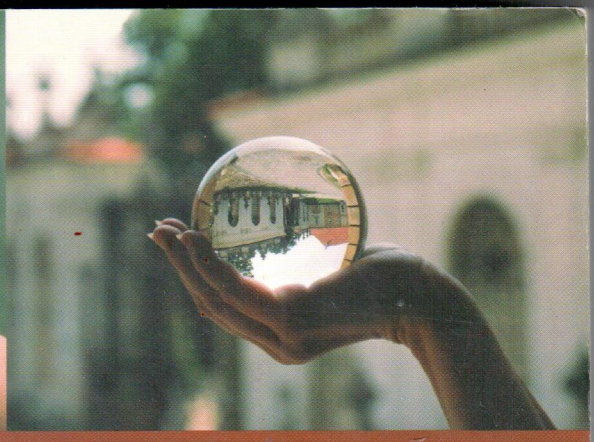
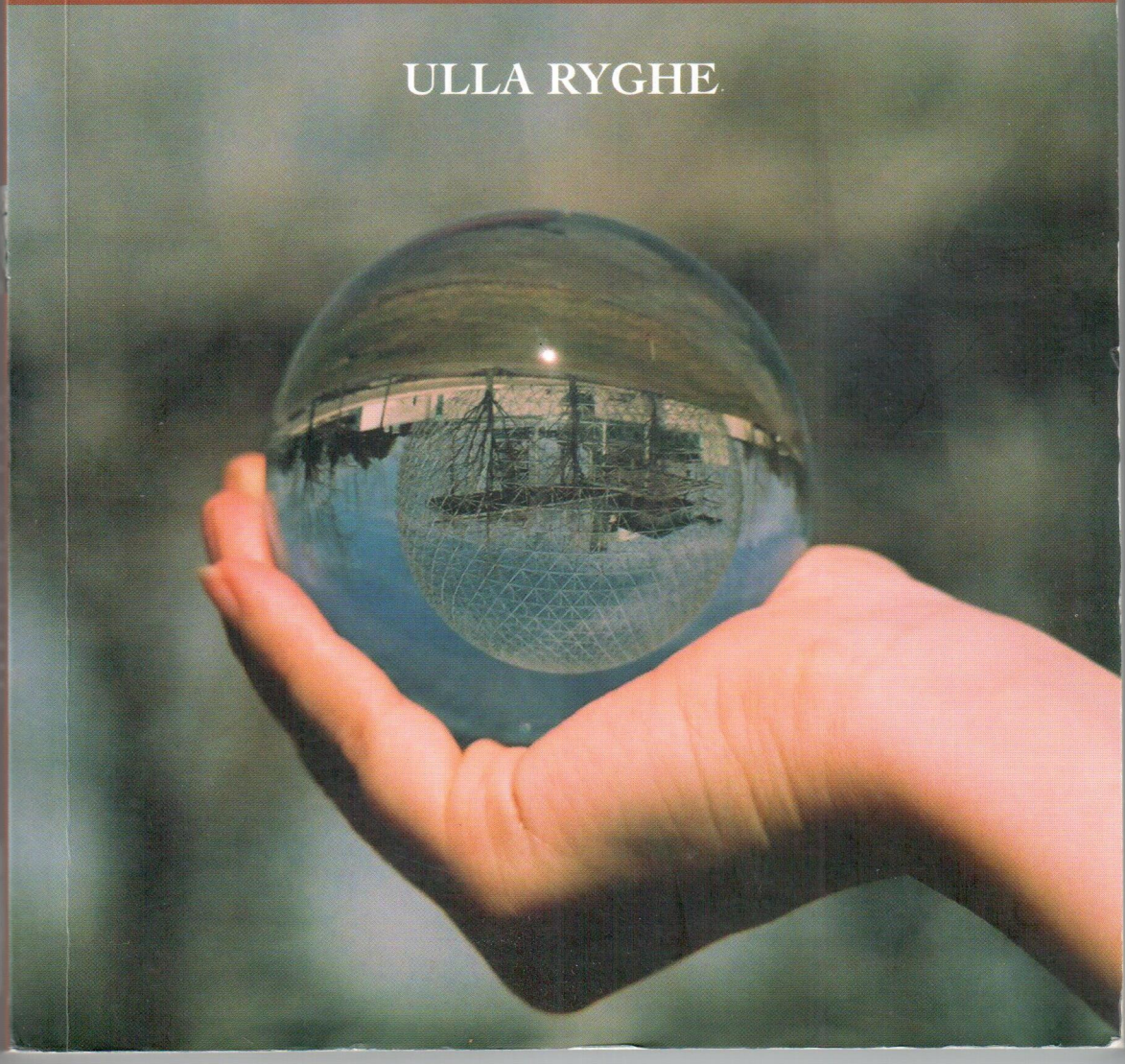


TRAVELS IN WONDERLAND

ULLA RYGHE



Hans and I formed a very compatible foursome with one of my cousins and her husband, who had inherited the most charming qualities from a Swedish father and a Russian mother. When work allowed, we often spent Saturday evenings together over a good dinner and always stimulating conversation, but one specific Saturday turned into a disaster and all because of that cable-filled box that always promises so much but seldom delivers. My cousin had fallen for this latest toy that had not been on the Swedish market for very long. The dinner was as good and enjoyable as ever, but then for the rest of the evening she refused to switch the darn thing off, hoping, against her better judgement, that the next program would be better. For the very first time Hans and I returned home sadly disappointed and not very pleased, having been forced to assist at one of the never-ending birth efforts of Swedish TV.

My introduction to TV had thus not been very positive, but what eventually, against all odds, brought me back to it was the revelation that 'one image is worth a thousand words' was much more than a stock phrase; it *was* reality! For some time already, reader resistance to long articles had become very perceivable, and although you could use illustrations, shorter paragraphs, and other tricks to visually lighten the look, the need for even a minimum of explanations of complicated science still created lengthy articles. The readers for whom I was writing consequently often eluded me. I had grappled with this problem for quite a while before I finally saw a clear pattern. The readers were not very likely to change, and if they did, it would most likely be for the worse, *but* I was changeable. The print journalist was to become an image journalist! People bought more and more TV sets, but seldom reached for the switch-off button and here I saw a possibility to open their eyes and minds to the fact that there was far more to the atom than only the bomb, and that there might exist economic propositions even more creative than running away to the circus. I was convinced that, if

you stopped making it look like 'illustrated radio,' TV could be a fabulously entertaining *and*, at the same time, informative forum. If it was informative, it could be 'educational,' and I could not, and still can not, see that in a negative light. 'Educational' and 'boring' are not inherently synonymous even if lack of knowledge and/or talent among program makers often enough makes it look as if they are. I was at a loss to understand why most of the time they did not exploit TV's mobility and inherent image richness, and eventually I made an appointment with the appropriate TV person. As soon as my lack of proper film knowledge was exposed, I was shown the door. I regarded the gesture as not only offensive but also utterly short-sighted. By then I knew that I had been able to learn a number of very different things, so why not film?

Svensk Filmindustri seemed the ideal place to work. They produced a weekly news reel, but I was told that it was not a money-maker and only kept going because of tradition. They were not prepared to let me work there even without pay, but offered me a job in their publicity department. As I could not see how this would teach me much about filmmaking, I tactfully declined and called the next studio — an act that would instantly transform me from established journalist to a pathetically unskilled assistant editor at Europa Film. The studio director negotiated my employment during this initial telephone call. On my first day at the studio, I understood that it was our conversation that had brought home how alarmingly close the start of Wic Kjellin's five-week summer holiday was. She was the studio's only editor; her absence would leave him not only without his factotum, but also with an empty editing room. I was asked to start the following day, but as I had some loose ends to tie up, I insisted on my need for another week. The morning I first faced Wic, it hit me that I had just five more days to learn the ropes!

