “as belonging definitely to the past.”

⁴⁴¹ The character of Elis Vergérus recalls not only that character’s namesake from The Face, but other roles by Josephson. Triangular relationships placing Josephson as a jealous husband opposite von Sydow as an ambivalent figure of adultery are found in The Face, Hour of the Wolf, and A Passion. In all three films, Josephson plays a character of a higher socio-economic rank than von Sydow. While Josephson was a longtime friend and collaborator with Bergman, his roles in The Hour of the Wolf and A Passion heralded a new phase of prominence in Bergman’s films that would continue into the 1970s up until Bergman’s final film.

Stockholm and in Skara, Sweden, in January and February of 1966.⁴⁴² In its sense of confinement, in the construction of the characters of Elis and Andreas, in its atmosphere of Artaudian cruelty and performance, A Passion recalls similar structures and relationships in Marat/Sade.

Artaudian theory entered Bergman's domain at the Royal Dramatic Theatre through the plays of Peter Weiss, the teaching of Jerzy Grotowski, and the work of Erland Josephson. But while Weiss was a resident of Sweden, attention to Marat/Sade was due to the work of the English director, Peter Brook. Brook's production of Marat/Sade opened in London in August 1964, and then was re-mounted in November of 1965 prior to its move to New York in December of that same year. Brook's production was viewed in its time as a seminal demonstration of the potentials of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, along with the Grotowski's work in Poland.⁴⁴³ Arguably, Brook's success with Marat/Sade in 1964 was a factor leading to the 1965 production at the Royal Dramatic under Bergman's tenure as artistic director; this in turn led to the production of Weiss' next play, The Investigation, directed by Bergman in an admittedly "experimental" fashion. Marat/Sade was also produced as a film, directed by Brook and based on his staging for the theatre; the film premiered in Sweden in April of 1967. These confluences of theatrical experimentation, experimental film, competition and celebrity should not be overlooked.⁴⁴⁴ Taking these into account provides a fuller understanding of the film's historical

⁴⁴² Grotowski 15; 225-242. Outside of Poland, Grotowski's various writings were published in Denmark, Sweden, Italy, France, and North America prior to their compilation in Towards a Poor Theatre in 1968. Grotowski also taught a 2 day seminar in Stockholm at Operarotunden prior to the seminar at Skara Skolscen in late January-early February 1966; see Järleby 53-55.

⁴⁴³ Susan Sontag, "Marat/Sade/Artaud," The American Stage: Writing on Theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner (New York: The Library of America, 2010) 667. Sontag lauds Weiss' "staggering ambition" to synthesize Brechtian theory along with Artaud's ideas. Peter Brook wrote the foreword for Grotowski's Towards a Poor Theatre (1968), and produced his own landmark theatrical treatise that same year, The Empty Space. Brook's book was available in Swedish the following year; Den tomma spelplatsen, trans. Anita Dahl and Leif Zern (Stockholm: PAN/Norstedt, 1969).

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Raphael Shargel, ed., Ingmar Bergman: Interviews (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2007) 136-137. Bergman makes an implicit rebuttal of Peter Brook in an interview in 1975. While discussing the remount of

origins, not only its context, and demonstrates the continuous interplay between theatre and cinema. Josephson's characters in his two films with Bergman following his performance in Marat/Sade are cultivated, charming sadists with a tendency toward contrived stagings; these are in Hour of the Wolf (1967/1968) and A Passion (1969). These figures are not isolated creations, but products of vigorous exchanges between performance media.

B. Artaudian portraits and paratheatrical spectacles of animal cruelty

A performative link between Bergman and Artaud in A Passion can therefore be traced through Josephson's role as Elis. Elis is a world-class architect who also takes and catalogs photographic portraits of human faces in pain or acute suffering. This activity of cataloging corresponds to Bergman's own position as director and the film's own catalog number.⁴⁴⁵ It also resembles, in both its scope and its preoccupation with nonverbal expression, Artaud's own suggestion concerning the study of the human face as mask.⁴⁴⁶ Bergman responded to an American interviewer who asked about "the truth" in his films by saying, "Please don't talk about the truth; it doesn't exist! Behind each face

Hedda Gabler at the National Theatre in London in 1970, the interviewer remarks that the staging was "cinematic" and a "marriage of the two mediums." Bergman responds, "No, it's no marriage. It's a relation. It's just that. When I was a teacher in the dramatic school in Sweden, we always started the first class with a discussion of what you need to make theater," which, when all that was unnecessary had been stripped away, resulted in three essentials. The interviewer suggests that the first thing needed are actors, to which Bergman agrees. The interviewer then uses Brook's term, "An empty space, a stage?" to which Bergman states, "It's not necessary". The interviewer next suggests a script, which Bergman reconstitutes as "a message." Bergman then goes on to say that the third thing is an audience. Bergman goes on to state that this is his "theology about theater" and that a "performance is not here on the stage; it is in the hearts of the audience. It is very important to know that. *In filmmaking we can learn a lot from the theater because what we need to make a picture is just that fantastic little machine, the camera, and some film, the negative. That is all*" (emphasis added). Presumably, the camera is in addition to the three essential ingredients for theatre, plus a director.

⁴⁴⁵ Hubert I. Cohen, Ingmar Bergman: The Art of Confession (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993) 298. This connection is widely acknowledged in writings on the film.

⁴⁴⁶ Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and its Double (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1958) 94. This detail in the film may well reflect Bergman's preparations for Woyzeck, which was performed in a Theatre of Cruelty arena setting reminiscent of Grotowski, Brook, and the work of local experimental Swedish companies.

there is another and another and another.”⁴⁴⁷ This essentially recalls the lines of Elis Vergéus in A Passion when he is talking about his collection of photographs, some of “people in the grip of violent emotions” and some “of violent acts,” “faces, close-ups” that have been catalogued “according to behavior,” which is an “irrational classification, just as meaningless as the collecting itself.”

Elis’ collection is essentially one of dramatic masks, appropriate to Bergman but also to Artaud.

Vergéus states to Andreas, the protagonist:

I don’t believe I can reach into the soul with my photography. I can only register an interplay of forces large and small. Then I look at the picture and let my imagination go. It’s just nonsense. Games, poems. You can’t read another person with any claim to certainty. Not even physical pain gives you a particular reaction. (*He shows a close-up of his wife, Eva, smiling sweetly*) She didn’t know I took this picture. She had a migraine attack.

Artaud’s first manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty includes a study of the face as mask in which, “the ten thousand and one expressions of the face caught in the form of masks *can be labeled and catalogued*, so they may eventually participate directly and symbolically in this concrete language of the stage.”⁴⁴⁸

A similar study is realized in A Passion through Vergéus’s collection of faces, catalogued and enumerated.

There is an explicit connection made in the film between Elis’ activities to the paratheatrical actions of an anonymous “madman”; this is established through the figure of police photographer who documents these acts of violence. These acts include the hanging of a dog; a large number of slaughtered sheep, the corpses of which are shown in a number of shots, complete with their blood; and a horse that, we are told, was doused with fuel and set afire in a locked barn, which in turn caught

⁴⁴⁷ Samuels 198; cf. Koskinen, “Allting föreställer, ingenting är” 96.

⁴⁴⁸ Artaud, Theatre and its Double 94 (emphasis added); cit. in Derrida “La parole soufflée” 191-192.

fire, leading to the injury of a number of other livestock before would-be rescuers were able to let the horse out of the barn, upon which it ran about while still on fire.⁴⁴⁹ All these animals were real, the dead sheep and horse provided for the film shoot from a slaughterhouse on the island of Fårö, with the dog being the only “live performer.” We do, in fact, see the dog hanging and swinging; Andreas rescues it. These events are linked to Elis by cutting from the police photographer at the scene of the slaughtered sheep to Elis photographing Andreas.

What has been overlooked is that the acts of the island “madman” are also “performances”: stagings intended to attract and terrorize both the diegetic and actual audiences. This may be considered a debt to Artaudian tendencies in Swedish experimental theatre and film at this time. The “island madman” is effectively a doppelganger to Elis, and the spectrum of “theatrical cruelty” therefore extends from the highest social rank to the basest, most anonymous category of inhabitant on the island. To some of the islanders (equally faceless), the suspected culprit is Johan (Erik Hell), an older man living alone on the island with a history of mental trauma and hospitalization, as well as legal problems. This figure may be interpreted as a doppelganger to Andreas, the ostensible protagonist of the film.⁴⁵⁰ But the full implications of this structure have not been examined.

Both Elis and the madman are representatives of Bergman: *auteur* figures using photography and performance to exact a kind of dramatic, spectacular “cruelty” on the powerless figures of Andreas and Johan, as well as the dog, sheep, and horse.⁴⁵¹ Just as Elis comes to control Andreas in a number of

⁴⁴⁹ This story is relayed in a classic “messenger” speech delivered to Andreas by a minor character at the site of the fire. We are also shown men loading the corpse of a large horse into a truck.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Cowie 264.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Cohen 306; “The culprit, of course, is Bergman, who says, ‘Unmotivated violence never ceases to fascinate me’” (cit. Björkman, et al 40).

ways, so do the actions of the “island madman” affect Johan. Johan is threatened by a note attached to a stone thrown through a window of his house, which he shows to Andreas and Anna. Soon after, Johan is beaten by a number of men and forced to confess, urinated upon, and then, humiliated, he composes a letter to Andreas and subsequently commits suicide. The links between Andreas and Johan are affirmed in particular through these notes, that is, through written language that is read aloud within the diegesis.⁴⁵² Johan is, in fact, the first human fatality due to the “madman’s” performances.⁴⁵³ There is no boundary kept between performers and spectators; as in Artaud, the cruel festival surrounds everything, usurping the space of the banal.⁴⁵⁴ A spectrum of performance is thus established by the film, with discursive improvisation at one end and non-verbal, non-agentic animal performance at the other. Despite its deceptively minor key setting, A Passion is a drama of Artaudian sensibilities with respect to performance and language.

C. Bergman, Artaud, and the problem of language on stage and in cinema

There are a number of similarities between Bergman and Artaud, but there has been no substantial consideration of these. Both worked in theatre and cinema and are thus compelling examples of the need to bridge these areas of study. Bergman’s career spanned the post-WWII generation, one period of revolution in Swedish culture, only to be rebelled against during the mid- to late-1960s: “With his

⁴⁵² Andreas reads the suicide note aloud for the benefit of the police (clock ticks the whole time), and then gives them the letter, being told that it will be returned to him after the official investigation is complete. The next sequence recall Through a Glass Darkly, as Andreas tries to locate Anna, who has disappeared from the house; as in Glass, we see Andreas go on and off camera, which remains stationary with a view on a hall and stair. He then finds her in the abandoned studio that had belonged to his wife; she is praying. He accuses her of praying only for herself, calling it “damned lousy theatre ... damned theatre.”

