In Front of the Camera, Behind the Camera: Ullmann Directs Bergman

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Abstract: Faithless, which centers on themes of fidelity and infidelity, was scripted by Ingmar Bergman and directed by Liv Ullmann, his muse and former lover. The film crosscuts between the ongoing dialogues of an aging director, named Bergman, and his created character, based on a woman with whom he has had a previous relationship, and flashbacks from the story they piece together. Just as the female figure emerges from the shadows of the director's workroom to spark his creativity and counter his loneliness by describing the major characters in his new screen play, so does Ullmann, through her direction, bring the real Bergman "face-to-face" with a dissociated, unformulated aspect of his own experience. The filmic characters, a mix of the autobiographical and the imagined, are used by Bergman to illuminate and articulate the transformations in internal objects and one's relation to them that occur in the processes of loss and reparation, as well as the reparative function of the creative process itself. Having characters emerge to take form as the narrative unfolds illuminates the power of the erotic imagination to represent, sustain, and restore the inner world. The intertextuality between Faithless and a number of previous Bergman films highlights the way that the film is a homage to Bergman and a reflection on the creative process itself.

**Keywords:** differentiation-relatedness, erotic imagination, immortal object, loss and reparation, scoptophilia

Faithless (2000), based on a screenplay scripted by Ingmar Bergman and directed by Liv Ullmann, his former lover, muse, and interpreter of his work, is about the power of the erotic imagination to represent, sustain, and restore the inner world. Bergman in his autobiography *The Magic Lantern* writes:

Film work is a powerfully erotic business; the proximity of actors is without reservations, the mutual exposure is total. The intimacy, devotion, dependency, love, confidence and credibility in front of the camera's magical eye become a warm, possibly illusory security. The strain, the easing of tension, the mutual drawing of breath, the moment of triumph, followed by an anticlimax; the atmosphere is irresistibly charged

with sexuality. It took me many years before I at last learnt that one day the camera would stop and the lights would go out. (1987: 169–170)

This poignant statement linking creativity to Eros is also a meditation about finitude, loss, and mortality, the topic of Bergman's late films, novels, and screenplays, including Faithless.

On the surface Faithless is a story about an affair between a successful actress, Marianne Vogler (Lena Endre), seemingly happily married to a renowned conductor, Markus (Thomas Hanzon), and their best friend, David (Krister Herikksson), a theater and opera director who works with both husband and wife. The affair and its tragic aftermath is narrated in the form of memories conjured up by Marianne who herself is conjured up by the aging director alone in his workroom by the sea on a secluded island that resembles Fårö, where Bergman in fact spent the last years of his life. The director, in search of a new screenplay and tellingly named simply Bergman, examines artifacts from the past—photographs of a child and a woman, a music box, letters and slowly a woman begins to emerge from the shadows (Figures 1 and 2). Through dialogues with this woman, whom he calls Marianne and who at first appears to be the product of his imagination, he gradually comes to recollect and recapitulate the history of a tempestuous love affair in which he may or may not have been a protagonist. The camera shooting from behind him heightens the ambiguity of the director's role in the narrative—is he casting the character of Marianne in his new screenplay or is he struggling to become reconciled to regrets about his past relationship with her? The film moves in concentric circles of narratives within narratives, monologues within dialogues, past within present punctuated by flashbacks in which the identity

Figure 1. Marianne emerges in Bergman's studio.



Figure 2. Bergman looks at photo of Isabelle.



5 3

of the characters is revealed in piecemeal fashion. These narrative devices suggest that the film ultimately is a vehicle to illuminate aspects of the internal object world, including the mutability and immortality of the libidinal object, but also the ways in which the image and meaning of the object may be altered and amplified according to the imperatives of the present. Further, the creative process itself becomes the vehicle through which these transformations in libidinal objects and one's relation to them can occur.

"Eros is what hits the raw film of the lover's mind," writes Carson (1998: 9), and indeed it is Eros the bittersweet that renders Faithless such a raw, compelling, and even scathing film. Eros has its roots in sexual pleasure, but it also creates a horizon that opens to imagination and play (Winnicott 1953). As André Green (2003: 115) points out, sexuality suffers a decline through aging but "Eros is timeless," thus differentiating between desire and drive. Sexuality, according to Green and others, is the first link in an erotic chain of drivepleasure-desire-fantasy-representation-symbolic language, with the links becoming progressively more complex, nuanced, and symbolic. Winnicott (1953) makes a similar point when he talks about the transition in early development from a focus on bodily stimulation to the excitement of play generated by the creative interplay in the child's mind between subjective and objectively perceived reality. Thus, traces of erotic experiences and the objects with which they are linked are indelibly inscribed in the psyche, forming a reservoir of internal representations both conscious and unconscious, and forming a wellspring for creative play and symbolic activity. Such representations function in Schafer's words as "immortal" objects (1968: 220), which provide a conduit to a reservoir not only of desires and pleasures, but also of fantasies, wishes, and fears—both unifying and destructive—that reveal us to ourselves and illuminate the world, fueling our imaginative or creative pursuits. Eros is a ramifying chain that is transformative, even transgressive; the chains of Eros enlace body to object to fantasy to cultural and creative production, eradicating boundaries between body and psyche, melding ecstasy and destructiveness (Carson 1998).

