A CINEMA OF OBSESSION

THE LIFE AND WORK OF MAI ZETTERLING

MARIAH LARSSON

A Cinema of Obsession

Wisconsin Film Studies

Patrick McGilligan
Series Editor

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Mariah Larsson

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A Cinema of Obsession

INTRODUCTION

It sounds obsessed. Well, I am obsessed!
MAI ZETTERLING,
"You Must Make People Angry"

In 1978, film director and actress Mai Zetterling visited Thule (Qaanaaq) in Greenland and became fascinated. She was invited by famed British polar explorer Wally Herbert. Herbert planned to circumnavigate Greenland by kayak and dogsled, and he wanted his expedition to be documented and broadcast on television. Zetterling was the director he engaged to film this trip around the largest island in the world. Herbert explained that this would be an epic challenge, demanding skill, endurance, experience, and fearlessness. He wrote: "The appeal of this journey goes far deeper than the challenge; for an epic journey is not merely an exercise in skill—it is an original achievement which enriches mankind by its stiring [*sic*] example and its contribution as an exploration to the sum total of human knowledge. . . . It will be an epic journey brought into the home through the medium of a dramatic series of television films."[1]

Due to bad weather, Herbert was forced to cancel his expedition less than halfway through. The explorers met up with Zetterling in Thule, where she had shot some footage for the TV series, but because of the difficulties involved in the journey—both concerning the actual circumstances of traveling in the Arctic and the complications of filming in the dark days of the polar winter—she would not travel with them but would meet them at certain intervals along the way. Because of the cancellation, nothing came of these plans, and there was no TV series about the circumnavigation of Greenland.

Nonetheless, during her short visit, Zetterling had fallen in love with Greenland. Undaunted by the Herbert project failure, she embarked on a different kind of journey—through board rooms and meetings—and managed to raise funds from the Danish company the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department to make a film about seal hunting on Greenland. It was an auspicious time to propose such a project, since French film star Brigitte Bardot had recently spoken out about the evils of seal hunting with the example of the north Canadian seal hunt, which involved clubbing baby seals. The images of Bardot on the ice next to a cute baby seal spread across the world, and seal furs were shunned. For the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department, the economic loss of decreasing fur sales was not huge, but the promotional value of another (former) actress and movie star, speaking in favor of seal hunting, was too much of a temptation to pass up. In May 1979, Zetterling returned to Greenland with a small crew, including Swedish cameraman Rune Ericson, with whom she had collaborated on several films, and her young lover, Glen Grapinet, to shoot the half-hour documentary *Of Seals and Men*.[2]

This story is significant in several ways. First, it demonstrates Zetterling's unflinching determination to bring a project or idea to its conclusion and how she navigated alternative forms of financing to make it possible. Second, it demonstrates her keen eye for subjects that were both opportune (seal hunting was a hot topic at the time) and inopportune (but promoting seal hunting ran the risk of being perceived as following the lead of evil capitalist multinational companies, and doing so financed by a colonialist power was even worse). A third significant aspect is her passionate and sometimes romanticizing fascination for various peoples, cultures, and places on the margins of Western culture—she "fell in love" with Greenland because it was Other and so utterly different from the comfortable, civilized nation-states in which she had grown up and lived.

Finally, this story juxtaposes two such opposite characters as famous polar explorer Herbert, later knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, and a feminist actress-cum-director of Swedish origins in her fifties. Who was this person Herbert approached to immortalize his epic journey for the screen?

Mai Zetterling

At a time when gender relations and the representation of women in film are heatedly debated (not least in the wake of the mobilizations of

the #MeToo movement beginning in the fall of 2017), Zetterling's life, career, and films emerge as significant contributions to film history and the history of women in film and television. Making her feature film debut with *Loving Couples* (*Älskande par*) in 1964, she worked through the 1960s in the male-dominated traditional film industry, through the 1970s as a transnational feminist filmmaker, and through the 1980s by taking advantage of new opportunities, provoking controversy and scandal on several occasions until her untimely death at age sixty-eight in 1994. She is unusual for having worked in documentary, short film, feature films, and television, while also writing novels and short stories. Politically, she claimed to belong within a leftist intellectual tradition and for a while was under investigation by MI5 (the UK counterintelligence and security agency).[3] Nevertheless, the ideology expressed in her films dealt with alienation in modern welfare societies and a deep romanticizing of cultures on the margins of mainstream Western society. Her representations of sexuality and gender were conservative and radical at the same time: paradoxical, often strongly symbolic, fascinated with female sexuality and reproduction, and oscillating between homophobia and a queer representation of same-sex relations. Her films are visually striking and their narratives often controversial.

Her symbolic value has increased in the early twenty-first century: a new online journal of feminism and visual culture in 2018 named itself *MAI: Feminism and Visual Culture*. On its website, the editors, Anna Backman Rogers and Anna Misiak, explain the name: "Inspired by our patron, Swedish actor and film director, Mai Elisabeth Zetterling (1925–1994), we refuse to shut up."[4] The Faceted Zetterling Project, set up in 2012 by Julia Milliken, Siân Murray, and Jane Sloan, consists of an online resource—the Mai Zetterling Digital Archives—and a series of interviews available on YouTube.[5] In 2005, Norwegian artist Unni Gjertsen's *The Mai Zetterling Project* was exhibited in Stockholm.[6] Here, a counterfactual historiography demanded a new space for Zetterling in film history. In black printed letters on huge, white posters, bold statements such as "Many streets and city squares are named after Mai Zetterling," "Mai Zetterling was a genius," or "Mai Zetterling's political influence is enormous" provoke and confound viewers. Since 2006, Konstnärsnämnden, the Swedish Arts Committee, annually awards the Mai Zetterling prize to film artists, with recipients including Lena Einhorn (2006), Erik Gandini (2012), Mia Engberg (2013), and Ahang Bashi (2017). In 2006, in an attempt at provocation, I wrote in my dissertation that "inevitably, for a Swedish film scholar or journalist with

feminist inclinations, Zetterling has, in fact, become just as indispensable as Ingmar Bergman."[7] I based this statement on the observation that in the small pool of Swedish women cinephile writers, a large share had at some point written something about Zetterling, usually pointing to her unfair treatment by the (patriarchal) Swedish art cinema institution.[8] (No one, however, seemed very provoked by my claim.)

Perhaps one reason Zetterling has turned out to be such an inspiration and symbolic presence in the collective mind of a Swedish/Scandinavian feminist film community is that she did, implicitly yet quite unapologetically, make a claim for herself. A clear indication of her bid to be considered on a par with Bergman is found in the lead actors she chose for her films. These belonged to the crème de la crème of Swedish film and theater but were often strikingly actors who had been made famous by their performances in Bergman films. Harriet Andersson, Eva Dahlbeck, Gunnel Lindblom, Gunnar Björnstrand, Ingrid Thulin, Bibi Andersson, and even Jörgen Lindström, the boy from *The Silence* (*Tystnaden*, 1963) and *Persona* (1966), were all co-opted by Zetterling in her 1960s films. In the 1980s, she chose Stina Ekblad and Erland Josephson for the main characters of her film *Amorosa* (1986), only a few years after their singular performances in Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* (*Fanny och Alexander*, 1982).

Nevertheless, she never matched Bergman's success. He had been raised in the Swedish studio system and been taught filmmaking by older professionals in an apprentice-like education during the Swedish film industry's most prolific era, but Zetterling came to directing later in her life and in Swedish film history. Bergman learned the craft in the age of commercial cinema, during which budgetary considerations were a significant part of the job and films needed to attract an audience. Zetterling made her debut feature film after the introduction of a comprehensive film support scheme that favored the auteur—the creative genius—and art cinema above all. It was the early 1970s when she finally learned to keep a budget. Her films were screened at festivals and distributed internationally. Although they stirred up controversy and were marketed in the United States as "adult," they were not commercially successful. Apart from *Loving Couples*, they were not favorably received by film critics—not internationally, and even less so domestically. The domestic film critics were important in this regard, because several of them sat on the so-called quality jury, which decided which films would receive the awards from the newly founded Swedish Film Institute to stimulate the production of artistically valuable films. Although given to the producers as a support after a film was made, these awards were

often crucial to a director's chance at directing again. Of Zetterling's 1960s films, only *Loving Couples* was awarded in this way.

This book deals with Mai Zetterling's career as a film director. My focus is not on her many years as an actress, because my main objective is to explore a very particular woman filmmaker whose entry into the profession took place before the women's movement in film, who passed away long before the uproar of #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, and whose will to direct, be creative, and tell stories in moving images made her persist against all odds. Her pitfalls, her successes, and her strategies are well worth reconstructing and, by doing so, we discover why her position in film history and women's history is so paradoxical—simultaneously remembered and even revered by some, yet completely forgotten by others. Her least successful film (*The Girls*) has been screened the most, yet much of her best work laps at the margins of film and TV history.

A Scattered Oeuvre

One reason for Zetterling's paradoxical position in film history is that her work largely seems to have fallen between categories. It is no coincidence that the feature films she made within her native art cinema institution are the most well recorded of her works in film history. For the lion's share of her career, however, she moved outside of a national context: emigrating from Sweden in 1947 and making the United Kingdom her home for more than twenty years, and moving to France while retaining a flat in London. Making films and TV productions outside of her native land made her difficult to claim by national film historiographers. In addition, she worked within so many genres, formats, and contexts that a clean-cut definition of *cinema* excludes much of her work.

Consequently, it may seem somewhat contradictory to call this book *A Cinema of Obsession*. Today, however, *cinema* has been redefined and is in many ways a challenged concept. TV series—often streamed on sites or through services such as Netflix, HBO, or Hulu—have become an accepted art form and have even supplanted cinema as the main form of audiovisual cultural consumption in the twenty-first century. Documentaries have had a resurgence in impact and audiences, and YouTube has transformed the overall conceptualization of entertaining or informative moving images as well as providing an (unreliable and sometimes ephemeral) archive of material. Interestingly but not surprisingly, some of the material used for my project can be found on YouTube: not only

The Hitchhiker series (1983–1991) and *Doctor Glas* (1968) but a number of interviews made by the Faceted Zetterling Project.[9] Other material has been made available online in other contexts, like *Concrete Grandma* (*Betongmormor*, 1986) *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (1979), and *Amorosa*.[10] Suddenly, quite a lot of Zetterling material can be seen, consecutively, on the small screen, which by now has become the accepted viewing mode of the general public in many parts of the world.

Furthermore, the concepts of nationality and national cinema have been contested, discussed, reframed, and interrogated in various ways. Although the world around us seems to go through a process of what might be called "renationalization"—with Brexit, different nationalist movements mobilizing throughout Europe, and "America first" sounding from the White House—scholars have reflected on the stipulated boundaries of nations at least since Benedict Anderson put forward his notion of imagined communities in 1983.[11] Within film studies, Andrew Higson discussed and questioned the "concept of national cinema," and several others followed suit.[12] In 2005, Thomas Elsaesser discussed European cinema in terms of the "postnational," and the term *transnational* has been a significant explorative concept for almost twenty years.[13] Even if nationality still functions as a way to organize the knowledge of film and moving images, the many coproductions, alliances, distribution networks, and regional production centers of particularly European film and television has made it increasingly important to take the cross-national aspects of film into account. Constructing national film histories as a series of art cinema classics, a national film canon of "quality art cinema," is, if not obsolete, at least not the obvious way of doing it anymore.[14]

In the special issue of the Swedish film journal *FLM* on the occasion of Zetterling's ninetieth birthday, Ingrid Ryberg places Zetterling's 1970s work in a context of feminist filmmaking and an emerging women's movement in film. Ryberg points to how, in Swedish film historiography, Zetterling disappears for eighteen years after *The Girls* and does not return until *Amorosa* (1986).[15] This gap in her directorial biography testifies to the problem of a historiography that uses a narrow concept of national cinema to structure and organize film history—a formerly common way of writing film history because of a perspective on film as either Hollywood (popular, mainstream, globally dominant, blatantly commercial) or national (all other cinemas struggling under the oppressive presence of Hollywood movies). Higson has argued that "national cinema" should be defined at "the point of consumption," that is, as the

films the citizens of a particular nation watch rather than as the films that are produced in that nation or by people of that nation.[16] In his article, Higson describes four possible interpretations of national cinema: one that corresponds to the domestic film industry; one that is canon-based and includes particularly artistically valuable films of that nation; one that expresses national characteristics, regardless of the origins of the filmmaker; and finally, one that focuses on the national audience.[17]

These four definitions still exclude Zetterling's production during the 1970s and early 1980s, not only because of their national status but also because the films she made during this period (with the exception of *Scrubbers*) were not theatrically released feature films and thus not included within the concept of "cinema." To understand and fully encompass Zetterling's career, a wider conceptualization of film, which includes all kinds of moving images, is necessary. Even so, *Vincent the Dutchman* (1972), *Visions of Eight* (1973), *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (1979), and *Of Seals and Men* (1979) fall outside the concept of "national"; during her transnational years, Zetterling does not really belong within any kind of national film historiography. Her oeuvre is scattered, so to speak, and her history fragmented onto British, French, German, Canadian, and Danish/Greenlandic territories. By taking place in between nationalities, outside nationality, or in displacement, Zetterling's filmmaking is not claimed by anyone in particular, and the ones who do claim her tend to exclude the films made outside the national, cinematic context. This is ironic, for in at least two cases (*Visions of Eight* and *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*), nationality is foregrounded as significant. In these cases, furthermore, Zetterling is part of a cosmopolitan, international endeavor, representing a country where her welcome is ambiguous and to which she is ambivalent, as foregrounded in the closing words of *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*: "Perhaps I have been away from Stockholm too long, as I don't seem to have the same kind of wishes as my compatriots. Here are my wishes then—inner growth, insecurity, love."

Already in the films of the 1960s, Zetterling is apparently something of a stranger in a Swedish context. This irreverent strangeness, her uncanny unfamiliarity—actually, quite accurately uncanny because for Freud, the *unheimlich* refers to something that is both known and unknown—comes across in her moving image production and public persona.[18] Zetterling was both well known and familiar to the Swedish audience, as evidenced by the significance Swedish television placed on her as the lead in *We Have Many Names* (*Vi har många namn*, 1976), yet utterly foreign to a Swedish context. Her criticism of her former home

country, demonstrated in *The Prosperity Race* (1962), *The Girls* (1968), and *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*, all of which seem to use the metaphor of a bomb shelter for Swedish society, was a foreigner's critique, an appropriation of the outside world's view on Sweden's middle way. Zetterling seems to have had an experience similar to that of Susan Sontag, who wrote, "I came prepared to see through the negative clichés about Sweden—and found many of them disconcertingly confirmed."[19] At the same time, her perceived Swedishness provided Zetterling with opportunities for work. That she was not Danish or Greenlandish probably gave her an air of "objective" outsider for the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department; that she was compatriot with Ingmar Bergman made her the natural second choice for *Visions of Eight*.

Transnational Film Histories, National Film Policies

The changing conceptualizations of nationality and film have had implications for how film scholars study women directors. On the one hand, providing space for women filmmakers within film production still is a project for the cultural policies of the nation-state; on the other hand, transnationality has become an important model for understanding the production, distribution, and reception of women filmmakers' films. As Patricia White has argued, "dominant conceptualizations of cinema organized around national movements, waves, and auteurs often minimize or misrecognize the significance of women filmmakers' participation and the questions of representation—both aesthetic and political—that it raises."[20] In *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, the editors lift the concept of decentering, concerning technological shifts, transnational turns, queer and trans perspectives, challenges to white hegemony, and the changing media landscape.[21] Limiting oneself to nationality or a particular format for film, for instance, also limits how one can recognize the achievements of women directors, something clearly illustrated by the case of Zetterling.

In light of this, it is somewhat paradoxical that the cultural policies of the nation-state have become an important way of addressing gender inequality. One recent and striking example of the effects of such national policies on statistics is Sweden. Women filmmakers in general—defined as film directors and producers but also screenwriters, editors, and cinematographers—are rare. According to "The Celluloid Ceiling Report 2017," 11 percent of the 250 top box office films of 2017 were directed by women. For women producers and editors, the numbers are

higher (executive producer: 19 percent, producer: 25 percent, editor: 16 percent), whereas women cinematographers are even rarer (4 percent).[22] In Europe, the situation is more difficult to assess (with large national differences and with other ways of measuring a film's success) but according to a study by the European Women's Audiovisual Network in 2016, covering seven countries, roughly one in five films (21 percent) was directed by a woman.[23] However, as Swedish political scientist Maria Jansson points out, numbers do not accurately represent equality or inequality. Production and distribution contexts also need to be taken into account, since the economic terms for working in the industry and access to the public sphere play into the conditions for women filmmakers and the impact of their work.[24]

In 2013–18, the Swedish film industry attracted international attention—first with the proclaimed goal for film policy to increase the share of women personnel to an equal, fifty-fifty level, then with the news that this goal had been (at least somewhat) attained, and finally with the news that the work on gender equality in Swedish film would continue under the new state film policy introduced in 2018.[25] This development has been both celebrated and criticized. Policy makers have argued in favor of the endeavor to increase the number of women filmmakers by claiming it will improve conditions for women in the industry and provide diversity in experiences represented on the screen. Jansson has taken a closer look at the effects of the policy, with a focus on economic terms and women's access to the public sphere.[26] She observes that the initiative to increase gender equality in the film industry came from the government rather than the industry, and there is a perceived conflict between the core values, the quality of the films, the box office success of what she calls Swedish film's "governance regime," and the goal of gender equality. Policy makers have (superficially) resolved this conflict by claiming that equality is a kind of quality.[27] Nevertheless, as Jansson demonstrates, "the conditions under which women work and their access to voice will not automatically follow from the inclusion of more women."[28] Although the policy of the Swedish Film Institute has been criticized, particularly by those (male) directors, producers, and screenwriters who are not favored by it, this endeavor has garnered much attention and praise from abroad.[29]

Zetterling's entry into feature filmmaking coincided with the birth of a coherent and unified Swedish film policy and thus of the Swedish Film Institute, which in recent years has attempted to improve the gender statistics in domestic film. At that point in time, the core value of

quality was still untouched by concepts of gender equality. Even so, Zetterling's presence in the Swedish film industry was highlighted by Swedish officials, implicitly as a sign of the nation's progressiveness in general and its film culture in particular.[30]

A Woman Film Pioneer?

In Zetterling's obituary, Swedish film historian Leif Furhammar, referring to her film directing career, wrote that for a long time Zetterling the actress had seemed "sweet and blonde and defenseless, glowing with fair femininity and suitable submission, but that was a deceptive glow."[31] This impression of deception was crucial in Zetterling's reception in Sweden—all the major male film critics had long been enticed by her glowing sweetness, her righteous love, her lovely innocence (or, as in *Torment*, her sultry charisma of erotic experience); suddenly they found themselves face to face with provocative attacks on male hegemony, bourgeois convenience, welfare state comforts, and representations of sexuality and reproduction as "woman's final destination—and cul-de-sac."[32] Zetterling's four Scandinavian films in the 1960s—and the films of her later career—can be described in many ways but "sweet" is not one of them. By male film historiographers, Zetterling was described or even dismissed as an aggressive feminist: "It is after all as a suffragette that Miss Zetterling makes her most effective contribution to Swedish cinema," wrote Peter Cowie in a 1970 overview of Swedish film.[33] In that same year, film critic Nils Petter Sundgren, in another overview of Swedish film directors, claimed about Zetterling's films that "at the center of it all one sense a kind of feminist fury, a raging humiliation which grows more vehement and implacable in each successive film."[34] In one concise national film history, Zetterling's films from the 1960s are deemed to be without any great value, with the exception of her feature film debut, *Loving Couples*. She "lacks independence" and is "insecure."[35] In a more recent film history, Furhammar described *The Girls* as "unashamedly feminist."[36]

Interestingly and perhaps unsurprisingly, the feminist reception and historiography of Zetterling's work also focused on her gender; within the women's movement in film, Zetterling was given due credit as a pioneer and trailblazer. Preceding the women's movement in film by approximately a decade, Zetterling—very much like Agnes Varda—was seen as a forerunner, and *The Girls*, derided by Swedish critics in 1968, opened the New York Women Film Festival in 1972. Zetterling was

instrumental in the 1975 forming of Film Women International and served on its board, and she was involved in the start-up of Svenska kvinnors filmförbund (SKFF, Film Association of Swedish Women). In 1983, SKFF arranged a film festival where Zetterling was represented with three feature films and one short. From the early 1970s and through the 1980s, Zetterling became a part of the emerging scene of feminist film festivals, women's film organizations, and the scholarly work of feminist academics, in Sweden and abroad. Having attempted to claim a space for herself within the (masculine) modernist European art cinema—next to filmmakers such as Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman, Luis Buñuel, and Michelangelo Antonioni—she instead found one among the young radical feminist film movement.

Nevertheless, Zetterling can be regarded as misplaced in this strongly politicized group of women filmmakers. Although an outspoken advocate for women's rights in general and the rights for women artists to express themselves in particular, and a longtime self-proclaimed socialist, she was simultaneously intensely individualistic. Her films might present feminist ideas, gender-bending performances, and nonheteronormative sexual practices, but they also had a conservative, sometimes even reactionary streak, especially concerning her celebration of the primitive conditions of nomadic or otherwise difficult lifestyles and her critique of the welfare state. Although known by both the male establishment and the feminist movement for her films featuring women protagonists, she divided her attention equally between women (*Loving Couples*, *The Girls*, *We Have Many Names*, *Scrubbers*, *Amorosa*) and men (*Night Games*, *Doctor Glas*, *Vincent the Dutchman*, "The Strongest," *Of Seals and Men*). As Derek Elley observed, her most prominent themes are isolation and obsession, words taken from her own notes from the filming of "The Strongest" for *Visions of Eight*, the documentary about the Munich Olympics in 1972.[37]

Accordingly, Zetterling is paradoxical and does not fit into any cookie-cutter idea of feminism. It is important to remember that Zetterling was young in the 1940s, beginning to direct films in the 1960s; the beginnings of second-wave feminism coincide with her midforties, which means she was taken up by a discourse that was formed many years after she had come to some central ideas as to how life and society works. That she would express feminist sentiments in the late 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s is unsurprising, given that she had suffered the reactions of a sexist and patriarchal society to a transgressive woman and that the women's movement seemed to embrace her and her work. In

the mid-1960s, however, when asked what kind of emancipation her film *Night Games* (under the working title *Longing*) was about, a "female emancipation, perhaps?" she rebuked the interviewer by saying "no, *human* emancipation, that is much more important."[38]

A Cinema of Obsession

In comparison to Ingmar Bergman, with whom Zetterling had worked (starring in *Music in Darkness* [*Musik i mörker*] in 1948) and with whom she was often compared (and found lacking), there has been little to nothing written about her for an international audience. A handful of articles and book chapters from the 1970s and on have been very helpful as dialogue partners in my discussions of her films.[39] Even taken together, they do not offer a comprehensive view of her career and work. This book sets out to change that by exploring Zetterling's influential, fascinating, and occasionally frustrating life and career as a director. Often cannily but only sometimes successfully, she navigated through the changing industrial and contextual structures of three decades. In the 1960s, she attempted to establish herself within the European art cinema institution and the national film canon, but she was prepared to exploit an offer to direct a transnational, US-financed production of an adult-oriented Scandinavian film. Later she navigated the potentials of television by making documentaries, short films, and TV productions within the cine-feminism and women's countercinema of the 1970s, and in the 1980s she returned to fiction in both TV and film. Simultaneously, her career is full of unfilmed films. In particular, her final years were marked by her struggles to find financial backing for her projects.

Although she worked under such different circumstances, within different genres and formats, and in different national contexts, a Zetterling production is always recognizable. Contrary to the accusation by Swedish reviewers in the 1960s that she was eclectic and had no vision of her own, she had a distinct personal style, recurring themes, and authorial trademarks. At her death, one Swedish obituary claimed "she was obsessed with making films."[40] The choice of the word *obsessed* may seem a bit condescending, referring to a frustrated, fixated mad(wo)man who will go to any lengths to make a film and implying a failure to actually realize planned projects. This may have to do with Zetterling's ceaseless struggle to finance and finally make her grandiose adaptation of Swedish author Maja Ekelöf's social realist diary novel *Rapport från en skurhink* (*Report from a Wash Bucket*, 1970) under the title *The Woman*

Who Cleaned the World. In the Mai Zetterling collection at the Swedish Film Institute's archive, there are many versions of the screenplay and a massive file of correspondence with possible producers, financers, and public support institutions.[41] She was, in truth, obsessed with this project, to the extent that she let down her longtime friend Inga Landgré, who had been promised the lead role, when an opportunity arose to make it a pan-European production with the more famous Jeanne Moreau.[42] With this in mind, it is not so strange that Zetterling's legacy became a story of an obsessive filmmaker, struggling against the system. Not least because this narrative very easily can be understood as a feminist narrative—a women director, struggling against an oppressive, patriarchal system with a project centered on a woman and a traditionally feminine occupation (house cleaning), based on a book by a female working-class writer.

However, as the epigraph to this introduction demonstrates, Zetterling willingly described herself as obsessed—obsessed with making films and with making a difference but also with cooking, with the medicinal properties of herbs, with art and philosophy, and with generally feeling alive. In *All Those Tomorrows*, her autobiography published in 1985, she also conveyed how a sense of obsession followed her decision to become a director: how she almost ruthlessly took every opportunity to work and learn; how she made her husband go skiing and horseback riding to make the first documentaries; how she continued to direct *Loving Couples* after recovering from an appendectomy; and her obsessive love of gardening, cooking, and herbs and of a farm in the south of France.