⁴⁵³ Similarly, Andreas and Johan can also be read as faces of the *auteur*, the former a quasi-autobiographical figure working through his perpetual isolation and serial romances, and the latter a benevolent, harmless hermit figure suspected of atrocities. In this latter reading, the performances of the paratheatrical terrorist that drive Johan to suicide may well be a comment upon the rebellion against Bergman by the new generation of Swedish theatre and cinema revolutionaries.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Artaud, Theatre and its Double 81, 124.

roots in institutional theater, Bergman has been very much in the center of the clash between cultural heritage and innovation that has characterized twentieth-century aesthetics.”⁴⁵⁵ The ideas of Antonin Artaud were very much a part of this “clash.”⁴⁵⁶ There was no Swedish translation of The Theatre and Its Double available during the 50s and 60s.⁴⁵⁷ Artaud’s influence was felt and disseminated through practice by Swedish experimental groups; through exposure to the work methods and ideas of Jerzy Grotowski; and through Artaudian tendencies in playwrights such as Jean Genet, Peter Weiss and, arguably, Edward Albee. Such indirect but salient channels provide sources for the Artaudian qualities found in Bergman’s re-workings of modern classics such as Hedda Gabler and Woyzeck, as well as in A Passion.⁴⁵⁸

A specific link between Artaud and Bergman lies in the affinity that both men felt they had with August Strindberg’s A Dream Play. Artaud extolled the play as appropriate to “an ideal theater,” the staging of which would be “the crowning achievement” for a director.⁴⁵⁹ The space of such an “ideal”

⁴⁵⁵ Timm, “Borderland” 96.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. Timm specifically stresses the influence of Meyerhold, Stanislavsky, Gombrowicz, and Artaud. The impact of Stanislavski in the Swedish context has been discussed in the first chapter. Meyerhold and the Polish dramatist Witold Gombrowicz were both introduced primarily via the work of Alf Sjöberg.

⁴⁵⁷ Artaud’s writings on the theatre became available in 1964 and 1970 in untranslated volumes of the Collected Works. The first published academic analysis available was in English: The dramatic concepts of Antonin Artaud, by Eric Sellin, 1968 (U of Chicago Press).

⁴⁵⁸ See Steene, Reference Guide 606. Hedda Gabler opened on 17 October 1964 on the Main Stage of the Royal Dramatic. Bergman sought to establish a “total theatrical space” for the performance, with house lights left on into the first act and a powerful flashlight used in the second to make the audience visible to itself. This may be taken as an attempt by Bergman to maintain both the classical purpose of the Royal Dramatic Theatre while also keeping abreast trends in European theatre, in general; cf. Sjögren Lek och Raseri 196. Birgitta Steene finds that the critical response was divided into roughly two camps, those who found the choice to produce Ibsen’s play an indication of the Royal Dramatic Theatre’s outmoded approach, and those who approved of Bergman’s elimination of Ibsen’s period settings and portions of the text. Steene notes that some critics found Bergman’s choices to be an intrusion of “filmmaking that relied on visual effects” and that “so-called cinematic features” frequently met with critical disapproval, “indicating a distrust of their artistic potential” and considering these to be “a form of emotional manipulation.”

⁴⁵⁹ Antonin Artaud, Antonin Artaud, Selected Writings (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976) 163.

theatre was found “between real life and the life of dreams” where lay “a certain interplay of mental associations, relationships between gestures or events that can be translated into actions,” actions that would “constitute precisely that theatrical reality” that Artaud felt had been abandoned, “erased from the human brain,” but which still existed.⁴⁶⁰ This terrain “halfway between reality and dreams” also consistently shaped Bergman’s aesthetics. Bergman certainly had his own historical relationship to Strindberg, deriving from the Olof Molander “Swedish” interpretations, and developed through his own stagings of Strindberg, primarily at Malmö. But it is significant that, following the artistic upheavals of the 1960s, Bergman began a new phase of theatrical production with A Dream Play in 1970.

Both men worked in cinema as well as theatre. Artaud compared “the state of total degeneracy” of the French theater with the fact that cinema houses were operating at “capacity business.”⁴⁶¹ Economics aside, the fundamental reason for the decline was “a written theater with literary pretensions and a doubtful psychological observation” that had outlived itself.⁴⁶² The text had “absorbed the action so completely” that “the entire theatrical spectacle” had been reduced to “a single person delivering a monologue in front of a backdrop,” confirming the “supremacy of spoken language” in Western theatre “over all other languages,” and had even made the cinema, “the art of images, a substitute for spoken theater!”⁴⁶³ Bergman’s initial drafts of screenplays in the early 1960s

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid 205.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid 206. This critique is double-edged, as one could well argue that Artaud is bringing knowledge gained from his experience in cinema to the theatre. In this, his approach is wholly compatible with Bergman’s development from the 40s to the 60s, during which he was frequently criticized and lauded for bringing “cinematic” moments to his theatre productions and vice-versa.

also evidence “the nature of the relationship (or lack of it) between the medium of the written word and the medium of the moving image” as well as what Bergman called his “dialogue disease”: “I really, once and for all, have to get away from dialogues. I’m damned tired of all these meaningless words and discussions.”⁴⁶⁴

Artaud rejects the idea of an equivalency between visual and written language, in which “the visual language would merely be a bad translation,” but sees the question as being one of “revealing the very essence of language and of carrying the action onto a level where all translation would be unnecessary and where this action would operate almost intuitively on the brain.”⁴⁶⁵ In various notes written between January and April 1962, Bergman describes the dialogue for The Silence as “entirely subservient and only an accompaniment,” as “a rattle on the soundtrack without any meaning” and therefore “cinematographic,” that “the art” will make “strong sounds weak while the weak sounds will be heard with an unprecedented sharpness,” and that “by weighing correctly the acoustic sensation with the visual, I will reach the desired depth in terms of effect.”⁴⁶⁶ Bergman’s approach aims at an acute sensory perception that seems similar to Artaud’s ambitions to cinematic “worlds which ask nothing of anyone or anything” out of which may be born “an inorganic language that moves the mind by osmosis and without any kind of transposition into words” made possible because cinema “does not detach itself from life but rediscovers the original order of things.”⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ Koskinen, Ingmar Bergman’s The Silence 70-71. Koskinen emphasizes that, rather than inviting psychological reduction, this self-consciousness is cultural and reflects earlier criticisms of Bergman’s writing for both stage and film for excessive literariness, which resulted in “a well-documented weariness” with the literary scene that in Bergman, “in his own view, was never allowed to be a part of” (73).

⁴⁶⁵ Artaud “Cinema and Reality,” Selected Writings 151.

⁴⁶⁶ Qtd. in Koskinen, Ingmar Bergman’s The Silence 71.

⁴⁶⁷ Artaud, “Cinema and Reality,” Selected Writings 152.

Neither Artaud nor Bergman was a purist in terms of erecting a firm boundary between theatre and film. Abjuring the notion of a “pure cinema” in two short essays, “Cinema and Abstraction” (1927) and “Cinema and Reality” (1927), Artaud maintains a difference between film and theatre, but still describes the effect of his vision of the cinema in a manner that clearly anticipates his theatre writings.⁴⁶⁸ In particular, Artaud stresses the corporeality of perception and feeling in a manner comparable with Bergman’s approach: “No matter how deeply we dig into the mind, we find at the bottom of every emotion, even an intellectual one, an affective sensation of a nervous order” that “involves the recognition” perhaps elementary but still tangible “of something substantial, of a certain vibration *that always recalls states*, either known or imagined, that are *clothed in one of the myriad forms of real or imagined nature*.”⁴⁶⁹ This subjective experience that “always recalls states,” whether from experience or imagination, describes a cognitively engaged spectatorship common to film and theatre; this is compatible with Bergman’s ultimate goals toward his audiences in the 1960s. This relationship was explored in a new manner through the actor interviews in A Passion.

III. *Mellanspel* in A Passion [En passion Film nr. L-182] (1969)

The director’s script (*regimanus*) for A Passion is dated 19 August 1968, and the film’s official industry number is L-182. The script is typewritten and marked variously with notes in blue ink, black ink, red marker/ink, and green marker/ink. In both its working form and published version, the script is divided into four “acts,” with each subsection marked in Roman numerals. As with many of

⁴⁶⁸ Artaud, “Cinema and Abstraction,” Selected Writings 149. “From a collision of objects and gestures are derived real psychic situations among which the cornered mind seeks some subtle means of escape. Nothing exists except in terms of forms, volumes, light, air—but above all in terms of the sense of a detached and naked emotion that slips in between the paved roads of images and reaches a kind of heaven where it bursts into full bloom.” The last image is evocative of the tower that blooms to heaven in A Dream Play.

⁴⁶⁹ Artaud, “Cinema and Reality,” Selected Writings 150; emphasis added.

Bergman's later scripts, A Passion is written as a piece of prose containing dialogue. There are none of the conventions of a commercial screenplay included, such as camera positions or sound effects:

"The script had been written straight off the cuff, it was more *a catalogue of moods* than a film script."⁴⁷⁰ The division between each act is marked by a monologue in which one of the four principal characters speaks directly about themselves. In the typewritten text, such an interview is called an *intermedium*, but these passages are also called by other names indicated in handwritten notes within the director's script: *reklamfilm*, *resefilm*, *journal*, and simply, *film*.

In the final product, each of these act divisions is shot as an on-set interview in which each of the actors playing the four main roles talks about their interpretation of their character, rather than being an *intermedium* featuring a character speaking in the first person. While the order of presentation in the script is Andreas, Eva, Anna, and Ellis, the position of the female characters is switched in the film; thus the order is Max von Sydow (Andreas), Liv Ullmann (Anna), Bibi Andersson (Eva), and Erland Josephson (Ellis). This seems to follow the hierarchy of the characters, and also orders them into couples. Each of these actor interviews begins with a framing of the slate showing the film number, date, and lot number on the top line (L-182; 17/8; A22); these are the same for all the interviews. "*Mellanspel*" is written below this information on the slate, along with the actor's name, plus a roman numeral indicating the take number. *Mellanspel* may be translated as interlude or intermezzo, and thus has connotations that are both musical and dramatic.⁴⁷¹

It is telling that these short sequences marking the formal "act" divisions should have had so many different names: *intermedium*, *reklamfilm*, *resefilm*, *journal*, *film*, and *mellanspel*, respectively.

⁴⁷⁰ Björkman, et al 261; emphasis added.

⁴⁷¹ A literal translation would be "between-play(s)" or "in-between-play(s)."