Bergman says to his created character, "you said we'd play and fantasize," and she replies, "If we are to enjoy this you must describe me." He responds, "Come sit in the window where I can see you; these are my lines—what do you want to do with them?" But she insists, "No, you must describe me first—how old am I?" The director begins to take out a picture of a woman, but then quickly pushes it back in the drawer, suggesting that he is drawing from his own past to create the character. "You're very attractive. You left drama school about fourteen years ago, seventeen years ago. You're about forty. You are married to a conductor Markus. He is enjoying a great international career. Otherwise I know little of your private life—you'll have to help me," he falters. "Any children?" she asks. "You have a nine-year-old daughter, Isabelle." She

prompts him, "What do I look like? Describe me." He replies, "Almost unnoticeable lines around the eyes and mouth. Otherwise nothing. You have a good face, well suited to tragedy and comedy. You can look surprised even when you're not." This description brings Marianne to life and as we see her emerging from the shadows, she begins to assume the persona of a woman with whom the director once had a relationship. "Are you describing Marianne?" she asks. "It's not Marianne, I promise you. It's not Marianne," insists the director. "It's a good name. It's a little bit odd. It's not Marianne, but you need a name—Marianne Vogler. Come to think of it, it's a bit odd—a few hours ago you didn't exist; now you are utterly real."

This last sentence establishes that we (the spectators) are entering into a transitional realm where a potential space is being established between the two characters that falls at the nexus of intrapsychic and objective or external reality (Winnicott 1953, 1971). Winnicott defines such a transitional sphere as a cradle of creativity in which fantasy and reality, self and other cohere into new configurations comprised of aspects of both inner and shared reality—configurations that cannot belong to or be encapsulated by either realm alone. These initial scenes also suggest that the film is the result of creative playing between the scriptwriter and the director (Bergman and Ullmann) and their alter egos in the script (Bergman/David and Marianne). The intertextuality between this film and a number of other aspects of Bergman's life and work highlights this point, and allows us to interpret the actions of the characters in a manner not usually appropriate for a literary or filmic work. The available biographic material and Bergman's transparent naming of the main character after himself provide a rational for seeing his past life as relevant to the plot and the explication of the characters' behaviors.

The kernel of the plot of *Faithless* can be found in the story of Bergman's love affair with a journalist, related in *The Magic Lantern*—a love which, he wrote, "tore our hearts apart and from the very beginning carried its own seeds of destruction" (Bergman 1987: l61); and the picture of the woman that the filmic Bergman pulls from the drawer is in fact that of the journalist who became Bergman's third wife (Nyrerod, 2006). Furthermore, the name Marianne Vogler is reminiscent of Elizabeth Vogler of *Persona* (Bergman, 1966), a

The kernel of the plot of Faithless can be found in the story of Bergman's love affair with a journalist, related in The Magic Lantern—a love which, he wrote, "tore our hearts apart and from the very beginning carried its own seeds of destruction"... film about the merged identities of two women, a theme that will be repeated in *Faithless* where the all-consuming passion leads to psychological merger between David and Marianne; Marianne of *Scenes from a Marriage* (Bergman, 1973), who reappears in *Saraband* (Bergman, 2003), whose spouse leaves her to join his lover in Paris, as this Marianne will also leave her husband and child, and join her lover in Paris; and finally and perhaps

most important, Marianne of *Wild Strawberries* (Bergman, 1957), the young woman who becomes a source of regeneration for the aging embittered Dr. Borg, just as Marianne becomes the source of psychical renewal and repair for the aging director in *Faithless*. All of these previous themes and narratives are woven into the texture of *Faithless*, all of these previous characters resonate in the persona of Marianne. But as we watch her emerge from the shadows of the director's workroom to become a full-bodied character in her own right through dialogue with the director, we watch the emergence of a character who is a product of both the director's internal reality and the real Bergman's life and work, a character who comes into being through playful dialogue and who in turn becomes a vehicle for the director's psychical discovery and repair.

Significantly, the director almost immediately fixes an intense gaze on Marianne and asks her to "talk about David." She appears to be a bit unnerved, but prompted by a photograph of David, tells him that David and her husband worked together at the opera where David directed and Markus conducted, that he was a frequent guest in their house partly because he had left his wife and two young sons and was living alone. "I do believe David and Markus were real friends," she tells the director. "Isabelle loved David. He listened to her stories. David swore Isabelle had a magical personality. They went to the theater and cinema together, and that was really it."

Thus, just as the director brings Marianne into existence by describing her, so she in turn recreates David for the director, perhaps reconnecting him with his former self. "Could you describe David?" he asks her, and she replies:

David is forty, talented, unpredictable, kind, thoughtful when he wants to be; ruthless and bloody brutal when cornered. Not many friends; rather more enemies. Pedantically thorough. A perfectionist in his work, careless in his private life. I don't know what to say. We've known each other for years ... workmates ... there is a lots to say about David, but my mind is blank. A relationship with David—excuse my questions ... relationship with David ... nothing like it ... more like siblings.