All Those Tomorrows can be understood as a conscious attempt to create what Russian formalist Boris Tomashevsky called a biographical legend. A biographical legend is the narrative an artist creates around him- or herself and that may be regarded as a part of that artist's works. The Russian formalists wanted to refrain from biographical readings of literary works and focus on the texts themselves, but they realized that some authors had such legends created around themselves that it was hard to disregard the biographical narrative.[43] Understanding memoirs, interviews, and other autobiographical utterances as legend makes such narratives more useful than perceiving them as simply correct and fact-based accounts, the "truth" about an artist's feelings and intentions. For example, there are several cases in Zetterling's autobiography where the facts provided do not really add up, like her relationship with Tyrone Power in the 1950s or the account of how she persuaded Swedish producers to back *Loving Couples*. As a source for information of what

actually happened, *All Those Tomorrows* is to be regarded with some suspicion. It can function as a source for information of how Zetterling wants her life and her personality to be understood.

The difference may seem small but is crucial, and regarding her memoirs as part of her legend makes it useless to dismiss her as an untrustworthy writer. Instead of asking "Is this correct?" the question posed to the narrative is "Why is she telling the story like this? What does she want to say about herself?" The answer is complex, but the Zetterling that clearly shines through the narrative of *All Those Tomorrows* is a person who, after having made the decision to become a director, is determined to the point of pigheadedness and finally feels "alive." In light of this, the previously quoted obituary that claimed she was "obsessed with making films" seems to align with Zetterling's own biographical legend.

Furthermore, Zetterling's films and TV productions frequently feature protagonists who are in some way obsessed—with their art and their work, with their love, with their traumatic childhood memories, with lifting weights, with hunting and providing for their families, with their lost child, with food. In her collected works, one can discern her obsession with certain themes: gender, sexuality, and reproduction; creativity; how material comforts stifle the human spirit and make people complacent and inert; the toll of being a creative artist; loneliness and isolation; the impossibility of communication; and low thresholds between different levels of reality. In several of her early films, a metaphorical connection is made between war and the relations of men and women. In later productions, the metaphorical war takes place between individuals and the oppressive conventions of society: Vincent van Gogh, the young women of *Scrubbers* (1983), and Agnes von Krusenstjerna wage a constant battle to be what might be called (with a cliché) true to themselves. The battle threatens their health—both mental and physical, but first and foremost mental.

Zetterling's frank depictions of sexuality stirred debate and controversy in the 1960s, although not so much in Sweden. In particular, *Loving Couples* and *Night Games* were regarded as "adult," and the portrayals of incest, masturbation, and homosexuality in *Night Games* created something of a scandal at the Venice Film Festival in 1966. The poster, a reproduction of an intersection of human sexual intercourse by Leonardo da Vinci, was censored, and the film was only screened to members of the press and the festival jury. At the San Francisco Film Festival, Shirley

Temple Black resigned from the jury in protest against the film. Although Swedish reviewers did not react strongly to the sex depicted in these films, Zetterling's insistent focus on reproduction and motherhood put many of them at unease, like the authentic birth and freeze-frame image of a newborn baby that concluded *Loving Couples*.

For many reasons and in many ways, now is the time to write the story of Mai Zetterling's career as a film director. Not only because her career provides perspective on many of the issues—the navigation of women filmmakers in a male-dominated industry, the conceptualizations of nation and nationality, and the collapsed boundaries between feature film, television, documentary in the digital age—that loom large today but also because her story can be researched and written much easier than was the case only twenty years ago. The conceptual and analytical tools to do so are developed and available. The world has become increasingly interconnected, and even theatrical cinema is available digitally. A traditional separation of "big screen" and "small screen" production has somewhat lost its usefulness. In her way, Zetterling epitomizes all these tendencies.

1

THE STAR AS DOCUMENTARIST AND FILMMAKER

1959–1963

When Mai Zetterling made up her mind to become a film director, she had already been working in the film industry and on the theater stage as an actress for almost twenty years. Since 1941, she had performed in more than twenty-five films in three different national cinemas. She had played opposite Georg Rydeberg, Richard Attenborough, David Farrar, Herbert Lom, Dirk Bogarde, Danny Kaye, and Tyrone Power, among many others. Moreover, she had performed on stage and on television, mainly in theater productions for television (*Armchair Theater*, *ITV Television Playhouse*, *BBC Sunday Night Theater*, for instance) and in a television series called *My Wife and I* (1958).

Born in 1925, in Västerås, Sweden, Zetterling began training as an actor at Calle Flygare's theater school in Stockholm. At the age of seventeen, she was accepted to the Royal Dramatic Theater's acting school, but she was quickly engaged for professional productions on the big stage and saw little of her fellow acting students in class.[1] In particular, respected director Alf Sjöberg responded to her talents by giving her parts in performances at the Royal Dramatic Theater, and he assigned her breakthrough role on screen in the film *Torment* (*Hets*, 1944), which he directed from a script by the not-yet-established Ingmar Bergman. Stereotypically, the blonde, petite, and talented Zetterling enchanted moviegoers and theater patrons alike, judging by the reviewers' opinions. Again and again reviewers wrote about her skillful and sensitive stage

performances of roles such as Nerissa in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Electra in Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies* (*Les mouches*), and Agnes Webster in *The Beautiful People* by William Saroyan.[2] According to the trade journal *Biografägaren* (*Cinema Owner*), in 1944 Zetterling was described as "the most sensational debutante within the theater world of the capital."[3]

Between 1942 and 1948, Zetterling performed in fifteen stage productions at the Royal Dramatic Theater and appeared in eight Swedish films. During these years, she also found the time to get married in April 1944 (just before her nineteenth birthday in May) to Isaac Samuel "Tutte" Lemkow, and have two children, born in 1945 and 1947, as well as travel to England to play the title role in the British film *Frieda* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1947). Hardworking and determined, she later claimed in her autobiography, "I was hooked on my work, which made me feel more alive than anything else."[4]

The role of Frieda opened an opportunity for Zetterling. In the film, she portrayed a German girl who helped a British soldier escape from a prisoner of war camp. Feeling indebted to her, the soldier brought Frieda with him back to England after the war, where she encountered fear and prejudice toward Germans in an emotional melodrama that preached tolerance and acceptance. Ironically, the producers felt that it would be too much to actually cast a German actress in the role, which is why they turned to Zetterling. The film's tagline—"Would YOU take Frieda into YOUR home?"—was reproduced with an image of Zetterling's sweet face, with large innocent eyes framed by her blonde hair. According to the press and magazines (and the box office numbers for the film), the people of Great Britain were indeed prepared to do so. As Frieda, Zetterling was so convincing that she was offered a contract with the J. Arthur Rank organization. After fulfilling her obligations to the Royal Dramatic Theater and appearing in two more Swedish films, Zetterling immigrated to the United Kingdom with her family in December 1947. She never moved back to Sweden. In 1953, she divorced Lemkow.

For more than a decade, Zetterling worked as an actress in Great Britain—with a brief sojourn in Hollywood, where she starred opposite Danny Kaye in the comedy *Knock on Wood* (1954). In the late 1950s, she met and married British poet and writer David Hughes and soon thereafter decided to change careers. As she explained in an interview with a Swedish women's magazine: "I only knew that: now I don't want anymore to *talk* about my ideals, now I want to do something about them!

As an actor you rarely get the opportunity. A writer, an artist, or a composer can go into his chamber and create whatever he wants and *when* he wants to. As an actress I had to sit at home by my phone and wait for it to ring."[5]

To learn what she called the "ABC of filmmaking," she began by making documentaries and short films. These documentaries, produced in collaboration with the BBC, focused on people or places on the margins of Western culture: the Sami people in northern Sweden (*The Polite Invasion*, 1960), the Roma people of southern France (*Lords of Little Egypt*, 1961), and Icelanders (*The Do-It-Yourself Democracy*, 1963). This was a recurring theme for Zetterling, particularly in her documentary production. Nevertheless, there was a significant exception to this focus, and that was *The Prosperity Race* (1962), a thirty-minute documentary about the Swedish people and the welfare state. *The Prosperity Race* became controversial among Swedes living in the United Kingdom when it screened on British television. The film showed Swedes as physically healthy but emotionally empty automatons living in a perfect society catering to every need, and it was said to portray every stereotype there was about Sweden: juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, promiscuity, suicide rates, and so on.

Zetterling tried to explain and defend her film in Swedish media, but *The Prosperity Race* and its reception predicted a tendency in her continuing work. The film perfectly encapsulates Zetterling's personal vision and view of the world: material comforts are dangerous because they remove the meaning of life. Although problematic because it aligns with the reigning clichés about Sweden abroad, this is undoubtedly the flip side of her fascination with groups of people somehow outside of mainstream Western culture, and these two views expressed themselves in her fiction films and documentaries. The petrified traditions of the aristocracy in *Loving Couples*, the perverted decadence of the rich in *Night Games*, the tragic melancholy and passivity of *Doctor Glas*, and the alienation and loss of communication in the welfare state of *The Girls* all return to the notion of *The Prosperity Race* and contrast sharply to Zetterling's idealized but harsh examinations of creativity in *Vincent the Dutchman* and hunting culture in *Of Seals and Men*, or to her fascination with the obsessive weightlifters in her segment of the Olympics documentary *Visions of Eight*. In contrast to the people portrayed in the other three BBC documentaries, the denizens of the welfare states were always corrupted by their material well-being.

This worldview was dogmatic and unforgiving, and it contrasted starkly to the blonde ingénue whom people in Sweden remembered

from such films as *Sunshine Follows Rain* (*Driver dagg, faller regn*, 1946), *Iris and the Lieutenant* (*Iris och löjtnantshjärta*, 1946), and *Music in Darkness* (1948) or the sweet foreigner in her raincoat from *Frieda* that the UK audience held dear. Accordingly, Zetterling's transition from working in front of the camera as an actress to working behind it as a director was fraught with a somewhat disconcerting change of public persona that added to the more general issues brought to the fore in her career change.

A Challenging Transition

Zetterling's career change had implications that went beyond simply learning a new trade. Although her move from in front of the camera to behind it was a change of profession, she remained in the same industry. In film history, the border between acting and directing has frequently been fluid, and there are several examples of others making the same transition. Famed Swedish silent film director Victor Sjöström (or Seastrom, as he was known when he worked in Hollywood) worked on both sides of the camera, directing himself in *The Phantom Carriage* (*Körkarlen*, 1921). He concluded his career with the role of Isak Borg in Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*, 1957). Zetterling's co-star in *Torment* and other Swedish films of the 1940s, Alf Kjellin, also worked as a director, mainly for television, both in and outside Sweden.

In Zetterling's case, certain circumstances made her transition more precarious. She was not only an actor but also a woman. Changing careers demanded a change in demeanor, persona, and perception of character. The two professions carried—and perhaps still carry—connotations associated with traditional gender stereotypes. As Molly Haskell wrote, the notion that "acting is quintessentially 'feminine' carries with it a barely perceptible sneer, a suggestion that it is not the noblest or most dignified of professions. Acting is role-playing, role-playing is lying, and lying is a woman's game. . . . Role-playing and the seeking of approval are narcissistic, vain, devious; they go against the straightforward image man has of himself."[6] Haskell also observes, "Directing—giving orders, mastering not only people but machinery—is a typically masculine, even militaristic activity."[7]

At the time of Zetterling's screen breakthrough as an actress in 1944, some Swedish celebrities were asked by a newspaper about their opinion on women directors, and their responses typically underscore Haskell's observation: "I don't believe a woman can hold the entire film in her head at the same time," one famous actress (Viveca Lindfors) claimed,

and continued, "In any case, a woman director probably becomes a masculine woman." Another actress (Karin Ekelund) is quoted as saying that "men are, on the whole, better adjusted to leading and providing impulses." Two women were in favor of women directors (Ingrid Luterkort and Kaj Tenow), but even they thought that a woman "who takes on such an enterprise must consider that they will need very strong nerves and a great deal of physical stamina." The military association Haskell made some thirty years later was evoked by the one man in the group (Gunnar Skoglund), who said, "Isn't there something similar to a military exercise over film shootings? Is a woman really able to muster and direct all the actors and the crew, as efficiently as is needed?"[8]

It is interesting to note how the two different, related professions are understood. One demands sensitivity, receptivity, and an ability to listen and emote. This is further reinforced in Zetterling's case, as she had been inspired by Konstantin Stanislavski's teachings about acting.[9] The other demands physical strength, rational order, and an ability to rule and have others obey. One is impressionable and reactive, the other commanding and active. Women traditionally have been regarded as passive, emotional consumers of popular culture (romance novels, Hollywood tearjerkers, soap operas), while men have the potential to be active, intellectual, and creative producers of high (or modernist) art. German scholar Andreas Huyssen has discussed what he calls "the discourse of the great divide," that is, the great divide between high art and popular culture in terms of a gendered divide. Historically, according to Huyssen, mass culture was gendered feminine and modernist art masculine. The masses were regarded as volatile and hysterical (much like women were regarded) and modernism an elite project, fostering rationality, disinterest, and intellectual thought. Huyssen claims that within the discourse of the great divide, one can find a "powerful masculinist and misogynist current . . . which openly states its contempt for women and for the masses."[10]

Accordingly, by leaving the position as a female actress, impressionable and sensitive, to transition to the role of director, commanding and strong, Zetterling had to cross a space that divided traditionally construed feminine qualities from traditionally construed masculine ones. Moreover, her screen roles had mainly been in melodramatic, popular genre films. The films she directed, however, are clear-cut examples of what US film scholar David Bordwell has called "European art cinema," aligning themselves with a modernist filmic tradition that evolved after World War II in Europe.[11] Her objective was to be taken seriously as a

creative artist and filmic auteur, and the claim she made in this regard was both unexpectedly ambitious and ill-received, perhaps above all in her former home, Sweden.

This is another circumstance that made Zetterling's career transition challenging. The conceptualization of the auteur at the time, in Sweden and elsewhere, was strongly gendered. Those directors considered auteurs by critics on both sides of the Atlantic were almost exclusively men, and the vocabulary used to describe their work has a clear tint of androcentrism.[12] Contemporary debuting (male) filmmakers in Sweden who, like Zetterling, were career changers often came to directing from writing—Bo Widerberg and Vilgot Sjöman are the most immediate examples. Even before they began directing, they were considered serious intellectuals in a way that was unlikely for a female film star, although Zetterling's persona did exude a kind of ethereal intellectualism.

Zetterling began by teaching herself the craft of filmmaking. In her first undertakings, she was in front of and behind the camera, as her name, face, and star persona were significant attractions in the documentaries she made for the BBC.

Journeyman Work: Ethnographic Documentaries

Zetterling's first endeavor as a director, *The Polite Invasion: Mai Zetterling in Lapland*, was a half-hour documentary about the Sami people in Jokkmokk, northern Sweden. The film makes use both of Zetterling's status as a star in Great Britain and her nationality, in that this famous and beloved actress tells the audience about an aspect of her home country. Consequently, she becomes something of a guide, although she admits at the start of the film that she knows very little about the "Laps."

This ignorance provides the point of departure for the film. Zetterling makes her journey in the north into a quest for knowledge, and she travels by train and ski to find the Sami people, while she explains on camera and in voice-over narration that they are shy and hard to coax to talk in front of the camera. The snowy whiteness of Jokkmokk's surroundings are lovingly portrayed, and as Zetterling moves further into the wilderness, she becomes increasingly disheveled and bundled up in warm clothes. The climax of the film is the herding of the reindeers to mark ownership of them by cutting their ears. Zetterling describes the Sami culture as primordial and threatened by civilization, and although

the somewhat frustrating search for answers does not really yield anything concrete, she seems to find them fascinating and romantic.[13]

For all four of her BBC documentaries, Zetterling took advantage of her star persona. Her name was likely a selling point when she negotiated with the BBC. The films all have subheadings that include her name: *Lords of Little Egypt: Mai Zetterling among the Gypsies*, *The Prosperity Race: Mai Zetterling in Stockholm*, and *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy: Mai Zetterling in Iceland*. She narrates the films and is also present on camera, either talking to the audience or seen doing something. *The Polite Invasion* begins with a train ride, and Zetterling looks along with the other passengers at the reindeer on the tracks that stall the train, before she sits down in her seat and looks into the camera to address the viewers. *Lords of Little Egypt* shows her among the Roma. In *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy*, broadcast on May 14, 1963, she appears in the beginning of the film, first in a shot that pans down from the snowy mountains in the distance to Zetterling swimming in one of the hot springs to illustrate the voice-over words "Beneath the ice-capped mountains, I swam in hot water." Later, at a night club, she is seen smoking, drinking, and talking to Icelanders. The Mai Zetterling of *The Prosperity Race* from the year before, in contrast, wears a trench coat and looks very serious, an investigating reporter or even a detective.

Lords of Little Egypt, aired on BBC on January 3, 1961, opens with a shot of a shoreline, with the waves coming in and horses riding past. The title is shown: *Lords of Little Egypt: Among the Gypsies with MAI ZETTERLING*.[14] We see horses and riders coming over a sand dune; the third horse to crest the dune carries Zetterling, in a white blouse with a scarf over her blonde hair. Zetterling's choice of clothes accentuates her whiteness, something that recurs continuously throughout the film. She looks into the camera and explains that this shore is where the Gypsy Sara came to France, and she is the reason Gypsies from all over Europe congregate in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer once a year to celebrate a procession of a statue of Sara from the church to the sea.

Like in *The Polite Invasion*, she begins with a query. The mystery here has its roots in her childhood, when adults scared her that Gypsies stole children and her mother warned her about them. Gypsies would lie and steal; they were witches and cannibals. If she saw one, she would be scared, but at the same time, she found them romantic. Again, she wants to find out more about this mysterious people.

The film does not really provide an answer to her query. Instead, it postulates an idea on what it is about the Roma people that attracts

Zetterling: their freedom. At several points during *Lords of Little Egypt*, the concept of freedom comes up. In the early scenes from the camp, two elderly women peel potatoes while children play and do chores around them. Zetterling asks one of them how she feels about traveling and not having a steady place to call home, and she responds that she has liberty. "Liberty, she said," explains Zetterling on the voice-over, "pride and independence." Toward the end of the film, the concept returns when people depart from camp. One man had responded "We are free" and Zetterling observes, "Freedom. It always came back to that."

Of the four documentaries that were Zetterling's journeyman work, *The Prosperity Race* stands out as different, not so much in mode and address—in all the films, Zetterling is present on camera and on the voice-over, a particular group of people or a certain community is in focus, and a kind of query is expressed in the beginning. In that sense, all the documentaries are ethnographic, as they turn the investigating camera eye toward ethnic and national groups that are different in some way. The voice-over explains and comments on what the images show. The presence of the documentarist on location forms a significant ground for the authority of the documentary.[15] However, in *The Polite Invasion*, *Lord of Little Egypt*, and *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy*, a certain tendency to idealize the life of the subjects in the films is very much evident. The Samis herding their reindeer in *The Polite Invasion*; the elderly Roma women cooking over open fires, the children who help, and the scenes from the festival party in *Lords of Little Egypt*; and the long scenes from fishing boats and the scene with young Icelanders singing in *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy* all work to demonstrate some kind of sense of community and purpose. In contrast, in *The Prosperity Race*, people are either depicted alone or in such perfectly synchronized movement as to give the impression of a machine. Zetterling turns the ethnographic eye on a group that is not usually singled out for ethnography: an affluent, Western democracy. With a critical gaze, she diagnoses her former home country. Instead of opening with a fascinated and curious "Why?" *The Prosperity Race* opens with an assertive "Why not?"—why are the Swedes not happy?—posed as if she already knows the answer. There is also a lot more of her voice-over, authoritatively interpreting and explaining the images.

The film's focus on the young people of the welfare state poses an implicit question about the future. What will happen when these youngsters grow up? Children playing outdoors under supervision are followed by images of people sitting alone on park benches, enjoying

the sun but isolated from one another. Zetterling explains that the affluence of the Swedes is used to purchase escape from the city: summer cabins, boats, cars. Getting away from the city translates as getting away from other people. From a loudspeaker, an old popular Swedish song ("När jag var en ung caballero") is heard, and young people do physical exercises in a park. The men lift weights and the women, perfectly synchronized, do gymnastics. The need to keep fit is explained on the voice-over as a compensation for something else, a gap between body and soul. "Sex is often casual," Zetterling says. Again and again, people are shown solitary: a young woman riding a Ferris wheel, another one walking through the old parts (marked for deconstruction) of southern Stockholm.

Zetterling connects this loss of purpose to the mechanisms of modern society, particularly consumption and safety. Joyless consumption is illustrated by a montage of a pile of coins, money notes going through the printers, a cake being cut, and oil paintings being taken down. The montage ends up with an exhibition at the Modern Museum. The images, from the famous *Art in Motion* exhibition in 1961, show moving machines and a tied-up male mannequin. Zetterling returned to joyless consumption as a national characteristic in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (1979) and to the gigantic bomb shelter as a symbol of superficial security in *The Girls* (1968) and the *Stockholm* film. In *The Prosperity Race*, the bomb shelter is only briefly shown, with a shot from below of the huge staircase that leads down into the underground and another one of the heavy metal gate closing to the sound of an alarm. "But they've got the security they wanted. The final security. Huge A-bomb shelters under the city which they use as garages."

A Personal Vision of the World

In "You Must Make People Angry," the episode of *One Pair of Eyes* (dir. David Cantor) from 1971 that had Zetterling at the center, Zetterling observed that all her films are actually about different kinds of freedom. Although this statement could be modified, since the theme of freedom in some films unfolds as being about the need to break free or about what not being free does to people, *Lords of Little Egypt* is a very explicit illustration of her conceptualization of freedom. It is a simultaneously harsh and romantic notion, reminiscent of Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, that demands courage and sacrifice to gain value beyond the material and heightens a sense of being alive. In *The Polite Invasion*

it is more implicit, whereas in *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy* it again comes to the fore when Zetterling, on the voice-over, claims that "the danger makes the people enjoy the simple fact of being alive." In *The Prosperity Race*, it is at the heart of Zetterling's critique of the Swedish welfare state: it is too well organized, too comfortable, too materialistic, and the Swedes are too well cared for.

This worldview is, of course, not unique for Zetterling. Moreover, objections can be raised that it is a somewhat naïve and, at its core, dogmatic and extremist view of human individuals and their place in the world, in its worst forms bordering on a right-wing liberalism à la Ayn Rand. For Zetterling to promote this unflinching philosophy about freedom would seem doubly paradoxical because she identified politically as a socialist. On the other hand, this is one example of how her personal vision is complex and consistent: it recurs again and again in later films, with the frozen emotional lives of the nobility in *Loving Couples*, the decadence of wealth in *Night Games*, the stifling comforts of the welfare state in *The Girls*, and the alienation of the bourgeois flaneur in *Doctor Glas* contrasted with the romanticized hunters in *Of Seals and Men*, the rebellious vitality of the interns in *Scrubbers*, and the quests for creative authenticity in *Vincent the Dutchmen* and *Amorosa*. In *Lords of Little Egypt*, it seems as if Zetterling idealizes a way of life that ultimately entails hardship, ostracism, and deeply conservative traditions, but looking at her entire oeuvre points in the direction that this is just one aspect of her worldview.

In hindsight, there is another issue that calls for interrogation: the way Zetterling's whiteness in *Lords of Little Egypt* is accentuated. In her first appearance in the film, when she rides the white horse over the sand ridge, in a white blouse and with a scarf over her head from which her blonde hair peeks out to frame her fair-skinned face, her whiteness is striking. In a later scene, she sits in the middle and slightly behind a group of Roma people around a table. In the dusky light, Zetterling practically glows, drawing the eyes of the spectator. Shortly thereafter, she speaks to the camera in a medium shot, with a white cardigan over her shoulders. This is not an "invisible" whiteness—rather, by placing the whiteness in juxtaposition with the ethnic Other, Zetterling makes whiteness highly visible as a racial position, contrasting herself with the Roma people of whom she was taught to be afraid.[16] Interestingly, in the final shot of Zetterling in the film, this whiteness is toned down; instead of standing out against the background, she seems a part of it. In this scene, Juanita—who has been a guide and translator throughout

the film—and Zetterling approach the wagon. Juanita enters the wagon, and Zetterling continues to the driver's cab. She opens the door and stops to look at the camera. There is a cut to a medium shot. Zetterling wears no scarf and has a darker sweater on instead of the white blouse or sweater she wore previously. "The Gypsies just don't think our way of life is good enough for them," she says. "You begin dying when you live in one house or stay in one place for too long. Perhaps you do."

Ultimately, the ethnographic gaze of Zetterling's documentaries is compromised by her gender. The authority of the ethnographer traditionally is dependent on a Western, masculine perspective, on a division of people into "us and them," and on certain aesthetic and discursive conventions that consider the relationship between film and reality as transparent.[17] In contrast, Zetterling is a woman documentarist who identifies more with "them" than with "us"—except when the "them" is a Western, affluent democracy, her native country. To the British audience, she is familiar as their star, their "Swedeheart," yet simultaneously is still a stranger. Her English is slightly accented, and her role as the German girl Frieda is not forgotten. This is why she can function as an intermediary, a go-between, and a guide. She is a foreigner who was invited into the British audience's home; she is white and Western but nevertheless vaguely Other. She may very well be said to impose her conception of what constitutes a true and real life on the people and communities she portrays in her documentaries.

