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RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS IN FOUR INGMAR BERGMAN SCREENPLAYS:

The Seventh Seal, Through a Glass Darkly, Winter Light,  
and The Silence

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## ABSTRACT

Four Ingmar Bergman screenplays are studied in English translation. The thesis is: that these screenplays depict characters who search for God; that very few characters find Him; and that the barrenness of the characters' search becomes progressively more pronounced with each successive screenplay. To verify this thesis the main characters of each screenplay are examined individually and in detail.

Quatres scénarios d'Ingmar Bergman sont étudiés dans leur version anglaise. La proposition est: que ces scénarios dépeignent des personnages qui cherchent Dieu; que très peu des personnages Le trouvent; et que la stérilité de la recherche des personnages devient progressivement plus prononcée avec chaque scénario consécutif. Pour vérifier cette proposition les personnages principaux de chaque scénario sont examinés individuellement et en détail.

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## PREFACE

The system used to indicate sources for material found in this dissertation is similar to that used in the social sciences and biblical studies. The purpose of this system is to simplify the text of the dissertation by eliminating the need for extensive footnotes. In case the reader is unfamiliar with this system, it has been explained below.

At the end of this dissertation there is a section entitled WORKS CONSULTED. This is the bibliography. Books and articles listed in the bibliography are classified according to author (A to Z) and most recent date of publication (older to newer). When a passage occurs in the text of the dissertation which requires a reference, that reference is imbedded directly in the text, thus: (author, date: page). If only one work by that author is listed in the bibliography, the format is simply: (author: page). If, in a specific paragraph, the work in question has already been cited and it is the only work which has been or will be cited in that paragraph, the format is reduced to: (page). Thus, if the reader wishes to know the origin of a particular passage, he need only match the author and date given in the reference with the works listed in the bibliography.

Although it is not customary to acknowledge the assistance

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first the major works, in which one or more of the films whose screenplays will be studied below (see title) have been examined, are reviewed. In the second the material, thesis and method employed in this dissertation are discussed. Throughout the dissertation it will be assumed that the reader is familiar with the screenplays in question.

#### Section 1: Review

The first five items to be reviewed are books by Donner, Steene, Wood, Cowie and Young. Each presents a general analysis of Bergman's work.

In The Films of Ingmar Bergman (1972; originally published in 1964, under the title The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman), Jörn Donner examines each of Bergman's films from Torment (Swedish premiere: 1944) to Not to Speak About All These Women (1964). Donner objects to critics who, regarding Bergman's films solely as a mask, seek to remove this mask and discover Bergman himself. Donner restricts his analysis to the mask, which he considers consistent from one film to the next. Donner sees reflected in

Bergman's films concerns similar to those of Camus, Kafka and Sartre. In addition, the films show the influence of an "individualistic, intellectual tradition" related to that of Kierkegaard (Donner: 13). In general, Bergman's films describe and interpret the "chaos and insecurity" of the Western world (14).

Birgitta Steene, in Ingmar Bergman (1968), examines the same films as Donner, but adds a discussion of Persona (1966), filmed after Donner's book was written. She also includes a chapter on Bergman as playwright. Steene rejects the tendency of some critics to find a strong foreign influence in Bergman's films, and considers Bergman to be deeply rooted in Swedish tradition. In support of her thesis, Steene notes four characteristics found both in Bergman's films and in earlier works in the Swedish cinema and theatre: (1) a desire to relate man to his natural environment, the latter being a force both loved and feared, (2) a concern that dramatic form deal with ethical subjects, (3) a tendency toward abstraction, similar to that of the old morality play, and (4) a great sensitivity to rhythm (Steene, 1968: 134-136).

In Ingmar Bergman (1969), Robin Wood examines each of Bergman's major films, including Hour of the Wolf (1968) and Shame (1968), but passes over much of his early work. Wood selects four characteristics central to the majority of Bergman's films: the "sense of the characters' suspension; the presence of

the past; a brief, often twenty-four hour, but crucial period wherein a turning-point is reached and the course of the future decided; [and] the importance of journeys" (Wood: 12). Every journey has a distinct purpose, which is generally fulfilled. The characteristic movement of a Bergman film is from a state of "sickness and imprisonment" toward one of "health and freedom"; though the latter is not always attained it is invariably sought (13).

In his chapter on Bergman in Sweden 2 (1970), Peter Cowie examines the majority of Bergman's films, up to and including Shame. Cowie explores Bergman's relation to other Swedish artists and emphasizes his roots in the Swedish cultural tradition. Cowie finds himself "intimately in tune with the harmonies and rhythms" that rule Bergman's cinema (Cowie: 96). Though Bergman portrays life as basically miserable, he offers an anodyne, and that anodyne, says Cowie, is love: if there is love between a man and a woman, then they will be able to hold out against the misery of the world and even "vanquish the fear of death" (96). Cowie notes that each of Bergman's films involves similar personalities and similar "emotional situations" (133).

Vernon Young's Cinema Borealis (1971) is primarily a discussion of Bergman's films as an extension of their creator. In his analysis of Persona, Young states: "I have learned in Bergman movies always to look for the personal involvement first. His



subject, whatever ramifications and ideal extensions may be suggested, is forever himself" (Young: 236). In the first part of his book, Young demonstrates the inaccuracy of the belief that Bergman is the sole innovator in contemporary Swedish cinema. The only films not included in Young's analysis of Bergman's work are The Magic Flute (1975) and Face to Face (1976). When given an outline of the latter Young speculated (not inaccurately) that Bergman was not about to "breach virgin territory" (335).

The next five items to be reviewed are works by Nelson, Gibson, Gäll, Blake and Johnson. Each presents a more restricted analysis of Bergman's work.

In his prolonged essay entitled Ingmar Bergman: The Search for God (1966), David Nelson examines just eight of Bergman's major films, beginning with The Naked Night (1953) and concluding with The Silence (1963). Nelson begins with discussions of Sweden, Strindberg and Kierkegaard, stressing the influence of each on Bergman's work. Despite its title, Nelson's essay frequently displays a greater interest in the development and application of a psychological theory of film than in the exploration of Bergman's search for God.

In The Silence of God (1969), Arthur Gibson deals with seven of Bergman's major films, beginning with The Seventh Seal (1957) and concluding with Persona. He maintains that (a) God is first absent, then becomes increasingly present during the course of

the films, (b) which begin with man and end with God, although (c) both man and God evolve from first to last. Moreover, each film contains one character who acts as a "God-mouthpiece"; during the course of the films these "God-mouthpieces" become increasingly complex (Gibson: 13-14). Each film also contains at least one character who seeks humanity; in contrast to the "God-mouthpieces" these characters become increasingly simple (14). Gibson's book is the only work reviewed in this section which has not contributed positively to my understanding of Bergman's films. However, rather than present an elaborate critique of the book, I refer the reader to an excellent review by Harland Nelson (1971).

Jerry Gill, in Ingmar Bergman and the Search for Meaning (1969), concentrates on five Bergman films: The Seventh Seal, Wild Strawberries (1957) and the trilogy. Gill finds that the three characteristics which dominate Bergman's concept of "ideal community" are "involvement, communication, and love" (Gill, 1969: 37). They are important because they are the means to an end: "human significance" (38). Nearly all of Bergman's characters long for "personal significance"; that is, they "desire to feel that somehow life is worth living" (39). In relating Bergman's concept of ideal community to that inherent within Christian theology Gill concludes that though Bergman's idea of the nature of love is similar to that of Christianity, Bergman

remains silent with respect to the source of love. It is for this reason that Gill classifies Bergman not as a theist but as a humanist.

In his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "The Lutheran Milieu of the Films of Ingmar Bergman" (1972), Richard Blake examines all of Bergman's work in the cinema, up to and including The Lie (1970), whose script Bergman wrote for the BBC. Blake focuses on key theological motifs in the work of both Luther and Bergman, and attempts to clarify the similarities and differences between them. He observes that though Bergman inherited the viewpoints of the Lutheran tradition, in contrast to Luther he did not acquire a strong faith in a personal God. Bergman portrays man as powerless before a host of hostile forces. God is remote and fails to respond to man's needs. Unlike Luther, Bergman does not allow for salvation through Jesus Christ. Though both Bergman and Luther recognize the reconciliatory potential of the confession of guilt and the acceptance of love, only Luther recognizes the absolute liberating potential of the reception of God's love. For Bergman, confession and acceptance merely give man the strength to endure. Bergman readily admits to the saving power of love, but locates the source of this saving love in woman, whom he considers the fountainhead of life for man. Both Bergman and Luther regard society's institutions as inimical to freedom, though these also restrain the forces of evil which strive for

the destruction of man. In his early period, Bergman found all forms of society hostile to growth. However, as he grew older his outlook approached that of Luther.

In another Ph.D. dissertation, "An Analysis of Relational Ethics in Three Films of Ingmar Bergman" (1973), Wayne Johnson tries to delineate the ethical assumptions which emerge from Bergman's concept of the nature of man. "Specifically, if man is irretrievably alienated, what is the quality of his life? What counts as good? What counts as evil?" (Johnson: 4). Johnson's thesis is that Bergman offers some very definite answers to these questions. In his analysis, Johnson combines his own ethical criteria for dialogue with those of Martin Buber to develop a construct with which to illuminate the ethical statements of Bergman's trilogy. Johnson finds that Bergman has judged contemporary relationships to be characterized by "false dialogue, deceit, lack of candor, mutual humiliation, insensitivity to need, lack of concern, and an unwillingness to share self" (184).

The last three items to be reviewed are essays by Sarris, Simon and Brightman. They deal with The Seventh Seal, Winter Light (1963) and The Silence respectively. No major essay dealing exclusively with Through a Glass Darkly (1961) could be found.

The essay by Andrew Sarris, appropriately entitled "The Seventh Seal" (1972; originally published in 1959, in Film

Culture 19), is cited by Steene as being the most "comprehensive English analysis of The Seventh Seal" (Steene, 1968: 152). Sarris regards The Seventh Seal as an "existential" film, perhaps the first genuine example of its kind (Sarris: 81). Bergman's portrayal of death as the primary reality of man's existence is offered by Sarris as proof of the timeliness of the concepts presented in The Seventh Seal, whose central message Sarris expresses as follows: "If modern man must live without the faith which makes death meaningful, he can at least endure life with the aid of certain necessary illusions" (Sarris: 82). Sarris chooses Jof, the knight and the squire as the film's main characters. Jof, together with Mia, represents the "continuity of man"; the knight is the "questing mystic"; and the squire is the "earthbound philosopher" (Sarris: 89).

In his book, Ingmar Bergman Directs (1972), John Simon presents a very detailed analysis of Winter Light. He makes use of over 130 stills to augment his text. Simon's attention to detail makes it difficult to summarize his analysis. However, his conclusions are significant:

What Tomas does become aware of in the course of the three hours depicted in Winter Light is general human aloneness and suffering, and the need to mitigate this through some sort of communion, or communication, some sort of sharing. Karin bitterly remarks that she is alone now, but goes in to share her grief with her children. Algot Frövik finds consolation in someone's--Jesus'--even greater aloneness; and also in sharing that insight with Tomas. It is no longer a question of love being God and vice versa, only, more

modestly, of aloneness being sharable and so making life endurable, perhaps even an interesting journey. (Simon: 205)

The last item to be reviewed is the essay, "The Word, the Image, and The Silence" (1975; originally published in 1964, in Film Quarterly 17), by Carol Brightman. Brightman not only examines The Silence but also discusses attitudes of other critics (specifically John Simon) toward it. She laments that film criticism "has, in effect, become an awkward series of maneuvers between camps, by which critics can distinguish themselves not according to their singular perceptions, but simply from each other" (Brightman: 239). Brightman argues that with respect to both form and content it is the critic's task to recognize--but not to judge. The majority of Brightman's essay is consumed by her criticism of a review of The Silence by John Simon (1964; not seen by me).

## Section 2: Thesis

In this dissertation the objects of study will be the following Ingmar Bergman screenplays: The Seventh Seal (screenplay dated 1956), Through a Glass Darkly (1960), Winter Light (1961) and The Silence (1962). These works will be studied in translation. The translation of The Seventh Seal is by Lars Malmström and David Kushner (Bergman, 1960: 125-202); that of the trilogy by Paul Britten Austin (Bergman, 1967). All conclusions drawn

within this dissertation will be considered valid only with respect to the screenplays.

The reason why the screenplays, rather than the films, are being studied is that to conduct a detailed analysis of the films would be economically impractical (this dissertation is being written without the benefit of financial assistance). One of the tasks of this dissertation will be to demonstrate that the screenplays are actually worthy of close study.