Miraculously, I somehow survived those weeks without creating more than one catastrophe, and that one stayed a secret between me and the night watchman. One afternoon, somebody left me a big 16 mm reel and some instructions of what to do with it. Once finished, I lifted, in a very dangerous and totally unprofessional way, an unusually big

and not very tightly spooled reel off the editing table. Before I could blink, the centre bobbin hit the floor, trailing with it a rushing serpentine of film. I finally came to my senses and plunked the rest of the 'cake' on the floor. That's where the night watchman found me hours later when he came to his station outside my editing room door. The open door, the lit room and a snivelling sound made him investigate, and it must have been a sorry sight because he sat down beside me and for quite a while helped to untwist the serpentine and force the bobbin back in place.

Wic had been a negative cutter[1] for some twenty years, and when I met her, she had been a film editor for about five. She was an honest and generous instructor, who with diligence taught me the basics, and if it was not exactly a time of watching fireworks, it certainly brought home how meticulous one needed to be. When I was not needed in the editing room she did not mind me trying my hands at other things. The studio also produced records and had a big music department, and I got a taste of more than just editing. When eventually I joined Svensk Filmindustri, where the structure was stricter and much tighter, I realised how lucky I had been.

The film and TV industries were not the best of friends so, when I sought employment at Europa Film, I had naturally been taciturn about my future plans. That I only intended this to be a three-month employment, after which I would go back to journalism and with the greatest glee make the TV bosses aware that I had added film knowledge to my other assets, was of course never mentioned. When autumn arrived it was completely unexpected to be told that the studio wished to keep me on for good. I knew that I had barely skimmed the surface of film knowledge and that my earlier estimation of the time needed had been somewhat optimistic, but at the same time I was also convinced that I had learned enough to be able to handle TV. I talked to Hans about my options, and he listened — attentively as always — but did not offer any personal opinions; it was my job and my choice.

Contrary to a good number of people in the milieu I came from, I did not see my hitherto zigzag route through life in a negative light —

quite the contrary. In my mind I had gathered skills and knowledge that were an asset, not the least for a journalist, and until now I had regarded this latest know how only as a natural addition. It had never crossed my mind that it might be the means to its own end. More than once I have counted myself lucky that L. had seen in me something I myself had not detected, and had helped to steer me into a field I very much enjoyed and obviously was good at. I was also now acutely aware of something new and very notable: this latest learning curve had been easier than any before. For the first time, the concept of 'learning' had dropped its up to now dominant, uniquely tough-donkeywork aspect, and 'intuition' and 'talent' had suddenly found some voice. It had been a surprise to me to see Wic, with all her experience, hesitating between different alternatives, yet I seemed to have an instinctive understanding of the best solution. I was both puzzled and fascinated by this discovery, but not yet entirely clear about what to do with it. I do not think I had the slightest inkling then, that the magic of images had already not only cast its spell over me, but had also put its claws into me.

I obviously had some soul-searching to do. Was I prepared to give up journalism and my wish to develop it on the TV screen? I had no unambiguous answer, but for some time, on and off I had started to feel that Hans and I had some sort of silent competition going on in the house — something that was not really good for our marriage. There were no concrete signs, only a slight unease on my part, and I asked myself if it would disappear if I did not return to journalism.

After much reflection, I wholeheartedly accepted the offer from Europa Film and would never regret it, but in due time I would also learn that not only had my instinct been correct, my action had only acted as a temporary band-aid. Hans' best friend — a man with considerable psychological insight — after our divorce, pointed out that the only two occupations that Hans would without reservations have accepted in a wife, were teacher or nurse! He was undoubtedly correct, but I all the same deplored my former husband's unwillingness to put problems on the table. Hans thought discussing them would make them even worse — I thought it would clear the air!

To me the laboratory was unknown territory, but one of the things I had discovered in Wic's editing room was how often her intimate knowledge of negative cutting prevented her from making mistakes that later in the process could have had very costly consequences. In my second year at the studio, the film industry endured a lengthy strike, and Wic and I had no work. All the same, we were expected to clock in at the studio every morning. Quickly fed up with doing nothing, I thought it was the perfect time to find out what the studio's laboratory had to offer and went to see the director. He listened patiently to my request, diplomatically called it 'an interesting idea,' and promised to think about it. Obviously he did not understand what I had to gain and did nothing at all. I finally made daily visits to his office, and when he could no longer stomach the sight of me, he grabbed his telephone, called the lab manager, and informed him that he could expect me the following morning.

For the next six months I made my slow but steady way through a film laboratory, mentored by a man who had spent his entire adult life there but who now was close to retirement. He still kept up his high demands and through uncompromising drills taught me every aspect of laboratory work — even hand-bleaching fades as they used to be done before mechanisation took over. I was not 'promoted' before he was satisfied with my work; this way I got a good understanding of what takes place between the editing room and the cinema. To have nagged my way into the laboratory was probably one of the smartest things I did during those two years, although it was not until later that I would fully understand how important it had been. Even at the shaky beginning, this specific knowledge enabled me to edit a work print in such a way that the negative cutting was never compromised. Equally important: I was never forced to take 'No' for an answer when human laziness pretended something could not be done. I *knew* what was achievable and thus was able to argue until I got what I wanted.

Advantageous as all this was, in 1959 it was clear that I had nothing more to learn at Europa Film and gave notice. However, I still wished to stay in the film business and started to look around. Calling

Svensk Filmindustri, I had better luck than the first time. Their chief editor was on sick leave, and by sheer coincidence, their assistant editor had been fired the day before! I was called to an interview with the studio director — a tall, pompous man who did not even invite me to take a seat — and who clearly was not at all happy with the mere thought of a female editor. With a non-functioning editing room, he was not left much choice and finally, barely concealing his reluctance, gave me a three-month probationary contract as assistant editor. My good performance obviously did not change his mind, and he showed the same lack of enthusiasm when he later had to tell me that I was on a regular contract.

So, was there in reality glass ceilings and discrimination in democratic Sweden? Officially no, as the law prohibited it, but the old, stale traditionalists found ways. You could, for example, not advertise for female negative cutters — it had to be for 'negative cutters' period. There are, however, many ways to skin a cat. Men still had higher pay levels than women, so when the ads lawfully mentioned the pay, no men applied, and negative cutting stayed a lower-paying female job. In the long time I spent in the industry, I have met one single man in that job — a very gifted Italian in a Montreal laboratory.

Nothing much happened in my new editing room until, some weeks later, Oscar Rosander came back. He had been at the studio for a long time, always worked on Ingmar Bergman's films and was regarded as the grand old man in Swedish film editing. He was without doubt very accomplished, but unfortunately I soon discovered that my new boss was less grandiose on the human scale. *The Devil's Eye* was in its filming stage, and as Rosander's assistant I did all the preparation work that comes before the serious editing starts. Negative cutters being among the neatest people in the land, one would have expected Wic's editing room to be dust and dirt-free, but it had strangely enough not been a very high priority. Consequently, I had never learned to make an effort to keep the work print in pristine condition. However, the perception that things were different at Svensk Filmindustri had made me ask Oscar Rosander if, as had been my habit, I could mark the

scene numbers on the work print with a white grease pen? He told me it was okay.

The opening of *The Devil's Eye* takes place in hell where Don Juan, punished for his numerous seductions on Earth, is sentenced to encounter a never-ending line of very beautiful women who, alas, vanish as soon as he reaches for them. The set is sparsely lit, and all the walls hung with black velvet. When projected on a big screen the darker an image is, the more noticeable any imperfections will be, and my markings could hardly have been called diminutive. The result was disastrous. Rosander had been with Bergman long enough to know how such things drove him to distraction, and my boss seemed to have cleverly planned to get rid of me through Bergman's ire. Not that it made it more palatable, but I do not think Rosander's action was a result of misogyny, but rather was rooted in human insecurity. Competition scared him, and that was what he had feared since our first day in the editing room. That he could became his own victim had obviously not crossed his mind.