Controversy

Zetterling's choice of topics for her documentaries indicates her personal vision of the world, and it demonstrates her ability to sniff out subject matter that was both opportune and controversial. In *The Polite Invasion*, she aligns with the dominant discourse in Swedish policy toward the Sami by somehow regarding the Sami way of life as fragile in the face of modern progress.[18] At the same time, like in *Lords of Little Egypt*, there is an identification with the people portrayed in the film. In *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy*, Zetterling highlighted the implications of the Icelanders' small community for how politics were shaped and emphasized historical traditions rather than modernity. The focus of the film was, as David Hughes pointed out in a brief item announcing the film for the evening's broadcast in *Radio Times*, "a small ancient society engaged in a very modern struggle,"[19] perhaps with most emphasis placed on ancient. Although the film begins with modern Iceland—Reykjavik,

businessmen and politicians, night clubs, soda factories—it soon moves to subjects of farming, fishing, the desolate landscape, and Icelanders wrestling in the snow. In particular, her focus on the Westman Islands toward the end of the film—with spectacular shots of sheep being roped down from the high coast to boats down below in the sea—made Iceland seem more primitive than it really was.[20] Zetterling admitted in her memoirs that she created some of the situations that are presented as authentic in the film. Not only did the wrestlers grapple with one another in the snow on this one and only occasion, but the

> most dangerous enterprise of that film was when I made a group of men haul down a flock of sheep from rocks into little boats that were rocking on a violent sea beneath. It was a giant undertaking which, thank God, I only realised after the scene was in the can. It had taken me three days of talking, begging, insisting, to convince the people in the Westman Islands, where the scene was shot, that it was necessary for them to do this in order to show off the character of Iceland and the crazy things they had to do to survive. By now, I was slightly mad myself.[21]

Besides illustrating how Zetterling, like Robert J. Flaherty making *Nanook of the North* (1922), constructed scenes for her documentary, this quote exemplifies very well how she constructs herself as obsessive and determined to reach her goals.

The most controversial—and perhaps opportunist—of her four documentaries was *The Prosperity Race*. In it, Zetterling joined a discourse about Sweden that had developed after World War II, particularly in the 1950s. This discourse reflected Sweden's position in the Cold War, an uncannily ambiguous in-between position geographically and ideologically: between West and East, between capitalism and communism, and between and outside the clear division of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Reputation claimed that Sweden had the highest suicide rate in the world.[22] To a large extent, Sweden's image in the world was reflected through sexuality: having implemented mandatory sex education in schools in 1955, Sweden became known as a country where the state took control over even the most intimate and private of all matters.[23]

Accordingly, to make a documentary for British television—that is, for a non-Swedish audience—about Sweden, meant taking some kind of standpoint. During the filming of *The Prosperity Race*, Zetterling was interviewed by a Swedish women's journal, *Damernas värld*. According to

this interview, Zetterling's purpose of the film was to dissolve the myths of Sweden: the promiscuity, suicides, juvenile delinquency, drinking. She wanted the freedom to make films that express an "optimistic and energetic life view," said the article, which concluded, "Can Sweden wish for a better ambassador on the British tv-screen?"[24]

The reactions when the film was broadcast on April 10, 1962, in Great Britain reverberated all the way to Sweden: "Aftonbladet shows the first images from Mai Zetterling's scandal film about Sweden," one headline claimed. The article quoted the outrage of Swedes living in London. Words like *trash* and *opportunism* were used, and the article implicitly accused Zetterling of treason.[25] In Great Britain, there was also a negative reaction: Maurice Richardson called it "so angled that I had to strap myself to my viewing chair" and called for a "Hands off Sweden society" under the headline "Unfair to the Swedes."[26] Mary Crozier in *The Guardian* wrote a kinder review but still complained that it was "vague and disconnected."[27] None of the other documentaries received nearly as much attention in Great Britain or Sweden. *Lords of Little Egypt* was called "an excellent film" by Crozier in a TV review, and *The Do-It-Yourself Democracy* was mentioned in the Hughes article and in the Swedish news in an item about the Icelanders having made complaints about how Zetterling represented them.[28] The subject matter of *The Prosperity Race*—Sweden the welfare state—made it more eye-catching and provocative.

The Swedish article and its illustrations from the film focused on sex, something Zetterling did mention on the voice-over, implying that it was casual and loveless, but that was not the main focus of the film at all. Zetterling concluded the film much like she would begin *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* some seventeen years later: with a bird's-eye view. In the latter film, she used a crane for that view, but here she takes the Katarina Elevator on the south side of Stockholm and looks out over the city, with Slussen and the City Hall in the background. She turns to the camera and says that she sometimes becomes impatient with people who blame the welfare state for the alienation of Swedes because this is too simplistic. Without offering any other kind of explanation, she continues: "The Swedes aren't really interested in you. They are for themselves. Alone. There is no feeling of togetherness or a common aim."

This unflattering observation of her former country is delivered with an authoritative, explanatory tone like all of the voice-over for *The Prosperity Race*. In the other three documentaries, Zetterling is more explorative and less assertive. Compared with the open-ended "Perhaps you

do" at the end of *Lords of Little Egypt*, her concluding remarks in *The Prosperity Race* ring out with the force of conviction, although she attempts to mitigate the impression by continuing with the last words of the film: "Being so far ahead of Europe, they must accept criticism and envy, too."

A Journeyman's Qualifying Piece: *The War Game*

After making these four documentaries, Zetterling took the next step and wrote and directed a fifteen-minute short, *The War Game* (1963). Here, one of her significant recurring aesthetic components, architecture, plays at least a big role as the two protagonist boys, played by Ian Ellis and Joseph Robinson. Architecture had already been made into an important element of *The Prosperity Race* with Stockholm's construction areas and new high-rises featuring prominently in certain shots and returned with the menacing, haunted walls of Penningby Castle in *Night Games* and Ralph Erskine's utilitarian designs in northern Sweden in *The Girls*, to culminate, somewhat ironically, in *Betongmormor* (*Concrete Grandma*), the promotional film Zetterling made for the Swedish construction company Skanska in 1986. In *The War Game*, there is no dialogue and no nondiegetic sound. The two boys' escalating struggle over a toy gun plays out in a brutalist, concrete environment. One has it, the other one takes it, and the chase winds itself through open areas of concrete and stark, echoing staircases. The escalation is literal and figurative, because as they chase each other through the building, they work their way to the top, ending up on the roof of this high structure.

The exteriors of the film are shot at Golden Lane Estate, a council housing complex in London that was built in the 1950s.[29] This area had been largely destroyed by German bombing during World War II, and the construction of Golden Lane was part of a larger scheme to rebuild the city after the devastation of the Blitz. Accordingly, even as Zetterling was shooting the film, there was construction going on nearby, as can be seen in some of the shots toward the end of the film. The interiors were probably shot at Oak Hill Park Estate, which is thanked, along with the Corporation of the City of London, in the end credits.

Zetterling used the modernist geometrical features of the building to create striking visuals and for a densely rich soundtrack of natural sounds. On the terrace of the lower level of the complex are large, circular concrete walls and a sunken playground, which is unequipped.[30] The boys seem dwarfed in this stark, artificial landscape. Later, they chase

Above: Boy and concrete. Ian Ellis in *The War Game* (1963). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Louis Lemkow.

Below: The staircase. Joseph Robinson in *The War Game* (1963). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Louis Lemkow.

each other through a staircase, and the white paint of the walls and the bottom of the staircases together with the banisters and the shape of the steps form almost abstract patterns.

At certain points in the film, sound from televisions or radios in the apartments are heard in the corridors and the staircase: soundtracks of Westerns or war films with gunshots going off and music. The echoing sounds of quickly shuffling steps convey the sense of the chase. In contrast, the brief foray into one of the apartments, with wall-to-wall carpeting, soft furniture, and curtains, come across as muted. As the boys reach the roof and ascend by a ladder to the top-most part of the building, the structure is more industrial and rawer in the elevator machine room with no guardrails. In two vertigo-inducing shots, the boys look down to the ground, so that we are very sure of how high up they are. This may be shot at the roof of the Great Arthur House in Golden Lane, which was the tallest residential building in Britain at the time of its construction.

At its heart, this is a pacifist film about how an arms race can get out of hand, but it also brings forth a perspective that can be understood as feminist, as film scholar Lucy Fischer observes "from its critique of masculinity."[31] The boys' escalating violent play is not just an escalation in the here and now of the film; it is an escalation on a larger scale, or, in Fischer's words, "the perils of boys' games which lead to adult warfare."[32]

The War Game won the Lion of St. Mark shield at the Venice Short Film Festival in summer 1963. It was also screened at the Cork Film Festival in Ireland in September 1963; in 1964, it was nominated for a BAFTA for best short film. As a qualifying piece, *The War Game* demonstrated Zetterling's sense of sound and visuals, her direction of actors—typically, she was lauded for her direction of child actors in the reception of her feature films in the 1960s—and her skill in constructing a moving image narrative without dialogue. Accordingly, she was ready to move on to longer and more difficult projects. For this, she turned to Sweden.

Nine Out of Ten Movie Stars

In four films, Mai Zetterling had trained her skills and proven her ability. She had traveled to remote locations, skied in Sweden, ridden a horse in France, traversed Iceland in a jeep, and gone on fishing boats. Although appearing in all her documentaries, she had done so as the movie star playing the role of inquisitive explorer. She had been interviewed at the

Cork Film Festival, where *The War Game* was screened, as an intellectual and a representative of Sweden. Although the interview mainly focused on Sweden, the Swedish temperament, and Ingmar Bergman, Zetterling seemed to be shedding her persona as an actress and movie star and moving on to something different.[33]

To return to Sweden and persuade a producer to back her next project, a feature film based on Agnes von Krusenstjerna's seven-volume novel series, The Misses von Pahlen, she accepted an invitation from Lux soap to appear in their commercial. She returned to a role she had been happy to leave—the glamorous movie star whose complexion needs to stand up to scrutiny in close-ups. Since the 1920s, Lux had branded itself as the soap of the stars. With the slogan "Nine out of ten movie stars use Lux," commercials and advertisements engaged various film stars—Clara Bow, Deanna Durbin, Natalie Wood, and later Victoria Principal—to appear in the ads. As Swedish film and fashion scholar Therese Andersson noted in her study of movie stars and beauty culture in early twentieth-century Sweden, Lux soap used the female movie stars as experts on beauty, emphasizing the need for their skin to be flawless.[34]

In the one-minute commercial, Zetterling is not the main character. Instead, a script girl does the voice-over and explains how she learned about Lux from Mai Zetterling. In one long take, we see Zetterling and the script girl talking in the studio. Zetterling is wearing a white, corseted eighteenth-century dress, as if appearing in a costume drama. She leaves the script girl and skips gaily to the set, almost running into a man on her way. The camera follows as she sits down in front of the lights and the camera and moves nearer for a close-up on her face. "Oh, how popular Mai Zetterling is at the studio. She is always so happy and nice to everyone," says the script girl. "And so fresh-looking and pretty all the time, even though she has to get up at six in the morning and then work all day, with make-up on under twenty hot film lamps." Zetterling looks into a mirror, seems to approve of her appearance, and then turns her head to the camera, places two fingers on her cheek, and smiles. The whole impression is completely in line with how Zetterling was perceived by the Swedish public during her years as a movie star: she is "sweet and blonde and defenseless," as Furhammar wrote in her obituary, but she is also nice, helpful, and cheerful. Zetterling's performance in the commercial borders on self-conscious parody, and her attitude toward this temporary return to the world of stardom is reflected in her

autobiography when she mistakenly describes the offer from Lux as "the 'one out of every ten stars uses' slogan."[35]

Nevertheless, by reverting to the image people expected of her, Zetterling was paid not only for the appearance in the commercial but also for her trip to Sweden, where she could try to find someone who was willing to back her plans to make a film out of the Misses von Pahlen books (1930–35).

Networks in the Film Community

The Swedish film community in the 1960s was very small. It still is, in many ways, but perhaps particularly so when an escalating optimism of social engineering and the euphoria over Ingmar Bergman's international successes of *Smiles of a Summer Night* (*Sommarnattens leende*, 1955), *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), and *The Virgin Spring* (*Jungfrukälan*, 1960) created a fertile climate for consolidating a Swedish art cinema institution. Swedish Bergman scholar Maaret Koskinen has described the Stockholmian center for this film community as an island, "a small city of an affluent, highly organized country, in which most of the national, cultural and political capital was gathered."[36]

This is the community to which Zetterling turned to find the backing to direct her first feature film project. As an actress in the 1940s, she had been a part of it, but that had been fifteen years before, and several things had changed. Bergman—whose *Music in Darkness* (1948) Zetterling starred in when Bergman was an aspiring talent and was much appreciated for his theater work but far from the name he became in the late 1950s—was entering into a position of established power. In 1961, he had become artistic leader at Svensk Filmindustri, the major Swedish film studio; in 1963 he became the head of the Royal Dramatic Theater, indisputably occupying two of the most influential seats in the Swedish film and theater world (which, at this point, very much converged). Harry Schein, who at this time was becoming the most significant figure within the Swedish film culture of the 1960s, had begun writing film criticism in a literary journal in the late 1940s. At the height of Zetterling's stardom in Sweden, however, Schein was still working as an engineer, perfecting the water purification invention that eventually made him wealthy. Alf Sjöberg, the celebrated film and theater director with whom Zetterling had had an intense working relationship (two films, *Torment*, *Iris and the Lieutenant* [1946]; and five theater productions),

was now part of an older generation of filmmakers whose production decreased dramatically in the 1960s. Rune Waldekranz, who produced *Loving Couples*, left film production to become the head of the newly founded film school.

There are several stories as to how Zetterling's first feature film came about. First, there is her own: she accepted an offer to star in a commercial for Lux to afford to come to Sweden and propose her project. In her description, "it was a somewhat embarrassed lady doing the commercial but a persuasive and excited one talking about *Loving Couples* with the producers—who, to my great astonishment, said yes, they would back me."[37] The producers in this case were Kenne Fant at Svensk Filmindustri and Rune Waldekranz at Sandrews.[38] It was reasonable for Zetterling to turn to Svensk Filmindustri because most of the films she had starred in during the 1940s were produced by them. In any case, Fant must have rejected Zetterling's project or was outbid by Waldekranz, because Waldekranz ultimately produced the film.

According to Waldekranz, however, he was the one who contacted Zetterling when he heard she was in Stockholm to make the soap commercial. For a long time, he had wanted to find a woman who could direct, and he had seen *The War Game* and found it promising. He asked for a meeting with her and asked if she wanted to direct a feature film. When she said yes, he asked her to send him a scenario. She responded promptly by sending him the screenplay for *Loving Couples*, based on the Misses von Pahlen books, the rights to which Waldekranz held but had promised to his friend Alf Sjöberg. Nevertheless, since he found Zetterling "congenial" for the material, he broke his promise to his old friend and gave the rights to make the film to her instead.[39]

The stories do not end here. In an interview made a few years before he died, Sjöberg mentioned that Zetterling had approached him and asked if she could adapt the Misses von Pahlen series, which he had been working on. "I was glad to let her," Sjöberg said.[40] When I interviewed Harry Schein, he claimed he was the one who had given Zetterling a chance to direct, that he felt it would be a good thing for Swedish cinema if a woman made a film, and that Waldekranz had been entirely dependent on him.[41]

These competing stories are interesting in that they reveal how many (men) want to claim the honor of having helped Zetterling make her feature debut. In their interviews with me, Waldekranz and Schein both stated that they wanted to support a woman director. This might well be something they wanted to convey to me because at the time

(1999 and 2003, respectively) I was a comparatively young female scholar, who, it might be presumed, had feminist ideals. Even so, right before the premiere of *Loving Couples*, Waldekranz published an article in *Biografägaren* about women directors, in which he argued from an essentialist perspective that women should be given the opportunity to direct films. With knowledge and insight, he discussed more than twenty-five women directors from film history.[42]

All these people construct themselves through their story: Zetterling is creating a biographical legend where struggle, determination, and strength are important elements; Waldekranz entertains an image of himself as a father figure within the national film industry. Schein, on the other hand, presents himself as a mastermind with complete control over Swedish cinema. Waldekranz began as a film critic, worked as a producer for more than twenty years, became the first head of the film school in 1964, and became the first full professor of cinema studies at Stockholm University in 1970.

Schein was no less significant in Swedish film. He might very well have been invested in maintaining the image of himself as the key figure of Swedish film in the 1960s. There have been several accounts of Schein's significant role in shaping the film culture of that decade, but few manage to avoid a sense of dazzlement at Schein's persona, his charisma, his Machiavellian maneuvering, and (implicitly) his sex appeal.[43] Coming from Austria as a twelve-year-old refugee in 1936, Schein studied at night school and became an engineer. Through a patent on a water purification method, he became a wealthy man and gave more attention to his cultural interests, particularly film. He wrote film criticism in the literary journal *BLM*; in 1956, he married actress Ingrid Thulin. In 1962, he published a book on cultural policy called *Har vi råd med kultur?* (*Can We Afford Culture?*), in which one chapter described a model for subsidizing the Swedish film industry in a way that would stimulate "quality film" à la Ingmar Bergman. This chapter was later realized as a new Swedish film policy.[44]

Schein could implement this because he was extremely well placed in political and film cultural life. He was a member of the Social Democratic Party, friends with several up-and-coming young social democrats, including Olof Palme and the lesser-known Krister Wickman, who eventually worked in the Department of Education and Culture. At the same time, he was friends with many people within the film business. Finally, because of his years managing an engineering company, he could speak the language of CEOs and company owners.[45] The Swedish

film policy of 1963 was the result of a careful manipulating of government and film industry.

Accordingly, the film community in Sweden to which Zetterling returned to direct her first feature film was entering a game-changing phase, with a completely new film institute and film policy in place. At the same time, people who had been young in the national film institution when she left had gained positions of power. Not only was Zetterling transgressing the traditional gender divide in taking up directing; she was attempting to do so within an industry where words like *artistic*, *quality*, and *valuable* were key. Perhaps because of this, she was given quite a lot of creative freedom, but she had to reciprocate by providing acknowledged art films.

2

RETURN TO SWEDEN AS A FEATURE FILMMAKER

1964–1966

Feminist film scholar Lucy Fischer describes the male world in *The Girls* as a "manifestation of [radical feminist] Mary Daly's vision of patriarchy as a 'state of war.'"[1] There is a strong sense of war, of battle lines drawn and trenches dug, of a tension beneath the surface, in Mai Zetterling's films from the 1960s. In Thomas Hobbes's classic *Leviathan* from 1651, the notion is presented that a natural state for humans implies a condition of permanent war—everyone against everyone. However, under a higher power, this war can end and civilization can bloom. Humans thus give up some freedoms and some rights to the higher power to live in a state of nonwar.[2] In Zetterling's films, this state of nonwar does not exist. Rather, her work expresses a sentiment reminiscent of an idea Michel Foucault develops in "Il faut défendre la société." Arguing against Hobbes, Foucault says the war continues, even under the higher power, in the form of politics. Society does not consist of a hierarchical order but of two different groups in conflict.[3] According to Foucault, the peace that comes when one group is defeated cannot be regarded as voluntary by the defeated group. Instead, the groups continue to wage war beneath a peaceful surface. The concept of a permanent war can be used to understand and analyze politics: for instance, how counterhistories contradict official historiography as a strategy in this war.

In Zetterling's feature films of the 1960s, the two groups are women and men. The actual, physical wars that take place in the background of *Loving Couples*, and in the backgrounds of *Night Games* and *The Girls*, remind the spectator of what is at stake. The "permanent war" of Zetterling's universe is metaphorical, and it can be understood, as Fischer does, as a manifestation of patriarchy as a state of war, but it seems as if there is more to it. Although some of the violence in the films is committed by men, it is not necessarily against women as women. Adele's husband, Tord, wrestles with her in bed, and although he has the upper hand physically, Adele is depicted as the aggressive one. In one of the flashbacks, a dirty old man tries to seduce Agda as a young girl, but he fails miserably and Agda runs off. He is presented as pathetic rather than menacing. In the radical feminist analysis of patriarchy, men commit acts of violence—rape, forced pregnancies, domestic abuse, murders, child marriages, and so on—to keep women suppressed and controlled. In Zetterling's cinematic world, there is a constant antagonism between the sexes that is not fully mutual but not one-sided, either, and it is expressed through a sheer impossibility to communicate. When Liz in *The Girls* announces that she wants a divorce, her husband responds, "This means war!" In *Loving Couples*, one male character talks about the sound of machine guns, and his wife says, "It sounds like home." In *Night Games*, two of the ever-present party guests shoot air rifles at a map of Europe, aiming at the cities where the main character's mother is said to have been seen.

This metaphorical war between the sexes—connecting Zetterling to important Swedish cultural figures such as August Strindberg and Queen Christina, who appear in her film about Stockholm in the late 1970s—may be one reason Zetterling was perceived as aggressive and over the top by reviewers and critics in the 1960s and 1970s. The theme is most prominent in her feature films of the 1960s; in her later films, the struggle takes place within characters—they battle mental illness, fears, anxieties, and a loss of purpose or measure themselves against nature.

Furthermore, this battle is related to Zetterling's obsession with sexuality and reproduction. It is no coincidence that her first feature film, *Loving Couples*, concludes with a freeze-frame image of a newborn baby, recently pushed into the world, with the umbilical cord still intact. By cutting between medium shots of the actress (Gio Petré) and medium shots of the lower body of an unknown woman truly in labor, Zetterling was able to insert an authentic birth scene into the end of the film. In *Night Games*, Jan's mother, played by Ingrid Thulin, gives birth

to a stillborn child in a huge canopied bed with party guests surrounding her. In *Doctor Glas*, the war between the sexes is played out as a war of reproduction—the pastor argues that they cannot know if God wants to bless them with a child and thus they must have sex, while the doctor refuses to perform abortions. Children and motherhood play crucial roles in *The Girls*.

Some viewers found the use of an actual birth at the end of *Loving Couples* provocative, even "grotesque," whereas it might have been one of the inspirations behind another reviewer's comment that "whoever had expected something delicate and gently 'feminine' from Mai Zetterling, our first female film director, will be very surprised by 'Loving Couples.'"[4] Although incorrectly describing her as Sweden's "first female film director," this observation aptly captures how the impression of Zetterling in her former home country from her acting years as delicate, sweet, and innocent was challenged by the films she directed from the 1960s and onward.

The Sweden Zetterling returned to was in many ways very different from the one she had left. In the 1940s, the national film industry was market-driven and prospering, but the arrival of television in the mid-1950s and various demographic changes had led to a crisis in the industry in the early 1960s and a turn to cultural policy and public support to stimulate the production of films in general and a particular kind of "quality art cinema."[5]

The Swedish Film Reform

After World War II, the Swedish film industry was in good shape, particularly because the import and export of films had been restricted during the war, which left an audience hungry for movies with mainly domestic films to choose from. For a long time, a tax on cinema tickets had placed a heavy burden on the industry. In 1951, Swedish film production was halted for several months in a strike to protest what was perceived of as an unreasonable extra cost, and the government responded by returning some of that money to the industry as production support, albeit quite a meager one. Nonetheless, audience numbers continued to climb until the fateful year of 1956, when television was introduced. As in many other countries, television competed with movies as popular entertainment, even though it was managed through a state monopoly and there was only one channel. In 1958, with the World Cup tournament taking place in Sweden, sales of TV sets multiplied while sales of

movie tickets dwindled. By the end of the 1950s, audience numbers had decreased to the extent that one production company (Sandrews) had to close down its studios and rent space with its competitor, Svensk Filmindustri.

When Harry Schein presented his proposal for a new Swedish film policy, the time was ripe for change, and although the industry was wary of allowing the government to meddle in its affairs, it was prepared to accept some intervention to resolve the situation. In addition, with Ingmar Bergman's international triumphs, the government realized the potential of a domestic film production to increase national cultural capital. Schein explicitly argued that Sweden needed more filmmakers like Bergman, and he was successful in sounding as if he knew how to arrange a system in which this could happen.[6]

The special point of the reform, as Schein explained again and again, was that it created a self-contained system of financing outside the usual taxes. By abolishing the entertainment tax (a move the industry favored) and introducing a 10 percent fee on admission charges that went into a foundation and then was returned to the industry by the means of subsidies, no money needed to be added from tax funds (which the government was in favor of). Because the finances were managed by an independent foundation (led by a board composed equally of government and industry representatives), the "meddling" that the industry was worried about did not come directly from the government; moreover, the government did not have to create new official posts and employ anyone designated to work with the policy. Thus, the film reform separated the film policy from the government and created a foothold to stimulate the production of quality film. The 10 percent fee would be used to motivate Swedish film producers to make "quality films," most importantly through the "quality prizes" awarded to films that were considered artistically valuable.[7]

On paper, this was a great construction, perfectly planned and engineered (many jokes and references have been made to the fact that the film reform was designed by an engineer). In reality, the film reform became a highly contested cultural policy issue and, although it was maintained (with several changes and addendums) from 1963 to 2016, it was constantly criticized and fraught with conflict, and every change was preceded by year-long negotiations.[8]

One of the problems was the reality of the small Swedish film community. Schein prescribed that "experts" should be the ones to decide which films received the coveted quality awards. A jury was created,

consisting of film critics and intellectuals who wrote in the largest newspapers and journals (almost exclusively Stockholm-based), and their opinions were summarized in a table of grades in the most significant film journal in Sweden at the time, *Chaplin*. The consequences of this were manifold: (a) suddenly, these people found themselves in a position of power over the production of Swedish film; (b) their views of the annual film releases were well known in the film community, which meant that producers began looking for material and directors that might be pleasing to them; (c) the jury's composition entailed, at least in the beginning, a white, male, educated elite from Stockholm; and (d) any director who fell out of favor with the critics would—unless they were extremely commercially successful—find themselves out of a job. Although the quality awards were given after the fact—that is, to films that were already made, released, and reviewed—the quality jury influenced the production of Swedish film. This ensured a split within Swedish film production into two groups of films. In one group were the films aiming to attract a quality award and thus were films attempting at a high artistic standard. Eventually, as the 1960s progressed, the preferred aesthetics and themes changed and became more oriented to cinema vérité, commenting critically on society and the social welfare state from a left-leaning or socialist perspective. In the other group were films that more or less shamelessly catered to audiences (not least the Swedish sex films), which benefited from the relaxation of film censorship that occurred as several art films (like Bergman's *The Silence* and Vilgot Sjöman's *491*) pushed the boundaries for what could be allowed on screen.

