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## Playful Performances: Ingmar Bergman's *Bildmakarna* and Film Authorship

Midway through the first act of *Bildmakarna* (*The Image Makers*), an actress tells a film director, with whom she has had a brief affair, that he is not the author of the film he is making. That honor belongs to the writer of the short novel on which it is based. “Hon menar att det är hennes bok Victor. Inte din. Du mekar bara,” says the actress.<sup>1</sup> The narrative in question is *Körkarlen* or *The Phantom Chariot* (1912), written by Selma Lagerlöf and now the subject of a silent film with the same title by the director Victor Sjöström (*Körkarlen*, 1921).<sup>2</sup> The actress is Tora

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<sup>1</sup> “She means that it is her book, Viktor. Not yours. You’re just tinkering with it.” References to the Swedish text are from the program for the 1998 production of *Bildmakarna* at the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm. Unless otherwise noted, I quote throughout from *The Image Makers*, the English translation of the play by Charlotte Barslund and Kim Dambäck.

<sup>2</sup> *Körkarlen* has been translated into English as *Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness*. The translation is little known or used, however, and I have chosen to use one of the English titles of the film because it is closer to Lagerlöf’s title and also more familiar to English-language audiences. A literal translation would be “The Driver,” but this does not capture the colloquial nature of the reference, which means something like “the guy who drives.”

Teje, who had played the lead in *Karin Ingmarsdotter* (1920), one of Sjöström's earlier adaptations of a text by Selma Lagerlöf, and who would go on to become the leading stage actress in early twentieth-century Swedish theater, but who did not perform in *Körkarlen*. In the play, Tora Teje, Victor Sjöström, his cinematographer, Julius Jaenzon, and Selma Lagerlöf gather to view portions of the film, and in the course of the meeting, they argue about love, sex, class, alcoholism, and the status of film as an art form, as well as the authorship of *Körkarlen*. But if Tora Teje gives the honor to Selma Lagerlöf, who had, as we are reminded many times in the film, won the Nobel Prize in 1909, Sjöström himself refers to her text as pulp fiction (*en kolportageroman*). And the ending of the play suggests another view of authorship entirely. The characters appear as silhouettes against the images projected on the screen behind them and then suddenly disappear, as the stage goes dark.

Per Olov Enquist's *Bildmakarna* was first published as the program for the play's first production at the Royal Dramatic Theater, where it premiered on February 13, 1998, under the direction of Ingmar Bergman. Bergman subsequently adapted the play for television, and this version was broadcast for the first time on Swedish television on November 15, 2000. Enquist's play has been translated into English, and in 2008, Tartan Video released a DVD of the adaptation, as part of a two-disc package that also included a restored version of *Körkarlen*.

Like Per Olov Enquist's play, Bergman's two productions acknowledge the importance of the literary text, both in the publication of the play as the program accompanying the performance and in the prominence accorded to Per Olov Enquist's name as the author of the text. Thus, at first glance it would seem that the latter is the undisputable author of *Bildmakarna*. But the play bears an uncanny resemblance to scripts Bergman wrote, most obviously *Smultronstället* (*Wild Strawberries*), which became a film starring Victor Sjöström and also pays tribute to *Körkarlen*. *Bildmakarna* seems, as

well, to respond to two plays Bergman wrote about silent film-makers in the 1990s: *Sista skriket* (*The Last Cry* or *The Last Gasp*), which depicts a fictitious encounter between the Gothenburg film-maker Georg af Klercker and Charles Magnusson, head of the film company Svenska bio; and *Larmar och gör sig till* (*In the Presence of a Clown*), which depicts the efforts of a madman to make a sound film.<sup>3</sup> Bergman's versions of *Bildmakarna* build on earlier collaborations with Per Olov Enquist that date back at least to his staging of the writer's play *Från regnormarnas liv* (*Rain Snakes*) in Munich in 1984. It seems likely, moreover, that the two men responded to each other's work long before that.

Do the versions of *Bildmakarna* have an author? While writers and film directors continue to sign their works (and sometimes, like Selma Lagerlöf, receive prizes for them), few critics or theorists in the years surrounding 2000 would point to an individual as the sole origin of a work of art. Instead, it has come to seem that all artistic production draws on and reshapes a common language or tradition, echoing and transforming earlier works in an endless interplay of intertextual resonances. Small wonder, then, that one finds such echoes or even borrowings in works by contemporaries such as Per Olov Enquist and Ingmar Bergman, although the tendency to view film and literature in isolation has sometimes made it difficult to see them.

And yet, what is one to make of the choice of a filmmaker such

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<sup>3</sup> *Sista skriket* has been translated as *The Last Gasps*; a literal translation would be "The Last Cry." *Larmar och gör sig till* is a phrase from the Swedish translation of Macbeth's famous soliloquy, "Out, out, brief candle!/Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage..." Literally translated, the title would be "Struts and Frets." The English title *In the Company of a Clown* is confusing for speakers of Swedish because Bergman made a film about the making of *Larmar och gör sig till* that bore the title *I sällskap med en clown*. See Egil Törnqvist's discussion of this film's title in *Bergman's Muses*, 130-131.

as Ingmar Bergman to stage and film a play about a film about a text that emphasizes the interplay among the arts and calls into question authorship and originality?



The four characters prepare for the first screening; the film set mimics that of the performance at the Royal Dramatic Theater

Bergman's international reputation, which rests mainly on the films he made in the 1950s and 1960s, is that of a quintessential film *auteur*, an individual who not only directed but also scripted a series of highly personal films. But Bergman also adapted and directed many plays for television, beginning with the Swedish playwright Hjalmar Bergman's *Herr Sleeman kommer* (*Mr. Sleeman is Coming*, 1957) and ending with *Bildmakarna*, over forty years later. Can it be an accident that he chose for his last television adaptation

a play that centers on questions of authorship? What do the versions of *Bildmakarna* tell us about the interplay between text and image and among media at the turn of this century?