Intermedium indicates an intermission or interlude, but also a crossing between media or modes of representation. *Mellanspel* (literally “between-play/s” or “in-between-play/s”) is a more typical name for an *intermezzi* or interlude. *Reklamfilm* is an advertising commercial, but one filmed and shown before a feature film in a Swedish cinema rather than an advertisement made for television.⁴⁷² *Resefilm* is a travel film (even an amateur version of a family vacation) and therefore indicates documenting a journey of some sort. *Journal* implies a formal log or chronicle of daily notes, often in an institutional setting. It is clear that Bergman was wrestling with the exact nature of these breaks and that, whatever these might have been called, these constituted a separate category of performance for Bergman within the film.⁴⁷³

All four *mellanspel* were shot on 17 August 1969, eight months after the end of filming and shortly before the film’s release. As one actor described it, Bergman had tried the idea of the characters speaking in the first person, but “he didn’t really feel that it was good,” so he “took it away, and after the picture was finished he asked us to come to the studio and to speak as actors.”⁴⁷⁴ Only the actresses (Liv Ullmann and Bibi Andersson) are identified by first and last names; the men (Max von

⁴⁷² The *reklamfilm* idea has a specific historical association in terms of Bergman’s career. Bergman made a series of such advertising shorts for a bath soap called Bris in 1951. The Swedish film industry was undergoing a work stoppage and no other production was taking place at this time. Bergman’s Bris films are short, comical projects that are intriguing in themselves for their meta-theatrical and meta-cinematic references. In particular, they feature plays-within and also demonstrate Bergman’s familiarity with the early trick films of Georges Méliés [see Koskinen article]. There is a marked similarity between this early commercial work and the trick photography found in *The Hour of the Wolf*; that the *reklamfilm* concept is present also in *A Passion* therefore provides an additional aesthetic connection to *The Hour of the Wolf*.

⁴⁷³ Ingmar Bergman, *En passion* (Film nr. L-182) (Unpublished; Ingmar Bergman Foundation Archives, B: 057. Stockholm: Svensk filmindustri AB, 1968). This reflects, in a way, Bergman’s apparent relationship to the project itself. The first typed manuscript submitted to SF reads: “*En passion* (Fyra akter) [scrawled out] Film [handwritten] av Ingmar Bergman.” Conceptually, the project was “*A Passion* (Four acts) by Ingmar Bergman”, but revised even in this respect and brought into conformity as a “film.”

⁴⁷⁴ Ullmann, “Working with Bergman” 47.

Sydow and Erland Josephson) are identified by surname only. The slates also indicate the take number: the interviews used for von Sydow and Andersson were both the results of fourth takes; Ullmann's interview was the result of the seventh take; and Josephson's was his tenth take.

Like the performance-within, the strategy of offering meta-cinematic interviews paradoxically reinforces the strength of the diegesis; despite being shown the actors as actors commenting on the characters, the story of these four characters seems all the more "real" following these *mellanspel*. One can compare this cinematic strategy of providing actor interviews to Bergman's later remarks on what he held to be a misunderstood aspect of Brechtian *verfremdungseffekt*: "The real theater always reminds – the real theatrical experience always must remind the audience that it is watching a performance. [...] The spectator is always involved and he is always outside, at one and the same time."⁴⁷⁵ Koskinen considers A Passion in relation to Woyzeck as both projects premiered in 1969 and the latter was Bergman's return to the theatre after a two year absence. Koskinen sees something both new and similar between the productions in the concept of "open rehearsals."⁴⁷⁶ While this is not elaborated upon, the implication is that A Passion is in some way intended to be "opened" to the audience through the series of actor interviews included in the film that formally mark its division into four acts.

This aesthetic activism with its exhortation of the audience to participate reflects the avant-garde performance tendencies of the 1960s, but it also seems to be the radical potential of performance that Bergman has used as a plot point from Sawdust and Tinsel forward. A member of the onscreen

⁴⁷⁵ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theatre 32; see also Koskinen "Allting föreställer, ingenting är" 157.

⁴⁷⁶ Koskinen, "Allting föreställer, ingenting är" 65. Koskinen finds in Woyzeck "an impulse similar to that in A Passion: the public will be allowed, even assumed to participate during the so called actual rehearsal" ["*en impuls liknande den i En passion: publiken tillåts, ja, förutsätts att delta under så att säga pågående repetitionen*"] (original emphasis; my translation).

audience frequently penetrates the performance-within proper, as previous examples studied here demonstrate: Frans enters the circus ring, the constable disrupts the magic show, Martin serves as interlocutor, etc. So in some ways, this is both new in Bergman but also taps into an abiding anxiety of the performative usurping the space of the “real” (or the “real” being disclosed as being merely performative). This anxiety permeates A Passion, and in fact brings the film in close proximity with the post-structuralist thinking of Jacques Derrida and the performance theories of Antonin Artaud.

A. The phenomenon of “stolen speech” in A Passion

Derrida’s reading of Artaud in the essay “La parole soufflée” (1967) results in a number of observations that bear comparison with Bergman’s own statements and practices, particularly during the 1960s, and especially with respect to language on stage, in film, and in interviews, and the contemporaneous interest in Artaud’s theories. Derrida sees a basic split of the subject via the speech act, or at least he finds this in Artaud, and this seems quite closely related to the concerns with speech that are manifest in many of Bergman’s film and stage productions. The strategies of response to the experience of speaking vary in Bergman; but it is such a consistent concern that it bears deeper comparison with Artaud and Derrida.

Bergman, Artaud, and Derrida all actively resist definitions (fixed meanings) derived through language (speech). Artaud’s resistance may well be the most extreme, at least in terms of being involuntary, but in all three, one sees similar processes and similar concerns with performance. Derrida pursues an understanding of Artaud as a way of dismantling structuralist and psychoanalytical methods, which fail to “destroy” themselves “as commentary by exhuming the unity in which is

embedded the differences (of madness and the work, of the psyche and the text, of example and essence, etc.) which implicitly support both criticism and the clinic.”⁴⁷⁷ As Derrida sees it:

Artaud promises the existence of a speech that is a body, of a body that is a theater, of a theater that is a text because it is no longer enslaved to a writing more ancient than itself, an ur-text or an ur-speech. If Artaud absolutely resists [...] clinical or critical exegeses, he does so by virtue of that part of his adventure [...] which is the very protest *itself* against exemplification *itself*. The critic and the doctor are without resource when confronted by an existence that refuses to signify, or by an art without works, a language without a trace.⁴⁷⁸

The drama of “the critic and the doctor” who are “confronted by an existence that refuses to signify” is essentially that found in Bergman’s The Face, Persona and A Passion.⁴⁷⁹ In Bergman’s case, it is something far less extreme and without an explicit desire toward some unitary existence on the part of Bergman himself. But this is not the case for certain of his characters, such as Albert Vogler in The Face or his namesake Elisabet Vogler in Persona, both of whom reject speech and performance, and are therefore artists “refusing to signify” and “without works.”⁴⁸⁰

Derrida stresses two connotations of Artaud’s use of *soufflé* (spirited away, stolen) in his writings on speech and the theatre, the first involving the spectator (or commentator, reader, listener): “Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, offering itself to understanding or reception, offering itself as spectacle, immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes a signification which I do not possess

⁴⁷⁷ Derrida “La parole soufflée” 174.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid 175.

⁴⁷⁹ The “critic and the doctor” types persist from Dr. Vergéus in The Face to the psychiatrist in Persona, and in the architect and amateur photographer, Elis Vergéus, in A Passion.

⁴⁸⁰ Breakdowns in language are perhaps the most extreme instantiations of breakdowns in diegetically represented intersubjective communication, and occasionally with the audience proper. Examples in Bergman include the absent vocalization of “Albert” in Sawdust and Tinsel, the trial of Isak Borg in Wild Strawberries, the willful muteness of the protagonists in The Face and Persona, the divine or hallucinated voices in Through a Glass Darkly, and a passage in Persona in which the speech of the nurse, Alma, devolves into ungrammatical Swedish verging on gibberish.

because it is a signification.”⁴⁸¹ This desire to retain speech, or in Bergman’s case, to resist interpretation and analysis, is frequently expressed both in performances and interviews (even to a degree of hysteria). Examples include Bergman’s rebukes of “lecturing” by some interviewers, such as Torsten Mann and Charles Samuels, his pained public confrontations with various critics, or remarks such as these made at the beginning of an American Film Institute lecture-interview in 1975:

I am very nervous. I am almost fainting. I always feel very scared when I have to meet so many people, but you look very friendly. I will do my best. [...] But I think you make it a job—you ask questions. I don’t know what you want from me. I will try to be as honest as possible. It’s very difficult because I can’t talk my own language.⁴⁸²

In short, despite his marked eloquence and skills as an interview subject, Bergman frequently experienced questioning, analyzing, and explaining himself as a form of imposed cruelty or interrogation. His films frequently emphasize the unreliable, untrustworthy, and unstable aspects of speech, and in ways comparable to Artaud.

Derrida finds that the idea of “stolen speech” in Artaud touches on a basic relation between “the essence of theft and the origin of discourse in general,” because “the theft of speech is not a theft among others; it is confused with the very possibility of theft, defining the fundamental structure of theft.”⁴⁸³ This “theft” of speech is present in A Passion in a number of ways that are also familiar dramaturgical tropes: early in the film, Andreas eavesdrops on a phone conversation Anna has, and

⁴⁸¹ Derrida “La parole soufflée” 175.

⁴⁸² Shargel Ingmar Bergman: Interviews 127. Cf. Björkman, et al 244-246; cf. Samuels 183.

⁴⁸³ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 175. There is a correspondence here between such a “fundamental structure” as Artaud’s (and/or Derrida’s) idea of communication and Sartre’s idea of the *regard* of the Other: both reduce my (the speaking subject’s) freedom; both are part of the existential plight of the subject. This describes the existential condition of protagonists such as Elisabet Vogler in Persona and those played by the actor Max von Sydow in The Hour of the Wolf, Shame, and A Passion with respect to their experience of being seen and heard, and the frequently extreme dramatic “cruelty” that distinguishes the style of these four films, a style that was being developed in Bergman’s stage work as well.

subsequently reads a personal letter taken from a purse that Anna has left behind.⁴⁸⁴ A related idea to “stolen speech” is that of “unpower”; this idea also bears a resemblance with Bergman: “The generosity of inspiration, the positive irruption of a speech which comes from I know not where [...] the fecundity of the *other* breath [*souffle*] is *unpower*: not the absence but *the radical irresponsibility of speech, irresponsibility as the power and the origin of speech.*”⁴⁸⁵ This “unpower” and “irresponsibility” comes from being an actor prompted to speaking a text provided by another.