One person who illustrates this development was the director of *One Summer of Happiness* (*Hon dansade en sommar*, 1951), Arne Mattsson, whose genre films suddenly fell out of favor with the critics. Although they continued to be quite successful with the audience for a while, Mattsson sometimes received such severe criticisms for films he made with any kind of artistic ambition that he eventually became extremely bitter and finally chose revenge on the critics through his film *Ann and Eve* (*Ann och Eve—de erotiska*, 1970), a sexploitation film that was so darkly cynical that reviewers claimed to be worried about his mental health.[9]

Zetterling's production undoubtedly fell into the first group, although her films—like the ones by Bergman and Sjöman mentioned above—did contain provocative scenes of decadent sexuality. *Loving Couples* was based on a seven-novel suite written in the 1930s by Agnes

von Krusenstjerna (1894–1940). One of the most famous authors in Sweden of the 1920s and 1930s, von Krusenstjerna first won recognition with a suite of semiautobiographical novels, the Tony suite (1922–26). She was married to David Sprengel, her senior by fourteen years, who worked as a translator, critic, and writer. Sprengel and von Krusenstjerna had a stormy relationship, not least because their marriage was not accepted by her family, but also because von Krusenstjerna suffered from mental illness. The Misses von Pahlen series, published between 1930 and 1935, stirred up a controversy in 1934 and 1935. The large and prestigious Swedish publisher Bonniers had rejected the fourth novel of the suite in 1933 because of its depictions of sex, incest, and homosexuality. Von Krusenstjerna and her husband instead found another publisher, Spektrum. After a period of silence that seemed to be a tacit agreement to pretend the book did not exist, a heated debate, including anti-Semitic attacks from the Nazi press in Sweden, began and would continue until 1935.[10]

Zetterling was not one to back away from challenging themes. Neither would she back away from a daunting project when she had set her mind to it—the script for *Loving Couples*, cowritten with her then husband, British poet David Hughes, skillfully combined the material of the novels into a regular feature-length film through a construction of flashbacks. Not all of the abundant cast of characters in the novels appeared in the film, and naturally, only some of the events in the novels are shown on the screen, but the film encompasses elements from all seven novels. *Loving Couples* was an ambitious film with a huge and stellar cast (including such famous Swedish actors and Bergman stalwarts as Gunnel Lindblom, Harriet Andersson, Gunnar Björnstrand, and Eva Dahlbeck).

The production was large and, for a Swedish context, expensive. Zetterling's first feature film was a prestige project in many ways. The cinematographer, Sven Nykvist, had worked with Bergman from *The Virgin Spring* (1960; his first collaboration with Bergman was *Sawdust and Tinsel* [*Gycklarnas afton*], in 1953) and was regarded as perhaps Sweden's finest cinematographer.

The production did not run smoothly. There was discontent among the cast and crew, and Zetterling felt that there was opposition to her ideas. For instance, there was one take in which two protagonists—Angela and Thomas—walk around a tree during a midsummer celebration. The scene is central in the film, as this is when Angela falls in love with Thomas, which leads to her pregnancy and the birth that

Mai Zetterling directing Harriet Andersson in *Loving Couples* (1964). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

concludes the film. Zetterling wanted this filmed in one, uninterrupted take, circling the tree as the characters walk around it; Nykvist and his assistants said it could not be done.[11] Nykvist had once impressed Bergman by making a 180-degree pan in *Sawdust and Tinsel*, and his technical skill was undisputed. In the film, the scene is as Zetterling planned it, indicating both her determination and what might be understood as Nykvist's somewhat sulking reluctance to go through any hardships to impress this former actress. In her autobiography, Zetterling mentions that someone in the cast seemed to oppose her.[12] This was Harriet Andersson, and many years later, she explained that she felt as if Zetterling had completely forgotten what it was like to be an actress.[13] She wanted to decide everything, even the smallest detail, and Andersson balked. When Zetterling later asked her if she wanted to star in *The Girls*, Andersson hesitated and Zetterling offered an apology—"I have become much kinder now," she said.[14] Nevertheless, Andersson admitted that maybe it had to do with being ordered about by a woman. As an actress, she said, she was used to being directed and told what to do by men, and when she encountered her first female director, pride took over.

Sexuality and Its Consequence: *Loving Couples*

The flashback structure is the key device for condensing the sprawling narrative of the novels. Zetterling's film takes place at a maternity hospital, sometime during World War I, and focuses on three women: the main protagonist, Angela (played by Gio Petré), a young orphaned woman of the nobility who has been raised with her aunt, Petra (Anita Björk); Agda (Harriet Andersson), who is a maid with a family related to Angela and Petra; and Adele (Gunnel Lindblom), who is married to Tord (Bengt Brunskog), the tenant on Petra's land. Angela and Agda are about to give birth. Adele carries a dead child in her womb. While they are going through labor, they look back on their lives, presented to us in at first brief but eventually long and elaborate flashbacks. The film ends with shots from an actual delivery, showing how Angela's baby is pushed out into the world.

The first flashback functions as a set-up of the flashback structure. It is the most clearly prepared flashback in the film. Angela is left alone in a room at the hospital. Church bells are heard in the distance. Sound functions as a psychological motivation and as a carrier back in time. As Angela hears the bells, the camera closes in on her face and in a fade cuts to the face of a child with similarly blonde hair. The church bells are still heard. All possible cues for a flashback are present here—the overlapping sound, the close-up of the face (which makes it seem as if we are entering into her mind and memories), the fade that blends past and present for a moment before we are firmly in the past, the face of a child who is thereby identified as young Angela.

Later flashbacks are less elaborately set up, sometimes made simply through cuts between past and present. The first flashback sets the intrinsic norms for the film, which are that we will be traveling back and forth between past and present. Thus, the later flashbacks are not confusing, and one of the strengths of Zetterling's filmmaking is that however complex she makes her narrative structure (as in later films like *The Girls* and *Doctor Glas*), it is easy to follow. There is a low threshold between different levels of narration and between past and present in Zetterling's films, but it is not made to deliberately confuse the spectator or draw the narrative action into question.

The flashback structure functions as a device to propel the film's most significant themes of reproduction, gender, and sexuality. As Maureen Turim has observed, flashbacks tend to underscore a sense of determinism because the effect of something is shown before its cause,

making it the inevitable outcome of the events preceding it.[15] By cross-cutting between scenes of sex and scenes of pregnant women about to give birth or giving birth, sexuality and its consequences—reproduction, labor, childbirth—are connected quite dramatically. In one such transition, we first see Agda and her lover having sex. The film cuts to the obstetrician, leaning over Agda in a similar manner as her lover did (shot from the same angle). "That's it! Now it's over," says the obstetrician, and Agda replies, "It didn't hurt at all." Although Agda is pregnant already in the scene from the past, the ellipsis creates a visual point of the causal relationship between sex and childbirth. The dialogue also functions as an ironic comment to the sex act in the past. Maaret Koskinen has noted about this scene: "This drastic transition in time does not only make a ridiculous impression that sex, measured by this literally faceless, male standard, is a little on the short side; again the strong connection is underlined between female sexuality and its biological consequences, between cause and effect. The cut becomes like a microcosm of the film as a whole: sexuality as woman's ultimate goal—and her culde-sac."[16] Zetterling returned to this theme later on in *Doctor Glas*, but all of her films from the 1960s explore issues of gender, sexuality, and reproduction. However, somewhat paradoxically, her perspective during this time is not necessarily feminist. In the 1970s, Zetterling joined the feminist movement in film and television, but at this earlier point she seems to be regarding herself as a contemporary artist with a universal vision, and consequently her art claims to speak to humanity in general. This is important to keep in mind, since Zetterling already was spoken of as someone who brought "the women's perspective" to cinema and eventually became remembered as a woman—even a feminist—film director. As quoted in the introduction, Peter Cowie saw Zetterling as contributing most effectively to Swedish cinema as a "suffragette," whereas others have described her films as expressing a "feminist fury" or being "unashamedly feminist."[17]

Nevertheless, her 1960s films use gender as a way to reflect on society, and the relation between the genders has strong metaphoric connections to war. In *Loving Couples*, World War I looms beyond the horizon (Sweden did not participate in either of the world wars), and in the dialogue, marriage is explicitly connected to warfare. War and marriage teach people to hate each other, says Isa Landborg (Eva Dahlbeck) at one point in the film and when Dora Macson's husband (Toivo Pawlo) talks about the sound of machine-gun fire, she reflects that it sounds just like home.

At the same time, the women at the center represent different ways to relate to the opposite sex. Angela, the main protagonist, has had an intense love affair with an older man and is planning to raise her child with her aunt, Petra. The first scene of the film has Petra look at Angela as they are waiting to be admitted to the hospital and say, "Remember, Angela, that it is our child!" Agda, the maid, seems to move freely between her husband (who is gay) and her lover (a promising man of the nobility and therefore unable and unwilling to marry her). Adele, who carries a dead child in her womb, is the only one who lives in a traditional marriage—one that has brought her down, class-wise, and functions like a prison where hatred and bitterness breed. *Loving Couples* is so imbued with this war of the sexes that the only child conceived within traditional matrimony dies before it is born.

A Haunting Past: *Night Games*

The metaphorical permanent war is present in *Night Games* as well. *Night Games* was based on a novel by Mai Zetterling,[18] adapted for the screen by her and David Hughes (who aided her in screenwriting for the duration of their marriage and on some occasions after their divorce). Sandrews had received a quality award for *Loving Couples*, so Zetterling had no problem finding backing from the production company, although the producer this time was Göran Lindgren. Rune Waldekranz had left Sandrews to become the headmaster of the film school at the Swedish Film Institute.

A young man by the name of Jan (Keve Hjelm) returns to his childhood home—a mansion in the Swedish countryside—with his fiancée, Mariana (Lena Brundin). The mansion has been abandoned for many years, but as the man enters, his childhood memories begin to haunt him. His mother, Irene (Ingrid Thulin), a vain, narcissistic, and selfish woman, held huge depraved parties here with her decadent upper-class friends. In the first extended flashbacks, she has invited all her friends to witness when she gives birth. Lying on the canopied bed, she mutters obscenities and cynical phrases while suffering through labor, all in front of the assembled guests and her frightened twelve-year-old son. The baby, however, is stillborn, another innocent victim of the continuous and vicious war between the sexes.

Before this scene, in an earlier flashback, Jan has been searching among the party guests for his mother and encountered two of her friends in the attic, shooting at a map of Europe. "Where is mother?" he

asks. His mother's husband, Bruno, replies in a drunken voice: "Your mother? She is in Vienna." The image shows a close-up of the map with Vienna at the center. A shot is heard and a hole appears in the sign for Vienna, and the film cuts to Bruno: "I have just shot her." Albin, a party guest dressed up as a monk, aims his gun: "No, she was last seen in Athens, murdered by yours truly."

Athens and Vienna are central cities for European cultural history and civilization: Athens is the birthplace of democracy and the center of ancient Greek and the lore of that culture. At the turn of the previous century, Vienna was a center for knowledge, culture, and exploration. Both cities point in the direction of Sigmund Freud and the Oedipus complex. *Night Games* is an exceedingly Freudian film—although Zetterling later denied this and claimed that her heart was with Carl Gustav Jung rather than "uncle Freud."[19] Nonetheless, the narrative and the structure of *Night Games* quite obviously signal Freudian psychoanalysis. Jan's traumatic experiences have rendered him impotent, unable to love and make love sincerely and honestly. He needs to work through his childhood trauma to reach some kind of liberation (and be cured from his impotence). The flashback structure functions as a kind of Freudian revisiting of childhood and sheds light on the nature and depth of Jan's problems. As Maureen Turim has observed, flashbacks can illustrate how the psychoanalytical therapeutic model works by revealing repressed events in a character's childhood and thereby the cause of their problems.[20] In *Night Games*, there is no choice about it; Jan is compelled to go through these agonizing memories with the spectators of the film, and indirectly with his fiancée, who tries to help him.

So wherein lies this childhood trauma, and how is Jan treated? He needs a release from the past so that he can consummate his marriage by having sex with his wife—a wife who, moreover, looks a bit like his mother: blonde, tall, shapely, with striking features and high cheekbones. The mother has been symbolically buried in a well in the basement (the unconscious). Toward the end of the film, it is pulled out of the water and opened, revealing that there is, after all, nothing in the coffin. But for Jan to reach his ultimate liberation from his traumatic childhood, the whole building has to be blown to smithereens as the culmination of a grandiose party in the final scenes.

Through the flashbacks, we are treated to several scenes with twelve-year-old Jan and his mother. The story that can be constructed from these flashbacks is that Jan has an unresolved Oedipus complex and he has never truly abandoned his amorous/erotic feelings for his mother.

In several of the scenes from the past, Jan is neglected and attempts to get his mother's attention. In one of them, she wears a very low-cut dress with a wide, transparent crinoline. Lazy jazz music plays on the score (actually diegetic music, coming from a Gramophone playing in the dressing room). Irene is drinking from a high-stemmed glass, and she dips a sugar cube in the drink and throws it to Jan, as if to a dog. Later, Jan creeps in under the crinoline and looks up at his mother and Bruno. He continues in, under the inner dress, and begins to caress his mother's legs, clad in stockings and a garter. Irene yelps and jumps away, joking to Bruno that he has a rival. Bruno chases him out of the room, and Irene and Bruno resume their flirting. Jan hides in his room, with a piece of cloth from the dress, and he lies in his bed with the cloth over his face, smelling it, kissing it.

Jan's behavior toward the piece of cloth seems almost like a textbook example of how Freud described fetishism—a part that stands in for the whole. The cause of this is an exaggerated value ascribed to the desired sexual object, which grants a desirous quality to anything associated with the person with whom one is in love. Freud claims that a certain degree of such fetishism is quite normal, in particular during the early phase of a love affair.[21] It does not seem far-fetched that Jan would desire his mother, particularly since her husband—the father figure—is a very peripheral character without much charisma who pales next to his dominant and forceful wife. Thus, the fear of castration, which Freud claims forces a young boy (age three to five) to abandon his mother as a love object and instead internalize masculinity, might not have been present for Jan at the crucial age. Consequently, as he enters puberty—which is the age he flashes back to—this unresolved Oedipus complex bears fruit.[22]

This reading of this scene and Jan's troublesome past might seem farfetched in the light of recent criticism of psychodynamic therapeutic models and of the Freudian understanding of childhood, sexuality, and psychological development. However, if one sees Freud as an intertext to the film rather than psychoanalysis as a method to approach it, it is not unreasonable. Freudian theories were very popular for a large share of the twentieth century, used professionally for therapy and in some kinds of home-cooked, everyday psychology to explain and understand motivations and sentiments. As a former actress, and especially as one who worked through Stanislavsky's methods of immersion and identification, Zetterling was likely to have come across Freudian psychoanalysis and have read Freud's texts and case studies.

A mother's love. Ingrid Thulin and Jörgen Lindström in *Night Games* (1966). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

The most harrowing flashback is a later scene with Irene and Jan together. He has taken a bath, and she puts a towel around him and carries him to bed, where she dries him tenderly—as if he were a much younger boy. She tickles him, making sweet and playful jokes, and Jan very much enjoys the rare and loving attention. He asks her to read from the Bible, which she does reluctantly, from Song of Songs. Suddenly she notices a movement under the cover. Jan is masturbating. She pulls off the cover, slaps his face, and yells at him.

The sum of what she yells is that what he is doing is nothing shameful and that he should not do it under the cover. "Do it now! Do it so that I can see it!" From what she says, it is possible to make out a personal history of sexual disappointment. "Will you also be one of those men who fumble in the dark?" The effect of her words is the opposite. What Jan feels—and the spectator feels—is a strong, almost overwhelming sense of shame and embarrassment. Jan struggles and withdraws into a fetal position.

This scene eroticizes the relationship between mother and son by infantilizing the boy and thus providing an excuse for treating his body as asexual and caressing it in a way that is acceptable with toddlers but

Pornography and striptease for the wedding guests. Lissi Alandh in *Night Games* (1966). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

not with boys in early puberty. It contains and transgresses the taboos of pedophilia and incest. When Jan responds with sexual arousal to the intimacy of the situation, Irene punishes him. Even though her point is to rebuke the shameful furtiveness of the act, he is still punished for being caught in the act of masturbating.

Scenes like this are identified as the cause of Jan's impotence. The guests from his mother's parties return to the house, and Jan and Mariana get married. She is carried to the big bed where his mother gave birth to his dead brother, and the wedding guests withdraw to another room, leaving the couple to consummate the marriage while they party and, roaring with laughter, watch a stag film that stars some of the guests for a while projected on a female guest's underwear. In claustrophobic, overexposed close-ups, Mariana asks Jan to love her. "I can't," he responds, and leaves her to join the raucous party outside the bedroom. Freud claimed that children who do not succeed in overcoming the authority of their parents would bring trouble into their marriages. In his version, such children are most often women who become frigid.[23] In Zetterling's version, a boy becomes an impotent man.

Night Games is more than just a textbook illustration of Freudian theories. As quoted in the introduction, in an interview on Swedish television during the production of the film, Zetterling was asked what the working title of the film—*Longing*—meant. "Longing for emancipation," Zetterling replied. "Oh, female emancipation?" asked the male interviewer. "No, human emancipation," she said. "It is much more important than female emancipation."[24] The Freudian template for the film is perhaps no more than that, a template, because the emancipation is only superficially one from a dominant and narcissistic mother. In *Night Games*, Zetterling's conviction that earthly and material possessions and a rich and comfortable lifestyle enslave people is quite explicitly expressed. When Mariana forces Jan to liberate himself from the past, he must do so not only by exorcizing the demons from his childhood and the ghosts from his mother's parties but by ridding himself of the cumbersome castle and its baroque furniture and riches. The building is haunted and corrupt in itself.

"I tried to film a story of modern Europe," Zetterling explained in the program for Venice Film Festival.[25] If the castle can be understood as a metaphor for Europe and Europe's legacy of a decadent, incestuous aristocracy, laid back and blasé in relation to all aspects of life that makes it worth living in the Zetterling worldview, then the theme of haunting does not seem irrelevant. What is Europe except a mass of graves and a criss-crossing of old, contested borders? Ghosts of the past haunt Europe wherever one goes, having left their bodily remains as a palimpsest of ruins and monuments: in Paris, Nuremberg, the Balkans, Vienna, and Athens. The haunting specters in *Night Games* seem to enter unbidden, washing over Jan as soon as he enters his childhood home. His mother's voice echoes between the stone walls; her guests' laughter can be heard in the corridors. In one flashback, Irene says to Jan, "When you have decided to become a man, I will return." And return she does. Jan develops a mean streak toward his fiancée, almost as if his mother is possessing him, jealously trying to drive away her rival.

Several flashbacks occur through mirrors. Maaret Koskinen has observed that the mirror a character holds in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* can be said to have a "liminal" character; it constitutes a threshold or a link between inner and outer, simultaneously a border and an opening.[26] Similarly, in *Night Games*, mirrors, windows, and door openings are liminal portals, providing a link or a passage for the past to enter the present.

As in *Loving Couples*, narcissism is an evil and dangerous trait. Just like Adele, Irene gives birth to a dead child. In readings of the original novels, Adele has been understood as one of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "madwomen in the attic," a woman whose madness expresses everything repressed about femininity in patriarchal society.[27] Such a reading is not unreasonable, as Adele is a truth-teller whose cynical statements about how men always betray women and about the hypocrisy of the upper class provide a commentary on the events. Nevertheless, in von Krusenstjerna's novels and in Zetterling's film, Adele can also be understood as something else: a person down-trodden by circumstance and whose bitterness and jealousy force her focus away from the essence of life.

Irene is very different and yet similar: beautiful and privileged, she is, in a sense, spoiled, never having run into any hardships other than the meaninglessness of a life filled with luxuries and parties. The result is the same: she is bitter and cynical. She hates the opposite gender but is dependent on men for confirmation and attention. Nonetheless, men do not give her what she feels she needs and deserves.

Reception

By reviewers, *Loving Couples* was deemed a promising debut. *Night Games* did not fulfill those promises, according to the Swedish press. On the surface, this sums up the reception of Zetterling's first two feature films. Unsurprisingly, neither were any box office smash hits. *Loving Couples* had a decent audience of 330,415 paying cinema goers, *Night Games* was somewhat lower at 257,986 ticket buyers.[28] These numbers are related to how other Swedish films did domestically during this time. Compared with other film directors with similar pretensions (that is, aiming to be artistic filmmakers rather than popular ones), such as Bo Widerberg, Vilgot Sjöman, and Jan Troell, Zetterling's two first films were within what was reasonable for this type of film at this time. Even taking an established auteur like Ingmar Bergman into account, Zetterling's audience numbers are quite acceptable.

Of all Swedish films after the reform, Bergman's *The Silence* (1963) attracted the biggest domestic audience. It had nearly 1.5 million (1,459,031) paying cinemagoers in Sweden alone. This is outstanding, even considering Bergman's reputation and standing, and in particular because *The Silence* is a slow-paced reflection over God's silence and the human inability to communicate. Other Bergman films in the 1960s did not fare so well, and the commercial success of *The Silence* is usually

ascribed to its sexually explicit scenes and the censorship debate that preceded its release, something Bergman was well aware of during preproduction.[29] His other 1960s films had lower audience numbers: *All These Women* (*För att inte tala om alla dessa kvinnor*, 1964; 228,312), *Persona* (1966; 110,725), *Shame* (*Skammen*, 1968; 202,632), *The Hour of the Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*, 1968; 105,818), and *A Passion* (*En passion*, 1969; 66,095). In Bergman's case, however, domestic audience numbers did not play such a big role because they were somewhat compensated for by international audiences and, more importantly, quality awards from the Swedish Film Institute—even *All These Women*, which has, in hindsight, been regarded as flawed.

Bergman aside, the other art film directors of the 1960s had varied box office numbers. Only 60,150 people paid to see Sjöman's *The Dress* (*Klänningen*, 1964), as compared to *I Am Curious (Yellow)* (*Jag är nyfiken—gul*, 1967), which was nearly as successful (for similar reasons) as *The Silence* with an audience of 1,315,527.[30] The audience numbers for many films of the same type as Zetterling's fluctuated between 250,000 and 350,000: Bo Widerberg's *Raven's End* (*Kvarteret Korpen*, 1963), Jan Troell's *Here Is Your Life* (*Här har du ditt liv*, 1966), and Sjöman's other *Curious* film, *I Am Curious (Blue)* (*Jag är nyfiken—blå*, 1968).

This number crunching might seem pointless, but it demonstrates that although the box office appeal of Zetterling's films was not great, neither was it unreasonable. It also shows that films like these could not really depend on bringing money back to the producers, much less make a relevant profit. They were—and increasingly became—contingent on a support system that provided some extra money. Films that earned both good audience numbers and made the film critics happy were progressively rarer. For a while, explicit sex, especially in a context where it was surrounded by the gravity of art or social commentary, could bring art and commercial regards together. Simultaneously, Swedish film critics began to complain that sexuality in Swedish cinema was a dark and anxiety-ridden affair.[31]

For Zetterling's films of the 1960s, one can describe the critical reception in Sweden as a downward trajectory. It starts off with well-meaning praise and ends (for *Doctor Glas* and *The Girls*) with what can most accurately be described as aggressive condescension. *Loving Couples* was hailed in the media: "A Swedish victory" (*Aftonbladet*), "Mai Zetterling's brave trial of strength" (*Svenska Dagbladet*), "impressive debut film" (*Expressen*, *Dagens Nyheter*), "a masterpiece in the spirit of Bergman" (*Stockholms-Tidningen*) were the headlines in the major Swedish newspapers.[32]

Not only were the reviews favorable, but Zetterling received a lot of attention in the press during production and in connection to the film's release. Prepublicity focused mainly on two things: that she was a woman and that the film was based on a suite of novels surrounded by scandal. One and half months before the premiere, one of the tabloids brought up the von Krusenstjerna controversy and summarized it in an article. Zetterling's film was described as "a film about sexual minorities," and she is quoted as saying that it is "impossible to squeeze in all the perversities in a 2-hour film."[33] Although the angle of the article is highly sensational with a focus on sexuality, there is a political dimension: "The fact that a woman had written the books made the shock even greater for the readers," explains Kerstin Matz, thereby indicating something that became problematic in relation to Zetterling's films as well.

In the prepublicity and in several reviews, the way Zetterling's gender is framed is very eye-catching. One of the first small items about the film, in *Chaplin*, pointed out that "the most feminine of films is taking shape in the studios at Filmstaden."[34] Many of the women involved in production were mentioned. In one of the evening newspapers, an article joked, "Mai Zetterling wants to break men's hold over power" and "she has completely turned the heads of the gentlemen at Sandrews."[35] From the press conference at the Cannes Film Festival, another newspaper reported that "Mai Zetterling was so pretty wearing light blue, and her words were carried by such true conviction that she received a unanimous applause."[36]

The tone of these articles and reviews is very paternalistic. That a woman director is something newsworthy and surprising should not necessarily be taken as evidence of sexism but as a consequence of the fact that women directors were rare, almost nonexistent. However, the light, superficial sexism of these favorable reactions hid a more insidious kind of discrimination that came into play with the release of *Night Games*. All the attention, comments, and jokes about Zetterling being a woman definitely indicate that people were conscious of the rarity of a female director. It was not something that passed in silence, at least while her work was found promising.

When *Night Games* was released to a very mixed reception, all mentions of Zetterling's gender vanished. She was no longer news in the same way, and this time, reviewers did not have to "tip their hats" and be gentlemanly. In the largest newspaper in southern Sweden, a reviewer savaged *Night Games* not once but twice, first when it was screened at the film festival in Venice and then upon its Swedish release. "Zetterling's

sense for symbolism is not extremely subtle. . . . The whole thing reminds one of someone trying to hit a thumbtack with a sledge hammer."[37] The reviewer's main objection to the film (and to Zetterling) was that it was not original but the result of influences from other (male) directors, such as Alf Sjöberg (who was, in fact, something of a mentor to Zetterling during her time as an actress) and Federico Fellini. Her film art was eclectic, and her directorial ambitions lacked independence. Another review was even headed "Mai Zetterling's 8½."[38] Other influences the reviewers traced in *Night Games* came from Luis Buñuel and Ingmar Bergman.