Screenplays are neither film nor, strictly speaking, literature, since they are primarily written for the production staff. Though Bergman's screenplays are widely accessible, they were originally written only to be translated into film. Thus, they differ in many ways from most novels and short stories. They contain long stretches of dialogue in which the only clue to the facial gestures and emotional state of the participants lies in the content of that dialogue. They also contain many lengthy descriptive passages in which one word may be used repeatedly, a practice which would be ascribed to an author's lack of verbal skills were it to occur in a novel; in the screenplays, however, the repetition is often necessary to establish the exact nature of an action. Further examples could be cited to emphasize the differences between screenplays and other literature, but the point has been made: the study to be undertaken in this dissertation does not fall into the categories of either film or literary

criticism. Rather, it is screenplay criticism. Since screenplay criticism is not an established discipline, there exist no clear guidelines to be followed below. Accordingly, a few guidelines may be formulated here. These will be followed throughout the dissertation.

First, every effort should be made to approach the screenplays as works in which every detail mentioned serves a purpose, or exists because it is meant to exist. As a corollary of this guideline, only those details actually present should be examined. That is, any ambiguity present should be treated as intentional (note for example the apparent "seduction" scene in Through a Glass Darkly, to be discussed in Chapter 3). Second, dialogue should be examined in the context in which it takes place. In other words, it should be assumed that the content of the dialogue is related in some way to both the events which immediately preceded it and the physical surroundings in which it occurs. Third, to a greater extent than for ordinary literature careful attention should be paid to the visual and aural quality of the screenplays. However, care must also be taken to avoid reaching beyond the material to the films themselves.

In all, twelve of Bergman's screenplays are available in English translation. The four which will be studied below were chosen according to the following criteria: they were written by Bergman himself, and their characters display concerns which can



easily be shown to fall within the domain of religion.

Paul Tillich defines religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life. . . . The predominant religious name for the content of such concern is God" (Tillich, 1963: 4-5). That the knight in The Seventh Seal, Karin in Through a Glass Darkly, and Tomas in Winter Light are each preoccupied with a longing to be "grasped by an ultimate concern" which is God, is abundantly clear. Equally clear, however, is the fact that none of them finds what he or she was originally looking for. This fact is highlighted in The Silence, where even the longing to be "grasped" is stifled. Thus, the dominant motif in the screenplays is that of the unfulfilled quest; of all the characters available very few could be said to experience what Tillich refers to as an "encounter with the holy" (Tillich, 1967: 127).

The thesis of this dissertation is that the screenplays in question depict characters who search not simply for "meaning" (a favorite expression of critics), but literally for God. Not all characters search, but the majority of those who do fall short of their goal. This applies less to The Seventh Seal, but becomes progressively more applicable as one passes from Through a Glass Darkly through Winter Light to The Silence.

Although the characters are not always explicitly Christian,

they are never anything else (except atheists or agnostics, of course). Thus, in using the term "God" we may limit ourselves to a Christian understanding: God as the source of love, hope and peace. The characters' search for God therefore invariably entails as well a search for love, hope and peace. However, these elements are brought together in the search for God. It is for this reason that my analysis will not be in terms of the characters' search for "meaning." While a search for "meaning" does not always imply a search for God, the search for God does imply a search for meaning.

Since the search for God can be manifested in a variety of ways it was decided to use the term "religious dimensions" in the title and, where applicable, in the dissertation. This leaves one free to explore the individual traits each character brings to his or her quest, necessary since our method of approach will be to examine each character separately and in detail. The term "religious dimensions" therefore refers to the diverse manifestations of the search for, and encounter with God. The term includes the various ways in which individuals express their beliefs: prayer, worship, dialogue, interpersonal relationships, etc. It also includes the descriptions of the environment in which the characters find themselves since these descriptions, being a product not of careful observation of an actual setting (though Bergman often had a particular setting in mind) but of an

artistic imagination, are replete with symbolism.

The format of this dissertation is straightforward. Chapters 2 through 5 deal with The Seventh Seal through The Silence respectively. Each of these chapters is divided into three sections. The first contains an outline of the story in question, as well as a list of the characters chosen for study and the reasons for these choices. In the second section the main characters are examined individually and in detail. In the third section the minor characters chosen in Section 1 are dealt with briefly.

Two further items need to be discussed in this chapter. First: originality. The thesis of this dissertation, if applied to the films, is hardly original. It took no great insight to suggest that it might also apply to the screenplays. Thus, if any claim to originality can be made it is in the suggestion that the screenplays are worthy of separate study. Those wishing to examine some of Bergman's work in detail (a good critic can catch every major item in a film during a single screening) but lacking the resources to view his films repeatedly, might choose instead to focus their attention on the screenplays. However, one must beware lest one equate study of the screenplays with study of the films themselves.

The second item is the question of Bergman himself. In this

dissertation no attempt will be made to "uncover" Bergman the man by looking at his screenplays. As Bergman has been the subject of numerous interviews it can be demonstrated that there is often a difference between his views and those expressed in his screenplays. Thus, what he says about the religious dimensions in his screenplays will be taken into consideration only to the extent that it can be shown to be valid. This is not to deny his insight, but only to take the interpretive process no further than the screenplays themselves allow.

## CHAPTER II

### The Seventh Seal

#### Section 1: Introduction

The Seventh Seal concerns a knight and his squire, both recently returned from a crusade in Palestine, on their way home to the knight's castle, situated in Scandinavia. A plague is ravaging the countryside and the knight himself is called by Death to his mortal fate. However, the knight gains a few hours by challenging Death to a game of chess. Death accepts, giving the knight and his squire, Jöns, a chance to right a few wrongs, while attracting a small coterie of fellow wanderers. By distracting Death momentarily the knight is able to save the lives of Jof, an itinerant actor/juggler, and his family. The knight and the remainder of his companions then reach the castle, whereupon they are taken away by Death.

A careful reading of The Seventh Seal reveals a variety of engaging details. In order that these details might be more fully understood and interpreted, three main characters have been chosen for close analysis: the knight, Jöns and Jof. They will be dealt with in Section 2. They have been chosen because they illustrate aspects of the search for God. Moreover, their

thoughts and actions obviously form the main concern of the screenplay.

There are several other characters who illustrate aspects of the search for God, but do not form the main concern of the screenplay: Mia, Tyan, Skat, Raval and the monk who leads the procession of flagellants. They will be dealt with briefly in Section 3.

### Section 2: Analyses

The knight searches for God throughout The Seventh Seal. His desire is that God reveal Himself and speak to him.

In the opening scene the knight is portrayed as a man suffering both physically and spiritually. It is hot and dry, and he has slept poorly. He says his morning prayers with a "sad and bitter" face (Bergman, 1960: 138). Then:

He opens his eyes and stares directly into the morning sun which wallows up from the misty sea like some bloated, dying fish. The sky is gray and immobile, a dome of lead. A cloud hangs mute and dark over the western horizon. High up, barely visible, a sea-gull floats on motionless wings. Its cry is weird and restless. (138)

These five sentences describe the knight's condition both literally and symbolically. The sun is literally the light of the world; John 1:4 refers to Jesus Christ as the "light of men": Christ is the metaphorical light of the world. These data, applied to the first sentence, invite the following interpretation:

the knight's direct stare into the morning sun is symbolic of his search for God. But the sun "wallows . . . like some bloated, dying fish": the knight's search has failed to bear fruit and appears doomed to remain barren. The sky, normally open and permitting a gaze into the infinite, is impenetrable: the traditional domain of God is closed to the knight's vision. "A dark cloud looms on the horizon, foreshadowing the knight's encounter with Death and hinting at the plague which is ravaging the country. The sea gull which emits a "weird and restless" cry represents the knight himself.

After the knight has met Death, and after the knight and his squire resume their journey, the "sea gull floats under the dark cloud" (Bergman, 1960: 139): the knight is now completely beneath Death's shadow.

The knight and his squire arrive at a small stone church. The knight enters and kneels before the altar. Pictures of the saints stare down at him with eyes which express a complete lack of empathy. "Christ's face is turned upward, His mouth open as if in a cry of anguish" (Bergman, 1960: 149): Christ Himself is unable to help the knight. Indeed, the implication is that He has not even been resurrected, that He too must still undergo the agony of a lonely death. Meanwhile, on a beam in the ceiling "there is a representation of a hideous devil spying on a miserable human being" (149). It seems appropriate to equate Death

with the "hideous devil" and the knight with the "miserable human being" since Death is actually watching the knight from behind the grill of the confessional.

The knight enters the booth and makes his confession, unaware of the identity of his confessor. He reveals his feeling of emptiness, his indifference to, and isolation from his fellow men, and his imprisonment in a private world of illusions. He is prepared to die, but not until he has received absolute proof of God's existence. Somewhere in the darkness which is his inner self, a semblance of God exists, but this illusory presence only irritates him and he wishes to be rid of it. At the same time he calls out to God in that darkness, but "no one seems to be there" (Bergman, 1960: 150). The implications raised by God's apparent absence are too horrifying for the knight to contemplate: "No one can live in the face of death, knowing that all is nothingness" (150).

The nature of the knight's dilemma is clear: he cannot live either with faith alone or without faith altogether. Thus, his search for God is a search not for faith but for knowledge: the knowledge that God exists.

In the time which now remains to him, the knight wishes to perform "one meaningful deed" (Bergman, 1960: 151), but is tricked into revealing his chess strategy. In the face of apparent total hopelessness, and in defiance of his own mortality, he



raises his hand to the sunlight and proclaims: "This is my hand. I can move it, feel the blood pulsing through it. The sun is still high in the sky and I, Antonius Block, am playing chess with Death" (151). From this moment onward the knight is on the lookout for a chance to perform his "one meaningful deed."

During his first encounter with Jof and Mia, the knight finds both a respite from his inner torment and a focus for his saving act. Mia offers him some wild strawberries with milk, then enquires about his wife. The knight reminisces about the first days of his marriage: for a time he was truly happy. But the present creeps in and the knight tries to explain his spiritual agony to Mia, who simply does not understand. Suddenly the knight finds his struggle "meaningless and unreal" in the presence of the vitality exhibited by Jof and his family (Bergman, 1960: 175). He smiles and is content. Even the sea, to whose beach he now carries his chess game, is calm.

The knight and Death resume their match. Death takes the knight's knight, implying that despite his delaying tactics the knight is doomed. The knight merely laughs: he is no longer concerned for his own safety. But when Death mentions Jof and his family the knight stops smiling: he does not want them to be harmed.

The knight and his followers arrive at the place where Tyan is to be executed. Tyan is said to have been in league with the

Devil. The knight wants to meet him and ask him about God: the Devil will offer proof of God's existence. Tyan tells the knight to look into her eyes: does he not see the Devil there? The knight sees only "an empty, numb fear" (Bergman, 1960: 184). Aware that Tyan is already doomed, he does not attempt to save her. Instead, he offers her a potion to deaden the pain. Yet, even as she is being consumed by the fire, he refuses to accept the possibility that neither the angels, nor God, nor the Devil, but only "the emptiness" is there to watch over her (186).

In the morning the knight and Death continue their game of chess. Death takes his opponent's queen: Karin, the knight's wife, will shortly die alongside her husband. The knight was too preoccupied to notice the danger. But he is aware of another: that Death may include Jof and his family in his roundup. Accordingly, the knight knocks the chess pieces over; while Death carefully rearranges the pieces, Jof and his family escape. The knight has performed his "one meaningful deed" and is satisfied. Soon afterward he is checkmated: the games of chess and of life are over. Yet even as he stands before Death in the castle, he calls out to the God whom he has failed to find: "God, You who are somewhere, who must be somewhere, have mercy upon us" (Bergman, 1960: 200). The knight has carried his fruitless search through to the bitter end.

Jöns, on the other hand, renounces the search for God from

the start of The Seventh Seal. He has long since resigned himself to an absurd existence. Were he also to remain silent, an exhaustive analysis of him would be difficult to justify. However, Jöns is very vocal, expressing his doubt openly and frequently chiding the knight for his vain pursuit. Hence, he is worthy of study in this section.

In the opening scene Jöns snores loudly: unlike the restless knight, he has no trouble sleeping. At first he lies facing the morning sun, then rolls over to face the still-darkened forest, but remains oblivious of his surroundings. Thus, while the knight has already begun his daily search for God, Jöns remains in a world of his own concoction: his dreams.

Jöns is a very earthy character: when awakened "he grunts like a pig and yawns broadly" (Bergman, 1960: 139). While it would be difficult to visualize a sexual encounter between the knight and his wife, Karin, Jöns' physical desires are never in doubt; he sings: "Between a strumpet's legs to lie/Is the life for which I sigh" (140). Jöns also has a well-developed sense of humour; when the knight, inquiring about the man "sleeping" by the road, asks, "Was he a mute?" Jöns replies, "No sir, I wouldn't say that. As a matter of fact, he was quite eloquent" (141). In fact, he was dead.