One night after the rushes[2] were screened, Bergman wished to look at the film's opening reel, and already tired after a long day's work, when — on the big screen faced with all the dirt I had unwittingly created — he lost his temper. In front of the crew, the people from the lab, the music director, and of course Oscar Rosander himself, Bergman lashed out at me, finally reducing me to tears. He then stormed out of the theatre followed by Rosander and most of the others. A couple of kind souls stayed back and tried to comfort me by pointing out that this was not serious, it happened to everybody from time to time, and in the long run, it meant nothing. I do not cry often or easily, but when I do.... All the kindness was virtually water off a duck's back, and I regardless continued my impersonation of Niagara.

The next day I was still red-eyed and puffy-faced, and when I passed the shooting stage, delivering a camera test to the cinematographer, Bergman noticed me. I heard a snide remark about my looks and reacted by telling the Director that I was prepared to apologise for a mistake and that he would in all likelihood be spared to see the same

one repeated, but he was to leave my persona alone! Everybody froze. Bergman came up to where I stood, put his arm around my shoulders, and we started a long walk around the outskirts of the stage. I got an explanation for the outburst, an excuse for it, and had my initial glimpse of a man with a great curiosity about people, but a sometimes profound difficulty not to hurt them even though he may like them. We had had our one and only big run-in, and once the air was cleared and the rules set, we worked under a lasting, reciprocal respect for and trust in each other. Honesty is a complex notion with some uncomplicated facets, and as I had understood Bergman's need to know the reality, I took a very straight approach. Later, as the editor, if I had done something stupid — a maddening reoccurrence in the very beginning — I went and told him of my blunder. He would shake his head, tell me I was an imbecile, and that was it! I repaired my mistake, and I never heard about it again. It does not take a genius to understand how lies and subterfuge trigger uncertainty followed by insecurity, and most often *that* was what made Bergman explode. I was, I think, also well served by my notion that reasonable resistance is something we all need, and in that respect Bergman was not different from most other human beings.

Additionally, the incident in the theatre gave me a quick lesson about who was who in the laboratory. During the shooting period, the person responsible for the film was always present at the daily screenings, and for this one, as for all Bergman films, it was a man with a long service record and, I was told, one of Oscar Rosander's old pals. Also present was a young assistant, obviously being groomed, but I had never heard him say a word until the day after the debacle, when late in the day, after most people had already left, he turned up in my editing room. To begin with he made it clear that he had come on his own initiative, and then offered to take all my dirty film over to his department and, after hours, put it through their cleaning machine. This extraordinarily kind offer spared me hours upon hours of work, and from then on I used my grease pens in a very different way.

The following year, when *Through a Glass Darkly* was ready for edit-

ing, Rosander was again on sick leave. It was only supposed to be short, but it gave Bergman the opportunity he obviously had been looking for. Through the grapevine I had heard that on insistence from the company director, but without telling Bergman, Rosander recently had made some alteration to an edit. Bergman of course found out, and as he saw this as a betrayal of trust, something he would not tolerate, he had only bided his time. Now he grabbed the opportunity, insisting that he had to start working immediately and also that he wished me to take Rosander's place. This certainly raised a number of eyebrows, and I am to this day convinced that Bergman's choice was based on a misunderstanding! During my earlier laboratory practice, I *had* spent about a month in the negative-cutting department and thus was familiar with the routine, but it is not a job you master in that short a time. Bergman had obviously heard some rumours, and darting around as rumours do, the feather had become a whole bird. He thought I was a skilled negative cutter, and in his eyes they were people with nerves made out of steel. For him that had an appeal.

It is hardly the ideal situation to, at the same time supervise the editing of your film, and have to train your editor, but that was the situation Bergman had created. I had very limited experience, only basic skills, and was overwhelmed by the sheer size of a footage I clearly needed to learn to memorise. It is true that in the past my visual memory had often saved me, but now, mysteriously, my brain seemed to develop into an immense, constantly growing sponge that effortlessly retained information. I slowly conquered my confusion, but thinking back on *Through A Glass Darkly*, I still see myself more as a pair of human scissors — guided by Bergman — than a truly participating editor. We undoubtedly had a tough time, but by sticking it out, we not only made a film, but also laid a very solid foundation of trust and concord. My skills multiplied in leaps and bounds, and by the next year Bergman had much more of an editor at his side. From the very beginning, I noted that my remarks and/or suggestions always found an ear. The response was not always immediate, but sooner or later I was told 'let's try it' or 'I have thought about it, and I do not wish to do it'

followed by his reasons. It was very instructive, and I admired that in the editing room Bergman was always more intent on getting it right than being right.

His way of looking at his footage formed a tremendous learning trajectory and, I am sure, was among the most valuable coaching during these years. He never wore glasses tinted with the rainbows of what his intentions had been, what he had wished to do, or what he hoped to find on the screen. He instead looked at every image with an acute attentiveness until he was sure of what *the image* was telling. When something did not add up, he lamented over the fact that, even after so many years of experience, he had not been conscious of the solecism at the time it occurred, and then we began to look for possible solutions that would mitigate it. Bergman's capacity to let go of self-indulgent and/or superfluous material was also remarkable, and I never saw him fall for the allure of an image even though he clearly loved it. Never again would I meet a director with the same degree of objectivity that made the Bergman years so blessedly free from the destructive self-indulgence other directors' work occasionally reveal. If I was asked to put together a compilation called *The City In Film*, the opening sequence from *The Deer Hunter* would have its given place, but I would not even think of destroying *Dancing On Celluloid* by including *The Deer Hunter*'s never-ending Ukrainian wedding. Who needs a documentary in an already overly long feature?

Science attachés were part of all the bigger foreign embassies in Stockholm, and they all had regular contact with Hans. He, as well as his weekly page, were highly respected, and consequently, when UD, the Swedish Foreign Office, decided to send their first Swedish science attaché abroad, Hans became their choice. Not one to ever trumpet forth from the roof either good or bad, he came home one evening, showing nothing unusual, but finally during dinner let out about a meeting he had had at UD that same afternoon. They had offered him this new post! It had not yet been decided if it was to be in Washington, USA, or Paris, France, but I was the one jumping up and down, congratulating him over and over again. When asked how I felt about

moving abroad, I reined in some of my bubbly enthusiasm for a change. I thought of it as a tremendous opportunity, the sort of thing that probably only happens to you once in a lifetime, and in my mind it was an offer you simply could not turn down. With the professional 'luggage' I possessed, I did not have any doubts that I would be able to continue in my own field in either country. We did not have children who would be uprooted, and if it had been asked of me, I would have packed my bags the same evening. Only I was *not* the one who had the offer, and while assuring my dear husband that I would happily go with him, I stressed that it was his offer and his decision. No more was said, and for several weeks, increasingly itchy, I kept myself from asking. Then came the fatal dinner when, on its way to my mouth, a spoon filled with delicious green, sweet cicely soup fell out of my hand and made a mighty splash over the table. I had been wrong. My husband was bloody well able to turn down an offer of a lifetime! I could hardly believe what I heard, but Hans had just told me that he had said, 'Thank you, but no thank you' to UD. Why? He could not make himself move that far from his family! I chewed on his answer for a long time. It revealed an insecurity that he had never shown. Or had it been there all the time, but I had not seen it? It also brought with it the sad conjecture that I probably, after all, was not the wife he needed. Some years down the road, this finally was undeniable, and I insisted on a divorce.

THE BEST CURE FOR BOREDOM

Hell has no place in my belief system, but that does not prevent me from picturing what it would be like: never-ending repetition, without any further learning and/or insight. It would probably be completely exhausting to live a life without *some* repetition, but it must be kept to a minimum. The editing room is an ideal place for such requirements: you cut and splice pieces of film together, you roll up trims, log them, and put them aside, but that is basically the extent of the tedium. Each cut is a different choice, and only partly yours since it is —or should at least be — dictated by the actual images. When splicing two bits of film together there is in each piece *one* image that is the perfect one for your cut, and if you find it, you — humble servant of the footage — have made your cut almost invisible!