Bergman's two versions follow Enquist's text closely, but not exactly. Recent studies of Bergman mention the television production in the context of the relationships among different media in his work. For Maaret Koskinen, for example, the play and its adaptations hark back to earlier works by Bergman and are representative of the retrospective perspective of his productions in the 1990s (*Allting föreställer*, 164-165). In *Bergman's Muses*, a study of Bergman's recent work in various media, Egil Törnqvist notes some of the differences among the three versions: the performance and film incorporate three, not two, sequences from *Körkarlen*, and the film clips are accompanied by excerpts from Schubert's string quartet *Death and the Maiden* (153); the film adds sequences that show a projectionist in a projection booth, and one shot that shows Per Olov Enquist, apparently also in the projection booth (153-154); the film is shorter and faster paced than the play production and emphasizes close-ups (152); and Bergman adds a sequence at the beginning of Act 2 in which Victor Sjöström gazes at film images of Tora Teje and has the two begin to have sex after she arrives. (153) For Törnqvist, moreover, the contrast between color and black-and-white film evokes a confrontation with death, especially at the end of the film:

Suddenly we realize why it is meaningful that the screened audience is in color, while the characters they watch are in black-and-white, why we hear the former speak, the latter not. It is a new, intermedial variation of the medieval theme of the living confronted with the dead. (157)

In her reference guide to Bergman's life and work, Birgitta Steene suggests that the play performance and film present different perspectives on the play's two themes, the former focusing on

alcoholism and the latter on artistic authenticity. (449) Steene also notes the parallel in the film between Victor Sjöström, who plays with a pistol as he gazes at the film images of Tora Teje, and the wealthy man who shoots himself in the silent film sequence shown at the end of Bergman's film version, concluding that in the film "the Sjöström character was more desperate than in the Dramaten production." (449)

Perhaps the most far-reaching aspect of Törnqvist's interpretation is his argument that the filmmaker's adaptations bring into focus the role of different media in filmmaking. Other scholars have also made this point, most notably Maaret Koskinen, whose *Allting föreställer, ingenting är* examines the close parallels between Bergman's film and theater productions over the course of several decades. But Törnqvist connects what Koskinen and others have called intermediality to what literary theorists refer to as intertextuality, the inevitable interplay of linguistic codes in any literary work that undercuts romantic notions of originality and individual authorship.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Part Three of *Bergman's Muses* is entitled "Intermediality" and opens with a discussion of Julia Kristeva and intertextuality. Noting that the term is often used in very general and misleading ways, Törnqvist writes: "Intertext here denotes an element in a text or a performance, that is *closely* related – formally and/or thematically – to an element that is textually, audiovisually, or aurally documented outside the text/performance under consideration. Thus defined, intertext may seem merely a synonym for allusion. But allusion is just one type of intertext; quotation, paraphrase, and parody are others. Intertext may relate either to the producer (notably the author and the director) or to the consumer (reader, spectator, listener). The connection between the internal signifier and the external signified may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, and can vary according to its intended audience as well: it may be intended for general recipients, aficionados, a close circle of colleagues or friends, or merely for the author or director himself. In the following, I shall be concerned primarily with intertextuality as related to the author and the director who in this case [*After the Rehearsal*] happen to be one and the same person. (117) See also Törnqvist's discussion of the adaptation

Although the characters of all three versions of *Bildmakarna* argue about art, authenticity, and authorship, the play and its performances bring into focus precisely this kind of intermediality, transforming writers, filmmakers, technicians, and performers into spectators, and evoking a common childhood trauma as the real origin of the narrative of *Körkarlen* in all its manifestations. But the film version of *Bildmakarna* presents authorship as a kind of role, a performance that can be as fleeting as Per Olov Enquist's brief appearance or as all pervasive as the presence of Ingmar Bergman, a presence so important that the filmmaker does not need to appear in the film or mention his name until the very end of the final credits. All of the versions of *Bildmakarna* are hybrid works that hark back to an early encounter between older and newer media in the early twentieth century, while also incorporating aspects of modernist aesthetics and more recent theoretical discussions about the interplay between media and identity. But Bergman's film version raises the ante as it refers back to aspects of his earlier work that also explore these issues. The film version of *Bildmakarna* represents one of Bergman's last performances as a film *auteur*.

### Enquist's Texts

Per Olov Enquist's *Bildmakarna* is a complex and uneven work. Depicting a fictitious meeting among Scandinavian artists whose art, it turns out, responds to childhood traumas, it harks back to some of his earlier works for the theater, especially *Från regnormarnas liv*, in which Hans Christian Andersen and the Danish actress Johanne Luise Heiberg reveal wounds inflicted by class prejudice and anti-Semitism. In that play, the romantic view that art is rooted in pain and sickness is more in tune with the setting than it is in *Bildmakarna*, which reveals that all of the characters are haunted by alcoholic fathers.

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of plays in the introduction, 5-18.

That point is hammered home in the afterword appended to the Swedish version of *Bildmakarna*, a text that seems superfluous, while also highlighting the weaknesses of the play. *Bildmakarna*, the afterword argues, is a play about codependency, especially that of Selma Lagerlöf, who is an unusual case because she managed to win the Nobel Prize – both because of and despite her father's alcoholism. In recent years, Selma Lagerlöf has been the subject of a number of excellent studies that have focused on the modernist elements of her works, their links to first-wave and late-twentieth-century feminism, and the writer's passionate friendships with other women.<sup>5</sup> Although the afterword alludes to these studies, its portrait of Selma Lagerlöf is demeaning and misogynist.<sup>6</sup> Her short novella, it seems, is the kind of trash hawked by itinerant peddlers –

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<sup>5</sup> Ying Toijer-Nilsson's pioneering edition of Lagerlöf's letters to Sophie Elkan, *Du lär mig att bli fri* has been followed by many studies focusing on the writer's relationships with women. See especially Vivi Edström's two books on Lagerlöf, Eva Helen Ulvros's biography of Sophie Elkan, the essays in *Selma Lagerlöf och kärleken*, and Toijer-Nilsson's edition of Lagerlöf's correspondence with Valborg Olander.