Later, on the church porch, the painter describes the symptoms of the plague, then asks Jöns if these scare him. But Jöns

has been hardened by the crusade. He is not frightened, though he admits that the symptoms are hideous. Then he utters one of his profound truths: "No matter which way you turn, you have your rump behind you" (Bergman, 1960: 152). He is drunk of course, but serious nonetheless. He typically punctuates his moments of candour with some wry witticism.

Jöns illustrates his feeling of resignation toward the search for God when he paints a small figure on the church wall, and says of that figure:

This is squire Jöns. He grins at Death, mocks the Lord, laughs at himself and leers at the girls. His world is a Jöns-world, believable only to himself, ridiculous to all including himself, meaningless to Heaven and of no interest to Hell. (Bergman, 1960: 152)

Jöns has been disillusioned by the crusade, officially conducted "for the Glory of God" (152), and speculates that both he and the knight were induced to go to Palestine as punishment for their complacency, as their lives were too easy and their satisfaction with themselves too great.

Jöns is disgusted by the approach of the monk, who leads the procession of flagellants, to the problems posed by the plague. He dismisses the monk's tales of God and Christ as mere "ghost stories" (Bergman, 1960: 163). Once again he delineates man's sphere of credibility, concluding that everything "is worth precisely as much as a belch, the only difference being that a belch

is more satisfying" (164).

Jöns displays a concern for the welfare of others, though this concern is conditioned by a strong sense of justice. Thus, he has already saved both Jof and the girl from the evil clutches of Raval, and punished the latter for his misdeeds. Now he tries to comfort Plog in his moments of grief over the disappearance of his wife. But when Plog begins to talk about love, Jöns cannot contain himself, but instead reveals his own deep-seated pessimism:

Love is as contagious as a cold in the nose. It eats away at your strength, your independence, your morale, if you have any. If everything is imperfect in this imperfect world, love is most perfect in its perfect imperfection. (Bergman, 1960: 179)

Of course Jöns is speaking only of human, and not divine love, since he does not believe in the possibility of the latter.

The squire's pessimism turns into rage when he is confronted with the spectacle of Tyan's execution; bitterly, he exclaims to the knight: "Who watches over that child? Is it the angels, or God, or the Devil, or only the emptiness? Emptiness, my lord!" (Bergman, 1960: 186). His feelings of reproach are directed both toward the knight, who never ceases his (to Jöns) ridiculous search for God, and toward the world in general, since it is the absurdity of the latter which permits executions such as Tyan's to take place. At a word from his master, Jöns would kill the

soldiers (or die trying) and free Tyan but, like the knight, he realizes the futility of such an action: it would only delay the inevitable. Instead, Jöns stalks away in anger. And later, when Raval writhes in agony and pleads for water, Jöns refuses to help: once again it would only delay the inevitable. Thus, Jöns has resigned himself to the belief that both he and his companions are doomed. It is therefore not surprising that he remains unaware of the escape of Jof and his family: he would not have believed it possible anyway.

In his final scene, when he actually stands before Death, Jöns composes a harsh prayer to God:

In the darkness where You are supposed to be, where all of us probably are . . . In the darkness You will find no one to listen to Your cries or be touched by Your sufferings. Wash Your tears and mirror Yourself in Your indifference. (Bergman, 1960: 200)

Then he exhorts the knight to "feel the immense triumph of this last minute when you can still roll your eyes and move your toes" (201). Thus, Jöns has carried his rejection of the search for God and, indeed, of God Himself to the bitter end.

Throughout The Seventh Seal Jof the juggler contrasts sharply with the brooding knight and his pessimistic squire; he seems to dance before them like some joyous clown. Jof does not search for God; he has already found Him.

In the first scene in which he appears, Jof has a vision.

Though this vision is not described directly, there are signs which point to its occurrence: the wind, the murmur, the bird-song. All cease with the vision's passing. Jof immediately rushes to the wagon to describe his experience to Mia; he tells her that he has seen the Virgin Mary and the Child. Mia dismisses the vision as a figment of her husband's imagination, but Jof is adamant: "it was real, I tell you, not the kind of reality you see everyday, but a different kind" (Bergman, 1960: 143).

Jof ascribes a transcendent quality to his experience; it is to him an object of reverence and a source of love and peace. Thus, while it may be disputed whether visions constitute the majority of all forms of religious experience, those of Jof (he has already had several) clearly symbolize his abundant and viable faith in God.

Jof is an optimist; when his wife expresses her concern over the probable scarcity of food during the coming winter, Jof says casually: "We'll get by" (Bergman, 1960: 144). Rather than worry about such a trifling matter as food, Jof dreams of the day when his son Mikael will grow up to be a juggler who is able to perform the "one impossible trick": "To make one of the balls stand absolutely still in the air" (144).

Jof's reference to his son's potential supernatural ability suggests a similarity between Mikael and Jesus Christ (note: none of the suggestions in this paragraph is original; the reason

no sources have been cited is that there are very few critics who have not made similar suggestions; thus, I consider the ideas presented here to be common knowledge). This similarity extends to Jof and Mia: their names are reminiscent of those of Joseph and Mary, Christ's parents. Even Jof's vision is not immune: he sees the Virgin Mary with the Child, while close by Mia sleeps with her son. These similarities support the contention that Jof has "found" God.

Jof, like Jöns, likes to sing. But his songs differ markedly from those of the squire. Thus, whereas Jöns sings:

Up above is God Almighty  
So very far away,  
But your brother the Devil  
You will meet on every level.  
(Bergman, 1960: 140)

Jof offers the following:

On a lily branch a dove is perched  
Against the summer sky,  
She sings a wondrous song of Christ  
And there's great joy on high. (145)

The distinction between these two songs is self-evident; their content emphasizes the contrast between Jöns' pessimistic resignation and Jof's enthusiastic optimism. And when Jof sings of joy, his song does not smack of satire. Rather, he seems to tap some spring inside himself which gushes vitality; this spring, the screenplay suggests, is a product of Jof's faith in God.



In the closing scenes of The Seventh Seal, Jof perceives the knight playing chess with Death. With family in tow, he makes his escape. Dawn finds him on the road, while the forest "sighs and stirs ponderously" (Bergman, 1960: 197). Mia has become truly frightened; she and her husband crawl into the wagon and lie down, letting Mikael sleep between them. Then Jof exclaims: "It's the Angel of Death that's passing over us, Mia. It's the Angel of Death. The Angel of Death, and he's very big" (197). Jof and Mia lie closer together and pull blankets over themselves to ward off the sudden bitter cold. Outside, there is a roar "like a giant bellowing" (198). The whole atmosphere is one of oppressive darkness: Death has come for the knight and his companions. Later, after a period of rain, Jof and Mia climb out of the wagon. Death has passed over the landscape, leaving it renewed and refreshed as though he were a thunderstorm in spring. Everywhere signs of life emerge: the sun breaks through the clouds, a solitary bird begins to sing, and a "strong and fragrant" wind comes from the sea (201). The whole scene is reminiscent of the Passover: the "Angel of Death" has spared Jof and his family, who have now entered the Promised Land, as it were.

Finally, on the horizon, beneath a dark, retreating cloud, Jof sees his former companions being led away by Death: "They dance away from the dawn and it's a solemn dance toward the dark

lands, while the rain washes their faces and cleans the salt of the tears from their cheeks" (Bergman, 1960: 201). Mia, her fear gone, chides Jof for his imagination.

There is a problem with Jof's description of the dance of Death; he names the following participants: Plog, Lisa, Raval, Skat, Jöns and the knight. Yet he fails to name either Tyan, Karin or the girl Jöns saved from Raval. This omission also occurs in the film and has led Andrew Sarris to conclude that Jof's vision "is inspired by a creative imagination rather than a Divine Revelation" (Sarris: 89). The omission of Karin and the girl is particularly difficult to explain, since these two characters were with those for whom Death came to the knight's castle. On the other hand, Skat and Raval, both of whom Jof does mention, died previously: they should be absent. Thus, it would be easier to disagree with Sarris' conclusion had Jof listed either all nine, or only the final six characters who die in the course of both screenplay and film.

Three questions must be answered before the discussion of Jof can be satisfactorily concluded: (1) Is Jof's sight of the dance of Death a vision to which Jof alone is susceptible? (2) If so, does this imply that the vision's content is discredited? (3) If it is, what are the implications for the rest of The Seventh Seal, particularly Jof's earlier vision of the Virgin Mary?

The answer to the first question is: yes, since the only other characters present, Mia and Mikael, do not see what Jof sees. Indeed, Mia once again teases her husband for his "visions and dreams" (Bergman, 1960: 202). However, this does not imply that the content of the vision is discredited. Death has actually claimed all of the characters whom Jof mentions. Hence, given that The Seventh Seal is a work of fiction, the dance of Death could have occurred as Jof described it. And here we come to the crux of the matter: in the course of the entire screenplay, Jof has four visions; yet each is Jof's alone: neither his fellow characters nor the audience experience their content directly. It is only when Jof describes his visions that we become aware of their content. (I realize that I am involved implicitly in a theory of knowledge in relation to visions, since I am assuming that if only Jof can "see" his visions, they must be subjective. It might equally be that the other characters simply lack his "sight.") And Jof is an actor, prone to the temptation to alter and embellish his descriptions. Thus, whereas there is probably a germ of truth in all that he relates, the details may well be products of his imagination. Since there is no way to gauge the authenticity of those details, it is best to avoid overreliance upon them. Now, as to Sarris' contention that Jof's final vision is inspired by his creative imagination: I believe this goes further than necessary. It is sufficient to suggest that Jof's

description is embellished by his creative imagination.

In conclusion, Jof is a very sensitive character. He is acutely aware of that which occurs around him, especially as it relates to himself. His vision of the Virgin Mary with the Child demonstrates that he is acutely aware of God's loving presence in his life. His vision of the knight playing chess with Death indicates that he is acutely aware of the presence of the latter in what remains of the knight's life. His vision of the "Angel of Death" passing over the wagon reveals his acute awareness of the proximity of Death to his own life. And his vision of Death leading the knight and company away discloses his acute awareness of the fate of his former acquaintances.

### Section 3: Sketches

Mia is a very simple though not unintelligent character. She does not search for God, but acts as a source of love for both Jof and Mikael. She is also the only one who is able, briefly, to allay the knight's Angst. It is the love which exists between Mia and her husband which induces the knight to sacrifice his life in return for their safety.

Whenever anything happens to Jof, be it the onset of a vision or humiliation at the hands of Raval, Mia is the first to know. Jof invariably rushes to her with his news. When he tries to impress her, she teases him; when he is hurt or troubled, she

comforts him. Yet she is not overbearing, and it is clear that she is willing to submit to her husband's authority. When, near the end of the screenplay, Jof tells her that he can see the knight playing chess with Death, she no longer teases her husband, but does exactly as he tells her: she is frightened. Thus, though at times it appears that Jof and Mia are child and parent respectively, when danger threatens, Jof is in charge.

Of all the characters appearing in The Seventh Seal, Tyan is by far the most unfortunate. Her naivete has led her to believe that the charges which have been brought against her are actually true. When the knight, having asked her for an audience with the Devil, fails to find the slightest hint of his presence, Tyan is dumbfounded; she says:

But he is with me everywhere. I only have to stretch out my hand and I can feel his hand. He is with me now too. The fire won't hurt me. He will protect me from everything evil. (Bergman, 1960: 184)

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. However, Tyan, who is only fourteen, has been so impressed by the priests' and soldiers' ability to see the Devil within her that she herself has fallen prey to their deception. But, as the flames envelop her, her eyes reveal her growing awareness of the truth: she is alone, with neither God nor Devil to fill the emptiness. She dies the death of a "poor little child" (186).

Skat and Raval, on the other hand, die the deaths they

deserve. Each lives for one purpose only: to improve his own lot.

Throughout The Seventh Seal, Skat makes light of death. He is to play the role of Death at the saints' feast in Elsinore; he looks forward to "scaring decent folk out of their wits with this kind of nonsense" (Bergman, 1960: 146). To a certain extent Skat's function is to provide comic relief. But his words are often filled with a greater irony; speaking about his forthcoming role as Death, he says: "I feel as if I were dead already" (146). In less than twenty-four hours, he will be. Later, during the night, he pretends to commit suicide, only to be killed by Death a few minutes thereafter. So ends the glorious Skat; he does not search for God, but only flirts with death.

Raval is a more sinister character, and dies an appropriately horrible death. Though once a member of the church hierarchy, Raval has long since rejected the search for God in favour of a more materially rewarding profession: thievery. Raval is symbolic of a church grown corrupt, and acts as a reminder of the futility and stupidity of the crusade, for it was he who encouraged the knight and his squire to go to Palestine.