Bergman's editing room was the perfect place to learn and perfect this art, for nothing was ever done on a whim, rather every move was calculated to serve the whole. His 'kill-your-darlings' mentality was of course what made it possible in the first place, but at the core of the steady progress also lay his methodical way of working. The footage, in order to be manageable, needs to be divided up in separate reels, but they are still part of the whole, and in Bergman's editing room this was never forgotten. Before starting work on a new reel, the preceding one was always looked at in order for us to refresh our memory of its pacing and thus the editing progressed in a steady rhythm, starting at the film's beginning and carried on to its end and each time only a relatively *small* amount of film fell away. The process is like panning for gold; each round washes out more and more of the stones, the pebbles, and the sand until the gold — if there is any — glitters in front of your eyes. Cutting out chunks here and there, just because they *seem* to ask for it, is most often very destructive to the overall pacing, but if each cut is made in function of what came before and what follows, the rhythm inherent in the footage will be released. Our workdays also followed

the same pattern year after year. Bergman arrived at 9:00 AM, and we started in the theatre looking at yesterday's reel(s) on the big screen. Even in Bergman's unusually well thought out and carefully organised film work, sequences had to change place and these screenings always brought that to our attention. The big screen also amplified ungainly cuts that the editing table's small screen had camouflaged. Back in the editing room I put the next reel on my table, and we started to go through it in stops and starts. I took notes of what was to stay and what was to go, and the number of reels we went through each day was merely based on how much work they each appeared to demand. Bergman usually left no later than noon, I took a lunch break, and then started to cut and splice.

When searching for the exact first and last frames in dialogue scenes, it is the rhythm, inherent in the combination of image and sound, that helps to guide you, but when you work with images initially filmed without synchronous sound, you are on your own. Movements in the image can be of some help, but it is not as useful as the rhythm of a soundtrack. I was not comfortable without it and either asked the sound department for some atmospheric sound that fitted the surrounding sequences, or talked to the composer of the film's music. If he could give me a preliminary tape it was even better, and it felt much more satisfactory than just 'blind' cutting of mute footage. As my editing table could only accommodate two sound tracks at the same time, I often had to ask the sound mixer to make premixes, and even if the request was a bit out of the ordinary, he was always the same kind and helpful colleague. Normally the film editor only attends to the dialogue tracks, and all the rest is taken care of by the sound and music editors, but Bergman had an understanding of my need for sound and was fully supportive. He always was. Whatever I did to learn more about my tools as an editor had his approval. There were no unions at the time, and the rules were set more by habit than by principles, and as long as Bergman was happy, nobody at the studio was prepared to rock the boat.

Until I came to this editing room, I had not known a great deal about sound, but I took real pleasure in working with it. The greatest

discovery was to learn how the fusing of all the specific elements was done so that in the end the film resembled a big balloon filled with a gas composed of different elements. Because you had worked with them all, you knew what they consisted of, but when the balloon moved in the wind, they stretched the membrane and kept the balloon afloat but were no longer individually identifiable.

It would have been fun to sit down and compare notes with the editors who worked with a younger Bergman, but even without that, I was fully aware that *my* Bergman was using his considerable experience very wisely and not least yoking it with an admirable amount of discipline. Admittedly, most of the scripts for the films I worked on were written by himself, and I assume that behind the final script lay a visualisation process that had been driving the writing. That must be a great advantage when the camera finally rolls, and I am convinced that, if I was lucky enough to always start out with a manageable amount of footage and at the same time never lack anything of essence, his methodical and vast insight — together with Sweden's limited budgets — played an essential part. Not counting the time for the preparation work that went on simultaneously with the filming, the editing of image and dialogue was usually finished inside seven weeks.

There was no assistant in my editing room. Consequently, at the end of the day, it was up to me to roll up all the trims, mark them, and put them away in such a manner that they could be easily retrieved if needed. This job came at the end of already very long workdays, but since I realised that it helped me in training my image memory, in the beginning I did not really resent it. Later on my attitude changed somewhat, for I had become acutely aware of the fact that the *only* way to learn to become a skilled editor is by training under supervision. Once, on a work visit to one of the biggest film studios in London, England, I had great difficulty in keeping a straight face when the editor and I, after a morning screening followed by lunch, entered his editing room, and the first thing I saw was his five assistants lined up inside the door, sitting there on high tabourets waiting for their master. Sweden is still today a small country with a limited film industry (although the budgets seem

to have swelled), but even in much bigger England, I thought five assistants was overkill; *one* would have made me very happy! What irked me most was not the absence of help, but the industry's lack of foresight. I guess it was in equal parts the result of being penny-wise and pound-foolish — Europa Film had not replaced me when I left — and that the powers that be seem to have conveniently, but erroneously, talked themselves into believing that there was no need to train film editors. Their narrow reasoning was served by the fact that the television industry had started their own training, but precious few of these editors ever transferred to the film industry.

Outside of the periods when he was filming, Bergman and a small group of friends and co-workers came together once a week to look at films and this way we saw a great number of films from different countries that would never have appeared on the commercial circuit. The man who imported Russian films had our great appreciation; through him we were able to screen some remarkable films steeped in an emotional perspective very different from ours. The Russians had also, during the war, captured some territory where advanced film laboratories were located and they had started to experiment with colour film. The results were uneven, but when they were good, they were exquisite! Equally interesting, although most of the time far too garish for my taste, were the offerings from America. Also, the French director René Clement made, I think, a remarkable first when in 1956 he filmed *Gervaise* on colour negative but printed it on black-and-white stock. The method rendered Emile Zola's depressed, poor, smoky Paris of late 1800 an authenticity and strange beauty that gave food for thought. I sussed out what was on offer, and then Bergman and I composed the evening's program, but when we started I am afraid we acted like kids in the candy store. We jammed in far too much, but some not too discreet snoring soon told us that we had to limit ourselves to one, or at the very most, two short films followed by one feature.

The work time with Bergman was blessedly free from unwanted disruptions. No incoming telephone calls, no uninvited guests, and hardly ever any invited ones either. It was not until I emerged into the

'real' world that I understood how 'spoiled' I was, although I do not see it in that light, as effective editing demands a high degree of concentration. I do not think you can successfully multitask when at the editing table. Those were Bergman's needs as well, and the last week of shaping routinely took place away from the demands and the distractions of the studio. We went to Dalarna some 300 km north of Stockholm. The province was rich with echoes from his childhood; Bergman's maternal grandparents had lived there, and as a child and adolescent he spent periods of time with them. His maternal grandfather worked for the railways, and for the boy it must have been a great adventure to be allowed to accompany him when he went to inspect the line on his trolley. No wonder Bergman had a lingering love and an eye for big, smoke-billowing trains! All exteriors and some church interiors in *Winter Light* were filmed in this same landscape.

Siljansborg was a big, old-fashioned hotel known for its good table and its beautiful surroundings. People who could afford it would come there to recuperate after operations, family dramas, and the like, but although we did not fit into any of these categories, the director, the actors, and the whole crew were billeted at the hotel. Table and editor were together shipped to all exterior locations where the editing room replaced the studio cinema for screenings of the daily rushes. At the studio, my editing table had been given a makeover. Solderings were replaced with electrical contacts, boxes were constructed for the different parts of the table, and I got very good at assembling it, taking it apart, and packing it up for transport back to Stockholm. I had been given a crash course in the simpler repairs of its 'entrails,' and technical charts, soldering equipment, and a toolbox became part of my luggage. One room at Siljansborg had been transformed into an editing suite, and when we went back to Stockholm, the installations were left in place. When Bergman and I went there for that last week of 'fine-tooth-comb editing,' we also used the editing room as our evening entertainment zone. Now we took revenge on the drowsy, and it was not unusual for us to delight in several shorts and two feature films even after the daylong focus on 'our' film. If you are hooked, you are

hooked, and there are only a few things in life as relaxing as looking at films, where you are not part of the problems, only the grateful recipient of inspiration and ideas.