One is struck immediately by the difference between the two descriptions: The director's description of Marianne is somewhat impersonal and hesitant, consisting of a list of roles and physical characteristics, which only partially reflect her subjectivity or uniqueness as an individual. Indeed, he claims to have only limited knowledge of her and never to have met her husband Markus. By contrast, Marianne's description of David shows more depth, complexity, and compassion for and understanding of the contradictory ways that his character may manifest itself in different relational and situational contexts. She shows a tolerance for and integration of his disparate aspects, with both positive and negative qualities being described in ways that indicate a complex understanding of his feelings, motivations, and conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, despite the differences in their descriptions, both the director and Marianne disavow an intimate relationship with the person each has described. The director tells Marianne, "I know little of your private life—you'll have to help me." In similar fashion when asked to describe her relationship with David, Marianne states, "A relationship with David . . . nothing like it. . . . " Yet the scene ends with both of them in tears as "forgotten emotions" begin to move. "Why are you crying?" he asks her, and she replies, "Perhaps it is you who is crying." Indeed the director's expression conveys not only compassion and concern, but also a sense of anguished recognition expressed through his gesture of clutching his hands. One senses that through these descriptions, the director is not only giving life to the created characters, but also attempting to revivify his internal world, to counter his emptiness and loneliness, products not only of his physical isolation but his loss of feeling for and connection to his self and objects. These introductory scenes and descriptions of the characters thus suggest that the film is a reflection on the ways that the libidinal object may be reconstituted from multiple sources including reminiscences of past erotic experiences, the representations of self and others to which they are linked, and the distortions of repression to which they are subject.

Just as Marianne emerges from the shadows of Bergman's workroom to become not only a full blown character in her own right but also to evoke David so vividly for the director, so does Ullmann through her direction bring Bergman "face-to-face" with an unformulated aspect of his own experience (Lyall 1999; Porton 2006). Ullmann has characterized her relationship with Bergman as "a story that never ends" (Schwartz 2000). "I saw myself as the woman who is asked to come into [Bergman's] work room and give images to his story. And he felt that these are images [he] cannot do himself. . . . [He] wanted a woman's images, her experiences—so he asked me to direct it" (Schwartz 2006: 169). When asked why Bergman wanted her to direct a film that was clearly based on painful events in his own life, she reflected, "I think he felt it was so personal that he couldn't do it himself. Because he's a great artist, most of what he writes is personal, but it's very seldom you can see [a character representing] Bergman directly in a movie. This time, though, he's even called the main character Bergman. He said, 'I couldn't think of another name.' And I think that's why he wanted someone else to do it, but someone that he really trusted—someone that really could see things he wasn't sure he wanted to show" (Cox 2001). Marie Nyrerod, the director of the film, Bergman Island (2006), an artistic biography of Bergman, commented, "I think Faithless is very much about himself. . . . I don't know why he wanted Liv to direct, but he always wants her in front of the camera or behind the camera" (Nyrerod and Sklarew 2007: 117).

Ullmann agreed to direct the film on the condition that Bergman have nothing to do with its production; she explained, "My vision of the script will

be very different from what he had imagined, but he thought that would be exciting. In a way, our situation was similar to what happens in the movie: A woman comes into the man's studio, and he wants to find out what she thinks. The story is really a dialogue between a screenwriter and a woman who knows him very well" (Pizzello 2006: 173). Thus, both Bergman the screenwriter and his alter ego, Bergman the director in the film allow their story to be reconstructed from a woman's perspective. Just as his dialogues with Marianne pull the fictional screenwriter Bergman back into the vortex of the affair with its intricate patterns of guilt, passions, and regrets, so it is Ullmann's direction that repositions Bergman, initially an offstage character in the script, back into the film itself as a real person. The original script mandated that the film be shot over the shoulder of the director, so that he would not actually appear onscreen but would "exist as an unseen magisterial creator" (Merkin 2001). In similar fashion, Bergman's original screenplay did not include Isabelle, the child of Marianne and Markus, as an onscreen presence, and Ullmann states, "I put her there, listening, vulnerable, desolate, without changing any of his words, because he's very protective of his words" (Merkin 2001). Thus, by putting Isabelle onscreen, along with Marianne, Ullmann further develops the film as a series of interactions between the director in the film (though we can say the same about the real Bergman who has written this film) and his objects, both internal and external. These interactions on the screen are more visual and kinesthetic than verbal as both Bergman and Isabelle are largely silent, and thus are played out largely through affective exchanges with the other characters conveyed visually in shot/reverse shots and close-ups.

As the film progresses, Bergman increasingly becomes the object of the director's gaze in a series of close-ups that relentlessly reveal his internal world; thus in some sense she turns the tables on her former mentor, who in his previous films, like Persona, revealed the internal life of characters played by Ullmann in a series of close-ups in which shifts of scale and of angle on the face create an affective interplay between the characters and between the spectator and the characters of almost excruciating intimacy and intensity. Indeed, influenced by Bergman, Ullmann stated that it is the landscape of faces that carry the narrative and reveal the topography of the internal world, and that in Faithless, she "sought to tell a good deal of the story via close-ups of the characters faces" (Pizzello 2006: 174). In one scene, for example, the camera plays over the panoply of emotions on the previously impassive director's face as he asks his fictional character, Marianne, "Why are we playing—a diversion before death? In the remaining twilight that is left something happens because of mercilessly condensed time—a pull, a vortex . . . forgotten emotions begin to move. . . . I'm searching for answers to questions I never had. And so we play, making greater demands, finding it harder to stop." Through such revealing close-ups that show not only the internal press and movement of affect, but also the affective interplay between the characters, we see that the film is a reflection on the ways that the creative process itself, which involves both the dissolution and recreation of the object, may revivify and restore the internal world, serving both as a repository of culpability and remorse and as a vehicle for reparation.