<sup>6</sup> The one scholar Enquist mentions is Ulla Torpe. (114) He refers only generally and misleadingly to studies that mention Selma Lagerlöf's relationships with women: "Det har, till exempel, skrivits mycket om hennes eventuella lesbiska läggning. Men var finns detta i texterna, ens om infärgning? Själv ser jag det inte, när jag laser Selma finner jag ingenting av detta som så intresserar nutidens forskning: bara en förtvivlad, frustrerad, besviken, och lidelsefull alldeles vanlig kvinna som tror hon är klumpig och ful och låghalt, I själva verket, borde ha sett att hon var en alldeles ovanligt älskansvärd liten humla. (121)

(A lot, for example, has been written about her possible lesbianism. But where does this crop up in the texts, even as an undertone? Personally, I don't see it, when I read Selma I don't find any of the things that interest today's literary scholars: only a desperate, frustrated, disappointed, and passionate quite ordinary woman who thinks she's clumsy and ugly and lame. The fact of the matter is that she should have understood that she was an unusually lovable little bumblebee.)



the term used, *kolportageroman*, has no English equivalent – and Selma Lagerlöf herself is an aged spinster who has never had sex. In contrast, the afterword argues that Victor Sjöström’s film is a cinematic masterpiece.

The worst parts of the play confirm the heavy-handed interpretation offered in the afterword. By the end of the first act, Selma Lagerlöf has revealed to Tora Teje that she is obsessed by her father’s alcoholism; by the end of the second, she has also admitted that she is still a virgin and envies the purported promiscuity of chimpanzees and actresses like Tora Teje. But by this time, it is also clear that the other characters are also haunted by their alcoholic fathers, although they, too, have managed to transform their wounds into some form of art. The afterword reproaches Selma Lagerlöf for writing propaganda for prohibition in her *Körkarlen*. But Per Olov Enquist’s *Bildmakarna* invites a similar charge, except that it is propaganda against women writers and on behalf of male filmmakers who manage to make cinematic masterpieces despite the demands of former lovers and the inferiority of the literary models offered by spinster storytellers.

The mawkishness of the language associated with this aspect of the play suggests that the playwright probably realized he was on aesthetic and historical thin ice. Arguably the most embarrassing line of the play is uttered by Tora Teje in response to Selma Lagerlöf’s admission that she would like to comport herself sexually like the chimpanzees to which Sjöström has compared Tora Teje: “Men...(*hon vet inte om hon ska våga*)...du har aldrig...du har...har du aldrig?” (94)<sup>7</sup>

Tora Teje’s cloying and demeaning would-be compliment to Selma Lagerlöf a little later is at least as offensive, for instead of recognizing the older woman’s humanity, she compares her to an

<sup>7</sup> But (*She doesn’t know if she dares*)...You’ve never . . . you’ve...have you . . . never? (247)

insect: “Selma. Du ska inte vara lessen. Du är den finaste och vackraste lilla humla jag någonsin träffat.” (111)<sup>8</sup>

These lines are less anachronistic than most of the dialogue of *Bildmakarna*, which is littered with expressions such as *meka* (to tinker) or *runka* (to jerk off), and even has an angry Tora Teje improbably invite Selma Lagerlöf to kiss her ass (Kyss mig i röven, [20]), although they have just met. The apparent function of these anachronisms is to suggest that the psychological conflicts the characters experience transcend the limits of the play’s setting. Then as now, it seems, children are permanently scarred by their parents’ alcoholism, although some go on to become artists; and film directors dally with actresses and suffer the consequences. On this view, *Bildmakarna* is a history play with a thesis and a moral that are still relevant in the years surrounding 2000.

But the play is more interesting than its didactic afterword or the excesses of its dialogue suggest. Most obviously, it incorporates film and film conventions into its plot and setting, as have many recent play productions in Scandinavia and elsewhere. But the play’s dialogue also responds to elements of twentieth-century debates in cultural theory concerning the autonomy of the work of art and the relationship of film to older art forms.

The plot of *Bildmakarna* bears a striking resemblance to Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, which also plays off representations of work of art as autonomous against notions of the writer as a creator who controls every aspect of his or her creation. As Maaret Koskinen recently reminded us, Bergman staged this play twice, in 1953 at Malmö and 1967 in Oslo, and parallels to these stage productions crop up in films such as *Gycklarnas afton* (*Sawdust and Tinsel*), *Ansiktet* (*The Magician*), and *Persona*.<sup>9</sup> Like *Six*

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<sup>8</sup> Selma. Don’t be sorry. You’re the finest and sweetest little bumble bee I’ve every met. (258)

<sup>9</sup> See *Allting föreställer*, 33-34, 40-42, 61-63. Koskinen notes that the Oslo pro-

*Characters, Bildmakarna* also focuses on the interactions of a group of artists who have been involved in the making of another work of art. One might perhaps choose as an alternative title for Enquist's play *Four Artists in Search of an Auteur*. Both share a modernist view of authorship as secondary to the work itself and the author as one character among others in a play text.

The play's dialogue also appears to respond to Walter Benjamin's famous essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' Early in the play, the cinematographer Julius Jaenzon introduces the anachronistic slang term "meka" or tinker (the Swedish word is closely related to mechanical) to designate the mechanical aspect of filmmaking:

Meka. Meka Meka meka. Nä nä. Man försöker ju verka lite ÖDMJUK. Ligga lågt va. Men innerst inne tanker man ju att man gör bilder som ... ja som om man ... förvandlar!!! såna där små grå lerfåglar ... så dom kan flyga... så bilderna blir lite magiska... (8)<sup>10</sup>

Reading aloud a passage from Selma Lagerlöf's text, Tora Teje suggests the apparent opposite of *meka*: *själ*, a soul or spirit that emerges from words.