In this way, Zetterling was compared to the greatest and found lacking. Learning from the great masters is one thing, but according to reviewers, Zetterling had not found her own, independent voice. In the words of Harold Bloom, she had not been able to overcome the "anxiety of influence" to create original work.[39] The question here is whether the reviewers were objectively observing a quality of Zetterling's filmmaking or if they were under the influence of preconceived ideas about gender. Andreas Huyssen has pointed out that several of the modernist critics relied "on the traditional notion that women's aesthetic and artistic abilities are inferior to those of men. Women as providers of inspiration for the artist, yes, but otherwise *Berufsverbot* for the muses, unless of course they content themselves with the lower genres (painting flowers and animals) and the decorative arts."[40] This in turn is connected to the aspirations of cinephiles to make cinema accepted as an art form and to notions of the auteur that make possible a uniquely personal, absolute relation of property between artist and artwork. By describing Zetterling as unoriginal and eclectic, critics effectively excluded her from the auteur-centered national art cinema.

Both films contain relatively explicit sex scenes. Neither caused any controversy in Sweden. Instead, reviewers almost seem to have competed with one another to appear as blasé and unimpressed as possible about these scenes. In a feature article about sex in Swedish cinema in *Chaplin*, Leif Krantz wrote, "Mai Zetterling's *Loving Couples* dwelled wholly on erotic constellations, but the only scene that conveyed any sense of mutual pleasure was the mating of two dogs."[41] Carl-Eric Nordberg, who reviewed the film in *Vi*, claimed that of "Agnes von Krusenstjerna's fiendish eroticism nothing has come out on the screen where the loving couples in the common Swedish film manner simply tumble down amongst swaying ferns, in battlefield-sized beds or on beaches where the waves ripple."[42] The same blasé attitude can be found

in reviews of *Night Games*, for instance, when the sex scenes are described as "a bit of pseudo-liberal manipulating in the taboo regions of film erotica."[43] Although Swedish journalists were superficially unprovoked by the sex scenes, they were careful not to let on that they liked them. On the contrary, they wrote that the film was "sex-obsessed,"[44] "too gross,"[45] "icecold and without pleasure, mechanical and studied,"[46] and that there is a "hatred of sexuality, a disgust of sex."[47]

Swedishness and Sexuality

Abroad, however, at the film festival in Venice, *Night Games* caused a huge scandal. The poster, a cross-section of an intercourse drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, was censored. The screening was closed, and only the jury and journalists were allowed to see the film.

In Sweden, the Italian reactions to *Night Games* were interpreted as being the result of a different culture. Sweden was a Lutheran country—with a state church to boot—and Catholicism was regarded with suspicion as a more primitive and less rational version of Christianity, perhaps in particular in the Mediterranean countries. A very stereotypical view of Italians comes across in an analysis of the Italian reception in *Idun-Veckojournalen*, in which the reaction to *Night Games* is understood as being grounded in a double standard with regard to sexuality, a weird conceptualization of women, and the cult of the mother. "Obviously, the neuroses and feelings of guilt that the Catholic church must create cannot stand the sensations evoked by *Night Games*."[48] *Idun-Veckojournalen* was a middle-brow weekly magazine held in high regard due to its skillful journalists. However, this feature article comes across as almost racist in relation to Italians and Catholics, and it is interesting, even ironic, to see how Zetterling as a Swede and *Night Games* as a Swedish film were defended against the reactions of this strange culture, while at the same time few journalists and reviewers in Sweden treated the film very kindly. In addition, Zetterling was not Swedish in a straightforward way. Her national identity is ambiguous to say the least, and her relationship to her mother country was fraught with misapprehensions and alienations after her long sojourn abroad and her traitorous documentary *The Prosperity Race*.

In other countries, the connections between Sweden, sexually explicit imagery, and a female film director seemed to color the international reception of Zetterling's first feature films. Both were cut by the British Board of Film Classification for a UK release.

Ad for *Loving Couples* (1964) in UK newspaper. From the Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute. Photograph by Mariah Larsson.

At the San Francisco Film Festival, *Night Games* again proved provocative. Shirley Temple Black, former child star, first threatened to and then did quit the festival committee because *Night Games* was scheduled for a screening.[49] In two interviews in the *New York Times* in fall 1966, Zetterling's Swedishness was emphasized. "In Sweden It's Easier to Play 'Night Games'" was the headline of Joanne Stang's interview in October, which explained that *Loving Couples* "has several startlingly explicit scenes—a panorama of aberrations; an on-screen birth; and, for those bored with sex by human beings, sex by a pair of terriers. Miss Zetterling feels she has limited the sex to what supports the story."[50] In Vincent Canby's article a month before, the explicit elements in *Night Games* are highlighted, quoting Zetterling as saying that the film "does include some homosexuality and onanism."[51] Both articles stress her comments that being a film director in Sweden does not make you rich. "What we have is great freedom instead. . . . What is really important is to do what you creatively feel, and that is what makes you feel rich," said Zetterling.[52]

Loving Couples was, in fact, not released in the United States until fall 1966, around the same time *Night Games* provoked headlines at the Venice Film Festival. The *New York Times* complained that it was a bit too long-winded and a bit too obvious at times but concluded that "she has come up with an arresting, serious drama that proves she knows the directorial craft and is a welcome addition to it."[53] The focus on explicit

sex scenes in the interview was probably thought to attract attention and draw audiences. Zetterling, who in the previous decade had avoided selling herself as a sexpot when starring in the Danny Kaye vehicle *Knock on Wood* (Melvin Frank, Norman Panama, 1954), now seemed to try to play into the stereotype of Swedish sexuality.[54] "I suppose the crux is that my film was made in Sweden for primarily a Swedish audience. We are Protestants and we don't have the problems which Catholic countries have. That's really what it boils down to, I'm afraid," Zetterling said about the commotion in Venice, echoing the same stereotypical sentiments as the Swedish article referred to above.[55] The national culture that was a huge question mark in *The Prosperity Race* was here raised as a flag.

Thus far into her career as a director, Mai Zetterling had done quite well for herself. She did not get a quality award for *Night Games*, and critical reception could have been better, but she had the experience of two films and the promise of a third. Nonetheless, she was eventually given the chance to make four films, thanks to an offer from abroad.

3

THE TIDE TURNS

1967–1969

In 1968, Mai Zetterling's *Doctor Glas* was the only Scandinavian film scheduled for the Cannes Film Festival.[1] The late 1960s were turbulent in many countries and places—from Penn State to Paris, from Berkeley to Stockholm. While the Cannes Film Festival commenced in the south of France, strikes and demonstrations were going on in Paris, and soon voices called for a stop to the festival in sympathy with what was going on in the French capital. The driving forces of this campaign were Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, neither of whom had a film in the competition that year. Zetterling was one of the filmmakers who spoke at the long, stormy meeting that preceded the closing of the festival.[2] According to Roman Polanski and Miloš Forman, who were there as a jury member (Polanski) and as a competitor (Forman, with *Horí, má panenko/The Firemen's Ball*, 1967), and who both came from communist countries, the momentum that ultimately stopped the festival was eerie. In an interview in *Variety* many years later, Polanski said he was familiar with "moments of elation like this where suddenly you just feel like you're doing something great, when in fact it's just an illusion."[3]

In her speech at the meeting, Zetterling provided a gender analysis of the commotion. She called for sense and constructive discussion: "I am Swedish, I make films, I am a woman, and it is about time that a woman speaks. You men have declared war, and emotions have conquered reason. I propose that we calmly leave the room and let a sensible

Mai Zetterling at the tumultuous Cannes Film Festival, 1968. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

committee work out further suggestions."[4] According to newspaper reports, she was met with boos and applause in equal measure, but Polanski had agreed with her.[5]

As probably the only woman speaker at that meeting, Zetterling's comment echoes one of Lysistrata's lines, spoken in *The Girls*, responding to the question of how to solve world conflicts without war: "It's rather like a ball of yarn when it gets tangled up. We hold it this way, and carefully wind out the strands." The metaphorical war between men and women in *The Girls* extrapolated into a strong, analogous connection between masculinity and warfare. Ultimately, there was no sensible committee at Cannes, and the festival was canceled. Consequently, *Doctor Glas* was never screened in the competition, which may have contributed to its forgotten status. Of all Zetterling's feature-length fiction films, *Doctor Glas* is probably the least seen and circulated, which is unfortunate because the film provides important insights into her personal vision and style. Although *The Girls* and *Doctor Glas* were received unfavorably, *The Girls* was revived just a few years later and shown as the opening film of New York Women's Film Festival and since then has been one of Zetterling's most well-known films. Not being overtly

feminist and having a male protagonist at the center, *Doctor Glas* failed to strike a nerve with the women's movement in film. "With all of this to her credit, her most important contribution to film is the creation of a new film image of women," Linda Thornburg wrote.[6] Accordingly, *Doctor Glas* has not received much critical attention in Zetterling's historiography. In addition, because it was an American-Danish-Swedish production, *Doctor Glas* slipped through the cracks of a national film historiography.

The Political Late 1960s

There are several reasons for the hostile reception of Zetterling's third and fourth feature films, the most important perhaps being that the cultural climate had changed. From the mid-1960s on, the politico-cultural climate in Sweden had taken a turn to the left. In particular, this had to do with the movement against the US war in Vietnam. Protesters organized themselves in groups with a clear Marxist-Leninist perspective. The logical enemy was US capitalism and what was labeled American cultural imperialism, that is, the fact that American (popular) culture had a strong presence in Swedish and other countries' cultural life. Through the popularity of, for instance, Coca-Cola, Hollywood movies, and the TV series *Bonanza* (1959–73) that was shown on the only Swedish TV channel, Swedish people were thought to be indoctrinated with American values and culture. Political discourses of socialism, Marxism, Maoism, and general left-leaning tendencies became influential in cultural debates. For instance, in 1966, Swedish writer Göran Palm discussed "how to become west-indoctrinated in Sweden," in one influential cultural journal, explaining that social democracy actually mitigated capitalism and made it easier to accept. This, in turn, meant that the necessary and total social subversion was postponed because the people did not really feel the need for change. The state and capitalism were "sitting in the same boat" as a popular political folk song had it.

This political turn in the late 1960s was not unique to Sweden. Although the change in discourse and social analysis had somewhat different expressions in different countries, there was a generational change around the world. It led to upheavals and demonstrations, like the cancellation of Cannes festival, and it influenced reviewers, journalists, and cultural critics as to what kind of narratives, perspectives, and aesthetics were preferred in films. In a film culture relying on critical appreciation and "quality," understood as artistic value, tastes could thus quickly

change.[7] The kind of films that Zetterling made did not fit in with what reviewers and critics at the time considered valuable.

Both *Doctor Glas* and *The Girls* developed the mental subjectivity present in *Loving Couples* and *Night Games* to an even higher level of modernism by including symbolic and surrealist visions. In a climate where critical appreciation more and more veered toward documentary realist aesthetics and modes of representation that conveyed a sense of authenticity, Zetterling's production seemed too construed, too elaborate, and too processed. One reviewer described *The Girls* as "a quasi-artistic ping-pong game of pictorial fancies, scenery solutions, and generally un-digested memories from the cinema."[8] Another observed of *Doctor Glas* that the cinematography was "disgustingly handsome."[9] Swedish film scholar Cecilia Mörner has analyzed films between 1967 and 1972 that were highly appreciated by both reviewers and the all-important quality jury of the Swedish Film Institute. These films expressed social critique in a representational and narrative mode that Mörner characterizes by using Bill Nichols's phrase "discourses of sobriety."[10] In the general cultural climate toward the end of the 1960s, there was a strong national reaction against too-complicated narrative strategies, against what was called "aristocratic modernism" at the same time that popular culture was criticized for being an expression of capitalist ideology, indoctrinating its consumers and providing escapism instead of tools for change.[11] Zetterling's late 1960s films may very well be described as a kind of "aristocratic modernism."

In addition, their social critique appeared to diverge from the current tendency toward a socialist critique of the welfare society. At a time and in a place where it was opportune to claim that the welfare state did not do enough, Zetterling's *The Girls* seemed to claim the opposite: the welfare state does too much. Moreover, her protagonists were middle-class women, conspicuously well clothed, more or less well educated, and literate. As Mörner observes, they did not fall into the discursively constructed category of legitimate victim, like the American Vietnam deserters in *Deserter USA* (Olle Sjögren and Lars Lambert, 1969) or the convicted criminal with a tragic childhood of *Ni ljuger* (*You're Lying!*, Vilgot Sjöman, 1969). Their dialogue is too polished and their critique of society too unclear in comparison with, say, Lena Nyman's in the *I Am Curious* films (*Yellow*, 1967; *Blue*, 1968).[12]

Conceived as a Scandinavian art/sexploitation film, *Doctor Glas* fared even worse. Not only was it unfavorably compared to an adaptation of the same novel from 1942, but reviewers regarded it as focused

too much on an individual's sexual neurosis. On the one hand, Swedish intellectuals tended to try to prove themselves blasé in the face of sexual explicitness. For instance, they did not perceive the reverend's advances and assaults on his wife as expressions of what today would be regarded as marital rape but saw him as "a horny reverend who abuses his conjugal rights when the wife denies him."[13] In Sweden, marital rape had been criminalized only in 1965, but the reconceptualization of rape discourse that occurs with the women's movement's examination of rape myths and critique of patriarchal representations of rape had not yet happened.[14] On the other hand, it is quite clear that the reviewers do apprehend the sense of disgust—the abjection—that pervades the film—"a tangle of sexual disgust."[15] Glas is described as an "ambivalent old pornographer."[16] The problem conveyed in the film is understood as originating in an individual person: Glas is the one who turns what is normal into the grotesque. Accordingly, reviewers found no trace of a social critique in the film, a lack that was a mortal sin in late 1960s Sweden.

Life Passed Me By: *Doctor Glas*

The phenomenon of European art cinema after World War II has been described by many scholars. Beginning with Italian neorealism and continuing with the French nouvelle vague, European cinema came to be regarded with artistic respect and gained a small but reliable audience among the growing middle class. Film societies, university organizations, and various arthouse cinemas screened these subtitled, often black-and-white, narratively more or less complex films, and they began to be discussed and analyzed by cinephiles.[17] The French auteur critics praised Hollywood directors (Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Howard Hawks), but it was the European filmmakers who were inspired.

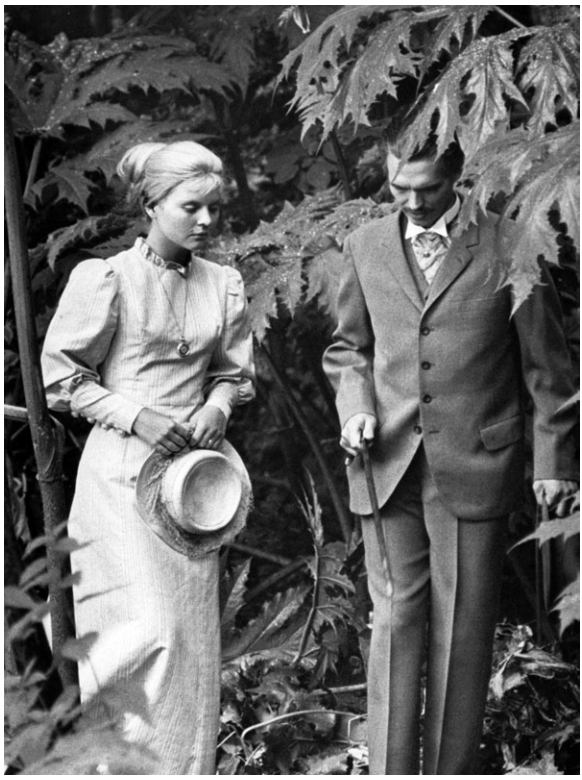
These European films were far from the American Production Code and could represent sexuality and intimate relations in a frank and unabashed manner.[18] This made an impression and should not be forgotten as a factor in the (relative) success of European film in the United States during this time. Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika*) was released as a drive-in film under the title *Monika!* with the tagline "The story of a bad girl," heavily edited and dubbed into English.[19] Danish filmmaker Johan Jacobsen's *A Stranger Knocks* (*En fremmed banker på*, 1959) was promoted with a focus on its sex scenes. Linda Williams describes watching the rapes in Bergman's *The Virgin*

Spring and Vittorio De Sica's *Two Women* (*La Ciociara*, 1960)—and seeing and experiencing things far beyond what the production code allowed.[20] That several European films had words like *adult* and *sexy* in their US ads was no coincidence. In particular, Scandinavia came to be associated with sexiness, and several sexploitation films toward the late 1960s made use of this association.[21] The connection between Zetterling's first two feature films and scandalous representations of sex made in the international press thus was no coincidence but fell neatly into already existing concepts of Scandinavian cinema.

Neither was it a coincidence that Joseph Hardy and Benni Korzen from 20th Century Fox got in touch with Zetterling via Mogens Skot-Hansen at the Danish film company Laterna Film.[22] With two films on her CV that had received attention because of their sex scenes, and as a woman director with a Scandinavian connection, things were looking good for an artistically serious yet sexually salacious movie that might be well appreciated. The original material, although it was old, held the promise of a scandal success—*Doktor Glas*, a diary novel by Swedish author Hjalmar Söderberg from 1905 that dealt with sex, marital rape, abortion, and murder.

This proposal made the following years in Zetterling's life very hectic. According to her autobiography, the synopsis for *The Girls* had already been accepted (her third chance!) by Sandrews and she planned to shoot it, postpone editing the film while making *Doctor Glas* from start to finish, and then resume postproduction work on *The Girls*.[23]

Shooting for *Doctor Glas* took place in Birkerød, north of Copenhagen, Denmark; in Lund in southern Sweden; the island of Marstrand outside of Gothenburg; and Stockholm and Uppsala. The logistics of the production matched the complex narrative structure of the finished film—a frame story has the aged doctor strolling around in contemporaneous Stockholm. Shot mainly with a point-of-view camera with an unfocused lens, the frame story shows us the hazy vision of the doctor's cataracts. On the voice-over, we hear the mumbled reminiscences of the past, which are shown in flashbacks. These, in contrast, are sharp and focused, as if the past is more vivid and clear to the doctor than the present. Within the flashbacks (which make up the bulk of the film) are additional narrative levels. Briefly, there are flashbacks within flashbacks, but more notably, there are also inner visions and dreams, shot in yet another mode of cinematography: a high contrast, overexposed frame that bleaches the white to an almost unbearable, stark light. It provides a sense of anxiety and anguish, and most of these inner visions



"Life has passed me by." Per Oscarsson and Lone Hertz in *Doctor Glas* (1968). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Laterna Film and DFI.

are quite painful to watch. Some of them are instead dark, with a black backdrop.

The epitomizing quote from the novel is "Mig gick livet förbi," or "Life has passed me by," referring to the events of the story and the doctor's sense of alienation from life. This sentiment is well expressed in the film through the construction of the present-day frame narrative, since Glas is all alone and somehow cut off from the world, but he was alone and cut off from the world already in the past. Swedish film scholar Tytti Soila describes Glas as "like the *flaneur* found in Baudelaire's work: the melancholic passer by, a character on a threshold, a disappearing figure who—while he may look both in and outside reflecting what he sees—still is a part of the past, unable to take the step out and into the future."[24] This inability on Glas's behalf to participate in life, to step into the future (or even the present), to become involved rather than simply a distant observer, is precisely the strength of novel and Zetterling's film.

The story is as follows: Early in the twentieth century, a general practitioner in his early thirties in Stockholm is approached by one of his patients, Helga. Helga's husband's sexual advances torment her, she says. He forces himself on her, demanding his conjugal rights. Dr. Glas already detests her husband, the Reverend Gregorius, who is some years older than his wife; Glas is also falling in love with Helga. Helga has another lover, a young man. Meanwhile, women seek out Dr. Glas and ask him to terminate their pregnancies. He refuses to do so on the principle of the sanctity of life. At the same time, he is disgusted by the pregnant women he meets on his frequent walks through the city. "So much pain for so little pleasure," he observes. In the inner visions, we are shown a woman, Helga, screaming in the pain of labor, and a brief shot shows a baby coming out of the mother's womb. Glas's refusal to perform abortions, which is entirely in line with the law at the time, can easily be understood as a refusal to have anything to do with these messy aspects of life and, as such, a strange sentiment for a doctor to have.

Nonetheless, as Glas's various strategies for getting the reverend to keep off Helga fail, and Helga becomes increasingly distraught, Glas finally poisons the reverend. So much for the sanctity of life. "How I long for one action, one meaningful action," he explains in the voice-over. This action, his one attempt to participate actively in life, is shown to be meaningless. Helga is abandoned by her lover and ends up alone. Glas never declares his love and remains alone as well. Truly, life passed him by.

The part of Dr. Glas was beautifully and sensitively performed by Swedish actor Per Oscarsson, contributing to its strong melancholic streak. One might even say that this is Oscarsson's film rather than Zetterling's. Oscarsson was renowned for his antics and eccentricity. During a production of *Hamlet*, in which he played the title role, at Gothenburg municipal theater, he suddenly simply left in the midst of the season and walked to Paris. He had a relationship with Harriet Andersson, about which another actress exclaimed: "How can this work? She is only body, he is only soul!"[25] For a long time, he suffered from stage fright and refused to perform on stage. He performed in films throughout this time. Perhaps his most memorable moment outside his theater and film roles is when he stripped on national television. At the time, Sweden had just one television channel. A popular, US-inspired show with journalist Lennart Hyland as its host, *Hylands hörna* (*Hyland's Corner*) had invited Oscarsson to appear on December 26, 1966. Since the day after Christmas is a national holiday, most Swedes sat with their

Matrimonial nightmares. Lone Hertz and Ulf Palme in *Doctor Glas* (1968). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Laterna Film and DFI.

families and watched the show. During a monologue about racial prejudice and the Holocaust, and in which he explained sex to children, he slowly pulled off one piece of clothing after another. He was wearing several pairs of boxer shorts, and the audience around the country held their breaths as he took off each pair, but he stopped short of being completely naked.[26]

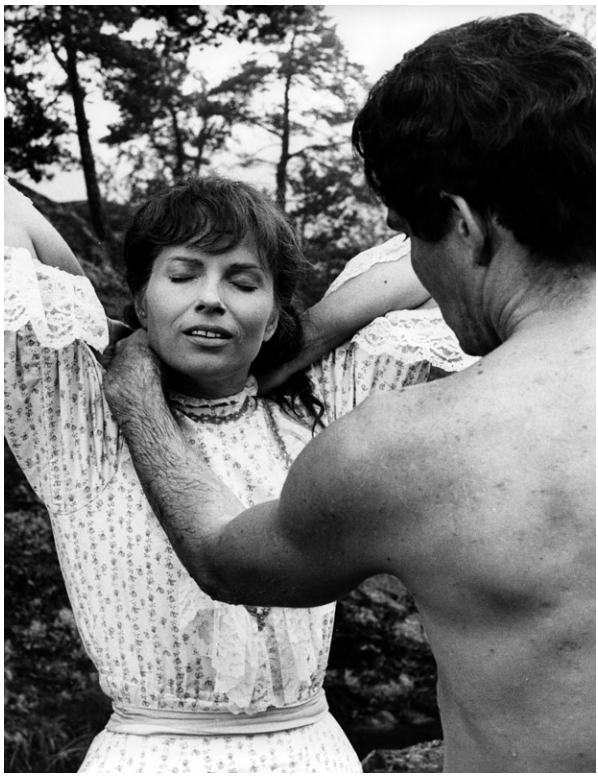
The most striking feature of *Doctor Glas* is the recurrence of inner visions, shot in a high-contrast, overexposed mode by cinematographer Rune Ericson, who worked closely with Zetterling on several projects. The visions are absurd, surrealist, sometimes comic and sometimes nightmarish, and they show, for instance, how Glas imagines the reverend practicing his conjugal rights when Helga talks about how she finds her sexual life disgusting.

Against a starkly white background and with blindingly white sheets, the reverend gropes his wife. When the conversation concerns the issue of separate beds, Glas sees, in the same style, how the reverend climbs into Helga's bed. On one occasion, a very brief shot shows a close-up of genitals during intercourse. In another shot, we see the reverend's head from Helga's point of view, bobbing back and forth as if the audience was seeing a rape from the victim's perspective, "the most clearly female view of rape ever shown on the screen."[27] Like in *Loving Couples*, sexuality is

directly connected to its consequence, reproduction. Here, however, it is conveyed more aggressively. Glas looks at a heavily pregnant woman with horror, disgust, and pity. In one inner vision, a woman is screaming soundlessly during parturition. A baby slips out between her legs in a shot reminiscent of the one ending *Loving Couples*, but here it is followed by a shot of a man who urinates against a fence, shakes his penis, and buttons his fly. A trivial need—as trivial as peeing—is juxtaposed with giving birth, illustrating one of the famous lines from the novel: "So much pain for so little pleasure."