Artaud’s crisis and obsessive concern with language was that “the origin and urgency of speech, that which impelled him into expression, was confused with his own lack of speech, with ‘having nothing to say’ in his own name.”⁴⁸⁶ Here Derrida touches upon a phenomenological aspect of speech, one appropriate to the theatre (performance) and to life, and that bears a relation with Sartre’s idea of the *regard*. In speech, “As soon as I am heard, as soon as I hear myself, the I who hears *itself*, who hears *me*, becomes the I who speaks and takes speech from the I who thinks that he speaks and is heard in his own name; and becomes the I who takes speech *without ever cutting off* the I who thinks that he speaks.”⁴⁸⁷ This “I who thinks that he speaks” describes the malaise and existential crisis of Andreas Winkelman in A Passion. But it also manifested in the *mellanspel*. Those performances-within that were intended as a platform for the actors to speak “authentically” but which largely collapsed because of a failure on the actor’s part to have anything to say “in his own name.”

⁴⁸⁴ One could argue that the bulk of the dramatic action in Persona is founded on this idea of a “theft” of the subject through her speech; the nurse, Alma, finds herself wholly without defense before the perpetually silent but always listening patient, Elisabet. This same principle is at work in August Strindberg’s play The Stronger.

⁴⁸⁵ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 175; emphasis added.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid 177.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid 177-178. There is a similarity with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s observation on touch, namely that in using one’s right hand to touch one’s left hand, for example, we have the experience of being both subject and object to ourselves.

This phenomenon of “the I who takes speech *without ever cutting off* the I who thinks that he speaks” is “the structure of instantaneous and original elusion without which no speech could ever catch its breath [*souffle*]”; an “elusion” that is the ‘original enigma’ of the individual’s existence.”⁴⁸⁸ This recalls Bergman’s view of acting: “When you are acting a part, *you are not an I, you are always a you.*”⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, Bergman’s protagonist in A Passion, Andreas, is similarly “constituted” by the “enigma” of his life’s history, the absence of himself as subject, one who “does not know where it is coming from or going to.” Andreas describes himself thus in a lengthy monologue presented in extreme close-up and seemingly suspended from space and time. Derrida argues that this kind of “elusion” that occurs is fundamental to existence, “the initial unity of that which afterward is diffracted into theft and dissimulation” through our participation in language; he further asserts this phenomenon was understood by Artaud in “a metaphysics of subjectivity (consciousness, unconsciousness, or the individual body).”⁴⁹⁰ This same “metaphysics of subjectivity” is at work in A Passion and is caught, unexpectedly, in the performances-within of the actor interviews.

B. Analysis of *mellanspel*

These interviews are interesting for a number of reasons. First, they establish and formally acknowledge the boundaries of a mimetic performance; second, they are an aesthetic experiment and investigation into audience empathy and its limits; third, they constitute an innovative performance-within that exposes one of the sources (the actor) for the performance proper; and finally as a platform

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid 178. “As the speech or history (*ainos*) which hides its origin and meaning; it never says where it is going, nor where it is coming from, primarily because it does not know where it is coming from or going to, and because this not knowing, to wit, the absence of its own subject, is not subsequent to this enigma but, rather, constitutes it.”

⁴⁸⁹ Marker and Marker, A Life in the Theater 30-31; emphasis added.

⁴⁹⁰ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 178.

for four longtime Bergman collaborators to speak about their work.⁴⁹¹ All four of these features oscillate around the phenomenon of *mimesis*.

Philosopher Paul Woodruff identifies three basic varieties of mimesis: modeling, complicity, and duplicity. All kinds of mimesis involve duplicity on some level, as mimesis requires a doubling or copying of an original of some sort.⁴⁹² But these three types pursue different ends. Duplicity is concerned with imitative effect, complicity is concerned with pleasure as experienced through mimesis, and modeling is concerned with education.⁴⁹³ Lying is a pre-eminent concern in A Passion, but of course the film relies on mimetic complicity between spectator and character/actor for its pleasure. Similarly, one could find in these interviews an ostensible purpose to educate the public, in some way, about an actor's creative process.⁴⁹⁴

Woodruff emphasizes that mimesis is not only a component of "the art of making human action worth watching" but also belongs to that art's counterpart, "the art of finding action worth watching": "Mimesis is a bridge between the art of watching and the art of being watched. Good mimesis makes good watchers."⁴⁹⁵ This may be turned against mimetic representations, of course, but also deserves to be applied to the limits of Bergman's art and his trouble with a new Swedish public who, at least in the

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Björkman, et al 251. Bergman has frequently professed a special interest in acting: "As a professional I've devoted all my time to learning how an actor functions, how to get the best results out of him. Since the actor is my chief instrument I have to learn how to collaborate one hundred percent, and that's something I've gradually figured out."

⁴⁹² Cf. Stanislavski 298: "The secret is that lying is implicit in the stage itself, in the very circumstances of public performance."

⁴⁹³ Woodruff 127.

⁴⁹⁴ The issue of the interrelation between performance and deception (of Others and of oneself) has been manifest in each of the films studied here.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid 140.

late 60s, was trying to break out of a culture of Swedish spectatorship and become agents rather than observers.

These *mellanspel* demonstrate the elasticity of audience empathy, if not identification, toward persons in fictive circumstances. This contradicts our usual notions of mimesis, however, in which our credulity toward what we are watching on stage or on the screen would supposedly suffer. In a classical view, “mimesis drives a wedge between our minds and reality,” and the “selectivity” of mimesis is such that, “the agent produces certain effects of the original but not others, and may do so more strikingly than the original.”⁴⁹⁶ But while these interviews may have attempted to reverse the effects of mimesis, to remove the mimetic “wedge” and affirm “reality,” the *mellanspel* exhibit in effect that actors may be perceived as extensions of the characters, rather than as creators or even beings with an existence independent from that of the characters.

A part of this failure lies with an inability of the actors to speak in the first-person. As early as November 1971, Bergman disavowed the *mellanspel* as a failed experiment:

I’m sorry to say that those [interviews] are very unsuccessful. I just wanted to have a break in the film and to let the actors express themselves. Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann improvised their interviews, but Max von Sydow and Erland Josephson had no idea what to say, so they said what I told them to. This led to two different films, and I no longer understand why I left the whole batch in, because I always realized that they wouldn’t work. But I like *coups de théâtre*, things that make people wake up and rejoin the film. This time, however, it wasn’t successful.⁴⁹⁷

Liv Ullmann recalled, however, that “Bibi Andersson used the text from her character.”⁴⁹⁸ This is evident from comparing Eva’s *intermedium* in the shooting script with the *mellanspel* in the film.

⁴⁹⁶ Woodruff 137; 139.

⁴⁹⁷ Samuels 188-189.

⁴⁹⁸ Ullmann “Working with Bergman” 47.

Conceptually, the *mellanspel* contradict Bergman's assertion that when acting a role, "you are not an I you are always a you." In a sense, the challenge was to both the actor and the *auteur*: can the actor speak authoritatively? The *mellanspel* offer four different answers. Erland Josephson delivers Elis's original monologue virtually verbatim. Bibi Andersson clearly used Eva's monologue as a source text. Max von Sydow's response has no precedent in the script, although it was apparently dictated by Bergman. Here is the somewhat surreal case of an actor performing what someone else thinks he should think about acting, while at the same time "playing" himself. But Liv Ullmann seems to speak quite freely and with autonomy about Anna. Ullmann also utilized this freedom when improvising the dinner scene in the film.

This question is significant in terms of both theatre and film scholarship because the actor typically is the common denominator in both (as well as in television, radio, and other visual media) and, in general, the locus of audience empathy and other affective strategies. The "human being" remains our basic mimetic model despite ever-increasing tendencies toward spectacular effects and critical interrogations of the construction of all types of identity. CGI effects, animation, and digital games, for example, still commonly rely on human actors as working models. There is always, at some level, an investigation of the human through performance that can be described as a philosophical concern.

Mellanspel: Max von Sydow/Andreas Winkelman (<http://youtu.be/k7ANDRuhgGs>)

The first interview is a single shot sequence beginning with the image of the slate and the voice of the slate operator saying, "Mellanspel, von Sydow; four." The camera shows the actor Max von Sydow in a medium close-up, seated, clean shaven, and with noticeably longer hair than he wore as the character. Bergman asks, off camera, "Max, as an actor, what is your personal view of Andreas Winkelman?" Sydow responds:

I think he's difficult because . . . he's trying to hide from the outside world. His failed marriage and his legal problems have driven him into a blind alley, where he tries to conceal his identity. He's trying to wipe out his means of expression. And this hiding place, perhaps without him being aware of it, has become a prison. The hard thing as an actor is to try to express the lack of expression.

By Bergman's own account, these were not the words of Max von Sydow reflecting on the role of Andreas Winkelman, but thoughts that Bergman prompted the actor to say, who apparently was at a loss for words. But rather than just a failed attempt at "authentic" speech on the part of a collaborator, this *mellanspel* captures something interesting in its failure, even if unplanned or unwanted.

In the *regimans*, this monologue is noted in handwriting as REKLAMFILM I.⁴⁹⁹ The text is as follows:

The world rolls over me. I no longer have any shelter. I have no one to turn to in protest, nobody to accuse, not even myself. I am powerless in surrender. I cannot master or alter that which I see and hear. It goes on uninterrupted hour after hour, it bleeds, gurgles, shrieks, crawls and stinks. I look on lifelessly, aghast, paralyzed.⁵⁰⁰

This original *intermedium* is Artaudian in its imagery of a world that "rolls over me," and in which all that is seen and heard "goes on uninterrupted hour after hour, it bleeds, gurgles, shrieks, crawls and stinks," while the onlooker is lifeless, "aghast, paralyzed."

The goal of the *mellanspel* was to provide a description of Andreas from an alternate subjectivity as deeply imbricated as possible with the character (and the author): namely, the actor. But von Sydow's own speech apparently fails him; or, Bergman interceded in his own need to control the commentary. In the former case, this recalls Artaud's idea of the prompter, the *souffleur*, as well as Artaud's stated

⁴⁹⁹ Bergman, *En passion* 12.