The monk who leads the procession of flagellants is an example of a church leader who, unable to cope with a situation which obviously is now completely out of hand (due to the plague), resorts to a familiar ploy: he announces that the plague

has been sent by God as punishment for man's sins. The monk and his followers represent that portion of humanity which is only too willing to be deluded into accepting facile conclusions about the cause of any misfortune. The monk's search for God has been corrupted by his failure to consider seriously the nature of the object of his search. The god of the monk is a completely one-sided creation: all wrath and punishment with not a trace of love or forgiveness. Small wonder, then, that the knight is disillusioned and his squire disgusted.

The attitude of the screenplay as a whole toward both Raval and the monk also illustrates Bergman's distrust of the institutional church: the latter plays a solely negative role in the search for God. This irony is magnified in Winter Light.

### CHAPTER III

#### Through a Glass Darkly

##### Section 1: Introduction

There are only four characters in Through a Glass Darkly: Karin, Minus, David and Martin. David is an author and the father of Karin and Minus. Martin is a physician and Karin's husband. Karin has had an unnamed mental illness (the symptoms resemble those of schizophrenia) and suffers a relapse near the end of the screenplay. The entire story takes place within a twenty-four hour period, evening to evening. The location is in and around a large, rundown, two-storey house which "stands by itself on a long sandy promontory" (Bergman, 1967: 15).

Through a Glass Darkly is primarily concerned with Karin, David and Minus; these three will be dealt with in Section 2. Martin, though forthright, is a somewhat pitiable creature, and does not illustrate the search for God to the same degree as his fellow characters; he will be discussed briefly in Section 3.

##### Section 2: Analyses

Karin is the focus of attention throughout the majority of the screenplay. She searches for God, but her search is closely related to her illness. Indeed, at times the two are



indistinguishable from one another. Her illness troubles Martin, fascinates David and horrifies Minus.

Karin's search for God takes place primarily in one of the rooms on the second floor. This room is her church, so to speak. Its window faces east, allowing the light from the summer sunrise to fall directly onto the right-hand wall. This sunlight is the high point of an otherwise dismal chamber. There is an old Windsor chair and a small nursery table (God's throne and altar, both empty and disused?). Some of the floorboards have been torn up, and the wallpaper, which once had a lively leafy pattern, is faded and torn.

Early in the morning, Karin, unable to sleep, enters the room and stands in the middle, her gaze fixed on the right-hand wall. It is barely sunrise, and suddenly the spot at which she is staring explodes into light, while a gust of wind comes in from the sea. Karin is transformed: "Her face swells up and darkens and her eyes become glazed, unaware" (Bergman, 1967: 33). She sinks slowly to her knees, legs far apart. Evidently she is going through some inner experience whose precise nature is indeterminable. However, the outward manifestations of that experience have a very sensuous quality, and are reminiscent of sexual arousal. It seems that her experience is a pleasurable one.

Meanwhile, David sits at his desk and makes final adjustments to the text of his latest work. Karin appears; David lets

her go to sleep in his bed, then leaves to help Minus with the nets. Karin soon wakes up and, finding her father's diary, proceeds to read from it:

Her illness is hopeless, with occasional improvements. I have long suspected it, but the certainty, even so, is almost unbearable. To my horror, I note my own curiosity. The impulse to register its course, to note concisely her gradual dissolution. To make use of her. (Bergman, 1967: 35)

In fact, her illness is not hopeless, as Martin admits (20). But Karin is only aware of David's diagnosis. She is shocked, and it is probable that her later relapse is due in part to her father's attitude toward her illness. She leaves her father's room and, shortly, asks Martin if her illness is indeed incurable. Martin assures her that it is not. But her father's attitude has already taken its toll.

After David and Martin leave for town, Karin and Minus struggle with the latter's Latin grammar. Eventually they tire of the study, and Karin begins to reveal the secret of her upstairs room. She takes Minus to it and describes the experience she had before:

Early this morning I was woken by a voice calling me, quite definitely calling. I got up and came to this room. Just at sunrise, and inside me a tremendous longing, a tremendous power. (Bergman, 1967: 42)

She goes on to relate an earlier experience; that time, seeking

the source of the voice, she had pressed herself against the wall, only to have it open up "like a lot of leaves" and permit her entry into a large room filled with people, some of whose faces were "radiant with light" (42). The people are waiting for "him who is to come" (42), and they tell Karin that she may join them. Minus interrupts: he wants to know who is to come. Karin replies: "I don't know, no one has said anything definite, but I believe God is going to reveal himself [sic] to us" (42). Thus, Karin discloses her search for God.

Karin is convinced that her experience is not due to her illness, for her illness "was like dreams, and this isn't dreams, it's real" (Bergman, 1967: 43). Yet she admits to living in two worlds; at times she is in one, at times in the other; the choice is not her own. In addition, there is the overt sexual behaviour associated with all her "inner" experiences, both past and future. Thus, her experiences appear to function on three different levels: spiritual, mental and physical. The "spiritual level is that on which she truly does search for God. But her search is affected by her illness, which limits and controls her "mental" life. In addition, she uses her body's ability to provide and experience physical pleasure to enhance her moments of mental and "spiritual" ecstasy. Thus, although it is possible in theory to distinguish between the three levels on which her experiences function, in practice they are inseparable.

Now Minus wants to leave. He proceeds to the door, then turns around. Karin is lying down on her side "with her right hand high up between her legs and her head pressed downward" (Bergman, 1967: 44). Though she is probably not masturbating, her position is nonetheless suggestive. Minus is worried: his sister appears to be retreating into herself, and may have a relapse. But Karin tells him to leave. He goes out the door and down the stairs, then rushes back up. Karin has risen from the floor; the incident is over. Karin warns Minus not to tell David or Martin about it: they will only think that her illness has returned.

In the late afternoon/evening, Karin disappears. Minus searches everywhere for her, and eventually finds her lying in the hold of an old beached wreck. She is "hunched up in a corner like an animal, her face dirty, her skirt pulled up over her stomach" and her breathing is "hot and febrile" (Bergman, 1967: 49). She reaches out to Minus, and:

Suddenly she has clasped him tight and he falls headlong on top of her, struggles to get free, but can't, sinks more deeply into her. He catches a glimpse of naked skin, an odour of seaweed, rotten wood, the sea bottom. She holds him tight to her with her arms and legs, but her face is averted, her mouth tightly closed. (49)

This is the apparent "seduction" scene (see, for example, Gill, 1969: 26) mentioned in Chapter 1 (see page 11). However, "seduction" is not the proper term; Minus is not seduced, he is

grabbed. Rape would be a more appropriate term, except that the text makes no direct reference to full sexual intercourse, though an oblique reference is made (Minus "sinks more deeply into her"). To put it very bluntly: Minus never opens or pulls down his pants. If Bergman had wanted Minus to have intercourse with Karin, he would have been that blunt. Since he is not, one must assume that no intercourse takes place.

Eventually, Minus manages to disengage himself and get help. When Martin arrives, Karin admits that she has been extremely ill. And to David she says that henceforth she wishes to remain in the hospital, without having to undergo further treatments:

Nobody can live in two worlds. You have to choose. It's more than I can stand, going back and forth between one and the other. I simply can't stand it. (Bergman, 1967: 52)

Karin is also at a loss as to what to make of the voices which continually plague her. It is such a voice which induced her to read her father's diary; another voice precipitated the incident with Minus in the old wreck. The voices even interfere with her relationship with the "bright ones" with whom she awaits God's imminent arrival (53). Thus, her illness and her search for God blend into one another.

Now the climactic scene for Karin arrives. She and Martin are in their bedroom, packing for the trip to the hospital by helicopter-ambulance. Martin leaves to fetch some aspirin for

Karin. When he returns, she has vanished. He finds her in her upstairs room; she is speaking to some unseen person: "I know it won't be long now. It's so good to know that. But our waiting has been a joy to us" (Bergman, 1967: 56). Fully aware of Martin's presence, she asks him to tread softly, and informs him that God will be arriving at any moment: the "bright ones" have told her that He is in the next room, and that they can hear Him speaking. Karin begs her husband to adopt a reverent posture; instead, he tries vainly to entice her downstairs. Now the helicopter arrives, shaking the whole house. As it passes over the roof, "there is a brief glimpse of it through the window, a gigantic dark insect" (57). Karin gets up (she has been kneeling), then:

She stands tense, radiant with expectancy. Then her countenance changes. She seems to see something coming out of the cupboard, something that swiftly approaches her. Shrinks away. Runs several steps backwards. Flattens herself against the wall. Presses her hands between her legs. A gurgling scream of horror forces itself out of her throat. (58)

After she has been sedated, Karin explains what happened:

The door opened. But the god who came out was a spider. He had six legs and moved very fast across the floor. . . . He came up to me and I saw his face, a loathsome, evil face. And he clambered up onto me and tried to force himself into me. But I protected myself ["Presses her hands between her legs."]. All the time I saw his eyes. They were cold and calm. (58-59)

Lest there be any doubt as to whom she has seen, Karin announces: "I've seen God" (59). She says this calmly, "but beneath the surface trembles a new and boundless horror whose swiftly growing roots are entangling themselves around her soul" (59).

So ends Karin's search for God. Though the God for whom she searches can be equated with the God of Christianity, the spider god whom she finds cannot. (It is interesting, incidentally, to note that a normal spider has eight legs, whereas Karin's has only six; this detail is an indication of the imaginary nature of her spider.) While it is not directly stated that her search for God runs amiss because of the encroachment of her illness, such a conclusion is nonetheless valid. Indeed, it is probable that the helicopter, which arrives moments before Karin's revelation, functions as the catalyst which speeds up Karin's final disintegration: the helicopter reminds her of her illness and of the fact that she will probably spend the rest of her life surrounded by disturbed patients and plagued by disturbing voices. In the face of such a reality, God's love and peace appear to Karin both remote and unreal; hence, God is transformed into an evil spider.

For David, on the other hand, this is not the case. Though at first in a sorry state, by the end of Through a Glass Darkly he is certain that "love exists as something real in the world of men" (Bergman, 1967: 60), love and God being "one and the same phenomenon" (61). David does not at first search for God.

Rather, he begins by searching for himself; eventually he finds a source of love within himself, and he equates this source with God.

David has long neglected his duties as a father. He is becoming painfully aware of this neglect, especially as Minus presents his short morality play (though it was not Minus' intention to disturb his father, only to entertain him). In addition, David wants to be recognized as an author whose works exhibit genius, but "the winding sentences, the hateful words, the situational banalities and the undimensional poverty" of the characters in his latest, yet-to-be-published novel will ensure that that will never come to pass (Bergman, 1967: 34). Thus, David has little to be proud of, and little to look forward to.

Neither Karin nor Minus holds their father in very high regard; but both keep their opinions private. Martin, however, is not so reserved; while he and David are having lunch on the boat, he says:

In your emptiness there's no room for feelings, and as for any sense of decency, you just haven't got it. You know how everything should be expressed. At every moment you have the right word. There's only one phenomenon you haven't an inkling of: life itself. (Bergman, 1967: 45)

Martin also strikes at David's religious beliefs, particularly as he has expressed them in his novels. David admits his inadequacy, but claims to find consolation as well as inscrutable grace



in his religion. To illustrate its inscrutability, he describes his recent attempt to commit suicide. Thus, he no longer has "any façades to keep up" (47). He can see himself. And out of the emptiness he has known, a love for Karin, Martin and Minus has been born.

At the end of Through a Glass Darkly, David tries to help his son emerge from the nightmare the latter has fallen into since the incident in the old wreck. He tells Minus that he only wishes to give him an indication of where his own hopes as to the source of meaning lie. Minus may then build on whatever he chooses to accept. David's hopes rest on the knowledge that love, any form of love, is a real phenomenon, to be equated with God; if one lets one's emptiness, one's "dirty hopelessness" rest on that thought, then: "Suddenly the emptiness turns into wealth, and hopelessness into life" (Bergman, 1967: 61).

What David describes is his own shift from doubt to faith: he has found God. This does not signify conversion, it merely implies that David has become aware of the presence of God's love in his own person.