Thus through her direction, Ullmann inexorably brings her imprint to bear on the material imagistically. The female spectator as De Lauretis (1984: 69) points out is always involved in a "double identification," in which she identifies simultaneously with both the passive object ("the image on the screen") and the active subject ("the look of the camera"). In *Faithless* Marianne is initially constituted as an object of desire for the director's pleasure and creative pursuits (Mulvey 1989); however in another reversal, Ullmann plumbs the full scope of Marianne's sexuality and subjectivity in ways that reveal the multifaceted complex nature of Eros. She focuses on a neglected aspect of female experience—the relationship between the aim-inhibited eroticism toward the child (Isabelle) or what Wrye and Welles (1989) have termed the "maternal erotic," and the mature erotic connection between the parental couple (Braunschweig and Fain 1975; Green 2003; Green and Kohon 2005), and the ways in which these two libidinal pathways may function in harmony or opposition to each other.

Initially Eros appears in the film as an all-enveloping force that unites Marianne and Markus, binding them to their daughter and to their "workmate" David (Figure 3). Eros also radiates into their work life, especially for Markus





whose "pleasure was his music," a statement that is conveyed imagistically in the scenes of him passionately conducting. Marianne reveals that Markus felt making love to her was "better than conducting *The Rites of Spring,*" and she describes being transported into states of rapturous frenzy during their lovemaking in which she "lost her head and her consciousness." The descriptions and images of their lovemaking capture the nature of "jouissance," or the complete submission to the erotic ideal, defined as " the acme of unchecked pleasure where the subject loses itself in ecstasy" (Green 2003: 45), but which also carries with it the danger of loss of one's unique or symbolic identity (Mollon 2008).

Marianne insists that this business with David "came out of nowhere." Although she claimed to adore her husband, she portrayed him as single-mindedly focused on music, which "became his passion." She also describes him as having an exclusive bond with his nine-year-old ethereal, creative daughter. "She is very much Markus's child—they are very much alike. They have a special relationship closed to outsiders." This comment, which suggests that she might experience herself as the excluded third in relation to the father-child dyad, offers us a clue as to one reason that she plunges into such a reckless affair. David, as we have seen earlier, is described as more of a "sibling," but in him she will also find a soul mate. Her affair with David begins innocently enough. With her husband away on a concert tour, she invites David—who is between wives and foundering in his work—for dinner and then agrees to let him sleep platonically in her bed; as she put it, "like brother and sister, no sign of incest," thus, by negation, introducing the theme of transgression. During this night she peruses his sleeping face as if for the first time, and states:

I thought that darkness had overtaken him again. I gave him my hand. We fell asleep as though we had always slept together. I woke up. I had David's sleeping face right next to mine. I looked at him, I looked at him properly. I realized that I'd not seen this man before. It was someone who would only exist for a second and never return. I would never see him again. I thought, thought . . . no, that is not the right word. I certainly wasn't thinking. I was simply a part, a tiny part of something mysterious. These words sound so peculiar. I can't explain what happened, but it was something tangible that would always be there inside my body—if you want to place it. Is this still just a game?

This passage captures the experience of Eros descending suddenly and inexplicably with the sense of transformation in body and psyche that it entails. As Carson puts it, "No one can fight Eros off... very few see him coming. He lights on you from somewhere outside yourself and as soon as he does you are taken over, changed radically" (1998: 148). This passage also expresses "the sense of wonder and inevitability that sometimes occurs when individuals,

often after knowing each other for some time, are transformed, with no previous sign, into lovers who feel that they are predestined for each other . . . having waited a very long time to find their other half (Plato)" (Green and Kohon 2005: 11).

After that night, Marianne relates:

I was in a state of chaos I cannot describe. To be dramatic you could say I'd never felt anything like this. The question was, shall I keep all this to myself? Or shall I tell David . . . keep a diary for Isabelle to read when I'm dead . . . the question was hypothetical; I'd already decided. The waning lights were flashing but I had already chosen.

In the grip of excitement and desire for the other beyond containment, Marianne experiences Eros as an invasion that takes over her mind and body. "What madness overcame me—I just had to get David to Paris," she states. David tries to dissuade her from pursuing the affair by telling her, "I don't have a normal relationship to reality. I mess things up for myself and other people. I wonder if there is something seriously wrong with me—perhaps I need therapy." She replies, "Analysis can wait. I accept you for who you are."

It is clear from this dialogue that Marianne pursues the relationship with David to find a soul mate, while David pursues it to bolster a collapsing and fragmenting self. She convinces David to meet her in Paris where she has a scholarship to study theater, telling him "let's look at this simply—it's fun. Life needn't be a series of disasters. There is affection and tenderness and other pleasant things." They consummate their relationship in a left-bank hotel, and, as we see them strolling the streets of Paris, laughing giddily as they emerge

Figure 4. Marianne and David in Paris.



from a bistro, rowing on the Seine, giving each other gifts such as the music box, we are reminded of "the eternal images of love as we know it, so linked in our erotic imagination that even if we never had an affair in Paris, we know just how it would look, feel and smell" (Haskell 2001) (Figure 4). Ullmann intended some of these idyllic scenes in Paris, such as that of Marianne and David rowing on the Seine, to recall the comedies that Bergman made early in his career (Pizzello 2001).