⁵⁰⁰ Ingmar Bergman, "En passion," *Persona/Vargtimmen/Skammen/En passion* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget PAN/Norstedts, 1973) 150-151; my translation. "Världen vältrar sig över mig. Jag har inte längre någon skydd. Jag har ingen att vända mig till i protest, ingen att anklaga, inte ens mig själv. Jag är maktlöst utlämnad. Jag kan inte besvärja eller förvandla det jag ser och hör. Det pågår oavbrutet timme efter timme, det blöder, gurglar, skriker, krälar och stinker. Jag ser på modlös, skräm, förlamad."

inability to “speak in his own name.” In the latter case, the *mellanspel* may be taken as Bergman’s own translation or revision of the original *intermedium*; rather than a world that “rolls over me,” Andreas is in “a blind alley,” a “hiding place” that has become “a prison.” And rather than looking on “lifelessly, aghast, paralyzed,” Andreas condition is translated as the result of an effort to “conceal his identity” and “wipe out his means of expression.” The challenge, ostensibly for von Sydow the actor but arguably for Bergman as screenwriter and director, is to “authentically” try to “express the lack of expression.” In Artaud’s terms, this is the “unpower” of speech, the result of which is the experience of the failure of language as a medium of authentic expression.

Artaud’s crisis in respect to language, which was “ceaselessly repeated” in his writings, was “the origin and urgency of speech, that which impelled him into expression, was confused with his own lack of speech, with ‘having nothing to say’ in his own name.”⁵⁰¹ Derrida stresses two connotations of Artaud’s use of *soufflé* (spirited away, stolen) in his writings on speech and the theatre, the first involving the spectator (or commentator, reader, listener): “Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, offering itself to understanding or reception, offering itself as spectacle, immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes a signification which I do not possess because it is a signification.”⁵⁰² This captures one aspect of the crisis of this first *mellanspel*; the apparent inadequacy of von Sydow’s speech to express what he knows or knew about Andreas, at least when speaking to his audience, ostensibly “offering” that knowledge “to understanding or reception” and “as spectacle.”

But an additional factor may have been the presence of Bergman himself as interviewer, and a second sense of *soufflé* therefore also appropriate to this first *mellanspel*. Derrida discerns it as the

⁵⁰¹ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 177.

⁵⁰² Ibid 175.

possibility of being “*inspired* by an *other* voice that itself reads a text older than the text of my body or than the theater of my gestures,” represented in the figure of the prompter, or *souffleur*:

Artaud desired the conflagration of the stage upon which the prompter [*souffleur*] was possible and where the body was under the rule of a foreign text. Artaud wanted the machinery of the prompter [*souffleur*] spirited away [*soufflé*], wanted to plunder the structure of theft.⁵⁰³

Bergman similarly wished “to plunder the structure of theft” by allowing this platform for the actor.

But, the *auteur* clearly functioned as prompter in this situation, while at the same time aspiring to some idea of a freedom for the actor (albeit through discursive means) from “a foreign text.”

In Artaud, the figure of the prompter is linked to the idea of “unpower,” a reticence that is “inspiration itself: the force of a void, the cyclonic breath [*souffle*] of a prompter [*souffleur*] who draws his breath in, and thereby robs me of that which he first allowed to approach me and which I believed I could say *in my own name*.”⁵⁰⁴ This is the curious predicament of this first *mellanspel*, as well as the problem of the entire film, which conveys the inability and the illusion of being able to speak “*in my own name*.” This agony of language, of first person expression in a medium of signification that is immediately lost to one as original speech by the fact of being a signification, informs A Passion in a number of ways.⁵⁰⁵ This first *mellanspel* inadvertently captures this Artaudian dilemma.

Max von Sydow’s concurrent engagement as Henry IV

The result of this effort is reminiscent of Pirandello: von Sydow is required to perform himself, apparently using a text of his thoughts as imagined by Bergman. This is quite similar to the

⁵⁰³ Ibid 176.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ In fact, the film concludes with a shot of Andreas collapsed on a road, a shot that slowly dissipates through an ever-increasing zoom lens, as Bergman says in a voice-over, “This time his name was Andreas Winkelman.” The possibility of possessing even a name is called into question.

predicament of the title character in Pirandello's Henry IV, and Max von Sydow's concurrent role in that play may well have informed his performance of Andreas in A Passion. Max von Sydow was working at the Royal Dramatic Theatre during shooting for the film, appearing for two shows each weekend, and commuting by boat in order to maintain a shooting schedule of 7:30 A. M. to 5 P. M., with Mondays off.⁵⁰⁶ The production was directed by Lars-Erik Liedholm in the studio theatre; von Sydow had played this role previously at Hälsingborg Municipal Theatre in 1953, in a production directed by Johan Falck.

Von Sydow's fame is virtually synonymous with that of Bergman's films from The Seventh Seal (1957) through The Touch (1971), as well as numerous stage collaborations with Bergman, beginning with Lea and Rachel, by Wilhelm Moberg, at Malmö Municipal Theatre, and concluding with Ibsen's The Wild Duck at the Royal Dramatic in 1972. But it is worth noting that, following his training at the school of Royal Dramatic Theatre from 1948-1951, the actor worked for four years under Johan Falck (1909-1983), first at Norrköping-Linköping Municipal Theatre from 1951-53, and then at Hälsingborg Municipal Theatre from 1953-1955, before joining the Malmö company in the fall of 1955. He had also worked with Alf Sjöberg, both at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and in two landmark films, Only a Mother [Bara en mor] (1949) and Miss Julie (1951). Thus, by the time of his first theatrical collaboration with Bergman, von Sydow had been in thirty previous productions.

Following Bergman's Malmö period, which culminated in the Paris performances of The Saga and the London performances of Goethe's Ur-Faust, von Sydow's theatrical collaborations with Bergman dropped off considerably. He continued working at Malmö for two more seasons before moving on to the Royal Dramatic Theatre. While this move complemented Bergman's own career trajectory, and

⁵⁰⁶ Cowie, Ingmar Bergman 260-261.

even though both men were working at the Royal Dramatic during the 1960s, von Sydow did not collaborate with Bergman at the Royal Dramatic for over a decade, in a production of Ibsen's The Wild Duck in 1972. Instead, von Sydow worked with Alf Sjöberg, Bengt Ekerot, and Frank Sundström, as well as Lars-Erik Liedholm and Ingvar Kjellson, while at the Royal Dramatic. Apart from a radio production of Strindberg's Playing with Fire [Leka med elden] in 1961, his collaborations with Bergman in the 1960s were primarily in film. And even in film, von Sydow worked with Bergman on 8 occasions from 1960-1972, and on 18 other projects with various directors. His acumen as an actor continued to develop through working with other directors.

It is easy to lose sight of this fact of the workplace for the so-called "Bergman ensemble." To do so fosters the impression that these actors' only career accomplishments were with Bergman and therefore can be evaluated only as an extension of the *auteur*. The actor is a repository of knowledge carried forward from prior performances to successive projects. Rather than a *tabula rasa*, an idea which may very well serve as an operative model and aesthetic goal for an actor, the actor is rather like a living palimpsest. Previous roles are erased or painted over to create a new space for a different role, yet there is still accretion and aggregation, textures that remain behind that inform the present project.⁵⁰⁷ This provides an account for a culture of performance, manifested in various media, but still held in common.

Mellanspel: Bibi Andersson/Eva Vergéus (<http://youtu.be/nr73N1Y3ouc>)

Eva delivers the second *intermedium* in the shooting script and the later published version of the screenplay. Based on notes in the regimanus, Bergman clearly was debating what to call these

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Camus 81. Camus' idea of the actor as a version of an absurd man, his "silhouette" imbued with the memories of previous incarnations and *personae*.

discursive disruptions. Eva's speech is accompanied by notes identifying it as "REKLAMFILM II", "RESEFILM?" and "JOURNAL."⁵⁰⁸ The text is as follows:

I couldn't bear it. To be conscious. To see with open eyes. To know the course of events. So I took the rest of the sleeping pills and sank in deep lethargy. It was riddled by horrible dreams. I wanted to wake up but wasn't able to. On the third day they woke me. Then my life was changed, I thought of my earlier being as a little sister, who died a long time ago and whom I mourned with sadness but without regret. *Now I am learning sign language for the deaf. It is a release, I should like to call it a reprieve.* I have put aside the past and live only in the present.⁵⁰⁹

In the film proper, this is positioned as the third in the series of actor interviews, or *mellanspel*.

This single shot sequence begins with a close-up of the slate, but with no voiceover of the operator.

The slate is removed and there is a momentary close-up of a vertical segment of solid concrete with a small hole in the middle; this is set within a wall of concrete block. The camera quickly pans left and

Bibi Andersson is framed in a close-up against a concrete block background. She speaks, but not directly into camera:

To me Eva is a woman who can't stand the fact any longer that she has no identity, that more and more she isn't anyone, she's just a creation of others. She has no free will or self worth. I think she will try to commit suicide. But a suicide isn't a solution. It's ultimately just another egocentric action. I hope she'll be saved, that one may say, I hope that when she wakes, she will have gone through something that releases her from herself, that she can look at her old self with warmth but without remorse. I believe that she'll decide to become a teacher, for example, for people who are hearing-impaired, because deaf people live in a deeper isolation than she has ever experienced. I believe that she will feel relieved and blessed.

⁵⁰⁸ Bergman, *En passion* 29.

⁵⁰⁹ Bergman, "En passion" 162-163; my translation and emphasis. "Jag uthärdade inte. Att vara vid medvetande. Att se med öppna ögon. Att veta förloppet. Så tog jag de återstående sömnpillren och sjönk i djup dvala. Den genomkorsades av fansanfulla drömmar. Jag ville vakna men kunde inte. På tredje dagen väckte de mig. Då var min tillvaro förändrad, jag tyckte att min tidigare varelse var en liten syster, som dött för länge sedan och som jag sörjde med vemod men utan saknad. Nu lär jag mig de dövstummas språk. Det är en befrielse, jag skulle vilja kalla det en benådning. Jag har lämnat det förflutna och existerar enbart i det närvarande."

The significance of this *mellanspel* lies in two areas: the relation to language through the reference to deaf persons, and the intermingling of text and improvisation on the part of Andersson. Bergman's original *intermedium* emphasizes the “release” and “reprieve” that Eva experiences through learning sign language. While sign language is in fact discursive and functions much the same as spoken languages, in Bergman's case this notion of a mode of communication that is physical and sign-based is akin to Artaud's ambitions. Secondly, despite the conceit of the *mellanspel* as speaking authentically in the first-person, Andersson still does not speak “in her own name,” but seems rather to work somewhere in-between her role and her “self” as an actor. But this in itself is productive and creative in a manner that von Sydow's speech was not.

Bibi Andersson's deconstructive speech act in Persona (1966)

With the exception of her role as Bunny in Bergman's 1963 production of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Andersson's stage roles at the time seem largely unremarkable. But her role as the nurse Alma in Persona, specifically that character's deconstructive speech performance near the end of the film, is striking in itself and relevant to her star persona in this *mellanspel*. Andersson was frequently cast as a representative of the “everyday” woman; Eva in A Passion, as well as Andersson's performance as the nurse in Persona, are significant developments in terms of the examination of the depths and extremes of an “average” person.