I shared Bergman's fondness for Siljansborg — how could you not? No household chores, no need for shopping, good food appearing in front of you at every meal, an hour's daily walk in nature, and first and last film, film, film. As it is, I also had ulterior reasons. When we filmed *Winter Light,* I made the acquaintance of a man who, over the years, afforded rare but much enjoyed company, and who eventually showed a generosity I had done nothing to earn. It was only our second day at Siljansborg, and since the crew was on location, I had a solitary lunch in an otherwise empty dining room. When he entered there was something familiar about this tall figure with a mane of dark hair and strong features, but it took me a while to figure out that I recognised him from a photograph. He was a well-established architect from the south of Sweden and the owner of a substantial sculpture collection that I had read about. What, however, struck me most that day was not his good looks but the nimbus of melancholy that surrounded him. I think we both soon realised how ridiculous it was with the two of us at separate tables at each end of this big dining room, and after a couple of days we asked to be seated together. His conversation was not limited to architecture and art, but was wide-ranging and always interesting, and I think we both enjoyed our lunches. The filming finished, and I returned to Stockholm, but six months later he called me at the studio. He was in town for a couple of days and invited me out for lunch. This habit continued for some years; we met for a stimulating conversation and a good lunch. As our conversations never alluded to the personal, I never got even the vaguest idea where this aura of melancholy was rooted.

When I first started to talk about a divorce, Hans did not want to hear about it, and it took both time and the intervention of his best friend before he agreed. We were by then living in our own house, but even our best efforts to sell it in such a way that we each got an apartment did not succeed. Eventually we found a buyer who could provide an apartment that suited Hans, and I said 'let's take it.' The only way

to find an apartment in Stockholm was still to pay 'key money.' It was not legal, but the law turned a blind eye, so your real problem seemed to be that you never knew who you were dealing with. Would you really get what you had been shown, or would the scam artist take your money and disappear? I was not even sure that my part of the sale of our house would buy me anything at all, nor did I know how to get in contact with this black market. Realising I could not take this stalemate much longer, I decided to put my furniture in storage and rent a furnished room until I could figure something out.

My architect friend made one of his Stockholm visits around this time and we, as usual, had lunch together. I did not mention any of my problems, but he must have sensed that something was not quite right and very gently made me put my problems on the table. At the end of our lunch, he excused himself and left to make a telephone call, came back, and asked if I had time to go and look at an apartment! I was speechless. An hour later I was the tenant of an affordable, sunny, pleasant one-bedroom apartment opposite a park. I had a signed lease, the keys, and a bank account number to which I would pay the 'key money' — once I had my share from our house sale. When the time came, I realised that the bank account was the architect's. He had not only negotiated a reasonable sum on my behalf but also paid it in my name. You can not write thank you notes to bank accounts, and no other lunch date ever gave me the opportunity.

'CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER!' cried Alice[3] — and so did I!

'Experimental' is not the first word that comes to mind when talking about Bergman films, but while in principle retaining his narrative style, Bergman was constantly exploring and pushing the limits of conventional and/or established wisdom. All over Europe, the 60s became a time for change, but while innovations during later decades would basically be technically driven, at this time it was creative thinking and intellectual curiosity that brought about the mutation — not the least in Bergman's cinema. Take a look at the scene in *Through A Glass Darkly* where Karin, after she has seen her father and her husband off on their fishing trip, sneaks up behind her brother and snatches the magazine with nudes he has been ogling. Minus jumps up and, trying to retrieve his precious substitute for Latin grammar, runs after his mocking sister. The chase has a great swirl and high pace to it, but this is not the result of an excellent editing job manipulating a multitude of shots from different angles. Conservatively, we were taught that when filming from a different angle, unless it was a travelling shot, we had to stay inside a 180 degree part of a circle, and for the reverse shots, a move of less than 180 degrees was prescribed.[4] This sequence only consists of two camera placements with exactly a 180 degree shift! It was obviously possible to successfully break the rule, and this discovery called for more of the same. In a later scene where Minus, looking for his now missing sister, climbs down the ladder to the hull of an old shipwreck, the same technique was applied. When we looked at the rushes, the ladder, which in the first shot went from upper right to lower left, had in the reverse one shifted place, now running along the opposite diagonal! We had overlooked the mirror effect, and in order to successfully apply our discovery, there *was* one restriction: the image could *only* contain horizontal and/or vertical elements. Any diagonal components triggered this unacceptable mirror image — unacceptable because it created total confusion.

If, in *Wild Strawberries*, Bergman had exorcised his mortal fright, in *Winter Light* the clergyman's son subjected his religion to a deep, searching scrutiny. The result was a film Bergman himself regarded as 'anti-Christian but not anti-religious.' 'When I started I did not clearly see how much of this whole, bizarre, external lot, which had stratified ever since my childhood, obscured the essential thing.'[5] The Swedish writer Pär Lagerkvist observed that Bergman let go of 'the holy rubbish' that in the church obscured the sacred. Bergman the script writer and Bergman the director also fought another battle. Was *Winter Light* a film the public would come to? *Through a Glass Darkly* had met with approval by the critics, but since their reviews appeared to march to the tune of one-up, one-down, we expected negative reactions to *Winter Light*. The trend was so obvious it turned into an editing room joke: 'Oh, isn't it great, now we are going to work on a masterpiece!' Next film and we would mockingly lament: 'Oh no, we have a flop on our hands.'

Hardly anybody is likely to regard it as a good idea to start a feature film with the entire length of the morning service, including holy communion, but Bergman initially thought it could work without making the film front-heavy. His religious respect also made it questionable not to start the service at its proper beginning, but once in the editing room the director in him saw that the earliest part had to go.

Winter Light was shot in fifty-seven days and had an unusual number of scenes re-shot — mostly for technical reasons. A Newall camera had replaced the Mitchell, but we did not have the American service, where the camera, during the whole shoot, would be attended by a factory engineer, and our Newall caused us technical problems resulting in re-shoots. A then new, highly light-sensitive negative, Double X, was used but the negative batch, reserved for the film, unfortunately had some problematic reels. All the same, it *was* a great negative for the light Bergman wanted for this film 'at the bottom of the vale of tears' — austere, grey, and lifeless as only a Swedish midwinter day can be. All aesthetically pleasing illumination from artificial light sources was banned and more and more lamps turned off until Sven Nykvist, the

Director of Photography, and the not very happy electrician mostly worked with candles. Finally Bergman had the compressed, realistic light he envisioned. The old, time-honoured clap,[6] which not only spread chalk dust but also did its best to fray actor's nerves, was no longer clapped in front of their faces. It had been replaced with an electronic signal from the Nagra,[7] but the device had been incorrectly hooked up, and the sound tapes did not sound as they ought to. When this mistake was discovered, two days worth of work had to be discarded. And yet another re-shoot followed.

As if all this technical devilry was not enough, Gunnar Björnstrand, although one of Bergman's favourite actors, struggled with his role as the doubt-stricken clergyman, wondering if there was *anything* in this character that the public would like? Most of the the technical mishaps caused irritation and slowed down the beginning of the shoot, but I believe they were not entirely unappreciated, in as far as they all gave the director another opportunity to work with the actor on his performance.