The camera cuts directly from the idyll in Paris to the music box on the director's desk, the talisman of his erotic encounter and the final clue that he is the David of the affair—something that he had previously disavowed. From this point on, by being both David and not David, the director functions as another component in the circuit or structure that constitutes desire in the film (Carson 1998). The music box also involves the real Bergman in this circuit by playing a melody from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, which he had adapted into a celebrated film (1975).

Interestingly, after this link between David and the director is established imagistically (through the music box), Marianne disappears. He tells us that Marianne did not come the next day or the day after and wonders if "I had driven the game too far." In a letter to the director, Marianne at first feigns illness but then explains that her withdrawal from "the game" signifies the difficulty of containing in words the excesses of erotic experience, including the inchoate bodily sensations and the ineffable longings they evoke in the embodied mind that are both a source of self-revelation and a source of self-estrangement. As he reads the letter, the film cuts to a scene of a distraught Marianne confronting herself in the mirror, so that we see her in double as she speaks the letter to the director to her image.

But the real reason for my absence isn't the cold....it's so hard to rake over your story. You sit at your desk and looking at me attentively expecting Marianne to do the work like all lousy dramatists evade the issue by thinking a gifted actor can give their work some shape and drive. To be honest, I feel tormented. Or maybe "tormented" is an exaggeration. But it's hard to talk about love. The jungle of impulse and attacks of vertigo growing like a cancer, finally becoming impenetrable. I rush

into situations I'm unable to cope with and I wonder why I'm not worried although there's one exception, one I can't deal with. I see Isabelle. I see Isabelle's little self, her face and then I'm frightened—really frightened. I come to my senses and think of some terrible words as if written on a wall. What am I doing to Isabelle? Sometimes I think that inside of Marianne the actress I see in the mirror is another Marianne with no name or identity. (Figure 5)

As Marianne gazes at herself in the mirror, we see Isabelle's face emerge

Figure 5. Marianne talks to her reflection.



in the background suspended between the twin images of Marianne's face. This scene in which the distraught Marianne confronts her own reflection in a mirror as she considers the effect that her actions have had on her daughter is similar to the famous mirror shot of Alma's and Elizabet's faces in *Persona*, one of the nine films that Ullmann and Bergman made together. This scene, which has Bergmanesque themes of merged and doubled identities, captures how Eros may bifurcate as well as unite the self by unleashing fantasies, desires, and wounds that have been banished or repudiated by the symbolic self (Mollon 2008). In this scene, the appearance of Isabelle in the background, seemingly floating between the twin images of Marianne's face, speaks to the multifaceted nature of Eros for women: that is, the relationship between the maternal erotic and erotic sexual passion (Braunschweig and Fain 1975; Green 2003; Green and Kohon 2005). Each of these types of libido is also linked to an object relation. The libidinal object, according to Kernberg (1992), Stein (2008), and others has both an ordinary and phantasmatic quality.

Indeed, after Marianne and David resume their affair in Stockholm, Marianne lives in a bifurcated state—one aspect of self firmly ensconced in her everyday family happiness with Markus and Isabelle, and the other dwelling in what Kernberg (1992) has called the "phantasmatic" realm of the sexual. "It was like a dream—where what you fear most happens over and over again," she states about her lovemaking with David. At other points she tells the director that she has no words to describe her passion with David. "A person growing into another person—it's inexorable, frightening. The process can't be halted; it's almost biology. David grows into Marianne and Marianne is frightened. Doesn't want to expose herself to what she doesn't understand." Bergman is referring here to a type of communion between the couple that involves each partner's primary processes, which would explain the feelings of being "two in one" or in a dream state—"both typical features of primary processes" (Green and Kohon 2005: 14). In a later scene, we see how the merger between Marianne and Bergman transcends the corporal and endures internally, when he interrupts the narrative to caress her wordlessly, the two enveloped by golden light evocative of a dream state or primary process moment in which the couple is reunited and the distinction between past and present eradicated (Figure 6).

Marianne withdraws from the game in part because she has no words to describe the states of sexual excitement and transport that are beyond linguistic containment, but also because although she can deny the impact of the affair on her relationship with Markus—whom we later learn has known about it from the beginning—she does not wish to confront the impact of her passion for David on her child. Let us recall that the film begins with Bergman, the director perusing a picture of Isabelle. As Ullmann said, "I also wanted to put the child prominently into the movie. In all the movies I've done with Ing-





Figure 6. Bergman caresses Marianne.

mar, you only hear about the children, you never see them. But if you are to tell his family story, you have to tell what happens to the children when the grownups are behaving the way they are behaving, because in *Faithless* he is telling a story of faithlessness that had once affected him as a child" (Long 2004). Ullmann suggests that in this film and *Private Confessions* (Ullmann, 1996), which depicts his mother's affair with a seminarian and is based on her journals (Bergman 1987), Bergman is representing and reworking aspects of his mother's infidelity and conflicts about these early experiences through the character of Isabelle.