In Persona, Alma confronts her antagonist, Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullmann), who throughout the film has maintained a willful silence. This silence has the effect of continually prompting Alma to speak, and is a dramatic enactment of the Artaudian *souffleur*, as Alma increasingly experiences dissociation from her “self” despite her efforts to maintain that “self” through speech. In a final, hallucinatory confrontation, Alma's language breaks down even as she continues to assert an identity that is distinct from Elisabet, whose silence and continual regard embodies the worst case version of a Sartrean Other.

Alma's speech devolves into non-grammatical language, gibberish, elided phrases that suggest different words and homonyms, and her patterns of inhalation and exhalation are as significant as any words that she employs. This last segment from her speech exemplifies these Artaudian characteristics:

(exhale/inhale) take I (exhale/inhale) what is nearest
(inhale) it's called what
no no no no no (combined with exhalation)
(inhale) us we me I
the words many so disgust/echo
(inhale) unintelligible the suffering throw
*pause*⁵¹⁰

The linguistic strategy is Artaudian and deconstructive, demonstrating that the identity of the subject must be wrested from or out of speech.⁵¹¹ It is Bergman's ultimate evaluation of language and its capacity for truth content: the only thing that can be affirmed through speech is its own negation.⁵¹²

Derrida's reading of Artaud identifies a crisis similar to that experienced by Alma:

⁵¹⁰ "Tar jag vad är närmast / det heter vad / nej nej nej nej nej / oss vi mig jag / orden många så äckel/eka / obegripliga smärtan kast." This is followed by Alma scratching open a wound in her wrist, Elisabet bending over to drink blood from the wound, Alma holding Elisabet's head down to force her to continue to drink or possibly suffocate, Elisabet pulling her head up and out of frame, and then Alma repeatedly, even ecstatically, striking Elisabet 13 times in the face (offscreen).

⁵¹¹ Cf. Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 240. In Artaud, speech and writing "will once more become *gestures*; and the *logical* and discursive intentions . . . will be reduced or subordinated." Cf. Samuels 189. In an interview on 10 November 1971, Bergman says: "She has been driven nearly insane by her resentments so that words, which are no longer useful, can no longer be put together by her. But this is not a matter of psychology. Rather, this comes at a point inside the movement of the film itself where words can no longer have any meaning."

⁵¹² The episode immediately following this in the film presents Alma still in uniform, entering the hospital room in which Elisabet is once again in her nightdress, seemingly weakened and resting on a hospital bed. Alma instructs Elisabet to repeat the word "nothing" ("ingenting") after her, and Elisabet does so, thus uttering her only word in the film. Alma affirms this saying, "Så ja. Så är det bra. Så skulle det vara" ["So yes. It's good so. So should it be."] Breakdowns in language are perhaps the most extreme instantiations of breakdowns in diegetically represented intersubjective communication, and occasionally with the audience proper. Other examples in Bergman include the absent vocalization of the name "Albert" by Anne in *Sawdust and Tinsel*, the trial of Isak Borg in *Wild Strawberries*, the willful muteness of the protagonists in *The Face* and *Persona*, the divine or hallucinated voices in *Through a Glass Darkly*.

What is called the speaking subject is no longer the person himself, or the person alone, who speaks. The speaking subject discovers his irreducible secondarity, his origin that is always eluded; for the origin is always already eluded on the basis of an organized field of speech in which the speaking subject vainly seeks a place that is always missing.⁵¹³

This is a social predicament roughly analogous with Heidegger's they-self and Sartre's crisis of the *regard*; in Derrida's scheme, however, there is no obtaining to authenticity:

It is first [...] the cultural field from which I must draw my words and my syntax, the historical field which I must read by writing on it. The structure of theft already lodges (itself in) the relation of speech to language. Speech is stolen: since it is stolen from language it is, thus, stolen from itself, that is, from the thief who has always already lost speech as property and initiative.⁵¹⁴

This theme of "theft" in connection with speech is fundamental to both A Passion and Persona.

Artaud's remedy is to "explode" this structure by opposing "to this inspiration of loss and dispossession" a "good inspiration" that is "the spirit breath [*souffle*] of life, which will not take dictation because it does not read and precedes all texts." Such an inspiration, as Derrida follows Artaud, would "return me to true communication with myself and give me back speech."⁵¹⁵ A similar dramatic strategy and dynamic is employed in the conclusion of A Passion.

In evaluating Artaud's idea of theatre, Derrida stresses that "theater summons the totality of existence and *no longer tolerates either the incidence of interpretation or the distinction between actor and author*," and requires an "emancipation from the text," a "protest against the letter" that was

⁵¹³ Derrida, "La parole soufflée" 178. Alma's speech act recalls an attempt at *glossopoeia* (speaking in tongues) as a remedy to this "irreducible secondarity." Cf. Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" 240: "Glossopoeia, which is neither an imitative language nor a creation of names, takes us back to the borderline of the moment when the word was not yet born, when articulation is no longer a shout but not yet discourse, when repetition is *almost* impossible, and along with it, language in general."

⁵¹⁴ Derrida, "La parole soufflée" 178.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid 179. This seems the crisis of Persona and the final confrontation between Alma and Elisabet may serve as a test case for the possibilities of restored speech and "true communication."

always Artaud's "primary concern."⁵¹⁶ The *mellanspel* were a similar effort toward "emancipation" and erasure between "actor and author."

Mellanspel: Liv Ullmann/Anna Fromm (<http://youtu.be/Yu5ojypZSeQ>)

The apparent goal of the *mellanspel* was to offer the actor an opportunity to speak as themselves, and thereby affirm the actor/character split. However, only one actor seemed capable of meeting the first part of this goal; Liv Ullmann. In her performance in the improvised dinner sequence, Ullmann demonstrated her creative agency as an actress in a role; in the *mellanspel*, Ullmann speaks as the interpreter of Anna. In the screenplay, Anna delivers the third *intermedium*. In Bergman's notes, this is also labeled as "FILM III."⁵¹⁷ The text is as follows:

God, in the past I lived next to you. I reached out a hand in the darkness and touched you! You punished me and understood. You enclosed me in your forgiveness and I rested. Away from you I am unhappy, constantly pursued, never safe. I try to do what is right but do wrong. I wish to be wise, but live in falsehood. I strain myself to think clearly but mix myself up in a bewildering dusk.

God take pity on us all. Turn not away from our cries. If you are shamed by your creation and want to obliterate it, then destroy us not in this slow way. Hurl the earth from its course and let it be overthrown in the emptiness beyond your knowledge. Douse our light, silence our shrieks and let us be destroyed in the blink of an eye.

God deliver me from my self, deliver me out from my prison, deliver me from life's fever.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Ibid 187.

⁵¹⁷ Bergman, *En passion* 42.

⁵¹⁸ Bergman, "En passion" 171; my translation. "Gud, förr levde jag nära dig. Jag räckte ut handen i mörkret och rörde vid dig! Du straffade mig och visste varför. Du inneslöt mig i din förlåtelse och jag vilade. Borta från dig är jag orolig, ständigt jagad, aldrig trygg. Jag försöker göra det rätta men gör fel. Jag vill vara sann, men lever i lögn. Jag bemödar mig att tänka klart men rör mig i ett förvirrande dunkel. Gud förbarma dig över oss alla. Vänd dig inte bort från vårt rop. Om du skäms över din skapelse och vill utplåna den, förgör oss då inte på detta långsamma sätt. Kasta jorden ur dess lopp och låt den störta i tomheten bortom din vetenskap. Släck vårt ljus, tysta vårt skrik och låt oss förintas i ett ögonblick. Gud befria mig från mig själv, befria mig ur mitt fängelse, befria mig från livets feber."

In the finished film, this is positioned as the second in the series of actor interviews. This single shot sequence begins with the slate and the operator saying, “Mellanspel, Liv Ullmann; seven.”

Ullmann is seen in a close-up wearing a red, floppy-brimmed hat. She speaks immediately:

I sympathize a lot with Anna’s need for truth. I understand why she wants the world to be a certain way. But her need, this desire for truth, is dangerous. When she realizes her surroundings don’t fit, when she doesn’t get the response she demands, she takes refuge in lies and dissimulation [föreställning]. That’s why it’s so hard to be honest, I believe—one expects others to be the same. We see that every day in thousands of people.

Ullmann’s *mellanspel* is the sole case of the actor speaking authoritatively in discussing the character, with none of the apocalyptic feverishness of the original *intermedium*. In accounting for the device of the *mellanspel*, Ullmann later recalled that Bergman “was confused about what he was going to do, because this was an idea he got in the middle of the whole movie,” and emphasized that “Ingmar Bergman never really improvises. He’s very meticulous that you—every word should be letter perfect. But . . . he made that because I think he was slightly . . . worried: ‘Where are we going?’”⁵¹⁹ Ullmann had perhaps an additional fluency in meta-theatrical and meta-cinematic performance with Bergman, having recently played the role of the stepdaughter in Six Characters in Search of an Author in Oslo, as well as the female protagonists in Hour of the Wolf, Shame, and Persona.

Later remarks by Ullmann emphasize a difference in Bergman’s relationship to language depending on the medium in which he was working. Ullmann found Bergman to be quite different when working onstage than on a film: “There he speaks much more. He really speaks. [...] He is a verbal genius.”⁵²⁰ But with respect to working on film, “He hates to discuss and analyze. He believes that if you have chosen your profession as an actor, then you know a little how to act. He assumes that you are fairly

⁵¹⁹ Carson “Disintegration of Passion.”

⁵²⁰ Ullmann, “Working with Bergman” 51.

intelligent. He feels that an analysis would take away the fantasy. He knows that is the way an actor creates. The actor has to use his own fantasy and imagination.”⁵²¹ This may account in part for the recording of the *mellanspel* long after the production phase of the film had been terminated, as well as for the ambivalence that the director and many of the other actors apparently felt toward these meta-commentaries. The opposition of analysis to creative agency is essentially the same as in Artaud, where discursive language necessarily inhibits the full potentials of the theatre and cinema.

Mellanspel: Erland Josephson/Elis Vergéus (<http://youtu.be/f0krQyjlCRE>)

The final *intermedium* is given by Elis in the screenplay, and by the actor playing Elis, Erland Josephson, in the finished film. Unlike the other monologues, Bergman indicates no alternative name for this *intermedium* in the director’s script. In the text, Elis says “It is hypocrisy to cry over the world’s stupidity. It is ridiculous to horrify oneself over human cruelty. It is emotionally careless to shout about justice or decency. My neighbors’ sufferings don’t keep me awake at nights. I am indifferent in my own eyes and others’. I function.”⁵²²

Unlike the framing of the other *mellanspel* in the film, Josephson is filmed in a medium shot from the elbows up, seated amidst a cluttered mise-en-scène of lamps with shades, chairs, etc. This recalls a theatrical backstage, as well as the clutter found in the many attics and cellars in other Bergman films. Josephson says:

I believe that Elis Vergéus is of the opinion that it’s hypocrisy to be horrified by human folly . . . and a waste of emotion to cry out for decency and justice. He won’t allow other people’s suffering to keep him up at nights. He thinks that he’s indifferent in his own and

⁵²¹ Ibid 45.