During various times, although in vastly different guises, film has always made use of 'sign language' of one sort or another. The most well known were probably the fade[8] and the superimposition[9] that were constantly used during the silent period to signal to the audience that time had passed — the 'fade' — or that the story had moved to another location — 'super' for short. As did most other directors, Bergman made use of these devices, but he also gave them a newness we had not seen before. I do not know where his inspiration came from; was it his keen interest in and considerable knowledge of cinematography that led him to it, or had he somewhere come across something similar and made it his own? Whatever the source, *Winter Light* has a number of unusual-looking superimpositions that were achieved by keeping, for a short moment, the middle part of the fades in unchanging light, before letting it all fade conventionally. A traditionally executed superimposition has a calm, floating feel to it, but when the middle frames of momentarily unchanged exposure hover above and beneath each other, it takes us to metaphysical spheres where the here-and-now-reality is being manipulated. The film becomes the instrument that

pushes us beyond our daily realness into a dream world, where we are made to believe in experiences as yet unknown. Both the director and his editor took to the new manipulation and used it more than once, not least in *Persona,* where the technique really shows its versatility.

Multi-camera shoots were not on Bergman's menu when I was his editor, but as an exception, it was used once in *Winter Light.* The short duration of the desired low afternoon light when filming the fisherman's suicide, together with the time-consuming make-up and the need for perfect continuity, would have made a single camera shoot a nightmare. Not having done any multi-camera editing before, I did not know that it would be different, but it *was.* However I cut between the two cameras it did not *look* right, and before I finally understood that I should drop logic and only trust my eyes — if it *looks* right it *is* right – my trial-and-error 'editing' had left me with the most spliced-together piece of film that I have ever produced. Filmstrips resembling minced meat do not go smoothly through projectors, so I also had to eat humble pie and order a new work print that I then had to fashion accordingly.

The making of *Winter Light* was documented in a unique way. An old friend of Bergman — the journalist and writer Vilgot Sjöman — was preparing three TV programs about the director and his film. After having done interviews and sound recordings during the shoot, he later occasionally also turned up with his microphone in the editing room. 'L136' was Svensk Filmindustri's production number for *Winter Light,* and Sjöman would eventually publish *L 136, Dagbok with Ingmar Bergman.*[10]

When we edited *Winter Light,* Sjöman, who by then had also become a budding filmmaker, was also at the editing stage of his first feature film. In our editing room he not only got material for his TV programs but also, I think for the first time, had the opportunity to see Bergman exercise his unfailing detachment in front of his own footage. As a director, Sjöman was of course not as experienced as Bergman, but more to the point, Bergman's disciplined lack of attachment did not have concordance with Sjöman's less generous nature, and *that* prevented him from seeing that, for the overall balance of the film, the cutting of the scripted and subsequently filmed opening was a necessity.

'After all that hard work, after all that trouble!' Sjöman questioned, but Bergman was adamant, brandishing his favourite war cry: 'Kill your darlings!' Not just years of experience, but also an unusually critical eye, not least when trained on his own work, had taught Bergman what worked and what did not. And it did not stop in the editing room. Once his films were released, Bergman used to go to the cinema and sit in the dark, taking in how the spectators reacted to the film. Diminishing attention was a signpost worthy of attention! It probably does not boost your ego all the time, but it is undoubtedly one of the surest ways to clearly understand the nature of your mistakes.

Bergman had learned to always exercise a healthy mistrust in front of the images he cherished the most. In *Winter Light*, driving to the afternoon service, the pastor has to stop his car at a level crossing. Together with the red-nosed, cold-stricken school teacher, he sits waiting when a big smoke-billowing train passes. The images were stunningly beautiful, and we had plenty — but most of them fell in my trim bin! Sjöman was almost at a loss for words, but Bergman insisted: 'The novice loves every image he has created; only experience teaches him severity, distinction. The healthiest of all work maxims: Be suspicious of what you have fallen in love with. Kill your darlings!'

Later, editing one of Sjöman's feature films, I realised that, although he now had more experience, he was in some respects still what Bergman labelled 'the novice.' To my unspoken irritation, he would drag superfluous footage with him for what felt like an eternity. Sooner or later it had to be dropped, but in the meantime this habit had not only made the job harder but in one respect also riskier. Repetitive looking has a tendency to blur your initial vision. If I, with my habit of looking at images all the time, am struck by something special at that first viewing, there is a good chance that others will be struck too. Lengthy, repetitive viewing of similar takes has a fading effect on the perception, and that is why I wish to avoid it as much as possible. No wonder Bergman's usual habit to make his choice between duplicates at the daily screenings was such a help in keeping one's judgement sharp.

His attention to detail did not stop with the image. His love for the human voice was as great as his love for music, and as a musical 'instrument,' it was always treated with the care given to treasures. Bergman detested mumble, did not tolerate it, and insisted that if there was dialogue, it was meant to be heard. He also maintained the notion of sound perspective, and I can only recall one very notable exemption. It occurs at the end of *Through A Glass Darkly* where Minus, in a very wide shot, runs along the beach. The boy is a distant figure in the landscape, but his shouted 'Dad spoke to me' has the sound perspective of a close-up. Equally important was the atmospheric background sound; it had to be crystal clear and, like dialogue, void of any technical interference. His special bête noire was a very faint repetitive noise that from time to time could be heard from somewhere inside the camera. All efforts to eliminate it were in vain: even after the camera had been wrapped in the thickest of covers, you could pick it up. The technical sophistication on the sound side was not yet what it would later become, and post-synchronisation all too often lacked the vibration always present in natural sound. Even when mixed with atmospheric sound, it was not equal to original dialogue sound, and Bergman detested it. He only used post-syncro sparsely and for very short dialogue. When filming *Silence*, the problem was acute; any interference would disturb the desired sharp contrast between the rumbling sound of a tank driving through the deserted streets and the eerie silence in Ester's[11] hotel room. Bergman solved his problem by inventing the 'wild' sound.

All dialogue scenes were shot in two different ways. The first was in the usual manner with synchronised sound, but as long as the sound was clearly audible, the boom man, for once, did not have to worry about the quality of his recording. When Bergman was happy with the performance and the cinematographer was sure that his camera movements were all correct, the scene was repeated. Now with only the Nagra running and no longer restricted by the framing, the microphone was free to find its ultimate position. In the editing room, it was then up to me to format the 'wild' sound in such a way that it became

congruous with the original take in every minute detail. The sound system in my editing table, originally not very sophisticated, was upgraded, and a set of earphones helped me to work undisturbed by external noise. The work had its surprises: some because of the nature of acting, some of a technical nature.

In the theatre there is a give and take between the good actor and a captive audience and this has an effect on the timing of the delivery — pauses are stretched to their maximum! While filming, the all observing, but inert camera lens has replaced the emotive reactions, and for some actors that impacts on their pacing. The practical effect showed immediately. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the 'wild' sound takes were shorter than those recorded when camera and sound had been running together. Seldom a great deal, but there was a small difference that needed some adjustment.

Instinctively, I took the same piece of tape from a new transfer, but to my big surprise it did not work. I could not give a name to what had happened — all I knew was that it did not sound correct. After some experimenting it became clear that if I instead chose a pause from another place on the same tape, the correction was inaudible. The explanation is probably the actor's breathing, so light that the ear hardly picks up on it, but some days these pauses were driving me batty. The work *was* very interesting, but also totally exhausting. There were times when I ended up not trusting either my judgement or my ears any longer. The entire dialogue track in *Silence* is constructed this way; Bergman loved the results of my labour, but the success of the method had its price. From then on each time he heard irrelevant noises he called for wild sound. It certainly made the filming easier, but when continuity did not react to actors making dialogue changes between takes, the method became a nightmare at my end. I raved and ranted and eventually put a sign on my editing room door: 'In here the impossible is done every day, but please note that miracles demand more time.' Even with the help of time the 'miracles' could not always be performed, and wild sound became *my* bête noire.