Minus, who is fifteen, does not search for God until after the incident in the wreck. Before that, his concerns are similar to those of any adolescent male. Thus, at the beginning of the screenplay, when the four characters are debating the assignment of evening chores, Minus wastes no time asserting his own

independence: "I've no intention of either fetching the milk or laying out any nets. I'll decide for myself what I'm going to do" (Bergman, 1967: 15). Later, after he and Karin have in fact gone to fetch the milk, she asks him, since he can't hear a nearby cuckoo, when he last washed his ears; he snaps back at her: "Oh, shut up" (18). Then the two of them begin to talk about their father. Karin, finding her brother's serious attitude quite humorous, begins to laugh. Minus is piqued: he can't stand being laughed at. Finally, on the way home from the farm where they have purchased some milk, Minus lets it all out:

The walls in this house are so thin, and I can't help hearing when you and Martin are making love, it drives me mad, can't you go and do it somewhere else? . . . You'd better look out. Keep away from me. And stop kissing and hugging me all the time. Don't lie there half-naked when you're sunbathing, it makes me feel sick to see you. . . . You know very well what I mean. Women are the bloody limit. They smell and stick their stomachs out and make special sorts of movements and comb their hair and gossip--till you feel like a skinned rabbit. (21)

Minus is growing into manhood, but he is still at the awkward stage. (However, lest there be any doubt concerning Minus' commitment to some version of the masculine ideal, one need only point to the later episode involving the pornographic magazine (39-40).)

Now Minus reveals his primary concern: "if for once in my life I could talk to Daddy" (Bergman, 1967: 22). In this case, the term "talk" signifies more than simple conversation; it

implies a dialogue in which the participants are willing to be open and honest with each other, rather than wasting time discussing the weather, etc. However, David is too absorbed in his own work; so says Minus. In reality, David is not yet capable of dialogue: he has too much to hide.

After a pause, Minus adds: "Him too" (Bergman, 1967: 22). Perhaps he is only referring to David; but a more tantalizing interpretation suggests itself: the reference is to God, and Minus is complaining about His lack of interest as well. Given this screenplay's preoccupation with religion, the latter interpretation is not impossible. However, it is impossible to determine which interpretation is correct.

In the evening Minus stages his morality play. He plays an artist who plans to sacrifice his life for his beloved; after all: "What is life to a real artist?" (Bergman, 1967: 26). But the artist reneges:

In the name of all the devils! What am I about! Sacrificing my life! For what? For eternity. To the perfect masterpiece. For love! Am I out of my mind? (27)

Though Minus did not consciously intend it to be so, the artist parodies David himself, the latter having placed his artistic endeavours above his familial allegiances. However, with respect to his desire to "talk" to him, Minus is unable to confront his father directly: when the latter speaks to him on the jetty

during the night, Minus wants to say something but breaks off before he has made any sense. Thus, Minus' play may represent an unconscious attempt on his part to acquaint his father with his frustrations.

On the following day, Minus finally gets a chance to "talk" to his father, but not before he goes through the traumatic experience of the incident in the wreck.

There are several events which lead up to that incident. While David and Martin are in town, Minus remarks to Karin that "everyone is shut up in himself. . . . You in your affairs, me in mine. Each of us in his own box. All of us" (Bergman, 1967: 40). It is perhaps in response to this observation that Karin begins to reveal the secrets of her upstairs room. At first Minus is curious, but soon his tension mounts, especially as Karin describes her ability to pass through the wall. Already, it is clear that Minus is being confronted with something which is too much for him to handle. Karin goes on to relate her experience in the room beyond the wall. Now Minus is frightened; he asks, "Is all that real?" (43). Eventually, he decides to leave, but rushes back, his concern for his sister's welfare having momentarily overcome his fear.

Later, in the late afternoon/evening, Karin and Minus are seated on the jetty, each busy with some chore. Twice, Karin predicts rain; each time Minus counters with a statement to the

effect that the rain will pass them by. Karin predicts rain a third time, then moves off toward the house. Minus suddenly becomes very anxious and looks out over the sea:

A bird screeches above his head. It, too, sounds anxious. He looks to see where the sound came from. It is repeated again and again, frightening and demanding. A black squall is coming in across the water, which splashes and clucks beneath the jetty. (Bergman, 1967: 48)

The seabird appears to represent both Minus and Karin: it is both "anxious" (Minus) and "demanding" (Karin, who is shortly to be ill, and will require help). The "black squall" presages Karin's illness.

Minus shivers and, overcome by fear, runs in search of his sister. All the while the seabird continues its "anxious" and "demanding" cry.

Now occurs the incident in the wreck, already described above (see pages 39-40).

Afterward, Minus sits down beside Karin; he is "incapable of movement, choked by tears" (Bergman, 1967: 49). The rain, which began while Minus and Karin were in their embrace, continues, affording them a miserable environment. Karin, coherent again, asks Minus for help. He gets up and, "in an obscure blend of terror and desire to help his sister" (50), runs to the house. Once in his room he falls to his knees, bows his head, and calls repeatedly on God for help. Then, armed with blankets and

oilskins, he returns to Karin, bundles her up, and holds her in his arms:

Minus is sitting somewhere in eternity with his sick sister in his arms. He is empty, exhausted, frozen. Reality, as he has known it until now, has been shattered, ceased to exist. Neither in his dreams nor his fantasies has he known anything to correspond to this moment of weightlessness and grief. His mind has forced its way through the membrane of merciful ignorance. From this moment on his senses will change and harden, his receptivity will become sharpened, as he goes from the make-believe world of innocence to the torment of insight. The world of contingency and chance has been transformed into a universe of law. (51)

This passage is essentially self-explanatory: Minus' observation of the outward manifestations of Karin's illness, and his subsequent awareness of their significance--that one's perception of reality can become radically subjective and terrifying--has a profoundly negative effect upon him. He is overcome by emotion and, after the arrival of David and Martin, shivers though he stands in the bright sunshine. When David first tries to talk to him that evening, Minus flees into the forest "like a shy animal" (55).

It is only much later, after the helicopter has taken Karin away, that Minus comes to his father and reveals his fear:

As I was sitting in the wreck down there, holding Karin, reality burst in pieces for me. . . . Reality burst and I fell out. It's like in a dream, though real. Anything can happen--anything Daddy! . . . I'm so terrified I could scream. (Bergman, 1967: 59-60)

Minus feels that he cannot live with "this new thing" (60), but David assures him that he can--if he has something to hold on to. That something, David suggests, is God. Minus mocks his father, tells him that God does not exist in his (Minus') world--which is precisely the point--then demands proof of God's existence. David offers his "God is love" formula (60), which Minus rejects as so many empty words. David, insistent, continues, and eventually convinces Minus that his (David's) beliefs represent more than hollow piety. All the while:

It seems as if they were standing in the midst of the sea's whiteness, with the whiteness of the summer sky above their heads, as if they were shut in beneath a globe of milky glass. Infinitely tiny in this silent misty whiteness.  
(60)

This passage lends credibility to David's words: though both he and Minus appear almost insignificant, they are enveloped by an aura of peace. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier passage (quoted above, on page 48) which describes the arrival of the squall.

Minus trembles and exclaims: "Daddy spoke to me!" (Bergman, 1967: 61). His wish has finally come true; though it cannot necessarily be said that he has found God, it can be said that he has found a source of love and hope: his new relationship with his father. (Yet, one is tempted to speculate that Minus' exclamation ("Daddy spoke to me!") carries religious overtones: Jesus

Christ addressed His Father as Daddy (Abba), hence Minus may also be referring to God.)

Now, disregarding the bracketed comment above, does Minus actually search for God? I believe he does, and suggest that his search is evidenced by his interest not only in the fact that David is willing to "talk" to him, but also in what it is that David has to say, for David talks about his own search for God. Minus' interest in that search implies an interest in the search for God generally; thus, Minus searches for God to the degree that the search for God can be equated with an interest in that search. Admittedly, this is a rather contrived argument; hence, it should be mentioned that searching for God is not Minus' only function in Through a Glass Darkly. He also serves to illustrate the conditions under which such a search may begin: in order for the search for God to be authentic, it must be entered into wholeheartedly, which may not always be the case unless the prospective searcher experiences a sudden and profound shift in his or her perception of reality. The incident in the wreck provides Minus with just such a perceptual shift, and it is only afterward that he begins his search for God.

### Section 3: Sketch

Martin does not search for God. He is an uncomplicated character, and his world is "clear and human" (Bergman, 1967:



46). He loves Karin deeply, and is angered by David's attitude toward her illness. When David suggests that Martin has "several times wished Karin was dead" (46), Martin vehemently denies it. However, he is ultimately unable to cope with Karin's illness, especially when it blends with her search for God. Martin is a scientist, at home in the physical world; the mental and spiritual dimensions of reality leave him cold.

## CHAPTER IV

### Winter Light

#### Section 1: Introduction

Winter Light concerns a clergyman, Tomas, his mistress, Märta, and various members of his congregation. The story begins at noon: Tomas is bringing his morning service to an end. After the service he tries to console Jonas, a fisherman with suicidal tendencies, but is unsuccessful: Jonas leaves and shoots himself. After breaking this news to Jonas' wife, Tomas, accompanied by Märta, commences his afternoon service at another church nearby. Thus, the story covers a scant three hours--not much more time than it takes to read the screenplay.

Tomas and Märta are easily the most important characters in this screenplay. They will be studied in Section 2. Jonas and Algot, a retired railway clerk, are also of interest, and will be discussed briefly in Section 3.

Winter Light illustrates a situation which will become even more apparent in The Silence: the gradual despair, on the part of all the characters who search for God, of ever being able to fulfill the longing which accompanies that search. However, the search for God is still the dominant issue in Winter Light, and will be treated as such.

## Section 2: Analyses

During the opening scene of Winter Light, Tomas leads his congregation in prayer: "We give thanks unto Thee, O God" (Bergman, 1967: 65). Yet he has influenza, with the result that "his eyes are feverish and his forehead gleams with sweat" (65): the contrast between the appearance of his body and the import of his words could not be more ironic. This irony sets the tone of Tomas' search for God: it is hollow, and Tomas has long since despaired of its coming to fruition--though he has not given up the search altogether.

The contrasts continue. During a pause, Tomas listens to the wind pressing against the windows: outside a cold, bleak winter prevails and, but for the wind and an occasional cough from the pews, a "colorless, empty" silence pervades the church (Bergman, 1967: 66). Now all present sing a hymn of praise. Then Tomas recites a prayer of thanks, is overcome by a wave of fever, proceeds, stops to swallow: "his throat is sore like an open wound" (67).

Eventually the official farce is over. Tomas retreats to a small leather chair and helps himself to some coffee and biscuits. Aronsson (the Vicar's warden) and Algot appear, try to make conversation, then are separately though indirectly dismissed: Tomas is uncommunicative. Next Jonas and his wife, Karin, arrive; Tomas becomes more responsive. Karin details her

husband's fears concerning the Chinese, then eagerly awaits Tomas' words of reassurance. They never come; instead, Tomas offers platitudes. These fail to impress Jonas, who smiles at Karin and the clergyman: "He seems to pity them" (Bergman, 1967: 74). Finally the Perssons leave, though Karin promises that her husband will return as soon as he has brought her home. Yet, already Tomas has revealed his inadequacy as a guide for the spiritually perplexed.

Now Tomas goes and stands before the altar, "a famous piece of Flemish workmanship from the sixteenth century" (Bergman, 1967: 65):

Christ on the cross, between God's knees. God himself has black hair and a brown beard and eyebrows arched as if in surprise. The dove flutters above His head. (75)

Then, evidently unimpressed by this work of art, Tomas exclaims: "What a ridiculous image!" (75). Tomas feels himself observed and turns around; Märta is standing at the other end of the church. She comes up to him and holds him in her arms. Tomas, whose eyelids have become red and swollen as though he were about to cry, reveals the source of his sadness: "God's silence" (76). This helps to explain his earlier exclamation ("What a ridiculous image!"); if God is silent, then the wood-carving loses its symbolic character, since it lacks a referent; it becomes pretentious, an object of ridicule.

Tomas admits to having "talked a lot of drivel" in the presence of Jonas and his wife (Bergman, 1967: 76); but he felt himself put off from God, and could manage no more than "drivel." Märta smiles and describes his condition: "A Sunday at the very bottom of the vale of tears" (76). In fact, Tomas seems to have spent the entire latter portion of his life in such a state.

Märta leaves; Tomas is alone. He is surrounded by a plethora of aural images:

Over in the corner the clock ticks, on the wall. It has its own secret life. . . . Inside the iron stove the fire whines and mutters, while between the two halves of the main door the gale whistles, full of distress. (Bergman, 1967: 79)

Thus, signs of activity abound. But the activity is mindless, uncoordinated, and the symbol--or what should be a symbol (for an appropriate definition of this term, see Tillich, 1957: 41-54)--of the church's spiritual focus is in decay:

Opposite the vestry window hangs a crucifix. It is a crude, roughly carved image of the suffering Christ, ineptly made. The mouth opens in a scream, the arms are grotesquely twisted, the hands convulsively clutch the nails, the brow is bloody beneath the thorns, and the body arches outwards, as if trying to tear itself away from the wood. The image smells of fungus, moldy timber. Its paint is flaking off in long strips. (Bergman, 1967: 79)

Tomas, too, is suffering, and the image of Christ seems to parallel his own condition. A rotting Messiah in a rotting church inhabited by a rotting priest.