⁵²² Bergman, “En passion” 179; my translation. “Det är hyckleri att gråta över världens dårskap. Det är löjligt att förfasa sig över mänsklig grymhet. Det är känslolärva att ropa på rättvisa eller anständighet. Mina medmänskors lidanden håller mig inte vaken på nätterna. Jag är likgiltig i egna ögon och andras. Jag fungerar.”

others' eyes and that those are the conditions under which he lives, otherwise he couldn't function.

The camera swiftly pans up and left to an exposed light.

As is clear, Josephson is not speaking as himself in the least, nor was he given a new text by Bergman, but rather he reiterates Elis' original monologue. It seems that other attempts were made at generating a new text, as this was the tenth take. Josephson's "failure" to generate a text is conspicuous. But given Josephson's position within the film as alter ego to the *auteur*, there is also a kind of obstinate reticence in his *mellanspel*; a refusal by the actor to reflect anything back toward his audience (the director) other than Bergman's own words.

C. *Mellanspel* redux

Three of the four actors offered later assessments of their own on the *mellanspel* in A Passion. Erland Josephson is fairly critical in his assessment: "Yeah it was different . . . they describe their own parts, their own destiny and there was also this sort of double messages in acting. I think it's . . . Now I, if I should see the film, I think I should take it out, I don't know."⁵²³ Andersson expressed her ambivalence at the time: "I said I am not sure about that at all. I would like to test it, I would like to be able to go out and in of reality and fiction. I don't know if it's good. He was very--the last I heard him talk about it, I wasn't sure it was going to be in. Then it was in. He's entitled to his experiments."⁵²⁴ Andersson also says the interviews should probably be left out. What no one acknowledges on tape is that 3 of the four interviews were prompted, scripted, or based on the script, while only one interview was improvised and reflects the actor's thoughts on the character.

⁵²³ Interviewed in Carson "Disintegration of Passion."

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

Film critic Marc Gervais, however, emphasizes the “certain sort of *freedom*” of the actors in these accounts, “the improvising that Bergman was forcing upon them—when each one has his or her bit to relate to the character and explain to the audience.”⁵²⁵ Gervais believes the *mellanspel* are authentic, but Josephson clearly uses the script for his *mellanspel*, and von Sydow purportedly parroted Bergman’s suggestions. Andersson does something more interesting; working in a similar manner for both the improvisation and the *mellanspel*, she draws on her knowledge of the character and circumstances from the script but generates “stories” as an actor. Ullmann uses the improvisation as a platform as advocate for her character and to express her own ideas on “truth.” Similarly, her *mellanspel* offers an understanding of the character that is employed in the performance. Rather than providing a “certain sort of *freedom*,” these interviews seem to fail in that respect and remain flatly discursive (although they still do function as formal divisions between the “acts” of the film).

But this apparent shortcoming of the *mellanspel* actually affirms Bergman’s more typical representation of language as a thing that ultimately fails and entraps. This is a “tragic view” that is shared by Artaud and Derrida.⁵²⁶ In the *mellanspel*, at least, Bergman seemed to try and resist his own inclination toward this view, and to seek to provide and even document a “freedom” rather than assert its absence. It is telling, therefore, that the *mellanspel* came at the very end of the postproduction process, an apparent effort to preserve the aesthetic shape of the original idea for the film but to open the film in some manner to the agency of the actors. By and large, it’s the opposite case: the four actors exhibit “creative authenticity” in the improvised dinner party sequence, but most struggled when called upon to speak as themselves.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Cf. Eugene T. Gendlin, “Thinking Beyond Patterns: Body, Language, and Situations,” *The Presence of Feeling in Thought* (New York; San Francisco: Peter Lang, 1991) 35-37.

The real failure, however, was allow only discursive freedom rather than action. In The Face, the actor Spegel says that in the progression toward death, “the motion is the only truth.” Diegetically, this is Spegel’s view as one who is dying; existentially, this is the “absurd” condition of all life. But in terms of performance, which always exerts itself against the “death” of inertia, motion and movement are the means through which freedom is asserted. This principle was shared by Artaud and undergirds Grotowski’s idea of the “sign” in live performance.⁵²⁷ It is also the fundamental characteristic of cinema. By allowing the actors freedom of speech, Bergman fell back on what Derrida termed the original “elusion.” Nevertheless, the effort was indeed towards a freedom. This effort is now apparent in the four films considered here, in which freedom has been linked to performance as an indispensable first step toward some similar form of freedom in existence.

V. Theatre, cinema, and a “tragic” view of language

In A Passion, the gap between actor and role is made as explicit as possible. But, even in the face of this device, the spectator readily re-engages with the diegesis as though it had never been disrupted. The *mellanspel* even induce a more powerful interest in resuming the plot. Asked about his “fixation” with “the interlude” (performance-within), Bergman replied that in terms of *practice*, “it’s a relief to interpolate something different” into a full-length feature film; and furthermore, in terms of *reception*, the performance-within offers cognitive relief for an audience through redirecting their attention: “It gives them exercise. It’s as simple as that.”⁵²⁸ He then elaborates, using examples from Persona, The Hour of the Wolf, and A Passion: “If you distract the audience temporarily from the course of events and then push them into it again, you don’t reduce their sensibility and awareness, you heighten it.”

⁵²⁷ Artaud, Theatre and its Double 124; cf. Grotowski 234.

⁵²⁸ Björkman, et al 222. This interview was conducted in January 1969, near the release of A Passion.

When a critic remarks that the French New Wave played with such “distancing” strategies and that these were considered “something new and shocking,” Bergman appropriately remarks, “But it’s as old as the hills, don’t you realize that? In the theatre! The author turns directly to his audience.”⁵²⁹ In terms of pragmatics, Bergman is correct that, by and large, *verfremdungseffekt* never operates in the manner that Brecht or a structuralist might argue, in that the signifier is never really divorced from the signified; the sign of the actor/character remains largely intact because the spectator continually reconciles the incursive effort to separate the two.

However, such “performances-within” (interludes, intermezzi, plays-within, etc.) have more than just the effect of distracting an audience; they catch something essential about the ideas in the piece as a whole, and re-organize them in a different register of performance and, thus, symbolic representation. The precise nature of this distraction and re-focusing is a phenomenon that needs to be understood in its own right, as it encapsulates the very nature of performance itself and why we, as a species, respond so favorably toward its presence. What we become conscious of through the performance-within, and what we accept, is the element of playfulness, un-self conscious awareness, yet at the same time, we accept the larger play as an organic reality in its own right; the characters become people watching “characters.”

This is a phenomenon that Pirandello relentlessly pursues and that draws bona fide philosophers, such as Sartre and Camus, to the drama. It is the radical potential that consumed Artaud and guided Grotowski and Brook, and there is good reason why Derrida would find an affirmation for his theory of deconstruction in Artaud’s vision of performance, a vision that may be more compatible with Bergman’s ideas than has hitherto been explored. The key difference is of degree: Bergman

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

consistently generates characters and urges actors to push beyond the limits of discourse; Artaud wanted the medium of performance, whatever that might be (theatre, but also film) to usurp the space of reality and continue on. Bergman much more carefully observes the window of performance, but seeks a similar release of metaphysical energy. But Bergman, in a movement that corresponds with a broader cultural turn away from revolution, chooses to abide in the realm of the domestic drama, steadfastly avoiding the most radical potentials of his own work methods.

In this kind of cinema, which comprises a considerable proportion of cinematic output, actors undertake (or play) various actions as fictitious characters in fictional circumstances; in short, there is a basic kind of pretending-to-be that is used in a process of story-telling. This kind of story is multi-valenced, to be certain; there is the story of the individual that takes certain actions within the set of circumstances, and there is the story produced by the relationships between individuals, and there is the larger story of the whole, etc. But, there is some kind of narrative being generated by human actors (and the occasional coerced contribution of animal performers). In the main, then, there is a human telling through enactment, and this kind of telling is basic to both theatre and cinema of this sort.

In fact, it is the human body that complicates distinctions between the semiotic and phenomenological whether on stage or on screen, and even between theatre and cinema: “If the body is always image, always available to patterning in the stage as visual field, it is also always itself—speaking, moving, spatializing, *living* in its self-oriented field and thereby subverting formal definition.”⁵³⁰ This is where traditional distinctions seem too slippery to uphold. Whether one argues that the actors are arranged for the monocular camera versus the collective view of an audience, or that

⁵³⁰ Garner 85. This is preceded by: “For until drama abandons the human presence altogether—and thereby relinquishes the names “drama” and “theater”—it will remain dialectically bound to the imagistic and the physiological, the inert and the living.”

films are played out in small bits and pieces while plays are rehearsed to be performed in their entirety, or that the spatial limitations, the scale of action, the vocal requirements, etc., are different for the actor between the rehearsal hall and the shooting location, the basic fact is that actors are assembled and engage in kinds of pretend-play in the presence of professional collaborators who also constitute an audience. In fact, an expert audience that works together in anticipation of a future general audience.

A. Summation

The *mellanspel* in A Passion are a new manifestation in Bergman's attempt to directly address the phenomenon of seeming-to-be, the very phenomenon that is reinforced by the performance-within. This has always been both a metaphysical and a dramaturgical preoccupation for Bergman, at once related to a God-operated theatre of human activity but, in the absence of any universal director, ringmaster, or puppeteer, the performance-within has been retained as a signal to both one's self and to others that existence is, at best, constituted through social practices of presentation and observation, a practice that is forever at odds with subjective phenomena, such as dreams and emotions. In short, life is an inescapable and an irreducible experience of seeming-to-be.⁵³¹

These *mellanspel* are performances-within; while seeming to offer a meta-commentary from the outside, they remain obstinately subservient to the diegesis. The characters are more real than the actors. This recalls Pirandello and Derrida. It evidences the pervasive presence of the Container schema in Bergman's cinema, the metaphysical boundary implicit in the very phenomenon of drama, and the fundamental, embodied link between linguistics, performance, and thought. Acting itself is metaphorical in nature, as one thing (the actor) stands in the place of another (the character); it is not

⁵³¹ Cf. Koskinen, "Allting föreställer, ingenting är" 90. Koskinen stresses that, rather than fulfilling a simple dualism of mask/face = false/true maintained in many interpretations of Bergman: "There is no single, 'true' I beneath the mask," but instead "role- and mask-play, in reality, is a human predicament."

just mimetic or representational, but “a certain kind of *actual*.”⁵³² But the function of the actor in the *mellanspel* is metonymic; the actor appears as a piece of the character, rather than emerging as the creator of the character. The actor-as-metonym is not merely referencing the character; it indicates a way of understanding what is meant by “character.”⁵³³ The actor-as-metonym focuses our understanding on “character” (i.e., identity) as *acting*, including false-playing, seeming, dissembling, lying, bad faith, self-delusion, etc., all in the role of personhood.⁵³⁴ This tendency to act is inseparable from language; only the silent observation of the individual’s actions might one see some reliable indicator of meaning. Anything else is bound to be an inevitable “tragedy of repetition” due to language, the “lying” inherent in representation (*mimesis*).