This montage can, on the one hand, be understood as feminist aggression. On the other hand, and intrinsic to the film, it can be understood as an expression of Glas's revulsion of the entire biological process, the body's common transience, and the grotesque realities of life. Inspired by psychoanalysis, feminist theorists have discussed a phenomenon they call "abjection," which is the simultaneous rejection of and attraction to things that evoke feelings of disgust, fear, and revulsion, like rotten food, bodily waste and fluids, and certain moral crimes. The abject is whichever that gives rise to such feelings, often something that is liminal in its nature or perceived of as liminal, with regard to life and death, sickness and health. Feminist theorists, notably Julia Kristeva, make a connection between childbirth, reproduction, and the corporeal mother, and she ascribes abjection to the need for the child to distance itself and break free from the "archaic mother," the authority of the mother and her body, which the child is initially completely dependent on for survival.[28] Accordingly, everything associated with reproduction—menstrual blood, reproductive organs, breast milk, labor contractions, parturition—may evoke feelings of abjection. This is why, for instance, childbirth is often represented in either hallowed or comic (or both) terms in film and TV series, "sanitized" and sanctified by the cult of motherhood, whereas horror films may draw a lot of inspiration from pregnancy and delivery: *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976), the *Alien* films (Ridley Scott, 1979; James Cameron, 1986; David Fincher, 1992; Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997), *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), and so on.[29]

Although psychoanalysis and other psychodynamic theories have been criticized within cultural theory and psychology, and in some cases even abandoned in favor of cognitive theories of behavior, the concepts of abjection and the abject do explain some issues in human relations and experience that are otherwise hard to explain, among them our relationship to childbirth and reproduction, our appalled fascination for



Young Adele and her lover. Gunnel Lindblom and Kai Norström in *Loving Couples* (1964). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

the gross and disgusting, and why certain images (like images of surgery) give rise to queasy feelings. In addition, abjection well describes Dr. Glas's emotions in relation to the messy biological realities of life, his reluctance to participate, and his melancholy, observational position as "flaneur." However, an additional understanding could be that Zetterling abjectifies, that is, makes abject, masculinity and male sexuality.

As a woman director, Zetterling does not necessarily reverse the male gaze by objectifying the men in her films. One exception would be Daniel (Kai Nordström), appearing briefly in a flashback in *Loving Couples*, in which he sits naked on a rock by a lake while Adele runs toward him, calling his name.

The lake water and Daniel's nudity recall the Nordic mythological creature of Näcken, a waterman who lures people to drown by playing the violin. In close-ups and medium shots, we see Adele and Daniel embrace, and his naked skin becomes emphasized by her clothed state. This scene is highly sensual because of its singular focus on the naked

male body and its rhythmic editing: "Zetterling lets the past and the present continuously flow into one another. Already in this rhythmic undulation between the time fragments there is a beauty and a sensuality that in an extraordinary way corresponds to Adèle's young experience."[30] Nonetheless, Daniel's appearance is quite momentary, and the contrast between him and the other men is striking. In *Night Games*, there is a short scene in which one of the mother's visitors shoots a film. A half-naked, muscular male model acts in front of the camera. The young actor Thommy (Stig Engström) in *The Girls* embodies a "lover boy" stereotype. But for the most part, the men in Zetterling's films from the 1960s are not displayed for the female gaze. The exceptions I have listed here account for a very small share of screen time in comparison with how Harriet Andersson and Gio Petré are represented in *Loving Couples*, Lena Brundin in *Night Games* (at one point baring her voluptuous breasts), Lone Hertz in *Doctor Glas*, and Bibi Andersson and maybe Harriet Andersson again in *The Girls*.[31] The husbands, lovers, and boyfriends depicted in the films are not made into objects of female desire and are not shown as sexually attractive (although the actors that perform in these roles may be). This fits in with a general 1960s film aesthetics, perhaps more particularly in Sweden, but it is still conspicuous that in four films by a female, mostly heterosexual director, women are the main erotic attraction.[32]

A common characteristic of the two male leads in Zetterling's 1960s films, Jan and Dr. Glas, is their inhibition, a kind of impotence—literally in Jan's case, figuratively in the case of Dr. Glas—an inability to give and receive love in any other way than the perverted. For Jan, it is sadism and evasion. Dr. Glas's act of love is a murder. They are both inhibited by their feelings toward the feminine. Jan's mother stands between him and a fulfilling relation with his wife. Dr. Glas feels fear and disgust regarding human, biological conditions, as manifest in the female reproductive process.

Moreover, as I mentioned previously, there is an abjectification of the male, most clearly epitomized in the visions Dr. Glas has concerning the reverend. Gregorious's facial and bodily features are exaggerated and perverted in these visions. He becomes grotesquely swollen, sweaty, and ugly in a way that is both ridiculous and gross at the same time. There is a logic to this depiction, because it is how Glas perceives Gregorius even before he learns about his abuse of Helga, and it is the narration's general sympathy with Helga's situation. Even though it is Glas's visions, it is Helga's perspective that shines through. In a dream that Glas has,

he observes that the reverend smells even before he has died, which points toward the kind of abjection that takes place when the border between life and death is unclear—the process of decay has already begun.

Glas himself is not represented as repulsive. Even so, his distaste toward the realities of human life can be said to disembody him. There is a subtle kind of abjection taking place in the film. Glas is played by Oscarsson, who was "only soul." In the frame narrative of the film, he has no body at all; he is only a shadow on the ground—a shadow that appears in the flashbacks as well, when one drunken evening Glas challenges his own shadow on a duel. "Are you the shadow that wanted to become human?" he jokes, but it is a sad joke because Glas is the human who became a shadow. In most scenes, he is dressed in accordance with the conventions of the time, with high collars and many-buttoned vests, but when he is naked, with a towel around his waist, at the bathhouse, his body seems soft, somehow without contours. At the barber, the faces of Glas and his friends are obscured when the barber swaddles them in hot towels. Again and again we see brief glimpses of how these upper-class men's bodies are taken care of by others.

Doctor Glas has been described by film critic Derek Elley as Zetterling's "harshest examination of loneliness."[33] This is an apt description, because the melancholy experienced by the flaneur, modernity's male protagonist, who only observes and does not take part, is only personified in an extreme version in Glas himself. At the same time, it has a much wider implication that encompasses his whole social class of men.[34]

Different Narrative Levels: *The Girls*

For *The Girls*, Zetterling drew from her own experiences of being an actress and a mother. She also provided a social critique that is expressed both individually and collectively. In the film, three actresses tour Sweden with a performance of Aristophanes's comedy about the love-striking women of Athens, *Lysistrata*. The play, the actresses' daily life on the tour, and inner visions intermingle in the film to create a web of comments on issues of war and peace, motherhood and the relation between genders, and welfare society. Film scholar Lucy Fischer has compared *The Girls* to Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), and she observes that whereas *Persona* has an almost mythical approach to motherhood, Zetterling deals with the issue in a much more sociological way.[35] The women of *The Girls* have different family situations: Gunilla (Gunnel Lindblom) has many children and a kind but boring and inept husband;

Marianne (Harriet Andersson) has an illegitimate child with her married lover; and Liz (Bibi Andersson) is married without children. As the film progresses, it becomes obvious that Liz can take a more active role in the struggle for emancipation because of her childlessness. She is not lamented in any way by Zetterling. For Marianne, her child is a constant hostage between her and her lover, and for Gunilla, her children are a source of bad conscience and anxiety.

The narrative structure of *The Girls* is complex and densely layered. Aristophanes's drama (as performed by the troupe), the diegetic reality of the actresses' everyday life, inner visions, and some flashbacks weave an intricate narrative web. To exemplify, at one point during a performance, from backstage Liz notices a man in the audience who has fallen asleep. On the soundtrack, dialogue from a previous scene returns: a couple that has seen the play comment to her that it was "a very nice performance." Suddenly she sees the whole audience sleeping in front of her. Some snore loudly. This brief scene contains three different levels: the everyday reality (Liz watching the audience from backstage), an audio flashback (the couple commenting politely but insincerely on the "very nice" performance), and an inner vision (seeing the audience asleep).

The next scene interconnects different narrative levels (rather than different minds). Liz is besieged by journalists who want to know why she tried to intervene at the last performance by starting to talk to the audience outside her role. She replies vaguely, seemingly unsure of herself, and during a close-up of her face, the sound of the journalists is faded out and instead, one of Liz's lines from the play is heard: "Girls! Where are you?" There is a cut to an inner vision, in which the actresses from the play walk toward the journalists, who back away, and now there is jazz music. When the women approach the camera, there is a cut back to Liz's face, and the music intermingles with the journalists' questions. Liz walks forward toward an audience at coffee tables and begins to strip, slowly and quite unspectacularly. On the soundtrack, the music grows louder and the interview ends. Liz takes off her bra and throws it at her husband, who is sitting at one of the tables with his two mistresses. He stands up and says, "But she is my wife!" There is another cut back to the actresses who also strip, and instead of the music, we hear lines from the play again. When the actresses have undressed to their underwear, there is a cut to the scene in the play where the women fight with the men.

This use of different narrative levels points to the film's formal and stylistic self-reflexivity. As a film about actresses, with actresses, and

written and directed by a former actress, it has an external metalevel that is connected to its production context and dependent on what the spectator knows about the people involved in its making. The three actresses playing the leading roles are perhaps the most famous Swedish actresses of the time, inseparable from their participation in Bergman's films, which propelled them to fame. At one point, a man says to Liz that his wife is a great admirer of her, it could just as well be that she is an admirer of Bibi Andersson. There is a parallel between the troupe touring Sweden and the film crew doing the same.

In Sweden in the 1960s, there was a tendency to give characters the same names as the actors. Accordingly, Lena Nyman and Börje Ahlstedt played Lena and Börje in Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious* films (1967, 1968). Keve Hjelm, Inger Taube, and Björn Gustafson perform as Keve, Inger, and Björn in Bo Widerberg's *Kärlek 65* (*Love 65*, 1965), and in Stellan Olsson's *Oss emellan* (*Close to the Wind*, 1969), some of the main characters have the same first name as the actors. The inspiration seems to come from cinéma vérité and direct cinema but in somewhat different ways: Sjöman was inspired by Jean Rouch, whereas Widerberg had John Cassavetes's work in *Shadows* (1958) as a role model. The "Lena-plays-Lena" strategy can be understood as an indication of "the film's implied indexical relation to reality," commingling the fictional character with the historical person and consequently attempting at conveying authenticity[36]—in particular, perhaps, because the director, Vilgot Sjöman, also appears in the film as a film director named Vilgot.

Zetterling does not use this strategy. Instead of being the same, the names in *The Girls* seem to be related, most clearly in the case of Liz. Lysistrata is played by Liz, which could be short for Lysistrata but is a common nickname for Elisabeth. Elisabeth is Bibi Andersson's middle name and also Mai Zetterling's middle name, indicating a relationship between the protagonist and the director. Gunnel Lindblom plays Gunilla, who plays Kalonike in *Lystistrata*. Gunilla and Gunnel are versions of the name Gunhild. Kalonike could be said to be a varied anagram of Gunilla. Myrrhine is played by Marianne, and Marianne is played by Harriet Andersson. These three names, Myrrhine, Marianne, and Harriet, are linked by assonance.[37] Accordingly, a self-consciousness attached to the use of names corresponds to the various slippages that occur within the film narrative between the different levels of narration and the actual production of the film.

In yet another scene, it is unclear whose inner vision is presented: Liz has died and the men gather around her body, joking and laughing.

In a festive manner, the body is taken into a large auditorium, where Hugo gives an aggressive, Hitleresque speech while his male audience cheers. The celebration ends as Gunilla and Marianne enter the room and Liz rises up from the stretcher. Quite obviously, this is a symbolic scene: Liz is not really dead, Hugo does not really give such a speech, and so on. It would be very easy to interpret it as Liz's vision, not least because it follows the scene of the press conference. In a sense, she dies of humiliation, or her experience of being ostracized feels like death, or something along those lines. Gunilla and Marianne's show of support might be a figment of Liz's imagination, but in the next scene, they are suddenly good friends again, which seems to indicate that whatever happens in the funeral vision is something that includes all the characters.

The logic here is not self-evident. Inside our minds, we are alone. We cannot share consciousness; it is one of the tenets of cognitive theory. But in Zetterling's construction of the world, it seems we can. The low threshold mentioned previously—between different levels of narration—clearly applies to consciousness as well. A previous sequence demonstrates that even though the visualizations of characters' inner visions seem to be an expression of their consciousness, the threshold in Zetterling's artistic universe between different minds and different levels of narration is low.[38] Liz has tried to reach out to the audience after a performance. The situation becomes embarrassing, and afterward, the rest of the troupe ostracize her (or perhaps she feels alienated from them). In the tour bus, Liz sits by herself, close to the front. The others sit behind her. One by one, they look out the window and seem to dream themselves out of the bus: Hugo (Gunnar Björnstrand) sees a car, and in the next shot, he is in the car, smoking a cigar in the passenger seat. The next shot returns to the bus, but Hugo is missing. Marianne looks out of the bus and sees herself paddling a canoe on a lake; in the next shot, she is missing from the bus. Thommy (Stig Engström) disappears on skis and Gunilla on a scooter. Finally, Liz is alone on the bus. The question here is whether this loneliness echoes Liz's feelings or if it is a visualization of how the others wish to be somewhere else. The fact that we see each of the disappearing characters looking out before they disappear indicates that this is a shared experience, visualized collectively although our consciousness is, in fact, closed to others.

There is a war between Sparta and Athens in *Lysistrata*. That is the why the women go on strike—to end the war. The film refers to two other contemporary wars: the Vietnam War and the Cold War. One famous scene, described as presenting women as active spectators or as

a critique of patriarchy,[39] takes place in a movie theater with an audience consisting solely of women. On the screen, a string of men from twentieth-century history is shown in rapid succession: Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Dwight Eisenhower, Swedish prime minister Tage Erlander, and others. The women whistle, boo, and throw eggs and tomatoes on the screen. The male characters of the film—Thommy, Hugo, Marianne's lover, and the husbands of Liz and Gunilla—walk in and try to calm the women down but also get pelted with eggs and tomatoes. On the screen, we see bomb planes.

When *The Girls* was released, many reviewers complained about its "male caricatures."[40] The complaint is not unfounded, since the men in the film are quite sketchily drawn, capturing a few exaggerated characteristics for each: Hugo is a cynical misogynist, Thommy is a romantic dreamer, Liz's husband wants a housewife, and Gunilla's husband is a dullard. Associations are drawn between these men and male figures of war and tyranny as well as democratic and respected leaders. The crudeness here should not be misunderstood—the film does not say that Erlander and Hitler are the same or even similar. The scene in question does, however, point to a common, defining characteristics: these are all men with power, and since the husbands and lovers are included in this chain of association, it is not far-fetched to see that this power has something to do with relations to the opposite gender. Zetterling paints a picture of a society in which men rationalize their choices, their lives, and the world they try to build for women as their responsibility as the ones in power. The world they are trying to build, however, leads to war and oppression, and even worse, to too much comfort, which impairs women's ability to break free.[41] In another scene, the actresses visit a bomb shelter. The guide explains how well organized the shelter is with regard to air and water supply, telling them proudly, "There is even a theater!" Here, Gunilla has a nightmarish vision about a hurt child she finds in a forest. Running off in a panic, she finds her husband in the woods, reading the newspaper in front of a fireplace, and brings him to the child. He looks at it, its skin covered in burns, sucks his pipe, and proclaims that it "is probably just measles. We will have to get the doctor."

The bomb shelter is organized rationally, as a response to the threat of nuclear war. It also functions as a symbol of the welfare state, where both material needs and cultural needs are taken care of. In Zetterling's worldview, this is in a sense akin to a kind of "death in life" because it removes the challenges that make life worth living. Already in *The*

Cold comforts and conversation. Bibi Andersson, Margreth Weivers, and Leif Liljeroth in *The Girls* (1968). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

"I should be happy." Gunnel Lindblom and Åke Lindström in *The Girls* (1968). Photograph by David Hughes. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

Prosperity Race, the bomb shelter is present, functioning in much the same way as a symbolic critique of the welfare state, and it returns in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*. The same critique is present in the depiction of Luleå shopping center, northern Europe's first indoor shopping center, designed by the British architect Ralph Erskine. Here, too, Gunilla has a vision in which she is chased by a horde of children through the perfectly organized shopping center. Not only are clothes and food for sale, but there is a movie theater and here her husband asks if she is happy when she buys groceries. Erskine's architecture was famous for his attempts to adapt to the conditions of the location—in the cold north, the rational solution for shopping is to have it indoors. His buildings feature in a scene in Kiruna as well, the famous block called Ortdrivaren, where balconies are hung from the roof without attachment to the flats in order to avoid heat leaking out of the flats; garages are in basements; and roofs are angled to withstand large amounts of snow. Liz is invited to dine at this apartment building with the head of the tourist office and his wife. The scene plays out with their thoughts, in sharp contrast to their polite spoken words, on the soundtrack. Liz desperately attempts to get a real conversation going, but they keep responding politely and nonproductively.[42]

The Issue of Money

In accordance with the negative reviews, *The Girls* and *Doctor Glas* did not receive any quality awards, and neither had any particularly good audience numbers. After these two films, there was not another Swedish-produced Zetterling film for theatrical release for eighteen years. She directed a children's film in Sweden in the 1970s, but it was only screened on television. These eighteen years are sometimes described in Sweden as Zetterling's artistic exile, and it is easy to get the impression that she was forced abroad and into passivity.[43] However, it should be noted that she was very active in the 1970s.[44] As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, her artistic productivity for a while actually seemed stimulated by the obstacles in her way. Zetterling did some of her best work in the 1970s.

Nonetheless, one important reason for this "artistic exile" was that the production company Sandrews was hesitant to finance Zetterling in her next project. The CEO of Sandrews, Göran Lindgren, was preparing for extensive cutbacks in production to invest in rebuilding the company's movie theaters,[45] and in a letter dated February, 26, 1969, he wrote to Zetterling:

> I have not previously burdened you with my thoughts, but this time I would like to. Mainly, there are three problems and I will go through them one by one.
>
> 1. I have several times pointed out that your work is expensive. If one makes as expensive pictures as you do, one lives a little dangerously. It is difficult to recoup expenses if a picture costs more than 800,000 SEK and your films usually end up at around 1.5 million SEK. I would like for your next film to be no more expensive than 800,000 SEK. Life would become, for us both, a lot less dangerous.
>
> 2. You have now made four films. I sense very strongly that you should take it a bit easy and maybe think through your next step carefully. I feel a bit uneasy about rushing headlong into the next project. I would like for you to make a film that converted all the people that doubt you, that it was a film that had something to say and that was convincing. . . .
>
> 3. The final problem is not yours, but mine and Sandrews'. The entire capital at my disposal is at the present tied up in a store of eight films that are being finished and beginning to be released one at a time. It will, however, take some time before the money is recuperated. Because of this, at the moment it is difficult for me to finance a vast and expensive production in 1969. Included here is of course also the economic failure of *The Girls* and *Palmkronorna* last fall. A lot of money disappeared that way.
>
> In my opinion, this is not a disaster. On the contrary, I find it beneficial that one is sometimes cornered and has a chance to rethink some issues. . . .
>
> Accordingly, my path is 1) to make a cheaper film than previously and 2) to move production to 1970.[46]

I quote this letter quite extensively because of its kind, friendly tone of voice and because of what you can read between the lines. The Swedish film industry was heading straight into a crisis followed the frenzied activity after the film reform. In 1972, only fourteen films were released—about half of what had been made annually during the heyday of the 1960s. This obviously had to do with the decreasing audience numbers and a number of extreme economic failures—among them Zetterling's *The Girls*, but also the film mentioned in the letter, *Svarta palmkronor* (Lars-Magnus Lindgren, 1968; called *Palmkronorna* above), an expensive adaptation of a novel about some alcoholic sailors left behind outside Valencia by Peder Sjögren. Although that film starred Max von

Sydow and Bibi Andersson, it was an economic and critical failure. Nevertheless, one could argue that the basis for this crisis had begun in the 1950s and that the film reform only postponed a crisis in the national film production. After the reform, production again increased—from 1960 to 1963, the output averaged 18.25 films a year, whereas the next six years averaged 27 films a year. This increase was gradual. In 1969, thirty-three films were released, but then production decreased radically.[47] The 10 percent fee on admission charges was ultimately not enough to keep business alive, and the deal between the state and the film industry was renegotiated with a revised reform installed in 1972. Lindgren must have sensed the precarious situation and decided that it was time to rein in his more headstrong directors.

At this stage in her career, Zetterling was clearly not one to accept financial limitations. One of the documents in the archive is a jokingly formulated contract from 1967, in which Zetterling promises not to exceed the budget of *Night Games* in her coming production of *The Girls*. If she fails, she will owe Lindgren and his secretary "an exceptional dinner."[48] Whether this dinner ever took place is unnoted, but considering the letter from Lindgren, the deal probably ended in his favor. In addition, the budget for *Loving Couples* had been slightly over 1.5 million SEK—a big investment for Sandrews—but according to documents in the Mai Zetterling Collection, it ended up at more than 2 million SEK; by late summer 1965, it had only made an income of 872,286.93 SEK (including money from the Swedish Film Institute), that is, less than half of its costs and only about three-fifths of its budget.[49] Granted, this was before the film found US distribution (in 1966), but according to the film's producer Rune Waldekranz, *Loving Couples* did not recoup its expenses until a television screening in the 1980s.[50]

Compared with American film production practices, the disregard for economic realities and the cautious approach of studio boss to contractual director seem jarring, or maybe quaint and cute. In a film policy system founded on the idea of the creative auteur, a director with a personal vision, the producer's sense of economic responsibility might conflict with the notion of creative freedom. Zetterling described the situation in her autobiography: "The initially hostile reception to the film [*The Girls*] was a disaster for me at that stage in my career. David and I were preparing another film for the same company—a totally different film, full of young, revolutionary ideas and concepts. We were suddenly told it had been cancelled. There followed an extremely tough year, with no job offers from Sweden."[51] The image presented here, although not

contradicting the letter from Lindgren, still paints a harsher picture than his urge for caution and patience does.

A Disastrous Reception?

Was the reception of *The Girls* disastrous? In hindsight, it has become Zetterling's most famous film, screened at festivals and to film and gender studies students, cited in articles and features about Zetterling, and remembered as the film that renowned Swedish journalist Bo Strömstedt described as "congested menstruations" but which Simone de Beauvoir liked so much that she wrote a personal letter to Zetterling and a highly appreciative review of the film.[52]

Nonetheless, at the time, it had a domestic audience of only 26,451 ticket buyers. This number is extremely low, although some films awarded quality prizes from the Swedish Film Institute had lower numbers (like the Susan Sontag film *Duet for Cannibals* [*Duett för kannibaler*], 1969, seen by 2,787 cinema goers). Zetterling's previous films, *Loving Couples* and *Night Games*, had had domestic audience numbers of 330,415 and 257,986, respectively.[53] It is very understandable that Lindgren hesitated to let her proceed with a film that might cost 1.5 million SEK but only attract around 20–30,000 spectators.

In addition, the reviewers (and by extension, the quality jury) hated the film. Jurgen Schildt made a distinction between creative "filmmakers" and skilled "film directors." A filmmaker, according to Schildt, is independent and expresses a personality, whereas the film director "only does the job." About Zetterling, he wrote: "She has sentiments and opinions energetically and correctly, but what she feels and thinks others have felt and thought before her. A great deal with her is derivative. She is a translator rather than a creator."[54] Other reviewers claimed that she "copied herself" or that the film felt like "old cotton wool that lies rotting after Bergman and Fellini."[55] Bo Strömstedt's infamous and derogatory words about "congested menstruations" were published somewhat later and not in a review per se but a chronicle that he devoted to trashing the film. Very likely, the theme of gender roles was found provocative. *The Girls* is described as "nothing more than a women's lib-film" or a "women's lib-comedy."[56] The representation of men was found wanting: "a crew of masculine louts and caricatures—husbands, lovers, bar flirters—who have, for the good sake of the women's cause, been robbed of every ounce of actual right to exist."[57] This was perceived as a problem because "by distorting the men into such caricatures, the film

loses its connection to what it wants to tackle,"[58] but interestingly, the unkind rendering of the male characters could have been made acceptable by placing them at the center of the story. The same reviewer (Edström in *Dagens Nyheter*) continued by saying that "the only interpretation of Aristophanes I think would be interesting would emphasize the men . . . with the conspiracy of male society in the foreground."[59]

Nearly all of the reviewers and film critics were men. The quality jury was made up of "experts," that is, film journalists, authors, and intellectuals, and during the 1960s, it consisted only of men. This is one of the reasons the case of Zetterling and *The Girls* has had such a particular resonance for Scandinavian film feminists—it functions as a textbook example of how a male-dominated coterie closes its ranks to exclude a woman. Actually, the only woman reviewer, Sun Axelsson, wrote a partly favorable review in the film journal *Chaplin*.[60] And there were some other glimpses of light. The reviewer in the other major evening paper, *Expressen*, recognized an "un-Swedish" irony and wit in the film. In the weekly magazine *Vi*, Zetterling received appreciative words. Although the film does have some flaws, it is elegant and inventive, according to this reviewer, who describes Zetterling as a filmmaker with the temperament of a "wild cat"—a metaphor with interesting connotations of a dangerous, feline femininity.[61]

Although another woman, Simone de Beauvoir, treated the film with respect, analyzing it perceptively in a long review, the international reception was not much better than the Swedish one. When it opened the New York Women's Film Festival, Roger Greenspun wrote in the *New York Times*: "That Zetterling working with so much has arrived at so little is less an indication of new directions than of directorial failure," a devastating conclusion at the end of an astounding review in which Greenspun notes that Zetterling "more slavishly revered" the beauty of her actresses than did Ingmar Bergman, that the film "never formulates a feminist manifesto," and admits, perhaps a bit defensively, that his opinion may be "two parts sexism to one part film criticism" but that is how it works for him and, he believes, "for most people."[62]

For Zetterling, it was already over by the time *Doctor Glas* premiered in Sweden. Had the Cannes festival not been canceled—had the film been appreciated by the audience and jury there—things might have turned out differently. As it stood in 1969, however, the domestic reception of *Doctor Glas*—in many ways her most accomplished film of the 1960s—seems to simply put the final nail into the coffin. Disgust is the choice of word for reviewers: "Disgust of humanity" or "disgust of

sexuality," Glas is an "ambivalent old pornographer," the film conveys an "atmosphere of gagging and disgust."[63] Rune Ericson's experiments in cinematography are described as making the characters look like "negroes in snow."[64]

Danish reviews were no less derisive: "Sad that Laterna Film has invested so much in such a failed product," wrote Morten Piil in a review in *Information*.[65] In *Politiken*, Bengt Mohn praised Zetterling's technical skill, saying it was much better than the Danish norm, but that it was a cold film. "Mai Zetterling is like a sewer, that uncritically lets herself be filled."[66] Erik Ulrichsen in *Berlingske aftenavis* wrote that Ulf Palme's performance as Reverend Gregorius was toned down, which on the one hand was laudable but on the other resulted in a problem with credibility: "one finds it a bit difficult to believe in Gregorius' 'violence and ruthlessness.'"[67] This problem, which Ulrichsen shared with several of the Swedish reviewers, points to a conceptualization of the rapist as a monster rather than any ordinary man, a conceptualization that was questioned by the women's movement only a few years later. In contrast, *Variety*'s reviewer sympathized, albeit with a modification, with Helga Gregorius, saying that she "after all, is *nearly* raped by her elderly husband."[68] Indeed, the *Variety* review quite perceptively captures the strength and weaknesses of *Doctor Glas*: "By avoiding anything even resembling voyeurism, Miss Zetterling may have lost out both commercially and artistically. . . . She so mutes the conflicts of the story that the viewer experiences them almost solely through the startlingly vivid but always beautifully controlled mime of Per Oscarsson. . . . Everything in this film has been filmed with exquisite beauty and unfailing taste by Rune Ericson. . . . This film is like tasting a venerable wine without being allowed to swallow it."[69] Like a venerable wine, *Doctor Glas* seems to have improved with aging, particularly the representations of Helga's experiences of marital rape, which predate Lukas Moodysson's rendering, in *Lilya 4-Ever* (*Lilja 4-Ever*, 2002), of the trafficking victim Lilya's experiences of forced intercourse with tricks, shown in a montage with the same point of view as in Zetterling's film. Such a point of view—placing the camera at the eyes of the victim—not only provides an actual victim's perspective but creates a sense of identity erasure.[70]

Nonetheless, *Doctor Glas* and *The Girls* were Zetterling's last theatrical feature films for a long time. In the 1970s, she instead continued to explore and develop her themes and aesthetics within television and documentary.