(Tomas now reads Märta's letter; it will be discussed during the analysis of Märta, below.)

Eventually Jonas appears. He and Tomas quickly settle on the source of the fisherman's troubles: his fear that the Chinese may soon wage war on the rest of humanity. Tomas makes an attempt at consolation: "But after all if it happens, Mr. Persson, it'll hit us all. We're all responsible; and we must all take the consequences" (Bergman, 1967: 83). Needless to say, Jonas' fear increases. He and Tomas fall silent for a while. Then the latter begins to reveal his own torments: he became a clergyman to please his parents, and believed in an "improbable, entirely private, fatherly god" (84-85). But reality, especially that of the Spanish Civil War, forced its way into Tomas' life, and every time he confronted his god with that reality, "he became ugly, revolting, a spider god--a monster" (85). By now, Jonas is terrified. Tomas further reveals his indifference to the message of the Gospels, and his "jealous hatred" of Jesus Christ (85). Jonas wants to leave, but Tomas begs him to stay, promises to change tack, then gets up, stands beneath the crucifix, and explains what happens if one rejects the existence of God:

Life becomes something we can understand. What a relief!  
And death--extinction, dissolution of body and soul.  
People's cruelty, their loneliness, their fear--everything  
becomes self-evident--transparent. Suffering is incompre-  
hensible, so it needn't be explained. The stars out in  
space, worlds, heavens, all have given birth to themselves  
and to each other. There isn't any creator, no one who

holds it all together, no immeasurable thought to make one's head spin. . . . All this stink of antique godliness! All this supernatural helplessness, this humiliating sense of sin! (86)

Tomas is rebelling against all his former beliefs. Finally, exhausted, he rests his head on the table. When he looks up again Jonas has disappeared without a trace.

Now, while the crucifix emits its "soundless shriek" to parallel his agony, Tomas moans: "God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Bergman, 1967: 87). It is as though he were reliving Christ's moments of wretched hopelessness. Tomas falls to his knees, then on his face, spreading himself out on the stone floor. Eventually he gets up; he has come to a decision: "God does not exist any more" (87). Suddenly the sun dazzles him, and he proclaims: "I'm free now. At last, free" (87). The sun appears to agree with his decision, casts him in a favorable light, so to speak. The symbolism is not inappropriate for, while it would appear on the surface that Tomas has rejected God, he has in fact abandoned no more than a variety of (literally) fake beliefs. This is a necessary step if he is ever to gain a true faith.

(At this point a puzzling sequence occurs. Märta has returned, and Tomas asks her if she has seen Jonas. She indicates that she has not, and Tomas concludes that Jonas will not be coming (Bergman, 1967: 87). Yet the screenplay has made it clear

that Jonas has already been there. I can suggest only one solution: though the screenplay talks about Jonas coming rather than coming back, the latter meaning is in fact the one which is correct. The only other possible conclusion would be that Tomas dreamt the conversation with Jonas.)

The old woman from Hol, Magdalene Ledfors (her given name must surely be symbolic), interrupts Tomas and Märta with the news that Jonas has shot himself. Having failed to save the fisherman's life, Tomas leaves to assist in the removal of the corpse. A fitting function for a clergyman who is unable to realize the potential of a life lived in God's presence. Later, in Märta's schoolhouse, Tomas asks the boy, who has come to retrieve a comic from his desk, what he is going to be when he grows up. The boy "looks Tomas straight between the eyes with an expression of indulgent disdain" and replies: "Spaceman" (Bergman, 1967: 91). Thus, the boy reveals his feeling of superiority with respect to Tomas.

Tomas feels humiliated by the rumours--which are true--that Märta is his mistress. He lists this humiliation as one of the reasons he is tired of her presence. Though she has on numerous occasions offered to marry him, he refuses to accept. He simply does not want her, and says as much, then lists further reasons why he would rather do without her: her fussing over him, her short-sightedness, her clumsy hands, her anxiousness and timid



ways when they make love, her bad stomach, her eczema, her periods, etc. In short, he says, he does not love her. Of course, the real reason is that she reminds him too much of the hopelessness of his own life: he will never be more than a small parish priest with a dwindling congregation.

After he has informed Mrs. Persson of her husband's suicide, Tomas, accompanied by Märta, drives to the church in which he is to give an afternoon service. On the way the car is forced to stop before a railway crossing while a train passes by. The sound of that train reminds Tomas of a childhood incident. He had awoken one evening, frightened by a passing train (he lived near the tracks):

I got out of bed, ran round all the rooms looking for Father. But the house was empty. I shouted and screamed, but no one answered. So I dressed as well as I could and ran down to the shore, all the time screaming and crying for Father. (Berman, 1967: 98)

It is as if Tomas were describing a recent dream, and "Father" referred to God. However, after the childhood incident Tomas' father sat up and watched over his son all night, whereas now Tomas has neither father nor (so he believes) Father to watch over him.

Eventually Tomas and Märta arrive at the church. Once inside Tomas is cornered by Algot; the latter expounds his ideas (for further discussion, see Section 3, below) concerning

Christ's passion, but Tomas remains unmoved; while what Algot has to say applies equally to both Tomas and Jesús, the latter's moment of doubt came to a positive issue, whereas Tomas' doubt seems only to be growing. In the past Tomas ministered to churches which were full. Over the years his congregation has shrunk drastically. And on this particular occasion, not a single member is willing to make an appearance. Only Märta and Algot sit in the pews (Blom is playing the organ). Nevertheless, Tomas decides to proceed with the service. He turns his "pale, anxiety-filled face" toward his audience and proclaims: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. All the earth is full of his glory . . ." (Bergman, 1967: 104). So ends the screenplay.

Tomas' last words in the film are similar, and have been the subject of much debate and speculation. However, the meaning of the screenplay's end is less moot: Tomas' words are hollow, they do not coincide with his attitude toward God. After his final conversation with Jonas, Tomas rejected the god in whom he had until then believed. As was indicated above, such a step would eventually have been required if Tomas were ever to engage in a true search for God. But, having taken that initial step, Tomas becomes sluggish, and there is nothing in the remainder of the screenplay to suggest that he begins a true search for God. Thus, one is forced to conclude that his last words do not bespeak his convictions.

Märta is more honest. She has never felt a need to believe in, or search for God. She attends church only because she is in love with Tomas and wishes to lend him support. In fact, she follows him everywhere.

Märta details her position fully in the letter she gives to Tomas. She has never been plagued by "religious temptation", and considers Tomas' personal faith "obscure and neurotic, in some way cruelly overcharged with emotion" (Bergman, 1967: 81). In contrast to Tomas, Märta grew up within a family which was non-Christian; nonetheless it was "full of warmth and kindness and loyalty--and joy" (81). It is little wonder, then, that she remains unimpressed by Tomas' religious notions.

Märta's letter continues. Märta describes the disgust Tomas felt at the sight of her eczema. Exasperated by his reaction and his inability to pray for the improvement of her condition, even though he has professed belief in the efficacy of prayer, Märta decided to pray for herself:

God, . . . why have you created me so eternally dissatisfied, so frightened, so bitter? Why must I understand how wretched I am, why have I got to suffer as in the hell of my own indifference? If there is a purpose in my suffering, then tell me what it is! And I'll bear my pain without complaining. I'm strong. You've made me so terribly strong, both in body and soul, but you give me nothing to do with my strength. Give me a meaning to my life, and I'll be your, obedient slave! (Bergman, 1967: 81)

A far more honest and convincing prayer than Tomas ever manages.

Though she steadfastly refuses to believe in its (the relationship's) possibility, Märta has a good grasp of one of the essentials of a divine-human relationship: complete openness.

Märta's prayer is answered: she realizes that she loves Tomas, and that he is to be the focus of her attentions. Forever sceptical, she cannot decide whether it is God or her "biological functions" which have brought about this realization, but henceforth she has only one desire: "to be allowed to live for someone else" (Bergman, 1967: 82). Thus, Märta unconsciously obeys Christ's second commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). However, being no starry-eyed youngster, she is aware that her task will be "terribly difficult" (Bergman, 1967: 82).

All Märta's appearances, both those which precede and those which follow the passage in which Tomas reads her letter, should be studied in the context of that letter. For example, it helps to explain Märta's participation in the Communion service at the beginning of the screenplay: she refers to that ceremony as a "love-feast" (this is, in fact, a theologically correct term) and presumably attends because she wants to avail herself of the opportunity to demonstrate her love for Tomas (Bergman, 1967: 76). Certainly, she does not ascribe any transcendent quality to the sacraments, for she does not "believe in God a bit" (77).

Later, when Tomas complains about the silence of God, Märta

retorts:

Sometimes I think you're the limit! God's silence, God doesn't speak. God hasn't ever spoken, because he doesn't exist. It's all so unusually, horribly simple. (Bergman, 1967: 78)

Yet, in spite of the vehemence of her denial of God's existence, Märta remains quite humble. When she tells Tomas that he must "learn to love" she does not presume herself capable of teaching him: though she loves him, she does not have the strength to teach him how to reciprocate her love (78).

Tomas' parish is "in the grip of death and decay"; so says Blom to Märta near the end of the screenplay (Bergman, 1967: 102). He suggests that she get out while she can, before she also falls victim to the surrounding decay: she is still young enough to leave and begin a new life elsewhere. But Märta stays. And just before Tomas begins his afternoon service, Märta--Winter Light's premiere atheist--utters what appears to be her second prayer:

If I could only lead him out of his emptiness, away from his lie-god. If we could dare to show each other tenderness. If we could believe in a truth . . . If we could believe . . . (104)

Thus, ironically, Märta is the only character in Winter Light who embodies hope. Yet she does not search for God. Her prayers--if that is what they are--are motivated not by a desire to find God,

but by her wish to help Tomas. Whether she will succeed in implementing her wish is a question which remains unanswered by the screenplay, though Tomas did at least ask her to accompany him to the afternoon service.

### Section 3: Sketches

Jonas' primary concern is finding an adequate reason for continuing to live in spite of the war he considers inevitable. Although he is a very reticent character, the descriptions of his face and mannerisms illustrate the intensity of his inner torment. During his first meeting with Tomas, Jonas' "terrified eyes stare painfully" out of his face (Bergman, 1967: 72). He averts his glance, "as if to spare his fellow beings its look of terror", and "rubs the tip of one finger incessantly against his cheek" (73). During his second meeting with Tomas, Jonas is at various moments "tormented", "frightened", "distressed", "more and more anxious" and "more and more terrified" (83-85).

Jonas is simply a character who is unable to cope with life and its attendant complexities, paradoxes and miseries. Of course Tomas, with his utterly hopeless attempt at consolation, does not improve the situation. Indeed, part of the blame for Jonas' suicide rests with Tomas: had the latter adopted a more positive attitude in Jonas' presence, the suicide might have been avoided. However, Jonas' function in Winter Light is precisely

to emphasize the degree to which Tomas lacks the ability to minister effectively to others.

Algot fulfils a similar function, but from a different angle: he has a better grasp than Tomas of the Gospel's meaning. Just prior to the afternoon service, Algot corners Tomas and delivers his interpretation of Christ's Passion. About the effect on Christ of His disciples' abandonment, Algot says:

Vicar, that must have been a terrible suffering! To understand that no one has understood you. To be abandoned when one really needs someone to rely on. A terrible suffering. (Bergman, 1967: 101)

Algot continues:

But that wasn't the worst thing, even so! When Christ had been nailed up on the cross and hung there in his torments, he cried out: "God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." He cried out as loud as he possibly could. He thought his Father in Heaven had abandoned him. He believed everything he'd been preaching was a lie. The moments before he died, Christ was seized with a great doubt. Surely that must have been his most monstrous suffering of all? I mean God's silence. Isn't that true, Vicar? (101)

Algot's interpretation is both valid and to the point. And his speech, delivered almost as though it were a sermon, is a two-fold blow aimed--by Bergman, not Algot--at Tomas: first, since Tomas has long been indifferent to Christ and the Gospels, it is ironic that he now has both thrown in his face, so to speak; second, since Tomas is so self-pitying throughout the screenplay, it is also ironic that he is now forced to listen to the story of

the suffering of another--especially one for whom he feels a "jealous hatred" (85). Thus, Algot, like Jonas, serves to illustrate Tomas' inadequacies.



## CHAPTER V

### The Silence

#### \*Section 1: Introduction

Three characters figure prominently in The Silence: Anna, Ester and Johan. Anna and Ester are sisters; Johan is Anna's ten-year-old son. All three will be studied in Section 2. There are but a few characters of minor interest; one--the old floor waiter--will be discussed briefly in Section 3.