My favourite Bergman film? Each time the question is asked I

hesitate for a moment, for every new film meant renewed pleasure and satisfaction, but I seem to always end up choosing *Persona* — because of the film itself and also due to some newness in the editing routine. The beginning, the middle, and the end of the film were noted but not elaborated on in the script — nor filmed at the same time as the rest of the footage. These sequences were slowly built during the editing process, image by image with shots from earlier films, which Bergman already had in mind, and new ones — the old type of projector with its glowing coal bar among others — but the film itself, together with logic and emotion, also 'suggested' some images. Ideas were tossed around, 'shopping lists' given to Sven Nykvist, who went out and filmed. New images were incorporated, visuals changed place, some ended up in the trim bin. New orders were issued, and finally, one day, the three sequences felt right.

Once the film was released, we had a delightful and, at the same time, annoying surprise. The images of the coal bar burning the film were so realistic that the projectionists thought that the film was on fire and stopped the projection! The newer safety film does not burn, explode, or melt as the old acetate-based film had done, but that seemed to have been forgotten in the heat of the moment. Notices, warning the projectionists that this was only an effect, had to quickly be printed and pasted in each can containing the 'dangerous' reel.

These sequences have often raised the question, 'What does it mean?' I do not think they in themselves import something specific, but they are signposts telling us that we have left 'reality,' as in daily life, and gone through the looking glass. Different rules are at work, and consequently anything can happen, as it does in dreams. Logic, as we know it when awake, is no longer applicable, distance is not a problem, time not an issue, and so on. If we are willing to open up to such feelings, it becomes easily acceptable, and it is such a pity that the audience, to a large degree, has let itself believe the critics' dictum that Bergman films are 'difficult' films. That they are serious films and very emotional ones I think is beyond question, but that does not necessarily make them difficult to understand or relate to. But if you do not like

the message, you can of course — although it is not very fair — shoot the messenger.

Initially *Persona* was not planned for 1965. It was not even written. On the table was a three-hour long sombre manuscript, but in spring when the preparations had just started, Bergman was taken ill and admitted to hospital. Everything was put on hold, and when he was on his feet again, there was not really enough time to set such a big film in motion. I think *Persona* was brought about by two things: by having revisited old territory from his childhood, and then, when he had just come home from the hospital, a chance meeting did the rest. The private hospital *Sophiahemmet* had its own chaplain, and Bergman's father had once filled the position. The family at the time lived in a house on the hospital grounds, and young Ingmar had played in the surrounding park with its morgue and a house for old retired nurses.

In 1964 Bibi Andersson played the leading role in a film in Norway and had then met Liv Ullmann, an already well-known stage actress. The two became friends, and in spring 1965 Liv had come to Stockholm to visit Bibi. Out walking one day, they met Bergman, and the three of them stood talking for a while. Bergman's film-trained eye immediately noted the sameness in the shape of their heads and details of resemblance in their faces, and in his mind it gelled with old memories, thoughts, and observations of human behaviour during his hospital stay. He went home and wrote *Persona* in a surprisingly short time, leaving the other script on a back burner. It was never realised, although parts of it have shown up in later Bergman films.

When reading the script of *Persona,* I had not detected anything out of the ordinary. In the early part there was a fairly elaborate sequence in which, after leaving her patient,[12] the nurse[13] goes back to her quarters in another wing of the hospital, and before she finally goes to bed, busies herself with a number of things. It was not until I actually saw the images that I started to wonder how Bergman intended to cut these scenes together. That was unusual, for I normally would have had a pretty good idea of his intentions from reading the script. When editing started, I usually only took notes or marked the film when he asked

me to do something that varied from what I had expected, but this time it was different. When we went through the sequence for the first time, I marked and scribbled in an unusual way that made Bergman nervous. 'Is there anything wrong?' 'No, no! But you wish to start here?' — big in-mark on the film — 'and end here?' — big out-mark. This went on for most of a morning, and when lunchtime came, a rather unhappy Bergman left the editing room. An equally unhappy editor started to work and blindly followed marks and notes, but the cuts did not make any more sense now than when I had marked them. Once finished, I spooled the film to its beginning, sat back, and looked at what I had done. It not only made perfectly good sense, but even more to the point, it created an interesting contrast to the surrounding rhythm, and it finally dawned on me that Bergman, in the same film, successfully had brought together two differently styled narratives. My confusion did hurt for I thought I had reached a level of insight and workmanship that would allow me to detect whatever my director had intended. That's what vanity does for you, digging the potholes, so you can fall head first into them!

As long as you take some learning from a comedown, it *has* served some larger purpose, and in *Shame* it brought to bear. Bad acting by a normally very accomplished actor put us in trouble, especially as continuity dictated that at least part of the role had to be left in. We tried all sorts of cuts, but nothing worked. Spooling back and forth, I suddenly remembered the sequence that had been my nemesis in *Persona* and figured that the same principle could now be applied. I started to suggest cuts that made Bergman stare at me as if I had gone mad, but as he had no counter proposition, I was told to try it. He left tired and irritated, but not before letting off some steam: 'We can always order a new work print when you have destroyed this one,' and he was gone. Later that afternoon, when I was in the midst of my creative efforts, Bergman came back very quietly and without a word positioned himself behind my chair. For about fifteen minutes he stood there looking at what I was doing, and not a word was said. Then he left as silently as he had entered. Although initially suspicious, he was too intrigued to

wait for the following day's screening. Curiosity was, among many other things, a substantial part of Bergman's makeup, and he had learned how all his different tools functioned. There was never any doubt as to who was the conductor of the orchestra, but Bergman also greatly appreciated his 'musicians' and once he had given his instructions left them to their tasks, and later often voiced his appreciation of their work.

My re-cutting had worked, and the following day Bergman was happy and complimentary but also very curious about where I had picked up the idea. Laughingly I told him *he* had taught me, with the opening sequence in *Persona*. Paying attention to *what* he did and *how* he did it — and in what context — taught me something new almost every day. It all had a natural logic that I found easy to understand and retain, but when he got into his pedagogic mode, which fortunately did not happen very often, I felt things became complicated. The re-cutting in *Shame* made me also, probably for the first time, become fully conscious that the forceful impact of the virginal first-time-view has more than one aspect to it. I have earlier mentioned how quickly the newness of the imprinting fades, but this latest re-editing made me also clearly understand that a successful outcome only is possible if and when you have arrived at a different pattern of thinking and can see your images through a 'new pair of eyes.' It is far from easy, and I do wonder over the strength with which nature seems to resist obliteration of that first look. Is there in this context a connection between us and birds, who might disappear if imprinting of their migration routes faded?

By 1965 film censorship had eased considerably in Sweden — at least compared to some countries outside Scandinavia — and more and more overtly erotic content appeared on the screens. Bergman, in *Persona*, not only went the other way, but he also avoided the pit-fall of flashbacks! I take my hat off. There is no sex, no nudity beyond bathing suits — and in *Persona* they are not even bikinis —but I think it is the most erotic of all Bergman's films. To make it all the more astonishing, the effect is created by the deadliest sin in filmmaking — exposition! The first rule — *show*, do not tell — is gloriously broken in

an interior scene in a summer cottage where the actress and her nurse sit together late at night. A heavy summer rain is falling outside, an open fire gives warmth to the night, and the two women have had some wine. The actress, who with great willpower has not uttered a word for some considerable time, is still silent while the nurse, as usual, chats away. Out comes an event that took place a couple of years back when the nurse, already engaged to a young doctor, had spent some summer time on a small island. When her fiancé returned to his work during the week, she kept company with another girl, and thinking themselves alone on their island, the two went swimming in the nude. One day two young boys appeared, and the older one eventually had sex with both girls. The following weekend the fiancé was back, and she recalls that 'our sex had never before or later been as great as then.' Soon after, the nurse found herself pregnant, and her fiancé helped her to arrange for an abortion. 'We did not want any children, at least not then.'