"Därför får du inte tänka, att min kropp ingenting är. Den är ett hem för en själ, såsom din egen och andra människors kroppar. Du får bara inte tänka på den såsom fast eller tung eller stark. Du skall tänka, att den är som en bild, som du sett i en spegel,

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duction brought into focus the fact that it was a performance in a way that resembles the sequences that represent the camera and projector in *Persona*. (62-63) Interestingly, a Swedish translation of Pirandello's short novel about a cinematographer was published in 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Tinker. Tinker tinker tinker. No no. You must be . . . *humble*. Keep a low profile. But deep inside you're thinking that you're making pictures which . . . well, it is almost as if you were helping little grey birds of clay to fly. The pictures become a little magical . . . (190)

och försöka inbilla dig, att den har stigit fram ur glaset och kan tala och se och röra sig.” (13)<sup>11</sup>

But in Lagerlöf’s narrative, the words are spoken by a ghost to describe his own appearance. And in response to Tora Teje’s reading, the cinematographer explains that he and Sjöström used double exposures in order to evoke the effect that Selma Lagerlöf had described in words:

Ja vi hade det som idé när vi skulle göra dubbelexponeringarna. När körkarlen kommer och fyllet stiger ur sin döda kropp. Jag exponerade samma remsa fyra tagningar och då dubbelexponeras... (13)<sup>12</sup>

Cinematographic technique thus bridges the apparent gap between the mechanical aspect of filmmaking and what Selma Lagerlöf’s words suggest is the spirituality of older art forms. But Julius Jaenzon is not entirely convinced of the value of his work. The clay pigeons he alludes to refer to another of Selma Lagerlöf’s texts “I Nazaret” (In Nazareth), a short story about the attempts of Christ and Judas as young boys to make birds of clay: the former’s took wing, while Judas’s models remained clumsy lumps of earth. The cinematographer, who obviously identifies with Judas, finds the story cruel, for it reminds him that he had turned to photography because he hadn’t succeeded as a painter. He reads Selma Lagerlöf’s text as confirming the close relationship between religion and the unique work of art, the handiwork of a single artist.

What is at stake in the network of references to mechanical

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<sup>11</sup> “Do not think my body is worthless. It is the home of my soul, just like yours and other people’s bodies. Do not think of it as firm or heavy or strong. Just think of it as a picture which you’ve seen in a mirror and imagine it has risen through the glass and can speak and move.” (193)

<sup>12</sup> Well, we had this idea that we would double expose the film. When the coachman arrives and the drunkard rises from the dead body, I exposed the same take four times and then you double expose . . . (193)

tinkering and spirit, the divine origin of unique works of art, and the potential of photography to evoke ghosts and spirits is what Walter Benjamin called the aura. For the German theorist, film and other art forms based on mechanical reproduction mark a departure from traditional notions of the work of art as unique, sacred, or auratic. For Benjamin, the break with tradition has a progressive political potential, especially when juxtaposed to the ritualistic spectacles staged by the Nazis and fascists. But *Bildmakarna* reverses the terms of Benjamin's essay, suggesting that it is Sjöström's film, rather than Lagerlöf's text, that is the auratic work of art.

Enquist's play also incorporates elements of Bergman's earlier work, taking place, like his 1984 television film, *Efter repetitionen* (*After the Rehearsal*), backstage, and focusing on Victor Sjöström. It even appears to borrow dialogue from Bergman's 1953 film *Gycklarnas afton* (*Sawdust and Tinsel*).

In the play, Victor Sjöström describes his relationship with Edith Erastoff:

Hon får mig att bli... alldeles stilla och varm ... som om hon omslöt mig. Jo. Som... som om jag var ett foster. I... fostervattnet... (74)<sup>13</sup>

His words echo the remarks of the clown Frost who, at the end of *Gycklarnas afton*, explains his relationship to his wife in very similar terms. Here, as elsewhere in the film, Frost speaks in a mixture of Swedish and Danish. This is a Swedish rendering of his words:<sup>14</sup>

I eftermiddags, när jag sov ruset af, då hade jag en dröm. Jag drömde att Alma kom till mig och sade:

<sup>13</sup> She makes me feel . . . completely calm and warm . . . as if she embraced me. Yes. As . . . as if I were a foetus. Snug . . . in the waters of the womb . . . (234)

<sup>14</sup> The screenplay of *Gycklarnas afton/Sawdust and Tinsel* has not been published. I quote from the dialogue and subtitles of *Sawdust and Tinsel*, Tartan Video, 2007.

“Stackars Frost, du ser trött och ledsen ut. Ska du icke behöva lite vila?”

“Jo,” sade jag.

“Då skall jag göra dig liten som ett foster,” sade hon. “Då ska du få krypa in i min mage och där ska du få sova riktigt gott. Jag gjorde som hon sade och lade mig tillrätta i hennes mage och där somnade jag så djupt, så skönt, gungen till ro som i en vagga. Så blev jag mindre och mindre, och till slut var jag bara ett litet frökorn. Sedan var jag borta.”<sup>15</sup>

Who is speaking – or writing – in Enquist’s play? His character Victor Sjöström echoes Frost, as Enquist himself perhaps echoes Bergman in a play probably composed for Bergman.

The staging and adaptation of *Bildmakarna* marked the culmination of a long and fruitful exchange between Bergman and Enquist that dates back almost to the beginning of the latter’s career. Sixteen years younger than Ingmar Bergman, Per Olov Enquist (b. 1934) published his first novel, *Kristallögat* (*The Crystal Eye*), in 1961. While the visual emphasis evoked by this work’s title suggests parallels to film, the subject of Enquist’s third novel, *Magnetisörens femte vinter* (*The Magnetist’s Fifth Winter*, 1964), resembles that of Ingmar Bergman’s film, *Ansiktet* (*The Magician* or *The Face*), which had premiered in 1958 and which focused on an episode in the life of a traveling animal magnetist, Albert Emanuel Vogler. It wasn’t until the mid-1970s, however, that Enquist turned to writing plays and to subjects that were also of particular interest to Bergman. His first play, *Tribadernas natt* (*Night of the Tribades*, 1975), repre-

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<sup>15</sup> This afternoon when I slept off the booze, I had a dream. I dreamt that Alma said to me:

“Poor Frost, you look tired and sad, how about a rest?”

“Yes, I said.

“I’ll make you tiny as a foetus. You can sleep in peace in my womb.”