Indeed, a number of critics have hypothesized that Ullmann's most daring and innovative move as a director was not only to put the child onscreen, but also to put her and her reactions to the affair at the forefront of the narrative and imagery of the film. She reflected, "though I had to be truthful to him, I also had to be true to myself" (Peary 2006: 202). In this statement we hear echoes of E. Ann Kaplan's (1983) conviction that the filmic representation of

motherhood may function as a vehicle for the empowerment of the female gaze and the exploration of female subjectivity in film. In contrast to Bergmann's previous films, notably *Scenes from a Marriage* and *Private Confessions*, in both of which children remain unseen presences, in *Faithless* Isabelle is never far from the camera's watchful eye. We watch the dissolution of her parent's marriage in part through her wide-eyed gaze, uncomprehending, stunned, and reproachful. Isabelle's increasing bafflement, appre-

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hension, and despair, although only intermittently shown, "runs like a black thread throughout the film" (Merkin 2001: 35).

In the biographical film, *Bergman Island* (Nyrerod, 2006), Bergman states that feelings of guilt and remorse ("having a bad conscience") about his failures as a father and husband in this last phase of his life, would be "mere affectation, a way of achieving a little suffering that can't for a moment be equated to the suffering you've caused." (He was eighty-seven when the film was released and died at ninety.) Yet *Faithless* begins with a quotation from the writer Botho Strauss, which bespeaks a sense of unconscious guilt: "No common failure whether it be sickness, bankruptcy, or professional misfortune will reverberate so cruelly or deeply in the unconscious as divorce. It penetrates the seat of anguish forcing it to life. With one cut it slices more deeply than life can ever reach." Indeed, the affair, the divorce, and its traumatic aftermath are registered not only in Isabelle's poignant expressions, but also in her play, that transitional sphere in which the child attempts to master both internal and external reality through an amalgam of the two dimensions of their experience.

The filmic representation of Isabelle's play functions as a conduit not only into her own internal world but also into the internal worlds of the adults. For example, when Marianne and David part in Paris, David dives into the bed, curls up in a fetal position, and covers his head, indicating his own regression to an infantile state in the face of his separation from Marianne. On parting he tells her, "I have never felt such pain." The camera then cuts seamlessly from David's collapse into anguish to Isabelle with the covers over her head telling a story to her bear about a "big lady wearing my mother's fur hat made of gold, eating one child after another in a red room covered with snow. I realized there was no way out." Here we might surmise that she is attempting to master her anxieties about the consuming sexual relationship between her

Figure 7. Isabelle dances with the mask.



mother and David, which she intuits in an inchoate manner, through her play where such feelings are expressed through the theme of oral devouring ("the lady eating one child after another"), clearly a representation of a mother now seen as alien and dangerous. Further, after Marianne returns from Paris and attempts to resume her life ("your marriage will go on as usual," David tells her), we see mother and daughter in a stylized dance with Isabelle wearing a Marie Antoinette mask. Momentarily she is transformed into a petit courtesan—an object of exchange as was Marie Antoinette herself, the teen queen who was traded into marriage at the age of fourteen (Figure 7).

These scenes indicate that Isabelle is attempting to symbolize through play her mother's enigmatic messages about sexuality, stemming from her own unconscious communications that are not transparent even to the mother herself. As Golinelli puts it, "feminine psychosexuality is constructed in the course of a woman's life . . . along dual lines: in relation to her own body and in relation to her mother—lines that are interwoven and are reworked at moments of evolutionary passage, when anxieties of separation and loss are reactivated, with their traumatic effect" (2009: 103; translation mine). As the mother interacts through play and feeding with the child, she introduces enigmatic signifiers laden with sexual potentialities that are subject to repression, which in turn produce unconscious residues that function in the child as "source objects" that together with the drives are the building blocks of the unconscious. The mother's inchoate signals thus awaken and converge with the child's own bodily sensations to construct fantasies about mother's sexual life and about sexuality itself, which forms a bedrock of the child's unconscious (Green 2003; Green and Kohan 2005; Laplanche, 1987, 2002; Stein 1998, 2008). Thus, as Stein observes "'excess' in sexuality comes . . . from the unconscious of the mother, which is 'excessive' to that of her infant" (1998: 263). Most of the time such enigmatic sexual messages are subject to repression or censorship, but, when this is not the case, we are in the realm of perversion: the Marie Antoinette mask on the nine-year-old child has echoes of such perverse resolutions in a child who has been excessively burdened by the vastness and uncontained nature of the mother's erotic experience (Laplanche 1987, 1995; Laplanche and Pontalis 1968). Significantly, after Markus discovers the affair, and Marianne tells Isabelle that she will be moving in with David, we are told that Isabelle "stopped playing," perhaps an indication that she had reached a limit in her capacity to represent or contain the experience symbolically.