4

ISOLATION AND OBSESSION

1970–1973

In the 1970s, Mai Zetterling transformed while retaining her core of characteristics as an individual and a filmmaker. Due to economic friction with Sandrews, Zetterling was—or at least felt herself to be—forced to find other means of financing her projects. If she had thought that by being contracted by a big (in Swedish terms) production company would imply finding patronage for her art, these illusions were shattered in an increasingly harsh economic climate. As the 1970s began, world finances were rumbling, foreboding the oil crisis in 1974, rumblings that echoed in Swedish economics as well. The years 1967, 1968, and 1969 had been labeled "record years" in Sweden, but inflation was beginning to become a problem, and the welfare state came with a cost. The difficulties experienced by Sandrews were shared with the rest of the domestic film industry and with Swedish society in general. The road to future progress, human equality, and welfare state policies had become increasingly bumpy.

Zetterling, however, was quite absent from these developments. Together with husband David Hughes, a British writer and poet who had collaborated with her on all her screenplays, she divided her time between France and England. Her interest in herbs and farming, food and cooking escalated, but she also focused on her work. As an expatriate Swede, with a professional career abroad and an international network of contacts, she was not confined to the national industry. In comparison

with Ingmar Bergman's exile after an indictment of tax evasion, in which he was eagerly welcomed by the municipal theater of Munich and provided opportunities to make films abroad (*The Serpent's Egg*, 1977; *Autumn Sonata* [*Herbstsonate*], 1978; *From the Life of Marionettes* [*Aus dem Leben der Marionetten*], 1980), Zetterling had to struggle for backing for her projects. Bergman complained about the restraints of working in a language other than his native Swedish (at least initially) and described the culture shocks with a tragicomic touch in his memoirs.[1] Zetterling seemed to be at home everywhere and nowhere, a stranger in all places, yet familiar, fluent in no language but speaking many. This seems to be true of her filmmaking, too—at this point, she left the national art cinema institution in which she tried to make a home for herself in the 1960s and ventured into documentary, short film, and television. This can be regarded as a return to what she did during her learning years; at the same time, she developed and expanded her repertoire, further exploring the potentials of these genres and formats.

During this period, Zetterling's interest in obsessions emerges more clearly than in previous films. *Vincent the Dutchman* and "The Strongest" focus, like *Doctor Glas*, on obsessive and isolated men. In sharp contrast to how she portrayed the protagonist of *Doctor Glas*, Zetterling conveys fascination and admiration for the individuals in these two films, and she does not render them tragic, although the surrounding world may perceive them as such. Instead of letting life pass them by, they take their obsessions to the limit. Although Vincent van Gogh may have been constructed as a tragic figure—the suffering artist whose life ends in suicide—and although the weightlifters in "The Strongest" may seem bizarre, from Zetterling's perspective there is still something heroic about their absolute and uncompromising dedication to what they do. Furthermore, there might have been a strong recognition or even identification with these obsessive men. When provided with the opportunity to express her worldview in a British TV program, Zetterling proved to be somewhat obsessive herself.

"You Must Make People Angry"

The TV series *One Pair of Eyes* was a BBC production, "offering individuals a platform for issues close to their heart."[2] Featuring authors, directors, actors, and artists, including such notable people as Margaret Drabble, Georgia Brown, Dudley Moore, and Peter Sellers, the program was aired irregularly over 1967 to 1984. "You Must Make People

Angry," the episode with Zetterling, was broadcast in 1971. It showed Zetterling at her farmhouse in France, alternately talking animatedly about issues close to her heart, discussing a planned short film, and directing the actors. At the end of the episode, the film, simply called "Mini-movie," is shown.

Although Zetterling had been interviewed for newspapers, TV shows, and magazines before, this film provided her with an opportunity to talk at length about her life philosophy. Two quotes introduce her, intercut while she is on the phone explaining her plans for a seven-minute film. The first one says simply, "Inside every angry woman there is a human being struggling to get out" and the second one is lined up, like a list:

> My aims in life are to
> make food,
> make love,
> make films,
> make wine,
> make changes in the world around me
> and make a thorough nuisance of myself.

A male voice-over then launches into a biographical description, delivered telegram-like, and accompanied by black-and-white still images. It counterpoints the BBC News Bulletin commentary in the mini-movie that concludes this episode, particularly since besides these instances of male voice-overs, the only other voice-over is Zetterling's own.

Zetterling makes full use of her platform. "You Must Make People Angry" shows off her beautiful home and life in southern France, with the bounty of her garden and the late summer life of picking apples, bathing in a lake, walking in sun-lit fields. It also gives her an opportunity to demonstrate how her way of life is underpinned by a strong ideal about how life should be. In particular, "Mini-movie" portrays life as it should *not* be. In "Mini-movie" the couple eat, sleep, go to the bathroom, brush their teeth, cook, do the dishes, sit at an office desk, go grocery shopping, and kiss good-bye in the morning in a deadening routine. The brief scenes are repeated with small variations again and again until the film ends, supplemented with a soundtrack reading what sounds like a BBC News Bulletin but which was written by David Hughes. Through the news, we get a glimpse of what is happening in the world during the twenty-five years the film covers, from the atom

bomb over Hiroshima to the death of Eisenhower, and, in the final words of the radio reporter, "the death of civilization." The world is going to pieces while the couples live out their lives in repetitive and trivial routine.

Stylistically, the film is condensed and rhythmic. This is Zetterling's first color movie, and she uses her palettes well—much of the footage is washed out and bleak in blue tones, providing a jarring effect when shots of oranges, bananas, and a yellow tiled wall in a subway show up in quick succession. There is rhythm to the editing of the repetitive images and the sounds of the toilet flushing, the teeth brushing, washing dishes, the sizzle of egg frying, and so on—a rhythm that provides pace and, indeed, a bit of humor to this dreary daily life. The rhythm and repetition allow for moments of absurdity and black humor. For instance, for the last kiss at the door before the husband leaves the house, he kisses the air outside the door his wife has already closed on him. At another point, the husband embraces the wife in bed, followed by a cut to her spitting out the foam of her toothpaste.

In contrast with the rich life at the farm in France, the intelligent discussions between Zetterling, Hughes, and the two actors—a real-life married couple, Joss and Rosemary Ackland—and Zetterling's monologues as voice-over and on camera, the couple in the film are insidiously made into parodies of the dull and unaware average. There is a mean streak in Zetterling's portrayal, and it comes across in the discussions with the actors about the film and their roles, particularly in her conversations with Rosemary Ackland. Zetterling and Joss Ackland seem to agree about what the film is all about, but Rosemary voices a few objections. At one point, she says that she feels bad about the people who live that kind of life, who come home exhausted to watch television to relax and then see this film. Zetterling immediately rebukes her: "They will get angry!" That is the beginning of change, and "you can change your life," Zetterling says. Later, when they discuss the food the couple eats in the film, described by Zetterling as "muck" (some kind of meat with boiled carrots and peas), Rosemary objects that some people cannot afford better food. Again, Zetterling corrects her: "The simplest meal can be absolutely delicious."

The third time Rosemary questions Zetterling's parables about life is slightly unnerving, for two reasons. First, the marriage between Zetterling and Hughes would end in separation and divorce only a couple of years later. This makes the discussion about love and marriage, in hindsight, charged with double meanings. Second, although Zetterling may

have been regarded as bossy and overbearing earlier in the film, she has at least showed some charm and conviction. Here, however, her imperiousness takes on a more sinister note. The four of them are sitting or half-lying in bed. Zetterling is doing most of the talking, with Joss commenting and filling in with his ideas. Hughes smokes quietly in the background, only chipping in with an occasional comment and some assenting sounds. Zetterling says that future generations will have no need for matrimony. Joss talks about how sexual desire for others is not allowed, and Zetterling claims that when women can grow and develop within a marriage, sexual desire will continue between couples. Rosemary asks why she married, if marriage is not necessary, and Zetterling actually raps her on the head with her pen. "I didn't say that!" she exclaims.[3]

From a feminist perspective, Zetterling can be said to appropriate a masculine position in the gender hierarchy—not necessarily by taking up space (after all, this episode is supposed to be about her) but by actively oppressing the only other woman in the film, treating her like a child, and bolstering the woman's husband. By engaging in discussion with Joss while reproaching the few interjections Rosemary makes, Zetterling enters a traditionally male position (she is, indeed, with an anachronistic term, mansplaining in this film) and upholds gender hierarchies in spite of her own gender.

There is truthfulness and a touch of passive-aggressive disclosure in this scene. David Cantor, the director of the TV series, must have been aware of how Zetterling came across as a bully and, although he may not have realized it at that time, as a chauvinist in drag, since she deals much more comfortably with Joss while her treatment of Rosemary is paternalistic at best. At least one reviewer, Mary Holland, reacted strongly on how Zetterling stood out in "You Must Make People Angry": "I agreed with almost everything Mai Zetterling had to say in One Pair of Eyes (BBC-2) last night. But the woman herself, at least as she emerged on the box, was self-centered, smug and appallingly patronising about 'these poor people' whose lives are so much less rich than her own." Pointing out Zetterling, Hughes, and Joss Ackland as "contemptuous," Holland gave Rosemary Ackland credit for being "an honourable exception."[4]

Losing Oneself in the Arts: *Vincent the Dutchman*

Vincent the Dutchman was a very different kind of production. Made for Richard Price Television Associates and the BBC, it is described on the

British Film Institute's website as "drama, documentary, non-fiction," but its fictional story is about an actor who transforms into Vincent van Gogh as he is working to come to grips with the role. In the Mai Zetterling collection at the Swedish Film Institute's archive, there is an unsigned and undated document, with the first page missing, containing notes on the project of a film about Van Gogh. Written as if they were the words of the actor, the notes conclude: "Let us examine our motives more precisely. Films have already been devoted to Van Gogh. He is a readymade subject; the commentary exists in the letters, the visuals in the paintings. Bring them together on film and you have all the evidence a women's institute or a sixth form needs to encapsulate genius and go home to tea."[5] The condescending attitude toward women's institutes and sixth-graders—not unsimilar to Zetterling's paternalism toward Rosemary Ackland—implies an ambition to go beyond the cliché of the suffering visionary artist. Like the quote says, there had been films about Van Gogh before—well-produced biopics like *Lust for Life* (Vincente Minelli, 1956) with Kirk Douglas as the painter, or the twenty-minute Alain Resnais documentary *Van Gogh* (1948), so why make another one? The way the film was ultimately executed, however, seems to indicate that the ambition extended beyond making a Van Gogh film. Rather, through the metalevel (actor Michael Gough playing an actor researching for a role), the film seems to explore the possibilities of transformation, the limits of the consciousness, and various mental states as expressed in visuals, while discussing the purpose of art. Shot in color in southern France—a landscape to which Zetterling felt a strong affinity—the film positively vibrates with light and sunflower fields. Zetterling continues and develops her theme of acting, previously present most explicitly in *The Girls*. As a Stanislavski-inspired actress, for her, the idea of losing oneself to a role must have been a fear, a temptation, and a question of how far it might be possible to go when entering another person's frame of mind.

As the document from the archive states, Vincent van Gogh can indeed be said to encapsulate our imaginings about the suffering creative genius. Able to sell just a few of his paintings during his lifetime, he rose to fame shortly after his death by suicide in 1890. His luminous, intense art is easily recognizable, and his biographical legend is extraordinary, including the story of how he cut off his ear. Biographers, neurologists, and psychiatrists have attempted to retrospectively diagnose him with various mental or physical inflections such as epilepsy (a diagnosis he received during his lifetime), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia,

Ménière's disease, or acute intermittent porphyria.[6] Van Gogh's correspondence has been published in various editions since the early twentieth century, bringing the artist's writings out in the open for scholarship and a general reading public. Irving Stone's biographical novel, *Lust for Life*, was originally published in 1934 and formed the basis for the film with the same title in 1956.[7]

Zetterling was probably uninterested in the possible mental illness of her subject. For her, Van Gogh offered an opportunity to explore the relationship between art and life. This does not mean that *Vincent the Dutchman* is void of episodes of madness. On the contrary, several scenes seem to allude to his state of mind: he talks manically with his friend Paul Gauguin but lapses into a stubborn silence in other scenes; he presents his cut-off ear to a sex worker; he eats paint and drinks turpentine. However, in Zetterling's oeuvre, madness is not so much a mental illness as a plunge into truthfulness, into the abyss that for nonartists separates reality from art. In the 1980s, she would again portray an artist whose biography has been marred by speculations about her mental status—Agnes von Krusenstjerna. Psychiatrist R. Correa argues, in the article "Vincent van Gogh: A Pathographic Analysis," that Van Gogh's artistic "brilliance was not due to his mental condition, as has been argued in various publications that associate genius with madness." Instead, Correa claims, Van Gogh in all likelihood suffered from a physical condition (acute intermittent porphyria) that was an impediment that he overcame to be able to create his art.[8] As *Vincent the Dutchman* tells the story, however, these points are moot, because in pushing the boundaries of life to create art—as the actor does in the film and as Van Gogh is thereby understood to have done—a kind of focused chaos opens up, in which the regular restraints of life dissolve. As Van Gogh immersed himself in his artwork, the actor in the film lets his role consume him. There is a romanticizing of art and artists at work here, too, but perhaps a different one from the clichéd connection between creative genius and mental illness. The process of the actor in the film actually mirrored the strategy of the production team: "We tried to duplicate Van Gogh's style of living as faithfully as possible. We lived as roughly as we could manage, denied ourselves all but the barest essentials. It had an extraordinary effect on us and we got very close during those months."[9]

The film opens on a whiteboard. A hand starts writing "Vincent" with a red pen. "I'm married, and I have children, and a happy home, and lots of very good friends. Van Gogh had none of these things," a male voice with a British accent says in voice-over. The film cuts to a

close-up of a gray-haired man with sideburns and a three-day beard, who continues: "I like people, and people are good to me. They weren't to him." He observes that he is very different from Van Gogh, "but I can't think of anyone more worth to understand. All I must do is let Van Gogh happen to me."

As the film progresses, and Van Gogh, through letters to his brother, expounds on what it is to be an artist, the boundaries are blurred between painter and actor, the art of painting and the art of acting. Sometimes, in lines that may or may not be quoted from the letters, it seems as if the actor is talking about himself. The first few minutes of the film take us rapidly through most of Van Gogh's life, with images from Belgium and Paris and a voice-over by the actor that provides a summary of the painter's biography until 1888, when, at age thirty-five, he moved to Arles. At this point, the film changes location, and we see the actor arrive at the train station in Arles. "This seems to me the moment when Vincent's life really began," he says on the voice-over as he disembarks and looks around. Images of old-town Arles are intersected with images of more recently built parts of Arles, and when the actor explains that it still looks like when Van Gogh was there and that you can see still see his motifs, he is immediately refuted by a short scene with a guided tour. Showing a postcard with the Yellow House (where Van Gogh lived most of his time in Arles), the camera pans up to reveal the same street corner, although, as the guide explains, that particular house was destroyed during the war. Later on in the film, though, the Van Gogh paintings are paraphrased again and again: a sower walking the fields, sunflowers, the pink blossoming apricot trees in an orchard, cypresses, poppies, even minor characters that look similar to the people Van Gogh painted.

The actor, of course, prepares through research. He quotes extensively from the letters to Theo van Gogh and recounts bits of Vincent's biography. It is also a visual transformation: he has acquired a beard, he dyes beard and hair red, and plucks his eyebrows to match the self-portraits he has pinned next to his mirror. It looks as if he has already lost some weight—through the course of the film he becomes even skinnier. He buys secondhand clothes and shoes and starts walking around with easel, palette, paints, and brushes, which he puts to use wherever the vista attracts him. Three anonymous artists are presented throughout the film in brief interludes that show them at work. On the voice-over, they comment on what it is to be an artist and what their work means to them. These voices add to the overall project of exploring

the requirements and essence of artistic work, lifting the particular case of Van Gogh to a more generalized, abstract level.

About fifteen minutes into the film, the first merging of actor and artist occurs, in a scene where he visits a brothel. On the voice-over, the actor quotes a letter to Theo: "I go to visit a girl ever so often. I have the crude desires of an animal. And anyway, by being with women I learn about art." The "girl" at the brothel is played by the artist presented in the first such interlude, hinting at a connection between art and sex work. Dressed in clothes that bring to mind notions of the late nineteenth century—stockings and garters, a vest, and billowing underpants—without being perfectly historically correct, the woman lies on a bed, leaning on her elbows, and listens while Van Gogh holds a long monologue about life, love, art, and beauty. He even says that he pays her to listen to him. Although he begins to undress and touches the woman's face and talks about beauty, no love-making is shown. The way this scene is set up gives an impression that it is an actual scene in the film the actor is preparing for, being performed for the camera. The woman's costume, indicating rather than accurately representing the late nineteenth century, brings to mind theater rather than film. If previously the film presented the actor's preparations, we are now witnessing some kind of performance. Simultaneously, the scene contains a musing that continues what the woman artist spoke about in the preceding scene. Can having children be compared to creating art?

The actor merges more and more with Van Gogh as the film progresses. He puts his easel in the midst of the sunflower field and is painting when an elderly woman appears. She tries to talk to him, but he is unresponsive. The intense yellow of the sunflowers dominates the images, and the flowers bend a little with the wind, sometimes obscuring the faces of Van Gogh and the woman. The beauty of the landscape surrounding Arles and the fragility of attempting to do justice to it provide a sense of desperate straining, of having a vision but not being able to really complete it. "Beneath the lush photography," Derek Elley wrote, "runs a despairing streak which has rarely been stronger in Zetterling's work."[10] In all of these shots, the light is astounding—Zetterling claimed that they filmed in early mornings and late afternoons, with an extended break in the middle of the day, to capture the light.[11] The voice-over of the actor reading Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo accompanies the sun-drenched orchards and fields: "If people find me difficult, it really is my own fault. . . . It actually is painful for me to talk. . . . All I know is that I must work and work to my limits, to forget

myself in what I do but not be destroyed by it." The elderly woman says: "If you don't want to talk, I'll leave," and when she does, a sunflower fills the frame, powerfully yellow against the deep blue sky. The colors are almost agonizing in their intensity. As Van Gogh walks in the field, his voice-over quotes: "Why should I try to excuse the fact that my pictures, even when they express thanks in the simple sunflowers, are still a cry of agony?"

As the film progresses toward its climax—which, predictably, is the breakdown when Van Gogh cuts off his ear—Gauguin arrives in Arles. In the film, he appears only as a shadow, a silhouette, or at a distance with a cape and a hat and as a voice; in contrast with Michael Gough's soft-spoken voice and smooth British accent, the actor doing Gauguin's voice speaks loudly in an American accent. "He can't look after himself, he is helpless," Gauguin states. Gauguin and Van Gogh are shown painting in the bullfighting arena, and Van Gogh shouts across the sand to Gauguin. Gauguin responds only to agree with him. The bullfighting arena in Arles has featured previously in the film, intercut with shots from an actual bullfighting. An explicit parallel has already been drawn between the trophy of the matador—the cut-off bull's ear—and Van Gogh's self-mutilation.

Zetterling elected not to show the actual ear cutting. Instead, the film cuts from Van Gogh's confrontation with Gauguin to an interlude with a contemporary artist and then to Van Gogh arriving at the brothel with a bloody bandage around his head and a package containing the ear in his hands. The confrontation with Gauguin is filmed with a point-of-view camera, showing Gauguin's perspective as he walks along one of the narrow alleys of Arles. On the voice-over, Gauguin talks about a discussion between them and how he could have taught Van Gogh to paint. As he reaches the mouth of the alley, the narration mentions hearing "rapid abrupt steps behind me. I recognized it at once." As these words are said, the camera turns to show Van Gogh coming from behind with a razorblade in his hand. In the beginning of the shot, he is far away, but he approaches quickly, and the shot ends with Van Gogh in close-up, staring into the camera and wielding the razorblade. There is a brief cut to a shot of a bull being struck down, and then again to Van Gogh running away. As the scene ends, the camera shows, from the opposite end of the alley, how Gauguin stands in the mouth of the alley, looking at Van Gogh running off, and then turns onto the street behind him.

As the voice-over of a contemporary female artist speaks about being selfish and living in solitude, the film returns to Van Gogh, walking to the brothel with a package in his hands and a bloody bandage around his head. At the brothel, there is a party. Van Gogh moves alone through music, laughter, and bare-breasted women and presents the package to the woman, Rachel, whom he visited before. She opens it, and a scream is heard and shocked faces are shown. Van Gogh leaves, the record comes to an end, and a scratching noise replaces the music. As Van Gogh is shown running down the alley, the voice-over states that newspapers reported on the incident, but then the music and the party in the brothel resume, as if nothing happens. Cut to Van Gogh, lying in his bed with blood on the white sheets.

The following sequence depicts Van Gogh's time in the hospital. These scenes are quite despondent, showing him looking out the window at the rainy landscapes outside and the hospital garden. Colors are drab, in contrast to the vividness of the landscape outside Arles. The doctor says that Van Gogh should be all right if he stops painting. Van Gogh recounts that the people of Arles have petitioned the mayor to keep him locked up. When they let him out with a guardian to paint, he walks through a windy landscape and tries to set up his easel in the sunrise. It blows down, and finally, he sets the canvas on the ground and holds it in place with his legs. The guardian follows him to his home, where Van Gogh eats paint and drinks turpentine. As he thrashes with paint frothing around his mouth, rapid cuts show a sunflower against the blue sky, a bull being pierced by a sword, and children catching the sunlight with mirrors. Van Gogh screams. The screen goes black.

Van Gogh's suicide is only recounted in the voice-over. We are shown two boys who practice target shooting on his paintings, and then music begins, with an orchestra playing and walking through the landscape. The actors and the production team have a party, and we see Gough talking animatedly. In the final shots of the film, Van Gogh disappears behind a huge sunflower in a field.

By opening himself to Van Gogh, the actor seems to open himself to the intoxicating beauty of the landscape, and ultimately becomes a part of it himself, an ending Van Gogh himself did not get. The actor has "let Van Gogh happen to" him, and although we see him joking in the party scene, he is still wearing the red beard and looks a bit worn, as if the process of becoming Van Gogh has been harrowing for him. The loud brass band, heard during the party, goes quiet when Van Gogh

walks among the sunflowers, as if his disappearance, his merging with the landscape, takes place in another dimension.