So I crept inside, and I slept soundly there, as though rocked in a cradle. I got smaller and smaller, till I was only a seed – and then I was gone.

sented a fictional encounter between the Swedish writer August Strindberg, his estranged first wife Siri, and her friend Marie David, during rehearsals of Strindberg's play *Den starkare* (*The Stronger*). *Tribadernas natt* takes seriously Strindberg's accusation that his wife had had a lesbian affair with Marie David, but also portrays him as an abusive and self-preoccupied husband, a view Enquist developed in his script for a television series on Strindberg's life. Several years later, Enquist wrote a play that evokes a fictional encounter, this time in 1856 between Johanne Luise Heiberg, the leading Danish actress in the mid-nineteenth century and the writer Hans Christian Andersen. This play brings to light the hidden wounds inflicted on the actress and the storyteller by class and ethnicity: Andersen, as Scandinavian audiences know, came from an extremely poor home and Johanne Luise Heiberg's family was Jewish.

Both *Tribadernas natt* and *Från regnormarnas liv* could be dress rehearsals for *Bildmakarna*, which also represents a fictional encounter that brings to light the psychological damage inflicted on the characters by their past. It may well be that some of Bergman's stage productions of Strindberg's plays after 1975 also respond to *Tribadernas natt* or Enquist's later television script for a miniseries about Strindberg's life. But what is certain is that Bergman staged Enquist's *Från regnormarnas liv* in Munich in 1984. That play, too, presents at least one parallel to Bergman's work that is too striking to be a matter of coincidence.

First performed in Danish in Copenhagen in 1981, Enquist's play has several different titles. In Danish it is *Fra regnormenes liv*, in German, *Aus dem Leben der Regenwürmer*, and in Swedish, *Från regnormarnas liv*.<sup>16</sup> The English title, *Rain Snakes*, is misleading, although it corresponds to the elements of the Scandinavian compound *regn*

<sup>16</sup> Steene cites the German title as *Vom Leben der Regenschlangen* (665), which she translates as "From the Life of the Rain Worms," but German sources cite the play as *Aus dem Leben der Regenschlangen* and that is also the title of the published version of the translation.

or rain and *orm*, snake, but the literal translation of *regnorm* is earthworm and the title is literally “Out of the Lives of the Earthworms.” That translation clearly echoes the title of the television film Ingmar Bergman made in Germany in 1980: *Aus dem Leben der Marionetten*, *Out of the Lives of the Marionettes*. The similarity is strikingly evident when the German titles of the film and the play are juxtaposed: *Aus dem Leben der Marionetten* and *Aus dem Leben der Regenwürmer*. That Bergman himself seemed aware of the similarities between his work and Enquist’s play is suggested by the overlap between the two casts of the film and the play. Christina Buchegger played the female lead and Heinz Brenner minor roles in both productions.<sup>17</sup>

In an interview published in the leading Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* two days before the premiere of the stage version, Ingmar Bergman told Yvonne Malaise that he came across the play while he was editing his second film about a silent filmmaker, *Larmar och gör sig till*:

I korridoren mötte jag dramaturgen Ulla Åberg som sa att hon hade en pjäs som hon tyckte att jag skulle titta på . . . En pjäs om en films tillblivelse.

Och inte vilken film som helst utan om det kinematografiska underverket “Körkarlen,” som han sett minst hundra gånger. Han var fast.<sup>18</sup>

Bergman goes on to mention Victor Sjöström’s affair with Tora Teje during the filming of *Karin Ingmarsdotter*, characterizing Sjöström as a ladies man who “hade gått fram som en grasklippare”

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<sup>17</sup> On the production at the Munich Residenztheater, see Steene, 665-666.

<sup>18</sup> In the hallway I met the dramaturg Ulla Åberg, who said that she had a play she thought I should look at . . . A play about the making of a film. And not just any film, but the cinematic miracle *The Phantom Chariot*, which he had seen at least a hundred times. He couldn’t say no. (Translations from the interview are my own.)



(had mowed them down like a lawnmower), before he met Edith Erastoff, who became his third and last wife. Mentioning the two films he had made with Sjöström, *Smultronstället* and *Till Glädje (To Joy)*, Bergman notes that he had also known Tora Teje, with whom he had worked on a radio play. He explains that Tora Teje was not suited for film: “Kameran gillade inte henne.” (The camera didn’t like her.) It is a remark that jars both with her appearance in Mauritz Stiller’s masterpiece, *Erotikon*, and with Bergman’s own representation of her image in the film version of *Bildmakarna*. Bergman characterizes Julius Jaenzon, in contrast, as a cinematographic genius.

As is often the case with Bergman’s statements concerning his work, one should take these remarks with a grain of salt, including not only his presentation of the characters, but also the account of his discovery of Per Olov Enquist’s text. The parallels between the play and Bergman’s films are so striking that it is difficult to imagine that Enquist did not write it with Bergman in mind, or to explain why he didn’t send it directly to Bergman himself. They also suggest an intertextual overlap that calls into question the distinctions between film and literature, as well as notions of individual authorship that would characterize any of the versions of *Bildmakarna* as the work of a single individual.

#### Bergman’s Versions:

Enquist’s play ends with the projection of a sequence from Sjöström’s *Körkarlen*. The four characters seem mesmerized: “Bildmakarna ser sina bilder stiga fram ur historien. Och så plötsligt: mörker” (112)<sup>19</sup>

The endings of Bergman’s stage production and film adaptation are far more startling than the conclusion of Enquist’s text. In the

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<sup>19</sup> The image makers see their images emerge out of the story/history. And then suddenly: darkness. (my translation)

version staged at the Royal Dramatic Theater, the projector turned on the audience, engulfing spectators in the images of the film, literally incorporating them into a play about filmmakers and images. As a member of the audience, I experienced this ending as a shock that broke the illusion and led me to resist my identification with the characters and their world. Bergman's television adaptation does not attempt to reproduce the conclusion of the play performance. Instead, the final sequence of the film version begins by showing the sequence of the film in which the dissolute friend of the protagonist tells the story of the phantom chariot. We see some of the famous scenes in which multiple exposures evoke a ghostly and decrepit cart and driver, as they travel through various settings in turn-of-the-century Sweden. Then we return to the storyteller and Selma Lagerlöf quietly walks over to the screen and, as the film's images flicker over her face and body, caresses his face. A final close-up shows her pensive face in the flickering light of the film projection. The film's ending evokes a double reconciliation – of film and literature and Selma Lagerlöf and her past. It is not as shocking as the end of the theater performance, but it does surprise. Earlier in the play and film, Tora Teje asks how the nurse could have been attracted to a homeless drunkard like David Holm, and Selma Lagerlöf's account of her own father's alcoholism appears to answer the younger woman's question, suggesting that David Holm represents her father. But at the end of the film, it is the face of David Holm's friend, Georges, the upper-class drunk, that she caresses – an unexpected but entirely plausible gesture.