At the beginning of The Silence, Anna, Ester and Johan are returning home to Sweden on a train. At dawn, while the train is passing through some foreign country whose language is unfamiliar to all three major characters, Ester, who is dying, vomits blood. She decides to rest for a day in a hotel in the next town--still in the same country. Anna and Johan also interrupt their journey. Johan spends the day wandering about the hotel; Anna meets, and has sex with a young waiter from the bar across the street; Ester gradually becomes more ill, and has several arguments with her sister. By the following day, Ester's condition is no better; she decides to further postpone her journey. Anna and Johan leave without her on the afternoon train.

The Silence presents a difficulty not encountered in the

other three screenplays: the extreme paucity of overt religious language. There is a church in the town where the story takes place; that church can be seen from the windows of Anna's and Ester's hotel rooms. Yet, though the church's bells ring on occasion, none of the characters deigns to accept their invitation. And the term "God" is used only once, by Ester. Thus, it is difficult to associate the search for God with any of the characters. In fact, it is safe to say that the search for God is not the dominant issue in this screenplay.

The dominant motif in The Silence is: silence. Silence--the word itself occurs on numerous occasions--pervades the screenplay. Although the main characters reside in a hotel which is surrounded by crowded streets, only the odd sounds (siren, bells, tank motor and treads) filter through the open windows. In addition, the main characters are unable to communicate verbally with anyone save each other. Even the communication which occurs between the main characters is limited and, more often than not, bitter and reproachful.

God, of course, is also silent: He neither speaks (discounting the church bells), nor is spoken to (except once, by Ester). And that is precisely the point of this screenplay: to portray a world in which God is silent. In such a world, God might as well be absent--the effect is the same: "no genuine human life exists" (Vajta: 60). Thus, The Silence is "the symbolic

enfolding of what becomes of human community when God is eliminated" (Vajta: 59).

If God truly is silent, then the search for Him becomes stunted, and is doomed to fail in every instance. Such is the case in The Silence. Anna searches for ecstasy, but the ecstasy she seeks is not spiritual, it is physical: orgasm. Ester tries desperately to show love for Anna and Johan, but is rebuffed by both. Johan craves his mother's affection, but is invariably brushed aside. Thus, all three main characters exhibit symptoms, so to speak, of the search for God. But God remains silent, and without His presence to guide them, their search is both aimless and barren.

## Section 2: Analyses

In the opening scene of The Silence, Anna presents a none-too-appealing picture: she is sweating, wears a crumpled dress, and keeps her thighs wide apart to cool off. Yet she gives no evidence of her later-to-be-revealed disinterest in her son and dislike for her sister. Johan lies against her, asleep. When he awakes and asks her for a drink, she offers him an orange. Eventually he lies down again, his head against her knee, whereupon she gently slips a pillow under his head. And when Ester is overcome by fits of coughing and vomits blood, Anna tries to hold her sister's head, then dutifully sits down beside her and wipes

the blood from her face.

In the second scene, Anna's true feelings begin--faintly--to emerge. When Johan tries to play with her, she gives him an "irritated" smile (Bergman, 1967: 110). Later, while he scrubs her back, she tells him, in a "faintly hostile" voice, to hurry up (111). And when, after Anna has had a nap and while she is putting on her make-up, Ester compliments her sister for her tan, Anna doesn't reply, but: "Deep down inside her fair eyes one catches a glimpse of wrath and scorn" (117). Then Anna leaves for the bar.

At the bar Anna meets the young waiter with whom she will later have sex. After paying her bill, she goes into a movie theatre, but is unable to comprehend the film. Instead, her attention is absorbed by the sexual antics of a nearby couple. Eventually Anna leaves. Then--so she tells Ester afterward--she goes back to the bar and picks up, or is picked up by the waiter. The two of them go to the church and make love "in a dark corner behind a pair of big pillars" (Bergman, 1967: 129). Ostensibly, they chose the church because "it wasn't so hot there" (129), but a more subtle irony is at work here: just as Anna has debased sexual intercourse by stripping it of love, so she degrades the church--traditional symbol of the cult of love--by using it to maintain her cult of sex.

When Anna returns to the hotel, Johan runs toward her and

gives her a passionate embrace, but she dismisses him with a quick kiss to the top of the head, then enters the bathroom to soak her clothes (they were soiled by the church floor because, in her haste to satisfy her sexual appetite, Anna did not have time to undress). Ester comes in, picks up Anna's dress, then drops it to the floor: she knows what Anna has been up to, in part because this is not the first time that Anna has engaged in such activities. In reply Anna offers a "scornful snort" (Bergman, 1967: 124). Ester returns to her own room. Anna, cruelty rising within her, follows, and tells her sister to stop spying on her. Then, as if perplexed by her own audacity, Anna says to Ester: "If only I could understand why I've been so scared [of you]" (125). It is only later, after she has revealed her late father's authoritarian nature, that Anna's comment makes sense; she says, still to her sister:

D'you remember the winter ten years ago, when we were staying with Father at Lyon? And I'd been with Claude? Remember cross-examining me just the same way [Ester has just been cross-examining Anna]? How you scratched my arm and swore you'd tell Father if I didn't tell you all the details? (129)

This time "Father" is not around: Anna is unafraid of her sister, and will do as she pleases. She leaves for another rendezvous with the waiter, feeling no remorse for the torment and humiliation she causes Ester.

Anna and the waiter meet in the hotel corridor and press

themselves against each other. Unaware that Johan has seen them, they adjourn to a nearby room. Some time later, Anna says to the waiter: "How nice it is we don't understand each other" (Bergman, 1967: 133). Thus, she openly admits the nature of her sentiments: she wants no communication other than the physical to take place between the waiter and herself, because she is interested only in sex, not love. Then she adds: "I wish Ester was dead" (133). It seems that there exists not a single altruistic sentiment in Anna's personality.

When Ester tries to open the door to the room in which Anna and the waiter are lying, Anna unlocks the door, then rushes back to the bed, pulls the man close to her, and pretends to make herself comfortable: she wants to embarrass her sister as much as possible. Ester enters the room, and the sisters begin another argument. Anna accuses Ester of being full of hatred; Ester vainly tries to convince her sister otherwise. Anna is wrong, of course, but refuses to admit or even realize it: if she is wrong, then it must be she herself who is full of hatred. She screams at Ester, orders her out of the room. Ester complies, closes the door, but collapses in the corridor.

Eventually Anna gets dressed and leaves the waiter. She finds her sister lying where she collapsed, and puts her to bed. When Ester awakes, Anna informs her that she and Johan will be leaving on the afternoon train: Ester is dying, will probably

never make it home; nevertheless, Anna is willing to abandon her in a foreign country. Her last words to Ester, after the latter says that it is a "good thing" that Anna and Johan are leaving, are: "No one's asked for your advice" (Bergman, 1967: 142). Considering that she will probably never see her sister alive again, these are callous words indeed!

The portrait of Anna which emerges from The Silence is of a character who is selfish and unfeeling. She does not search for God, of course; she searches for no more than a physical high, and an absence of authoritarian figures. She is afraid to allow any deep emotional ties to develop between herself and anyone else, including her son. Thus, she rejects the possibility of love in favour of unadorned sex.

Ester appears to drink a fair amount of liquor. She is also not averse to sexual stimulation: just before the end of the second scene, she masturbates until a "drowsy feeling of security comes over her" and she is able to fall asleep (Bergman, 1967: 113). But this is the only instance in which Ester engages in sex. Throughout the remainder of the screenplay she is concerned primarily with her own mortality and her relationship to Anna and Johan.

When Anna leaves for the bar, "Ester puts her hand to her mouth as if to stifle a scream" (Bergman, 1967: 117): she is exasperated by her sister's unfeeling attitude. Shortly she is

"convulsed by cramps" and drops the cognac bottle from which she has been drinking, then "whimpers and swears by turns: it's so humiliating all this, I'm just not going to put up with such humiliation" (117). One is permitted to feel pity for Ester since her illness is quite real: it is difficult to vomit blood unless one is suffering internal hemorrhaging. Thus, the degree of Anna's lack of concern becomes disturbingly obvious.

Ester continues to whimper, but tries to get herself under control. Eventually she is able to kneel; she stretches her hands out across the bed and pleads: "oh God, help me, let me die at home at least" (Bergman, 1967: 118). This is the only mention of God in The Silence.

Though Ester does not openly search for God, she does seek reciprocal love and peace of mind. In other words, she desires that which God offers, that which Jof (in The Seventh Seal) has already found. Thus, she participates in the search for God in an indirect way.

After the old floor waiter has put her back to bed and given her some hot mineral water, Ester leans back, closes her eyes and reminisces about the Swedish archipelago: "a summer outing, the clear green chill of the water, the white horizon, light afternoon clouds over the cliffs" (Bergman, 1967: 118). This serves to calm her, contrasts sharply with her present surroundings, but also functions as a tantalization: it is doubtful whether she



will ever see Sweden, let alone the Swedish archipelago, again. in addition, Ester's reminiscing illustrates her desire for peace of mind.

Later, Johan comes into Ester's room. For a while the two converse, then fall silent. Ester tries to caress Johan's cheek and ear, but he "shies away with an expression of surprise" (Bergman, 1967: 120). Afterward, he maintains a "polite distance" (120); Ester's first attempt at showing love for Johan does not meet with success. But she continues to feel tenderness for him, though that tenderness is mixed with fear: what will become of Johan when Ester dies, leaving him alone with an uncaring mother and an all-too-frequently absent father? Johan withdraws to his mother's room.

When Anna returns from the bar, Ester confronts her with the evidence of her infidelity. Ester is "beside herself with rage" (Bergman, 1967: 124); why must Anna mistreat son and sister so? But Ester is powerless to induce any change in Anna. Henceforth, Ester lives in the "shadow of annihilation" (126); a "mortal fear of death sweeps over her" (125); she is afraid to die alone and unloved. For a while she stands at the window, absorbing every sign of life coming from the streets below.

Eventually Ester leaves the window and turns on her radio. Music by Bach filters through the room. The old floor waiter knocks, enters, listens:

ESTER (in a low voice): What's it called. MUSIC?

WAITER (smiles): Music--musike! Music--musike.

ESTER: Sebastian Bach?

WAITER (pleased): Sebastian Bach. (Nods emphatically)  
Johann Sebastian Bach. (Bergman, 1967: 126)

This is the only instance of verbal communication between any of the main characters and a citizen of the foreign country in which they are staying. It is fitting that the conversation, brief though it is, is initiated by Ester: first, because she is interested in establishing a rapport with anyone who enters her room (only three people do); second, because she is a translator, a specialist in communicating with those who speak other languages. Yet, the choice of Ester's profession is ironic: though she is a translator, she remains ultimately unable to communicate--perhaps through no fault of her own--with either Anna or Johan. The final words of the screenplay (see below) emphasize this irony.

Later, Ester pries the information concerning Anna's afternoon escapade from her. (In fairness to Anna, it should be mentioned that Ester's initial approach does resemble a cross-examination. In fact, this is only one of several instances in which Ester literally pesters her sister. Nevertheless, Anna's invariably hostile reaction is childish, and emphasizes her overall immaturity. Perhaps this makes Ester's attitude necessary.) When Anna insists on meeting the young waiter again, Ester pleads that she change her mind; but, as Ester's hand fumbles for that of her sister, the latter leaves anyway.

While his mother is with the waiter, Johan enters Ester's room. Ester is asleep. Johan goes to her desk and finds several pieces of paper filled with writing. Ester's writing is "microscopic" but three words stand out; they are in a foreign language but beside each Ester has put the Swedish (i.e., English) equivalent: "HADJEK=spirit, MAGROV=anxiety, fear, KRASGT=joy" (Bergman, 1967: 131). Thereafter is written: "We listened to BACH. A moment of peace. I felt no fear of dying" (131). The meaning of the latter quotation is clear. The contents of the former quotation--I am painfully aware of my dependence on the English translation--are more difficult to interpret. The final two words ("fear" and "joy") refer to emotional states--perhaps those of Ester, though it is impossible to prove. The first word ("spirit")--assuming it is a noun--may be a reference to a religious phenomenon, or it may simply be another reference to an emotional state (e.g., good spirits, poor spirits, etc.). Yet, the presence of all three words is an indication of the depth of communication Ester seeks in her relationship with other persons: emotions are deeply-rooted facets of the personality, and are often impossible to discern through mere observation of face and mannerisms; thus, Ester's interest in emotions illustrates her willingness to delve much further (than Anna) into the human psyche, her own or that of anyone else.

Ester soon wakes up. Johan stages a puppet show for her.