## Marianne tells Bergman:

A Sunday morning. Markus was away. Isabelle was on my bed. We had breakfast together. We sat there talking. I told her I was moving to David for a while. She'd stay with Gran and be closer to school. Daddy would be away for two months. Isabelle kept herself occupied while I spoke. I became long winded. We would see each other. Gran would be pleased. Isabelle stopped playing. I see her attentive little face, the tangled childish hair. Her little body is tense, the thin arms folded across her chest—Oh God, that it should be like this. She swallowed. Her face was expressionless. I couldn't think of what to say. I nearly said "Forget it Isabelle, I'm talking nonsense. We will always be together." After a moment's silence, she asks if she can live with David and I, and then I tell her, "there's no room and think of school," but David is looking for a larger flat. What am I saying? What nonsense. I can't live without

David. I know it's literally true and I can't live without David. Isabelle puts her little cup on the tray and walks into her room without a word, her straight little back by the door. She doesn't turn round. I wanted it all to be unsaid—anything, but not like this. She cries, her straight little back by the door; she doesn't turn around. Now at this very moment Isabelle's life had taken an unforeseen turn and I was to blame.

This scene, dramatized as Marianne narrates the action to the director, conveys Isabelle's devastation and her mother's distraught reaction to it through their expressions and body language (the child never speaks) in a series of shot/reverse shots. Significantly, Ullmann commented that this scene is "the scene I'm most proud of . . . when she [Marianne] talks to the child and cries about leaving" (Peary 2006: 202).

After Markus intrudes on Marianne and David making love, and informs them that he has known about their affair from the beginning, the chains of Eros unfurl into a realm where hate, destruction, and shame prevail over vitality and passion. "This is where the tragedy begins," Marianne tells the director. What is notable about this scene is its excruciating depiction of sexual shame, which is the product of scoptophilia or visual pleasure, and is stimulated when one's nakedness and raw sexuality are exposed to the gaze of another outside of the consensual or covental sphere of sexual passion (Mollen 2008). During sexual intimacy the self is denuded and exposed to the other's gaze and therefore is exquisitely vulnerable to shame, which is only overcome through experiences with a desirous other who participates in the transgressive aspects of sexuality and whose excitement overrides and abolishes shame. In this searing scene of sexual exposure and shame, words fail David and Marianne who can only laugh and weep. It is also noteworthy that David, like Adam in the fresco Adam and Eve Banished from Paradise (Tommaso Masaccio, 1427), first covers his face, a signifier of shame that reverses the male prerogative of the eroticized gaze with its power of action and possession (Kaplan 2000; Figure 8).

After this incident, Marianne reports, "poison spread through my body, like a horror." Eros may, in Carson's words, "sting, pierce, wound, poison, suffocate, drag off or grind the lover to a powder" (1998: 148). For a time, the lovers hide away in a remote country house where Marianne becomes pregnant with their child, making them "full of joy." However, in the last part of the film, the characters ricochet through a series of unrelenting catastrophes including a custody battle, divorce, rape, abortion, suicide, and death—for David and Marianne their union became "a friendship in damnation."

Consumed by jealousy, Markus initiates a brutal fight for custody of Isabelle in which social-service workers subject Marianne and David to humiliating investigations. Then, in deadly reversal, Markus offers to grant custody



Figure 8. Markus discovers Marianne and David

to Marianne if she will have sex with him, during which he humiliates her physically and psychologically. David, whose chronic jealousy is further inflamed by this event, continues the humiliation by cruelly interrogating Marianne, demanding a detailed recounting of her sex with Markus, and accusing her of defiling their unborn child. When she realizes that the joy is gone and their affinity is in their misery, she aborts their child. Continuing this cycle of revenge, Markus attempts to form a suicide pact with his daughter, which she abandons at the last minute. His dead and naked body is found in his living room by a woman who turns out to have been his long-term mistress, thereby shattering Marianne's illusions about her marriage. David also ultimately betrays Marianne with a leading lady in his next film, and, after a violent argument in which she hurls dishes at him and castigates him for the damage he has wreaked, he leaves. Subsequently, we are told that they become friends for life, although "studiously apart" until she drowns.

This concatenation of betrayals brings home the full meaning and impact of the film's original title, which was "The Faithless" in that none of the major characters are faithful to their objects, internal or external. The cycle of vengeance and catastrophe that comprises the last part of the film has been termed melodramatic, overkill, and/or unbelievable by critics. However, one may also see it as the manifestations of the contradictions inherent in Eros, which may whirl one toward heights of passion or hurl one into the abyss of hate and destruction (Green 2003). These links between love and hate cannot be disarticulated in Green's view because these polarities and contradictions are at the essence of Eros. In addition, the cataclysm of catastrophes that un-

roll at the end of the film are examples of what Stein (2008) talks about as the bad excesses of Eros, that is the abomination, repulsion, and shame that may be the inevitable legacy of the good excesses of ecstasy, rapture, and grace (see also Bataille 1957). One film critic called the last part of the film "a kind of orgy of bad behavior and blame . . . in the melodramatic events and revelations of the ending there emerges a kind of excess" (Haskell 2001).

However, confrontation with this excess, destructiveness, and all-consuming malignancy that is the underside of Eros and love, ultimately becomes a

Confrontation with this excess, destructiveness, and all-consuming malignancy that is the underside of Eros and love, ultimately becomes a vehicle for reconciliation and forgiveness for both characters.

vehicle for reconciliation and forgiveness for both characters. As the cross-cutting between past and present accelerates toward the end of the film, we see the transmutation of Eros as an all-consuming, urgent, and even reckless experience into Eros as imagination, which is "at the core of desire" (Carson 1998: 77). Toward the end of the film, the focus shifts from Marianne's tortured narrative of the affair, to

its impact on the internal world of the character, Bergman. A series of relentless and revealing close-ups map the topography of his expressions as they shift from impassive and inscrutable to apprehensive and anguished at the realization of the consequences of his behavior. In one of the final scenes the director has a dialogue with David, his younger self.