Anita Björk as Selma Lagerlöf approaches the screen at the end of *Bildmakarna*.

In the television adaptation of *Bildmakarna*, film dissolves the distinctions between creators and spectators, audiences and the work, because the images function as a kind of mirror, eliciting desire and identification. The adaptation incorporates metafilmic sequences in that have no origin in the Enquist's text, but instead hark back to Bergman's own work. In the film version of *Bildmakarna* these sequences function as signatures, suggesting that the television adaptation belongs to a group of similar films, all attributed to the name "Ingmar Bergman." In other words, these sequences are in line with structuralist theories of film authorship that eschew explanations of origin to focus on family resemblances

among film texts.<sup>20</sup> They also deploy film images to respond to theories of spectatorship, particularly those harking back to Jacques Lacan's famous essays on the mirror stage.



The final close-up: the writer as film spectator.

As a text about a film, Per Olov Enquist's play is, of course, a metatheatrical work, a play about another performance. To the single setting of the play, however, the film version adds two others: the projectionist's booth next to the viewing room, where an elderly projectionist – not Julius Jaenzon – operates the projector, and the interior of the projector itself, through which the strips of film

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Peter Wollen's famous *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*.

pass. The sequences that show the film strips in the projector recall the famous opening and closing of Bergman's most ambitious metafilmic film, *Persona*, in which the sequences showing the film projector frame several narratives within the narrative, suggesting that they are all linked to a kind of projection that resembles the work of the film projector. In *Persona*, as well, the link is reinforced in the final shots of the pre-title montage. This sequence shows a boy in a sterile white setting that may be a hospital or a morgue. Towards its end he turns to the camera and palpates an invisible flat surface whose nature is unclear: is it a window, a mirror, or the camera lens itself? The reverse shot, of the face of a giant woman – or perhaps two women – suggests that it is a combination of all three. Looking into the mirror-lens-window, the boy seems to see the image of his mother, with whom he painfully identifies and whom he desires. A shot near the beginning of *Bildmakarna* recalls the end of the pre-title sequence in *Persona*. Tora Teje turns and looks into the camera, posing as if in a mirror and commenting on the potential of her film image to seduce and entrance millions of spectators. She speaks the words of Enquist's text as she does so, but her gestures and look evoke the potential for spectators to see themselves in the image of a film star:

Tänk om hela livet var så där, liksom att allting kunde hända mest i fantasin. . . . Man kunde vara tillsammans med... alla. Man var liksom...överallt!... och då kunde man vara tillsammans med hur många som helst. Man VAR någonting, för varenda en!

. . .

Det skulle bli som... ja som när Victor och du gör en film, och jag är där på duken FÖR ALLA, men slap själv. Men liksom... att livet är som på film. (11-12)<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Imagine if your entire life was like that. That everything happened mostly in your imagination. . . . You could do it with . . . everybody. As if you were . . .



Elin Klinga as Tora Teje: the camera as mirror.

In this film that is all about fathers, this shot emphasizes the seductiveness of the film image itself, rather than spectators' potential identification of the image with that of their mothers. Another sequence, inserted in the film between Acts 1 and 2 of the play further emphasizes the power of the film image. Here we see an anguished Victor Sjöström, fascinated by a film sequence that shows

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everywhere! . . . And you could do it with as many as possible. You could *be* someone for everyone!

. . .

It would be like . . . well, when Viktor and you make a film and I'm there on the screen for everybody, but I don't actually have to be there. . . . As if life were a film. (192)

Tora Teje preparing for her great role in Mauritz Stiller's film comedy, *Erotikon*. She appears back lit, with her hair up, an idealized, beautiful mask not unlike the famous mask-like photographs of Greta Garbo. Sjöström's anguished fascination before her image presents a stark contrast to his terse embarrassment in her presence.

The echo of theoretical issues in the images of *Bildmakarna* recalls a passage in the introduction to *The Fifth Act* or *Femte akten*, a collection of plays that Ingmar Bergman published in 1994. The volume includes three plays that served as the basis for films he directed after *Fanny och Alexander*: *Efter repetitionen*, and the two plays about silent filmmakers that preceded *Bildmakarna*, *Sista skriket*, and *Larmar och gör sig till*. Although *Bildmakarna* was not included in this collection of Ingmar Bergman's plays, the opening text, "Monologue," suggests that the parallels to Lacan in the film version of Per Olov Enquist's play are probably not accidental. Here an aging man presents himself to an audience he cannot see and begins to discuss his reading. He complains that he has been unable to absorb texts such as Ernst Deutsch's biography of Trotsky or Peter Weiss's novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* and that he has difficulty reading aloud. What he is able to do is to bring some texts – above all but perhaps not exclusively dramatic texts – to life:

Själva lusten har däremot alltid varit närvarande. Ett bibliotek, en bokhandel, en ny bok, en gammal, gammal bok, ett okänt eller för alldel välbekant skådespel utstrålar dragningskraft, ibland magi. Och så säger jag till mig själv: "Wittgenstein" eller "Lacan." – Efter två sidor rådlöshet och vrede. Lider jag av något essentiellt fel på förståndet eller vad är det fråga om?