It is filled with expressions of hatred and anger (neither directed toward Ester). When it is over, Johan is in tears. He crawls toward Ester. She "throws her arms round him, over his head and cheeks, feels his breath, his thumping heart" (Bergman, 1967: 132). Cut to Anna: "I wish Ester was dead" (133). The scene is self-explanatory: Ester is empathetic; Anna is apathetic. However, Ester is only temporarily successful in being permitted to show affection for Johan: as he prepares for bed, she caresses his head and cheek, but "he finds it too much to bear" and draws away (134). Ester is forced to resort to a verbal assurance: "We love Mommy, you and I" (134).

Ester also tries to tell Anna (who is still with the waiter) that she loves her, but Anna rebuts scornfully: "You're always talking about love" (Bergman, 1967: 136). Ester is unequal to the scorn:

Ester is about to reply, but just gapes. After a few moments' silence her lips begin to move, but her voice isn't equal to it and all she utters is an unclear whisper. (136)

Anna continues to bear down upon her sister, who soon makes for the door. There she looks at Anna "without superiority, sympathetically, with tenderness" (137). The screenplay leaves no room for doubt as to the authenticity of Ester's good intentions.

The next morning, while Anna and Johan are having breakfast, Ester appears to become delirious: she babbles, talks about

"monstrous powers" which have overcome her (Bergman, 1967: 140). Perhaps she has become resigned to her inability to find reciprocal love, the "powers" being that which has caused Anna to hate, and Johan to be unable to show love for Ester.

But Ester has not yet become resigned to her impending death. After being convulsed by cramps, she whispers:

No, no, no! I don't want to die like that, no, no! I don't want to stifle [she has difficulty breathing]. Oh, it was, horrible! I'm frightened now. It frightened me that time. It musn't come back. (Bergman, 1967: 141)

But the cramps do return. As Ester's awareness fades, she cries out:

Mother! I'm ill. Mother, come and help me! I'm so frightened. I'm so frightened. I'm so frightened. I don't want to die. (141)

Eventually Ester becomes calm, then lies flat and pulls the sheet over her face: either she wants to take a practice run at death or she wants to frighten the next person who enters her room. She succeeds in the latter: Johan, "astonished and rather scared" (142), comes in and lifts up the sheet. Ester tells him not to be frightened, gives him the letter she promised him, and says: "Johan! It's important, d'you understand! You must read it carefully" (142). When he does, on the train, his face soon becomes "pale with the effort of trying to understand the strange language. This secret message" (143). So ends The Silence, but

silence continues. Ester, now completely alone, has failed to communicate, or establish an on-going relationship with anyone. And she has not found God.

Johan is a very lonely child. He spends the entire screenplay in an adult world; even those who look to be his age (i.e., the dwarves) are older than he. Thus, after he has left the dwarves chamber, he finds that in "a new and frightening way the solitude closes in around him" (Bergman, 1967: 116). Like a frightened animal, he feels the need to urinate. Unable to reach his room in time, he is forced to relieve himself in the corridor.

When he enters Ester's room a while later, Johan looks quite unhappy and "nods seriously" after Ester asks him whether he is longing to be home (Bergman, 1967: 119). The conversation which ensues illustrates Johan's desire for signs of affection from both his parents. These signs are so rare that a frustrated anger has been born and nourished within Johan: he goes to his own room and, with crayons and a drawing pad, "makes a long red line, which continues in a bow and forms itself into a forehead, a nose, a cruel twisted mouth" (120).

Earlier, when his mother chided him for scrubbing her back too slowly, Johan was "seized with a violent desire to cry" but brought himself under control (Bergman, 1967: 111). Now, as he runs to greet her (she has just returned from her first meeting

with the waiter) in the corridor, Johan is rebuffed again, told to remain outside; in "a rather melancholy way he hops about on one leg" (124). Yet, he still loves his mother: in the evening, after she has clipped his nails, he "lifts his arm and puts it fondly round" her neck; in response, Anna "draws him to her and kisses him over and over again; sits a long while silent, rocking him on her knee, in her arms" (126). For Johan, a brief respite.

It doesn't last. During an argument with her sister, Anna tells Johan to go into the other room. Johan is "deeply alarmed" at his mother's tone of voice (Bergman, 1967: 128). He suggests that he go into the corridor instead: there, at least, no one will bark at him. Anna gives her permission, but tells him not to go too far away. Johan gives her a bitter look, meaning:

No, he won't go too far. He'll be on hand, in case it pleases her to call for him. But just now she wants no part of him. He's to vanish, instantly. (128)

So he goes out into the corridor. Soon Anna and the young waiter are there, too. They embrace passionately, unaware that Johan is watching them. He knows what they are up to; perhaps he is also jealous. At any rate, he has been humiliated, so he "sits down in a gilded armchair, leaning forward, chewing his lower lip, swallowing his grief and fury" (130).

Eventually Johan goes to Ester. There he stages a puppet show to give vent to his frustrations. The little performance is

packed with violence and anger: "Punch" is at various moments "raging", "furious", "beside himself" and "livid" while he beats the "Little Old Woman" to death (Bergman, 1967: 132). After the show, which has been staged behind the end of Ester's bed, Johan, "red in the face, rushes out, crying" (132). His misery is so great that he is willing, just this once, to let Ester hold and comfort him. The whole incident serves to emphasize the degree to which Anna's uncaring attitude has wounded her son who, in spite of his craving for maternal affection, is unable to effect any significant change in that attitude: Johan is searching vainly for love from someone who cannot provide it.

By the end of The Silence it appears that Johan would rather stay with Ester than with Anna. After Ester has given him the letter, he stands for a while by her bed, "gazing at her steadily" (Bergman, 1967: 142). Perhaps he has come to realize that, if he is to find love, then he is more likely to find it in the presence of Ester than Anna. Thus, when it comes time to leave, he tries to escape by crawling under Ester's bed, but is captured by the old floor waiter. As Johan sits on the departing train, all he is left with is Ester's incomprehensible letter: the silence of The Silence is complete.

Johan does not search for God, but his search for love bears similarities to the search for God, especially in its intensity and degree of commitment: both must be great in order for either



search to reach fulfilment. Unfortunately, Johan finds neither God nor love. Thus, of the three main characters, he is the most pitiable since, at his age (ten), he is so very much in need of love, whatever its source.

### Section 3: Sketch

The floor waiter neither searches for, nor finds God; he is simply a kind old man. He spends most of his time in his little "cubbyhole" (Bergman, 1967: 123), where one particularly poignant scene takes place. While he is eating, he shows Johan his photographs:

Between mouthfuls the old man comments on each of these pictures, though for the most part only with little convulsive sighs. Takes off his glasses and wipes them. At the base of his nose a tear has fastened. He squashes it with his forefinger, makes an expressive gesture which can mean: all dead and gone, finished. (123)

Thus, the old waiter, too, is alone. For a long while he and Johan sit close together, the old waiter with his arm around the boy: two lonely people.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Section 1: Summary

Four of Ingmar Bergman's screenplays were studied. They were chosen because their characters display concerns which fall within the domain of religion. In Chapter 1 it was suggested that the dominant motif in each screenplay is that of the unfulfilled quest; though a majority of the main characters search for God, very few find Him. It was further suggested that the barrenness of the characters' search becomes progressively more pronounced with each successive screenplay.

The knight searches for God throughout The Seventh Seal. He is unable to live either with faith alone or without faith altogether. Instead, he wants God to reveal Himself so that he may have absolute proof of His existence. But the knight dies without having found Him.

Jöns renounces the search for God from the start. He has been disillusioned by the crusade, feels bitter toward God and is resigned to an absurd existence. Needless to say, Jöns does not find God, but mocks Him to the end.

Jof also does not search for God, since he has already found

Him. Jof's visions symbolize his abundant and viable faith; specifically, his first vision demonstrates his awareness of God's loving presence in his life. And his constant optimism is due to his trust in God.

Karin, in Through a Glass Darkly, searches for God: together with a group of imaginary persons whose faces radiate light, she awaits His imminent arrival in her upstairs room. However, she experiences a recurrence of her mental illness which darkens the reality she perceives to such an extent that, when God does come, it is in the guise of a terrifying spider. This is the only god whom Karin finds.

David also searches for God. By admitting his faults and the wretchedness of his condition he finds a source of love within himself. This love he equates with God's presence. Thus, David finds God.

Minus does not search for God until the reality he has known as a child is shattered by the implications of Karin's illness. Thereafter, though he does not find God, Minus gains his father's love, an event which leaves him profoundly moved.

During the first portion of Winter Light, Tomas still searches for God. However, he displays little enthusiasm for the search and has despaired of its coming to fruition. He feels cut off from God; when he confronts Him with the question of human

suffering, God becomes a revolting monster. After his second meeting with Jonas, Tomas rejects the god he has until then pretended to believe in. Thereafter, though he conducts another service, his words are hollow. Thus, Tomas does not find God.

Märta neither searches for, nor believes in the existence of God: she feels no need. Though she prays twice, with complete openness, her prayers are motivated not by a wish to find God, but by her desire to help Tomas, whom she loves.

Anna, in The Silence, searches not for God but for physical ecstasy and the ability to do as she wills. She rejects love in favour of sex because she does not want to enter into any deep emotional relationships, even with her son.

Ester, on the other hand, does seek depth of relationship, yet is unsuccessful in attaining it. Nor does she either find or search for God. But her desire to love and be loved illustrates one of the fundamental characteristics of the search for God.

Johan also desires to be loved, specifically by his mother. But she denies him her affection, and the frustration he feels in its absence comes to the fore several times. Johan's search for love bears similarities to the search for God, but Johan finds neither God nor love. Thus, his loneliness is quite authentic.

## Section 2: Conclusions

If a work is studied in a language other than the one in

which it was written, then the quality of the study may depend greatly on the accuracy and precision of the translation. Such is the case with this dissertation: I have frequently drawn conclusions which are based solely on individual words or phrases. Thus, to be safe one might say that these conclusions are valid only with respect to the English translations from which they were drawn.

Nevertheless, I believe that this dissertation has shown the study of Bergman's screenplays in translation to be worthwhile. As well, it has demonstrated that the four screenplays in question depict characters who search for God. And one may safely conclude not only that the majority of these characters fail to find Him, but also that their lack of success is a phenomenon which is ever more applicable to each consecutive screenplay. Indeed, this tendency is so prominent that no one finds God in Winter Light, and no one even openly searches for Him in The Silence.

The tendency, on the part of the search for God, toward barrenness, is but a specific example of a more general trend toward the total silence of God. There are several other examples, not studied in this dissertation, of this general trend. First, there is the movement indoors: in The Seventh Seal the majority of the action occurs out-of-doors; in Through a Glass Darkly a large portion occurs indoors; in Winter Light the majority occurs

indoors, while the world outside disappears slowly beneath a blanket of snow; and in The Silence the only action which doesn't occur indoors is set in the midst of a sterile town. Second, there is the worsening health of the successive main characters: the knight is merely physically uncomfortable (though he does die in the end), whereas Karin is mentally ill, Tomas is physically ill and Ester is dying. Finally, there are the respective endings: Jof and his family amid a clean, fresh morning, saved from Death; Minus, ecstatic over the fact that his father has spoken to him; then Tomas, intoning the empty words of the afternoon service; finally Anna and Johan, sitting at opposite ends of their train compartment, Johan trying desperately to decipher his aunt's incomprehensible letter.

Moreover, the search for God is not the only motif in the four screenplays. For example, each work contains at least one episode, involving an "artistic" performance, which appears to function as a commentary on the role of the artist in society, or the nature of art in general. In The Seventh Seal there are the occasional comic interludes provided by Skat, as well as the play which he and his fellow actors stage in the courtyard of the inn; in addition, there is the procession of the flagellants, a spectacle designed (by the participants) to placate the deity which they presume caused the plague. In Through a Glass Darkly there is the play written and staged by Minus, with its observations

on the nature of the artist's allegiances and priorities. In Winter Light the official histrionics of Tomas are just that, for he does not believe a word of his mutterings. And in The Silence there are the meaningless film which Anna tries to watch, and Johan's hate-filled puppet show.

The search for God has ceased to be a major topic in the films which Ingmar Bergman has made since The Silence. Instead, his recent works explore the ultimacy of human love: they suggest that human love is the source--perhaps the only source--of meaning in life. Thus, Bergman is providing a "humanistic" definition of "ultimate concern" (see page 12).

Ester, in The Silence, already approaches such an outlook in that her primary ambition is not to find God but to love and be loved by her two relatives. Agnes, in Cries and Whispers, similarly searches for love, and serves as a focus for the (largely truncated) affections of the other three women. Finally, there is Jenny in Face to Face: having witnessed the love which still lives on between her aged grandparents, she brings the film to a close with a hopeful look in her eyes; but this hope is not derived from God; rather, it emanates from her new awareness of the reality of human love and its ability to give meaning to life.

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