When I think about how I behaved all those years later, I am filled with shame—there's no other word. Now that's she's gone I can see too late that she didn't betray me; I betrayed her in the most despicable way. I let her down at the most important moment of our life together. But I was beyond reason. She said, "can't you understand; be a little kind. It hurts." I see Marianne, her face. I spent the night furiously interrogating her. When I think about her, which I often do, it's like film images clearly etched in line. I suffer from something called retrospective jealousy. During our intensely erotic interlude in Paris, I jokingly questioned Marianne about her previous lovers. She was trusting and walked right into the trap. She was touched by my interest. She told me in detail about her relationship with Markus, how under some circumstances she achieved an intensity of feeling she'd never felt before or since—that cut deeply and became a small but infected wound, and that disastrous night the wound broke open and there was nothing I could do. I didn't stop. I went on tormenting her. Marianne never defended herself; she just looked at me steadily; she must hate me. All her life she would carry the memory of my words, my voice, my face. She knew I let her down when she needed me the most. I wish I could be sentenced to a punishment, which expunged my guilt, but my punishment continues. It's a life sentence which I'll never escape . . . since Marianne is gone.

This scene ends with the director stroking David's cheek (Figure 9). Then suddenly David disappears and the scene cuts to an empty chair. The director breaks down in anguished sobs.

These final scenes crosscut between close-ups of the younger David and his older persona as the director, with the internal lives of the characters, past and present, suggested through the crosscutting and subtle shifts in shot scale and facial angles that heighten the affective interplay between the younger and older version of the characters. In these final scenes, the distinction between past and present collapses, highlighting how film, like many works of art, can function as a self-reparative object that enables one to atone for guilt and find redemption through reconstitution of one's good internal objects. It should be noted that reparation, in Klein's view (1975), is an internal unconscious process of repairing internal objects for the damages we imagine we have done to them and hence exists as an ever-present possibility. Whereas the earlier David was consumed by jealously, revenge, and resentment and was not able consciously to bear his guilt and remorse (as evidenced by his distortions and evasions), the mature David, the director Bergman, in his initial description of Marianne and in his denial of knowing Markus altogether, is able to confront his own destructiveness towards his good object (Marianne). In this passage, he finally is able to imaginatively reconstruct Marianne's experience of the fateful encounter as well as his own, showing a depth and understanding that was missing in his earlier descriptions. His guilt and concern in turn bring reparative attempts into play. As



Figure 9. Bergmann comforts David.

Mitchell reminds us, "Only by embracing one's destructiveness [an aspect of Eros] can one transcend it for forgiveness and appreciation towards the real other, internal object and ultimately the self" (1993: 171–172). We see the aging director comfort the tortured and remorseful David, and in so doing forgive himself. Thus, "the faithless" confront both the destructive and creative aspects of Eros; they come to realize that fidelity involves affirmation of one's own experience and one's own internal representations of self and objects.

These scenes also show how the internal object can be shaped and reshaped over time to represent both wish and reality. "The internal concept of the object can heal, can perform in ways that the real object does not or did not" (Pine 1974: 312). Having reestablished contact with his good internal objects and with dissociated aspects of himself, the director is then able to tolerate the sense of helplessness and vulnerability that accompanies mourning evident in this last scene in which he weeps without restraint. These final scenes remind us that reconciliation and forgiveness are part of an ongoing dynamic process fueled by erotic and aggressive wishes in an ongoing effort to repair one's relationship with internal objects and the self, which are continually reshaped according to the imperatives of the present—in this case the imperatives of aging and loss. In this sense Eros, which flings one into tumult, also "serves as a launching pad for reflection" (Green 2003: 30), and a potential reservoir of redemption. "I allow the people in the movie to forgive each other in one way or another" observes Ullmann, adding that perhaps "the movie was his [Bergman's] way of asking for forgiveness" for an affair that she believes haunted him for five decades (Lyall 1999). In comparing Faithless to Private Confessions, Ullmann stated, "Faithless is much more despairing—that's in the writing. I tried to add grace and forgiveness but there is only so much that you can do through the control of images" (Porton 2001:



Figure 10. Bergman on the beach alone.

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#### Note

<sup>1</sup> These criteria are based on the Differentiation-Relatedness (D-R) Scale (Diamond, Blatt, Stayner, and Kaslow, 1993), designed to assess the developmental quality of object relations, that is, the degree of self-other differentiation and relatedness in the content of openended descriptions of self and significant others through a projective technique called the Object Relations Inventory (ORI; Blatt, Wein, Chevron, and Quinlan, 1979). The ORI has been used widely in clinical and empirical investigations of the level of self-other differentiation and relatedness (Diamond et al. 1993) in the individual's representations of self and significant others and the ways these change over the course of psychoanalytically oriented treatment in different pathological and normative groups (Blatt and Auerbach 2001; Blatt, Ford, Cook, Berman, and Meyers 1988; Blatt, Stayner, Auerbach, and Behrends 2006).

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# **Filmography**