Det långsamma läsandet har en enda fördel, en yrkesmässig. Då jag tar mig fram genom en dramatisk text, ser och hör jag mycket tydligt de transsubstantierade orden. Vanligen bestämmer jag mig för en iscensättning i samband med första konfrontationen. Jag *vet* att detta är *min* text även om den inne-

håller granitblock av olösliga problem. (10)<sup>22</sup>

Although the passage describes the readings of Lacan or Wittgenstein as though they could have taken place at any time or over long periods of time, it also suggests that the relationship between dramatic texts and theory seemed especially pertinent for Bergman in the 1990s, perhaps above all in connection with the title of the collection refers to as his “fifth act.”

His adaptation also draws on the talents of the individual performers and the resources of the intimate stage of Målarsalen (literally the painters’ room) at the Royal Dramatic Theater and the film set that mimics it. Cast as Tora Teje, Elin Klinga suggests both a young actress in the late 1990s, as well as a vamp in 1920. Clad in pants and boots in the first act, she tosses her waist-length mane of hair as she flirts with Julius Jaenzon. Her dress and mannerisms echo the anachronisms in Enquist’s dialogue. In the second act she appears in a demure gray dress that one might have seen in 1920, but with a long braid that seems distinctly out of place in a film studio. As Julius Jaenzon, Carl-Magnus Dellow lisps and knocks things over. Lennart Hjulström’s Victor Sjöström is all tight-lipped nervousness, worried that Selma Lagerlöf will not approve of his film and acutely embarrassed by the appearance of Tora Teje; despite his historical role as the director of one of the masterpieces of Swedish film, he is the least noticeable character in the play, only

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<sup>22</sup> Unlike the ability, the desire to read has always been with me. A library, a bookstore, a new book, an old, old book, an unknown or for that matter a well-known play radiates a magnetic force, sometimes magic. But then I say to myself: “Wittgenstein” or “Lacan.” After two pages of confusion and rage, I think: Am I suffering from some essential flaw in my ability to comprehend, or what?

Slow reading has one advantage, a professional one. When I work through a dramatic text, I see and hear the transubstantiated words very clearly. Usually I decide on a staging during that first confrontation. I *know* that this is *my* text, even though it contains granite blocks of unsolvable problems. (4)



coming to life when he and Tora Teje finally clutch at each other at the beginning of Act 2. In contrast, Anita Björk's Selma Lagerlöf dominated the stage and dominates the film. From her first appearance, she radiates authority and vulnerability, canceling out attempts to demean her in the play's dialogue and Enquist's remarks about her in his afterword. This is no bumblebee who needs the interpretations of others to discover why she wrote *Körkarlen*. As becomes evident in her conversation with Tora Teje at the end of Act 1, she is all too well aware of what she calls her "original narrative," her obsession with her dead father and his alcoholism. Instead, what Björk's performance brings out is her discovery – and possibly ours – that her situation is not unique: in the play she shares it with Tora Teje, Julius Jaenzon, and Victor Sjöström. And the interaction between the two actresses, who convey the two women's fascination with each other, gives the lie to Enquist's dismissal of Selma Lagerlöf's relationships with other women, as well as to the embarrassing lines that evoke the writer's virginity and compare her to a bumblebee.

In contrast to the belittling references to the writer and her works in Enquist's play and afterward, Anita Björk's Selma Lagerlöf transforms misogynistic clichés into an imposing and moving character who is extremely seductive. Under the direction of Ingmar Bergman, the performers of *Bildmakarna* make clay pigeons fly.

The versions of *Bildmakarna* represent the result of an unusually close collaboration between Bergman and Enquist, a collaboration based on a long history of interpretation, imitation, borrowing, and adaptation across media. It seems likely that Enquist wrote *Bildmakarna* in the hope that Ingmar Bergman would direct it at Dramaten. While acknowledging Enquist as the author of the play (and including the writer as a very minor character in the film), Bergman's versions transform a dogmatic and flawed text into a tribute to Victor Sjöström and his collaborators that also suggests that artistic creation has more in common with erotic attraction

than alcoholism. At the same time, visual quotations of *Persona* in the television adaptation tie it to the filmmaker's production as a whole.



Selma Lagerlöf arrives for the first screening.

#### Authorship, Collaboration, and Intermediality

The opening credits of the television adaptation of *Bildmakarna* mention only the title and Per Olov Enquist's name: "*Bildmakarna* av Per Olov Enquist" (*The Image Makers* by Per Olov Enquist). Bergman's name is not mentioned until the final credits, when it appears at the end of the list of performers and crew members who had worked on the film. Of course, the publicity for the broadcast

emphasized that the television film was a Bergman production, a position echoed by the voice of the television host who introduced the broadcast. But if the initial credits appear to affirm Per Olov Enquist as the author of the play in the romantic sense that traces a work back to a single originating consciousness, the credits at the end suggest an alternative notion of authorship as collaborative and collective. And the little world of the play and film, in which four characters meet to see a film, suggests a third position that parallels the end of the film. Film incorporates and transforms the work of many different creators: in the end what matters is the work itself: the film's the thing.

This view agrees with one aspect of one Bergman's famous statements concerning his role as a film director that dates back to the years surrounding 1960. In this talk, later published as the introduction to *Four Screenplays*, he emphasized the collective nature of filmmaking, the affinities of filmmaking with religion, and film's difference from literature.

I myself have never had any ambition to be an author. I do not want to write novels, short stories, essays, biographies, or even plays or the theatre. I only want to make films – films about conditions, tensions, pictures, rhythms and characters which are in one way or another important to me. The motion picture, with its complicated process of birth, is my method of saying what I want to my fellow men. I am a film-maker, not an author. (145)

He compares his work as a filmmaker to that of anonymous artisans who helped build the cathedral at Chartres, concluding:

Thus if I am asked what I would like the general purpose of my films to be, I would reply that I want to be one of the artists in the cathedral on the great plain. I want to make a dragon's head, an angel, a devil – or perhaps a saint – out of stone. It does not matter which; it is the sense of satisfaction that counts. Regard-

less of whether I believe or not, whether I am a Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral. (146)

These remarks do not entirely stand up to scrutiny, for Bergman published works of fiction both at the beginning and toward the end of his career and, as Maaret Koskinen has shown, there is considerable overlap between his work in the theatre and his films.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, many of his films of the 1950s and 1960s seem to represent the quintessence of author films, in which a single artist translates his or her concerns, his or her vision, into filmic terms. Indeed, Robin Wood's study of Bergman considers his work of the 1950s and 1960s from this perspective, arguing that the filmmaker's use of scripts by Ulla Isaksson and others around 1960 is evidence of an artistic crisis.<sup>24</sup> But they are useful as a reminder that already in the late 1950s, it seems, Bergman asks us to consider film authorship from at least two perspectives: as the work of a director who has an unusual degree of control over his or her work and as the result of a collaborative effort in which individual contributions disappear into the film itself. The versions of *Bildmakarna* bring both perspectives into play.