She has never told her story to anyone, but this night it tumbles out. Her belief that she has found a good, elder sister in the actress and carried by warm, comfortable feelings of trust, and a glass too many, the bubble of guilt finally bursts open. All we *see* on the screen is the nurse in her white bathrobe slouched at the table, telling her story. The actress, dressed in an elegant night gown, is propped up on her bed listening and looking. And storing facts for later use. Ullman is performing in this scene the most eloquent intellectual cannibalism I can recall ever having seen on the screen. I have over the years also had unmitigated pleasure in listening to all the sex-scenes described to me; scenes *I* never edited, but all figments of sexual fantasies and, no doubt, a somewhat faulty memory of the film.

Editing *Persona*, we had, on more than one occasion, very good reasons to grumble about less than adequate continuity, and one day Bergman declared that, in the next film, I was going to do the job. Keeping the continuity going through a film shoot is immensely demanding, and it is also a very delicate job. An eye for detail is needed, constant attention, speed, diplomacy, presence of mind and that is probably only half of it. I had never been trained in this capacity, and I

had absolutely no wish to try it. Being richly endowed with what the French so tellingly designate as *l'esprit d'escalier*[14] I need time to think before correcting what turns out to be a mistake. The editing room provides you that time, but the set hardly ever does. The cost of mistakes can be exorbitant, and they make life unnecessarily difficult for the actors, not to mention the director. I doubted I would be good at it, and although from an editor's point of view I would deeply appreciate improved continuity, I had no desire either to learn the job or to do it. I also feared that the script girl's intimate knowledge of the footage would rob myself as editor of one of my most valuable assets: the freshness of the eye seeing an image for the first time.

I felt experimentation had gone one step too far, but all my arguments were countered. When Bergman wanted something badly enough, his powers of persuasion were beyond belief. So, on *Hour of the Wolf* I reluctantly found myself occupying the script girl's chair. The first week was sheer hell, and I only survived thanks to help from a totally unexpected source. The chief electrician and the gaffers kept an eye on me and would pass me whispering, 'Have you noted this?' 'Don't forget to take a Polaroid of that' or whatever they thought I may not have remembered. They were all old hands, and I had by then been at the studio long enough to know them — sort of — but I had never worked with them. Their concern and helpfulness were deeply touching, and if I managed to get through the ordeal without too many scratches, it was purely thanks to their generosity.

Finally back on firmer ground in my editing room, I eventually discovered that the experience had actually given me some advantages. If I needed to look at a different take of a scene, my image and sound memory were so clear that a glance at my continuity notes immediately told me whether or not that take was even worth looking at. It also came as a big, but very pleasant, surprise to discover that the freshness in front of the images was still there. Both on the set and when looking at the rushes, I guess I had been far too occupied with the myriad of technical details to see anything else. Although I had been deeply involved with the film for months already, it was only in the editing

room that I really perceived the artistic qualities in *Hour of the Wolf*.

The experience had been gruelling, and although the result was satisfactory, I was not going to repeat it — whatever Bergman said or did. Entering into the editing of the film, the memories faded, but my continuity script refused to let go of two particular days. It had been covered as carefully as possible and had gone through some extensive cleaning, but it still gave off a lingering, very unpleasant smell of bird droppings, courtesy of a flight of beautiful white pigeons scared witless. The film has a night scene where the birds unexpectedly appear in the dark, and a keeper of carrier pigeons had brought some fifteen birds to the studio. The scene was set up and rehearsed without disturbing the birds, and eventually we were ready for a take. The camera rolled, the cages were opened, the birds flapped their wings, exited their cages, and flew straight up to a cornice under the ceiling. There they sat! Nothing would make them lift until they were prodded with long fishing rods, and during that exercise they 'rained' on anything and everything. The following morning the cornice was gone, many more birds were waiting, as were stagehands all waving their fishing rods just out of the camera's lens field, with the hope of keeping the birds in it. As they now had nowhere to land, they flew around in a very agitated state, crapping on us even more badly than the day before. I had constructed a plastic tent for my script and dressed myself in my sailing gear, but the sound engineer was not tolerant of the 'plops' oilskin and plastic emitted when crapped on, and my camouflage had to come off. At the end of the day, I spent a long time in the makeup department's shower, sending thoughts of admiration to the people who had worked on Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

With *Now About All These Women*, Bergman, in 1963, took the big step into colour, but it was not done lightly. Looking at colour films, especially American ones, Bergman often voiced his aversion for their screaming brightness, and if *he* was going into colour it had to be something light and elegant. We looked at a great number of colour films from different countries, and eventually a meeting with all his technical personnel was held. Long discussions resulted in elaborate test shoot-

ings that went on for months, and I can not think of anything at all that was not put under the lens before a choice was made. Raw stock, positive film, different kinds of makeup, dress material, wallpaper, upholstery, nature's different shades of green, you name it. Everything was tested with different light and in particular combinations, and every combination got its own identification number. The job to keep track of it all had become mine. It was an unusual job for an editor but also a rare opportunity. Normally I only saw results, now I could observe how they were obtained. The time and effort spent on all this certainly paid off as the final film has a very stylish tone.

I guess it might have given Bergman some measure of satisfaction to use his own medium in both mocking his adversaries — the critics — and give the audience *his* take on the idols and their idolaters, but *Now About All These Women* will never have a place among the great Bergman films. All the same, I have always felt that it was treated a bit unfairly; not because of what it was, but rather because of what it was not! Ever since the delightful *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955), the public wanted Bergman to make another comedy, but he did not oblige. When *Now About All These Women* came out, it was regarded as a comedy but of lesser quality than *Smiles*, while in reality it is a satire. It is a very elegant, and sometimes very witty one, but also a rather jaundiced reflection on the ways present society treats their artists, and that criticism did not go down well. I had some fun working on it, but it is not a film that moves me, and I think it has to be attributed to the aloofness of Jarl Kulle — the comedian who plays the role of the Writer-Critic. He is, as always, very elegant and sometimes also funny with all his stupid manners, but he is ice-cold, and there is not even a scrap of affinity between him and the beautiful and attractive women who flutter through the film. Rumours had it that they all, at one time or another, had been the director's amours, and I do not think everybody looked forward to the location filming, where we all would stay in the same hotel. But we need not to have worried: everybody was on their best behaviour to an extent that was almost laughable.

Thanks to my involvement in the elaborate preparations, I spent

much more time on *Now About All These Women* than any other Bergman film, and my last glimpses of it somehow *fitted* the film. When finally one could be sure that the sets and props would not be needed anymore, the cleanup started. We were already well into autumn. One day I happened to pass the painters' building on the studio grounds, and outside, surrounded by a number of potted palm trees that looked strangely familiar, stood a young apprentice wiping each and every thin leaf with some foul-smelling paint remover. The exotic plants had been rented, but as their natural colour in Bergman's eyes looked too similar to spinach-green — and that was a no-no — they had been treated with a greyish spray. Convinced that the nursery would prefer to get them back in their natural splendour, the props master had ordered the rub off. I suspect the future life spans of the trees and that of the film might in the long run have matched each other. The following year we were back to black and white. Can you imagine *Persona* in colour?

Travels in Wonderland is an engaging and charming memoir by a fascinating woman. Ulla Ryghe came of age during the Second World War in a neutral Sweden, placed between occupied Norway and Denmark, and thus got her first taste of adventure. From birth, curiosity was bred in her bone, and it made her an explorer; a woman in the male-dominated worlds of newspapers and film companies. She started to travel, got a foothold in Cyprus and bought a house there — the Bitter Lemon House which inspired the Lawrence Durrell novel. During the 1960s she became Ingmar Bergman's film editor and *Travels in Wonderland* contains a rare insider's account of his daily work routine. Ryghe, in her quest to learn about the world, left her secure job. She fell in love with Montreal while working at the NFB; helped take film schools in Sweden and Australia from chaos to functionality; and taught her inventive script-editing course in Singapore and Brunei. Naturally the book interrogates many aspects of filmmaking, but make no mistake, there is much more — people, relationships, gardens — all inundated with Ryghe's boundless curiosity, humour and intelligence.

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