This is the repetition that Artaud would abolish, as Derrida has emphasized: “The menace of repetition is nowhere else as well organized as in the theater . . . for Artaud, the festival of cruelty could take place only *one time*.”⁵³⁵ This idea of a perpetual performance (which is unsustainable, of course), serves as the final moment of A Passion: after confronting Anna with the lie that she has based her existence upon, and having almost been killed as result, Andreas is left pacing back and forth upon an empty road; he collapses on the ground, rolling over on his back, then kneeling. All this begins in an extreme long shot, and the camera slowly zooms in slowly, distorting all outlines. In terms of the actor’s performance, this is the “sign” described by Grotowski in its full physical expression, “a human

⁵³² States 46.

⁵³³ Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By 36. In selecting a metonym: “Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on.”

⁵³⁴ As in Through a Glass Darkly, acting extends to the matter of religious faith: Andreas dismisses Anna’s praying at one point as “damned theatre.”

⁵³⁵ Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” 247.

reaction, purified of all fragments.”⁵³⁶ It is “theatrical” in the prevailing sense of Artaudian “cruelty,” demonstrating the performative “terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us”: “We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all.”⁵³⁷ This “cruel” *théâtre vérité* is welded to the medium of cinema through an expression of the camera’s limitations. Fixed in space and using only the zoom, cinematic illusion is also abandoned and the camera, too, offers a sign of itself.

But language, in the form of a voiceover (Bergman), asserts the inevitability of repetition (and drama): “This time his name was Andreas Winkelman” reminds us that “we are not free” and that “the sky can still fall on our heads.” Omitted from the soundtrack are the concluding words of Andreas found in the text of A Passion: “Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me.”⁵³⁸ The silencing of the text, like the metonymic presence of the actor in the *mellanspel*, complements the development of deconstruction and Artaudian performance: theatre, cinema, and philosophy are moving in concert, again, through the figure of the actor.

Bergman never offers an explicit theory of language, but provides an extensive testimonial to his dissatisfaction with spoken language, especially in aesthetic performance, but also in personal

⁵³⁶ Grotowski 235. Grotowski adds: “The sign is the clear impulse, the pure impulse. The actions of the actors are for us signs. [...] It is nothing to do with the mind; it affects other associations, other parts of the body. But if I perceive, it means that there was a sign. The test of a true impulse is whether I believe in it or not” (ibid). Other examples of this synthesis between Artaudian theatre of gesture and Bergman’s theatre and cinema would be the “empty space” performance by Karin in Through a Glass Darkly, the awkward physical position of Hedda following her suicide in Bergman’s production of Hedda Gabler in 1964, Bergman’s “performance-within” that concludes The Rite (1968/1969), and portions of Hour of the Wolf (1967/1968).

⁵³⁷ Artaud, The Theatre and its Double 79.

⁵³⁸ Bergman, “En Passion” 181.

experience.⁵³⁹ These attempts in A Passion perhaps did not succeed artistically, but nevertheless provide valuable insights with respect to the “tragic view” of language in Artaud, Derrida, Bergman, and in the broad, continuing interest in this subject in performance and critical theory. For Artaud, and Artaud as read by Derrida, language leaves me (one) with nothing to say for myself, or as myself.⁵⁴⁰ And it is indeed the issue of freedom that underlies the discomfort of many Bergman characters with language and being watched, being heard and seen; in short, in existing socially, in being audible and visible to the judgment of Others. This is a “tragic” view of language that remains popular in performance, critical theory, and philosophy.

Can one go beyond the limitations of language or seeming-to-be? No example of freedom through speech will be found in Artaud, Derrida, or Bergman, unless that speech is so aestheticized as to be unavailable to Others as everyday discourse: by being placed beyond discursive practice, in which no (de)finite meaning can be established anyway, the illusion of meaning is exposed and language acquires a new force as an object.⁵⁴¹ Such an extreme, even phobic, relationship to language is unsustainable, even when it is dramatically (tragically) effective; speaking a shared language is a

⁵³⁹ There are numerous examples in the films as well as the many examples in his stage work, such as devised “prologues” and entre-acts, which attest to the “unpower” of what is typically described as Bergman’s use of “silence”— the prologue in Sawdust and Tinsel, the “experiment” in Women’s Waiting that Bergman saw retrospectively as a preparation for The Silence, The Face, Persona, as well as characters who explicitly state their frustration with language or the deficiencies of discourse (Minus in Through a Glass Darkly, for example). In religious readings, the silence of God is repeatedly emphasized, and this may be likened in Sartrean terms to the idea of God’s *regard* as a permanent limitation on freedom

⁵⁴⁰ Derrida, “La parole soufflée” 175-177.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Gendlin 33-35. Gendlin identifies the “tragic” view of language held by Derrida. Cf. Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” 240-241: “The word is the cadaver of psychic speech, and along with the language of life itself the “speech before words” (*le langage d’avant le langage*) must be found again.” Derrida goes on to quote Artaud from “The First Manifesto”: “It is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams.”

pragmatic necessity, and Bergman retreats from this extreme position (and others) in his return to “ordinary” characters in the 1970s.⁵⁴²

B. Conclusion

The performance-within has shifted in the time-span covered here from an aesthetic reduction to a site of intractable resistance. The mimetic impulse remains problematic for Bergman, one that is basic to human interrelations, but one whose promise of enhanced communication is continually negated by the inherent ambiguity of *mimesis* and its tendency to conceal even in the process of disclosing. The director in Bergman’s After the Rehearsal [Efter repetitionen] (1984) observes that, “Everything seems, nothing is” (“Allting föreställer, ingenting är”). And it is clear that from the script of Jack Among the Actors (1946) up to the mysteriously closing doors and clocks of Saraband (2006), Bergman retains a sense of a universal, capricious, and ultimately “cruel” theatre as a metaphysical structure housing otherwise modern subjects. “Everything seems, nothing is” is both an astute observation on human behavior, but also a handy bit of dramaturgical nihilism, one that guarantees future projects. But it cloaks the imperative to perform, an imperative that is social, not solipsistic.

My purpose in focusing on the “performance-within” has been fourfold. First, the performances-within in Bergman’s films were frequently developed or generated as part of the production process rather than through the screenwriting process, complicating the notion of an *auteur* cinema. Second, the performance-within is typically intermedial; it brings into one medium (film) the attributes of another medium (theatre, puppetry, dance, instrumental performance, etc.). In this transaction between media, well-established critical categories are called into question, especially the categories of film and theatre. Third, the original and intermedial characteristics of the performance-within contribute to its

⁵⁴² Koskinen, “Allting föreställer, ingenting är” 94.

status of relative autonomy as an artistic event “within” a world, and as distinct from the other activities of that world. The performance-within thus offers a commentary and constitutes an assertion in relation to that world. In doing so, the performance-within demonstrates the existential nature of performance, in general, as committed action on the part of a performer. The performance-within is a particular way of making and offering meaning and, because of its widespread use in cinema especially, it has required a close examination.

The fourth aspect has been to improve our understanding of human performance as a mode of embodied thinking and discourse. The performance-within captures the elements of the drama proper because it instantiates nothing less than the Container Schema; this metaphorical structure is so fundamental to our thinking that it may be impossible for the performance-within to do anything but “to capture”: it cannot be arbitrary. The performance-within expresses a fundamental conceptual structure deriving from embodied experience. This is a different understanding of language than found in semiotics or post-structuralism; it contradicts Bergman’s dramaturgically “tragic” view of language and proves the expressive link between the body and thinking. Art and existence both function within limits. Performances of all sorts (theatrical, cinematic, athletic, etc.) rely upon human limitations as much as upon human capabilities. The possibility of expertise depends upon both capacity and limit; the opportunities for variety, virtuosity, and improvisation reside within such limits, as do the rewards and penalties for observing or breaching those limits. The performance-within brings the fact of such limitations into our conscious awareness.

The study of the performance-within thus illuminates the links between dramatic performance and philosophy; how dramatic enactments capture, develop, express, and impart pressing human concerns and ideas. In the context of mid-20th-century drama, the performance-within can be said to have an existential component: it is a knowing, self-determined choice of action on the part of a performer, or

at least it holds that potential. The exploration of that potential and its implications is continually presented in the work of Ingmar Bergman, and also in many of his contemporaries. Rather than being merely reflective, performance is presented as agentic. This is because performance itself is an existential assertion. The continued use of the performance-within indicates a commonly held value that is accorded to aesthetic performance.

The performance-within indicates the essential dependence of cinema upon other performance traditions. Bergman and other filmmakers could never make the films that they aspire to without availing themselves of the performance-within. Does “theatre” therefore remain a “necessity” even to cinema? This is a long-standing issue, at least in the art cinema that this dissertation is concerned with, and one that runs a course parallel with phenomenology and post-structuralism in philosophy into the 1960s. Rather than talking exclusively about film and theater as dissimilar media (which they are, for the former has a technological component that is its defining characteristic and the second uses technology only as a component to itself, i.e. it is not *held* within a specific technology), if we look at certain, basic production practices, we find things in common that differ because of a relationship to technology. This is narrowly limited to circumstances that obtain in the production of live action cinema, cinema as applied to the telling of enacted stories, a *dramatic* cinema that requires living actors. Such cinema may be said to retain theatre as its ground, or at least to share a common ground through one figure: the actor.

Examining the nature of the performance-within has exposed its aesthetic effects, the links between dramatic performance and philosophy, the nature of performance *praxis* as a mode of embodied thinking and discourse, and the significant cultural-historical contexts for each film. It also has demonstrated the historical reliance of cinema upon theatre and other performance traditions. Without the device of the performance-within, Bergman and many other filmmakers would have lost the

expressive range and narrative diversity that characterizes much of mid-20th-century cinema. Thus, looking at these films through the lens of the performance-within enhances Bergman scholarship, and theatre and cinema studies, in general.

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Performances

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