But *Bildmakarna* also presents a playful view of authorship, which appears as a one role among many. Recall that the sequences in which the characters view scenes from *Körkarlen* transform director, cameraman, actress, and writer into spectators. As an adaptation of a play that represents the clash between a kind of literature that has been consecrated by the Nobel Prize and the upstart me-

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<sup>23</sup> On the interplay between Bergman's early texts and films, see Maaret Koskinen, *I begynnelsen var ordet (In the Beginning was the Word)*.

<sup>24</sup> Wood's study makes a moving argument that Bergman's best films (which he scripted himself) show him to be an authentic artist. More recent studies focus on the films themselves. See especially those by Maaret Koskinen and Philippe Aumont.

dium of silent film, moreover, the film version includes sequences that hark back to one of Bergman's most famous films and respond to theories of spectatorship. One hardly needs these theories to understand *Bildmakarna*. Instead, the film incorporates aspects of film theory as part of the play of intertextual and intermedial resonances, alongside aspects of works by Sjöström, Enquist, and Bergman himself.

The mixture of seriousness and playfulness in the interplay of intermedial resonances and the film's treatment of authorship is nowhere more in evidence than in the shot that captures Per Olov Enquist's face alongside that of the camera projector, as it begins to show the encounter between David Holm's wife and the dying Sister Edith. It is true, as both Törnqvist and Steene state, that he seems to occupy the same position as the elderly film projectionist. The first time we see that character at the beginning of the film, he looks through a small square window and a point of view shot reveals that he has a bird's eye view of Tora Teje and Julius Jaenzon. Per Olov Enquist's face seems to peer through that window.

If we imagine Per Olov Enquist as a face in a window in the projection booth, his position suggests a parallel to the projector: his face looks out through a window that turns out to be the same size as the one occupied by the projector. Are we to see the gaze of the writer as somewhat superior to the light of the projector, like his window? Or are they part of the same process or operation? It is difficult to decipher his expression. Is he scowling or just puzzled?

Perhaps his puzzlement is intended to mirror our own, and in more ways than one. The face seems to be illuminated by the projector, but from what angle? There are no shadows to suggest that the light comes from below. Instead, the face is frontally illuminated, as if Enquist stood in the position of one of the spectators of the film showing, either onscreen or in the audience. He would then be looking at himself in a mirror alongside a projector. Specta-

tors in the audience, we may align ourselves with his gaze, imagining ourselves in the place of both writer and film apparatus, a little like viewers of Velasquez's famous painting, *Las Meninas*, who eventually discover the mirror behind the little princess and her attendants, and who, like well-trained film spectators, imagine themselves in the place of the royal couple reflected in it.



Per Olov Enquist – the author as projector?

In his famous opening chapter in *Les Mots et les Choses*, Michel Foucault offers an intricate interpretation of Velasquez's painting with the double aim of demonstrating how in the seventeenth century orders of knowledge and society evoked a notion of subjectivity that rested on a spectator's identification with royalty and also of

deconstructing that subjectivity.<sup>25</sup> His reading reflects the perspective of a twentieth-century theorist eager to celebrate the disappearance of the kind of subjectivity his analysis brought into focus, a perspective that looked forward to the death of “man” and perhaps also, as some commentators pointed out after Foucault’s death, to his own.<sup>26</sup>

The shot of Per Olov Enquist’s face in *Bildmakarna* suggests a reading similar but not identical to Foucault’s analysis of *Las Meninas*. Framed in black and juxtaposed to a machine, the illuminated face of the writer looks out at unidentified spectators, inviting or refusing their identification, depending on whether one views the space in the frame as a mirror or a window. Absent in the shot is the kind of world portrayed in *Las Meninas*, a world distinguished by its variety and architectural solidity. Also absent is the artist at work, prominently displayed in the foreground of the painting. Instead, Per Olov Enquist’s face appears suddenly, surrounded by darkness, and disappears just as quickly. The image evokes authorship as a kind of spectre that emerges from an interplay of various media but whose appearance carries with it the recognition of its inevitable disappearance, its death.

In Ingmar Bergman’s versions of *Bildmakarna*, authorship is a kind of game, a performance, not unlike the monologue at the beginning of *Femte akten*. It is a generous and playful performance, made possible by the director’s status as the grand old man of Swedish theatre and filmmaking and his mastery of his art. At the same time, the performance also represents a response to the many theorists who have argued about Bergman’s own status as an *auteur*. Not unlike Victor Sjöström, as he is represented in the play, the

<sup>25</sup> Chapter 1, ‘Las Meninas,’ *The Order of Things*, 3-18.

<sup>26</sup> Jim Miller was one of the first to argue that Foucault’s theories were intimately bound up with his personal life, especially as he lived it in San Francisco. For three responses to his controversial biography, see the brief essays by Lynn Hunt, Richard Rorty, and Roger Shattuck.

filmmaker as *auteur* can bring to life the flawed texts of others, but is only one collaborator in an art that is essentially collective. Looking back at Sjöström and his masterpiece, however, Bergman's *Bildmakarna* also evokes death, not only in the eerie black-and-white images of the silent film but also as an absence. *Bildmakarna* dramatizes the disappearance of the filmmaker, evoking at the same time Bergman's closeness to his own death and the death of a certain kind of authorship.

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