Zetterling and the production team won a BAFTA award in 1973 for best "Specialised Programme" for *Omnibus: Vincent the Dutchman*. It was broadcast on US, British, and Canadian television and received some attention, in particular due to Gough's immersion into the Van Gogh character.[12] Zetterling reflects in her autobiography that she had still not learned to keep to a budget, and the film ultimately was more expensive than it should have been.[13]

Size, Scale, and Isolation: "The Strongest"

The 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich might be most remembered because of the terrorist act that killed eleven Israeli athletes, five Palestinian terrorists, and one German police officer. The "Munich massacre" was one of several aggressive attacks in the 1970s, a decade marked by the acts of several different terrorist groups. This particular attack was not just a blow against the notions of democracy and openness that the whole Olympics design had been constructed to perform but also "reopened wounds that [Germany] was desperately trying to heal"—that Jewish people would be so afflicted on German territory.[14] In addition, it made the 1972 Olympics documentary a problematic testimony of the games because only one of the directors, John Schlesinger, who covered the marathon, could include the tragic event since the others had already finished shooting at the time. As the *New York Times* observed: "In a film of this kind there is no way of dealing with the event that shaped the 20th Olympiad—or deprived it of all shape: the killing of 11 members of the Israeli team. [It] cannot be integrated in the context of a movie that only wants to be thoughtful, funny, satiric or poetic."[15]

When the Olympic Games were planned, the focus was on creating an event that would replace the memory of the Berlin Olympics in 1936, in Nazi Germany. In particular, the architecture of the site was designed to create a sense of airy openness and transparent lightness, epitomized in the tent roof of acrylic glass that protected the arenas from rain and in the recreational park with its artificial lake.[16] The emphasis on openness, pacifism, and democracy was reinterpreted as poor security and naïveté after the terrorist attack,[17] but at the planning stage and for the first week of the games, these ideals expressed hope and peace. It is in line with the intentions behind the Munich games that the documentary that would commemorate them consisted of eight different directors'

visions rather than the unified and highly personal single aesthetic vision of Leni Riefenstahl's famous *Olympia* (1938). The documentary *Visions of Eight* (1973) forms a multifocal perspective on the Olympic Games, portraying not only various athletic events but also themes such as "The Beginning" (Yuri Ozerov, Soviet Union), capturing the seconds right before an athlete throws him- or herself out into the moment of truth, the looks of concentration, anticipation, and nerves that are unique but also universal; or "The Losers" (Claude Lelouch, France), showing athletes' reactions when realizing that they will not or did not win.

The segment that perhaps lies the closest to Riefenstahl's exceptional visionary is Arthur Penn's about the pole vaulters in "The Highest." Starting off with a blurry slow motion and continuing with clearer and clearer images of the pole vaulters as they, like ballet dancers, glide over the bar, it nevertheless emphasizes the physical exertion and the strained faces in close-up in a manner very different from Riefenstahl's almost abstract compositions. Each director of *Visions of Eight* represented a country, but their respective episodes did not necessarily reflect that country's athletes or sports. Rather, it was a gathering of nationalities, mirroring the Olympic Games, in a friendly competition.[18]

Described as a "mannered . . . but quite funny and well edited" segment by *Variety*, Zetterling's contribution, perhaps surprisingly, focused on a somewhat marginalized athletic event: weightlifting.[19] Weightlifting is not one of the most popular spectator sports, and during the history of Olympic Games, it has been tainted by doping scandals. At the same time, it was perhaps the most male of all athletic events in the 1972 games, with no competition for women weightlifters (there was not an opening for women weightlifters in the Olympics until 2000). Brought in as a representative of Sweden to replace Ingmar Bergman, Zetterling had considered portraying the women athletes but ultimately chose this less predictable subject. "The first suggestion had been the obvious one, that I should do something about the women athletes, but this was much more interesting," Zetterling said in an interview in *Films Illustrated*.[20] Instead, the women competitors were represented in Michael Pfleghar's "The Women," whose segment is, in retrospect, remarkably sexist with lingering shots that "cast a decidedly male gaze" on the female athletes, using "leering close-ups and fragmented editing."[21]

Each segment begins with a brief introduction, during which the director is shown at work in a series of still, black-and-white images, accompanied by the sounds of a camera shutter and a voice-over in which the director says something about the topic of the segment.

Obsession and isolation in "The Strongest" (1973).

Zetterling used this part to declare, frankly, "I am not interested in sports, but I *am* interested in obsessions."

Apart from this introduction, there is no explanatory narration to the segment. Zetterling's declaration forms a sort of key with which to understand her film of the weightlifters. Her authorial voice makes its presence known through an intense observation of the sheer size of the Olympic Games, as embodied by the bizarrely huge bodies of the weightlifters, who are in turn dwarfed by the space and mechanism of the games. The architecture, intended to symbolize openness and democracy, becomes almost abstract in its concrete grandiosity. She was no stranger to using architecture symbolically, as her representations of the Golden Lane estate in *The War Game* or Ralph Erskine's apartment buildings and Luleå shopping center in *The Girls* had shown, but in "The Strongest," Zetterling consistently focuses on size and scale.

In the first shot, a lone figure is rehearsing weightlifting moves outdoors in the Olympic village. While he repeats the same moves over and over, exemplifying the loneliness and the obsession of his sport, the

camera zooms out to show him as a small, solitary dot in the concrete park. Abruptly, the segment cuts to a close-up of a heavy barbell, hitting the ground with a loud clanking sound. Again, we are shown a lone weightlifter, frog-jumping through a vast, empty training hall with only the surrounding equipment for company. As the hall begins to fill with other weightlifters, warming up and exercising, a voice-over begins to list things necessary to maintain such a huge arrangement, like mattresses, pillows, even curtain rings, but most of all food: 1,350 kg of porridge, 120,000 bread rolls, 140,000 liters of orange juice, and so on. In a montage, we are shown the preparation of these massive amounts of food—including dead pigs hanging from hooks in a slaughterhouse—interspersed with images of the weightlifters working out.

Diffrient points out that this segment seems "critical of the kind of nationalistic pageantry that had earlier been associated with the Berlin Games of 1936," but at the same time, there is a detached and almost humorous mood to the montage, illustrating the absurdity of these gargantuan arrangements and the likewise gargantuan bodies that participate.[22] As sports historians Krüger, Nielsen, and Becker show, at this point antidoping measures were taken but mainly targeted stimulants rather than the anabolic steroids that enlarged the bodies and musculature of athletes.[23] Zetterling seems to view all sorts of oral intake—or food—as a kind of extreme measure taken to create elite athletic performances.

As the competition begins, the mood shifts. There is still a fascination with the bizarrely huge bodies, but Zetterling's camera also captures the concentrations, apprehensions, and hesitations experienced by these enormous men as they approach the barbell almost like it was a living thing, a wild beast. "There is something so isolated about the weightlifters, the way they are really competing against themselves," Zetterling said in an interview, and this isolation seems to be foregrounded in this part of her segment: All the preparations, all the organizational mechanisms, all the food produced and consumed, everything has led up to this moment—to grab the barbell and lift it all the way up to above one's head. "Zetterling shows her subjects at work, driving themselves deep into masochistic regions every bit as lonely as those inhabited by *Doktor Glas*, Jan in *Night Games* or Liz in *The Girls*," Elley observes.[24] The detached and absurdist mode that has characterized the segment so far is replaced by intensely empathetic close-ups and lingering shots.

One single movement, a single lift, is the objective of all this work. Some of the weightlifters succeed and others fail, but all of them seem to experience that same sense of heightened concentration, the same

fear. "In a moment like that, we begin to understand something of the difficulties of the weightlifter," film critic Roger Ebert wrote in his review,[25] but the scenes from the competition must be understood in relation to all of Zetterling's segment in which the conveyed absurdity is awarded some kind of respect not in spite of but because of that single moment each weightlifter (and, in an extended understanding, all of the athletes) must experience. As Elley commented, weightlifters are "more than open to cheap and easy humor. It is much to Zetterling's credit that she is able to explore her interest in this breed of sportsmen without resorting to either snide montage sequences or derisive visual effects."[26] Zetterling is the only one of the eight directors who shows the Olympic Games as something other, something more than simply athletes competing. Kon Ichikawa ("The Fastest") breaks down the 100-meter sprint into several slow-motion studies of individual runners, John Schlesinger portrays long-distance runner Ron Hill's loneliness both in the marathon and while training for it, Claude Lelouch studies the moment of losing for several athletes ("The Losers"), and so on, but Zetterling brings the massive backdrop that dwarfs even the huge weightlifters into the foreground. She displays the deconstruction of the weightlifters' podium and how it takes five men to carry off the barbell. In the concluding shot, she returns to the humorist mood of the beginning, ending the segment with a shot, from behind, of one of the weightlifters leaving the training hall with his much smaller coach, emphasizing size and scale again.

In "You Must Make People Angry," *Vincent the Dutchman*, and "The Strongest," Zetterling picked up on a theme present in her feature films of the 1960s but developed it and brought a new perspective to it. Although Van Gogh and the weightlifters in "The Strongest" drove "themselves deep into masochistic regions" and suffered the resulting loneliness, they did so heroically rather than tragically, attempting to transcend the constraints of society, reality, or their own bodies. Leaving the Swedish film production scene, in the early 1970s Zetterling found herself with an obsessive need to continue to make films but no clear outlet and no steady backing for her projects. This is when her oeuvre begins to become scattered and her transnationality becomes more pronounced. As the 1970s continued, so did these tendencies, as Zetterling persisted in looking for possibilities wherever they might appear: in Sweden, in France, in Denmark, and in Canada. But during the 1970s, Zetterling would find an audience and a community with the feminist movement in film. Here, she was welcomed.

5

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST FILMMAKING

1974–1980

Mai Zetterling worked for a while on a manuscript for a television adaptation of Simone de Beauvoir's famous book, *The Second Sex*, blessed by the author herself.[1] In a 1976 interview, de Beauvoir mentions this project, describing *The Girls* as a "beautiful" film and Zetterling as someone who has made "some excellent feminist films."[2] According to the undated proposal draft, the adaptation would consist of seven one-hour films, each focusing on a different stage or variant of women's lives, from childhood and young girlhood to women from maternity to old age, but also the lesbian, the married mother, "the prostitute and the courtesan," and the narcissist, concluding with the independent woman. The proposal suggested that the different stand-alone episodes would take place all over the world, in "wide-apart places" such as Japan, Sweden, Turkey, China and the United States, and described the project as combining documentary and fiction. In each film, one woman would be the center, and she would be both main character and narrator, which would, as Zetterling shrewdly explained, minimize the need for subtitling and make the global approach manageable. Not only would the films take place in different places, but they would move freely across time and bring in the time at which de Beauvoir wrote the book, as well as the present, and, Zetterling claimed, the future: "Nothing should be impossible." The narrative would be "extremely personal, fast moving and inventive. No stodgy documentary technique!"[3]

This unmade production encompasses much of Zetterling's authorial persona at the time. In terms of both narration—the disruption of chronological time, the many narrative levels, the multifocal perspective channeled through different protagonists—and the global approach, but also with regard to her emerging feminism, which became more pronounced as the 1970s continued. The notion of creating a story that would span the globe and use the female protagonist as the prism of many perspectives would resurface in her later plans for "The Woman Who Cleaned the World" but never really come to fruition, except maybe in condensed form in *Betongmormor* (*Concrete Grandma*, 1986), a short film made at the request of and promoting the construction company Skanska. In her autobiography and in the notebooks from the production of *Of Seals and Men*, Zetterling recalled her childhood dream of becoming an explorer.[4] Being a film director, in many ways, was like exploring—traveling to all kinds of exotic locations (Lapland in Sweden, Camargue in France, Iceland, Greenland) and exploring the medium of film: its limits, its potential, its various expressions.

The proposal for *The Second Sex* bears witness to Zetterling's various strategies of navigating and negotiating her projects—finding the right candidate for financial backing, highlighting her pragmatism in production choices, pitching visionary yet ostensibly manageable ideas. As mentioned, the proposal draft, which is available in the Mai Zetterling Collection at the Swedish Film Institute in English and in French, is undated, but it is not unlikely that it was written at some point in the early to mid-1970s, when Zetterling had licked the wounds of the harsh reception of *The Girls* and began to be interested in the burgeoning women's movement. In a 1975 Swedish newspaper article, Zetterling is quoted as planning to make seven hours of television on de Beauvoir's "woman's book" *The Second Sex*. "In different countries, Australia, maybe Sweden. One hour about the woman's situation in every country, that then will be put together in a TV-series."[5]

Second-Wave Feminism and the Women's Movement in Film

Zetterling's connection to de Beauvoir was significant at the turn Zetterling's career in the 1970s. As the decade wore on, Zetterling's focus shifted. She was one of the initiators of Film Women International and vocally demanded more women on festival juries along with many more women in film. The headline of the article cited above boldly claimed, "Now she goes all in for the women's movement."[6] In another

article the following year, Zetterling is interviewed because *The Girls* is programmed to open the International Women's Film Festival in Copenhagen in 1976. Here, Zetterling is described as "one of the driving forces behind the international women's movement in film," and according to the interview, the production of *The Second Sex* is scheduled to start in 1977. However, funding is "not yet completely in place." Again, her feminism is highlighted in the headline: "Mai Zetterling demands: Half of the jury at Cannes for women."[7]

Although from an earlier time than the women involved in second-wave feminism in the 1970s, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* was and is the fundamental text for the emerging consciousness about women's situation in the postwar era. Published in 1949, *The Second Sex* was translated into nineteen languages and formed a starting point and a model of thinking that resonated throughout the emerging modern feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, from Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 to Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* in 1970. The famous quote "On ne naît pas femme: on le deviant," or, in H. M. Parshley's much-criticized translation, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," has been cited countless times. For women who were beginning to express discontent with patriarchy, *The Second Sex* provided inspiration, insights, and an often-chilling analysis of the relation between the genders. Although Jane Sloan reads *The Girls* as diverging from de Beauvoir's thinking, much of the feminism of Zetterling's film should be located in a de Beauvoirean tradition, regarding women as complying with patriarchy due to their attributes as mothers.[8] Regardless, the developing Marxist-oriented feminism of the late 1960s and 1970s was not where *The Girls* found its philosophical inspiration.

There is a strong kinship between de Beauvoir and Zetterling—both practiced within male-dominated arts—philosophy and literature in the case of de Beauvoir, and film in the case of Zetterling; both regarded women's reproductive function as a kind of entrapment; both made transgressive claims to be taken seriously as human beings while being constantly associated with their gender by their contemporaries and their historiographers. As an intellectual in London in the late 1940s and 1950s, Zetterling would have been quite familiar with de Beauvoir. Zetterling's autobiography begins with a reflection on what it is to be a woman, or rather, what it is to not be a man, echoing de Beauvoir's discussion of female identity. "I have been a woman for more than fifty years and yet I have never been able to discover precisely what it is I am, how real I am."[9]

However, the times were a-changing. In the 1960s, being a feminist—without the nomenclature—would entail demanding to be taken seriously as a human being and claiming to be speaking universally on behalf of humankind. In the 1970s, the aims and goals of the women's movement multiplied and several "feminisms" developed. One goal could be the reevaluation of motherhood and women's traditional work—needlework, embroidery, knitting, cooking, preservation, baking. One aspect of the patriarchal oppression of women had been to disdain the skills involved in these activities and their necessity for human survival. Another goal was to conquer a space within traditionally male occupations. A third was to reclaim women's bodies with a focus on discovering pleasure by raising awareness about basic female sexual anatomy with the clitoris and the cervix, in particular, in the searchlight, and to defend women's sexual integrity by drawing attention to rape, sexual harassment, and objectification.[10] Equal pay for equal work, improvement in childcare, the right to abortion, and laws against discrimination were other important issues for second-wave feminism in the Western world.

Obviously, there were variations between different national contexts. In Sweden, the starting point for the women's movement is often said to be 1968 when the women's group Grupp 8 was formed in Uppsala.[11] However, this historiography excludes the "sex roles" debate that began in the early 1960s, a gender discussion with a liberal approach, focusing on the individual's rights and liberties.[12] Nevertheless, as the women's movement in Sweden was significantly informed by socialist ideology, the separation of the two can be warranted. What happened in 1968 with the start of Grupp 8 set the ground for much of the developments within Swedish feminism in the 1970s and after. In the United States, second-wave feminism can be said to begin with Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the formation of the National Organization for Women, and the Equal Pay Act in 1963. Again, however, there is a distinction between more liberally oriented feminisms and radical feminism, which did not begin to gain momentum until the late 1960s.

Regardless, the women's movement soon found its way into film, or women found the strength to challenge the male-dominated structures of film production. Women scholars began to look at women authors, women artists, and women directors in history and found that their existence had been neglectfully acknowledged by previous historians. An important feminist project during this time—continuing to this day—was to rediscover women filmmakers, women writers, and women artists

and draw attention to those currently working in these fields, putting them in the spotlights, so to speak. The 1970s sees something of a wave of female directors, particularly within the European art cinema world, where Zetterling had struggled only a decade earlier as one of the pitifully few women directors.[13] Suddenly, feminist scholars could point to more than just Zetterling, Agnes Varda, Marta Meszaros, Maya Deren, and Germaine Dulac: women directors were, if not many, at least more prevalent than before: Margareta von Trotta, Doris Dörrie, Marleen Gorris, Agnieszka Holland, Susan Seidelman, Elaine May, Ann Hui, and many more.

In the Swedish film industry, the first cohort of women had just graduated from the film school that had been started in 1964. According to Tytti Soila, the film school changed the structure of and point of entry into the film industry: previously, younger talents had hopefully attached themselves to experienced cinematographers and directors, working at shoots as errand boys and assistants. Learning the profession was done through an informal apprentice system, which reproduced and sustained a male, homosocial network, and made it difficult for women to gain entry. The film school changed these conditions and gave women new opportunities at positions formerly regarded as male.[14] As records from the early years of the film school show, it was not an immediate and obvious opening: women who applied and were accepted to the programs were scarce, and in the 1970s, a woman who applied for the cinematography program was denied on the grounds that the camera equipment was too heavy for her to handle.[15]

Nonetheless, the film school did open up opportunities for women in Sweden. Other developments that played into the relative increase in women directors in the 1970s were the new emphasis on documentaries, which were often made by a mixed-gender team,[16] and obviously the women's movement and the attention directed toward women, women's opportunities, and women's achievements.

The women's movement in film scholarship can be said to consist of roughly two directions.[17] Feminist film theory and feminist film analysis focuses on gender, representation, narrative, and style to understand, critique, or reinterpret ideological or political implications of various types of films. This field of study encompasses Laura Mulvey's famous article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (psychoanalytically inspired readings of films by Hitchcock and Josef von Sternberg, aiming to analyze the male gaze on the objectified woman and thereby undermine the pleasure of spectatorship), and feminist analyses of women-directed

avant-garde films like Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). Feminist film historians focus on rediscovering or drawing attention to women filmmakers—directors, producers, screen writers—in film history, from the silent film pioneers to modern day. Moreover, several women ventured into directing during this time, and filmmaking was regarded as a means to question, challenge, or change the predominant, patriarchal narratives and representations on the screen. The "woman's perspective" that Zetterling had been said to epitomize in her films in the 1960s became a feminist perspective that aimed for political change.

The institution of feature fiction filmmaking, whether art cinema or popular genre film, had proved itself stubbornly recalcitrant to women's attempts to break in. Zetterling's experiences within the Swedish art cinema institution were symptomatic. At this point, women ventured into television, documentary, short filmmaking, and avant-garde or experimental filmmaking. This was also true of Zetterling. Instead of being a brief hiatus from major feature films, the time period between *The Girls* and *Scrubbers* extended from 1968 to 1982.

Nevertheless, these years were very productive, although they entailed a personal break-up. As if forced into a creatively fertile constraint by format and budget, Zetterling's previously flamboyant and exaggerated style of directing became more condensed, more focused, more self-reflexive, and more energetic. She traveled the world for opportunities to make films: "I began to jump continents, to accept job offers all over the world. I took them all because I could not afford, either financially or emotionally, to say no: I had to get back to work. Montreal, Toronto, Stockholm, Manchester, Vienna; documentaries, a play, a children's film," she wrote in her autobiography.[18] The words refer to the time after her separation from David Hughes, whom she divorced formally in 1976. Hughes had been discontented as a writer for some time, being cut off from his British context on his and Zetterling's farm in France. Soon after the filming of *Vincent the Dutchman*, they separated. "How difficult it was for David to leave I shall never know. It was all so damned English, stiff-upper-lip and all that: detachment, no emotions shown and promises, of course, that all soon would be well."[19] According to Sheila LaFarge, who worked for Zetterling and was her friend, Hughes's wish to have children was one reason for the break-up.[20] Hughes remarried in 1980 and became the father of two children. The separation and subsequent divorce, however, took its toll on Zetterling, not least because she and Hughes had always collaborated.

The changes in the political and cultural climate made an impact on Zetterling's work and her discourse around her work. As mentioned in a previous chapter, in the 1960s, when asked about "women's emancipation," she had replied that human emancipation was much more important. *Loving Couples* had been marketed as a film by a woman about women, but there are several probable reasons that Zetterling highlighted the woman's perspective of *Loving Couples* and toned it down for *Night Games*. First, *Loving Couples* is truly a film about women, directed by a woman, based on material written by a woman—something that must have felt acute at a time when there were no women filmmakers in the Swedish film industry and Ingmar Bergman seemed to have a monopoly as a depicter of women. Second, using this argument—a woman's perspective on women—was opportune, in particular because Rune Waldekranz claimed to have been actively looking for a woman director. Nevertheless, for her second film, Zetterling must have felt that she needed to expand her image so that she would not become stuck as someone who "only" brought female themes to the screen. A real artist speaks to humankind, and at this point in time, humankind was represented by men. (Of course, it could be argued that this is still the case.)

In the 1970s, the focus shifted. Taking a stand for the depiction of women was an explicitly political stance with feminist aims. A culture grew up around women filmmakers, with festivals, political meetings, organized groups, workshops, and feminist collectives.[21] Instead of being dismissed, the woman's perspective (or women's perspective, or the feminist perspective) attracted attention and debate: "Then women's film festivals started to pop up all over the world in the most unlikely places and I was invited to many of them. It was now that *The Girls*, which had been so rudely received by the Swedes, suddenly found favour, which took me to Paris, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Rome, Australia, Africa, even Stockholm. It was a joy to be appreciated after all the rejections I had had and it was also important to meet other women who were trying to direct films."[22] Although she found a space in which she was respected and admired, Zetterling remained slightly ambivalent. "Sometimes the atmosphere could be ghetto-like, which I didn't much care for either—but being so close to women in friendship and work was new and important at the time."[23]

Swedish film scholar Ingrid Ryberg identifies the international women's year, 1975, as the time when "issues of feminism and film had

taken root."[24] Ryberg points to Mulvey's groundbreaking 1975 essay on visual pleasure but also to the fact that this was when the German journal *Frauen und Film* began and Norwegian Anja Breien's *Wives* (*Hustruer*) and Danish film *Take It Like a Man, Madam!* (*Ta' det som en mand, frue!*) by the team Mette Knudsen, Elisabeth Rygård, and Li Vilstrup were released.[25] This is also the year Zetterling wrote, starred in, and directed the TV film *We Have Many Names* (*Vi har många namn*, 1976).

We Have Many Names

We Have Many Names was originally conceived as a BBC production to be released during the international women's year. Its working title was "The Great Unwanted." However, the BBC backed out and Zetterling eventually approached Swedish television for funding. *We Have Many Names* combines Zetterling's now trademark directorial style with sequences of symbolic visions and fantasies (like in *Doctor Glas*) with a narrative focusing on the crisis of a middle-aged wife, Lena (played by Zetterling), who is abandoned by her husband, Bob (Gunnar Furumo), for a younger woman. The point of the film seems to be that the myth of all-encompassing love and security in marriage is a dangerous self-deception. In one way, it might seem like a melodramatic and clichéd "women's lib" story, with exaggerated symbols, like showing a naked woman being locked up in heavy, medieval chains and then, later, being freed from them. However, through several stylistic choices, Zetterling moves beyond clichés and into the woman's mind, addressing issues of life purpose, the immaturity of attachment, and the infantilizing of woman in marriage. The brief flashback sequence depicting the happy married life includes moments of play with the son, which also entail some kind of accidents that befall Lena: they roller-skate on the tiled floor of the kitchen, and Lena falls and hurts her backside; the son uses a snorkel in the bath and blows water in her face. A scene with wasps stinging her hand and making her ring finger swell up so that she has to get her wedding ring cut off forebodes the ending of the marriage but is also a logical continuation of the earlier, smaller mishaps.

The film begins with religious symbolism: a naked, female body (Zetterling), supine on the ground, with blood spattered across her midsection. On the soundtrack, some kind of hymn is chanted. A cut is made to a close-up of a mannequin's face. With a slow pan, the framing reveals a large, darkly lit room with a large number of naked mannequins in different positions, all bald, all with perfect make-up. Among them is

Roller-skating. Mai Zetterling and unknown actor in *We Have Many Names* (1976). Photograph by Beata Bergström. Courtesy of Stefan Bergström.

a real woman (Ewa Fröling), standing completely still. In close-up, blood is slowly trickling down the side of her face. She looks straight into the camera. Her hand is also bleeding, like stigmata, and the blood is dripping down on the breast of the naked woman on the ground who was shown in the opening shot. The mannequins look down on her. Wisps of mist float past.

After this prelude, the narrative is revealed in a voice-over by Zetterling and through telephone calls, interrupting Lena's breakdown. Lena passively puts down the receiver and lets her callers speak. In the first such call, she is invited to celebrate Christmas with friends, and in the second, her mother speaks her mind about Bob's behavior. Both callers pour out advice on how she should behave. In the voice-over, Zetterling recounts the story of their marriage in third person and explains how the woman only had one ambition: to love a man and their child. The images accompanying this part of the narration show the family together and are intercut with brief shots of Zetterling, looking at herself

in this "happy family" scenario, with a stony face and the unforgiving eyes that only hindsight can provide. These shots balance what might otherwise be perceived of as a wallowing in self-pity.

Much of the film, particularly some of the flashback scenes and the scenes with Lena's breakdown, is staged in a darkened room, with drawn curtains, reinforcing the claustrophobic ambience of both marriage and the emotional turmoil following its end. The dark background brings to mind very early cinema à la Thomas Edison's Black Maria studio, perhaps because early in the film we see the couple kissing in a medium shot and positioned correspondingly to May Irwin and John C. Rice in Edison's *The Kiss* (1896). More immediately, there is a kinship to the nightmares in Zetterling's *Doctor Glas*. The darkened rooms and drawn curtains also signal imprisonment and enclosure, especially in connection with the previous symbolic images of the woman in chains. At some point, Lena peeks out between the curtains, and the light that shines through is almost blinding. Similarly, when she finally leaves the home, she comes out of the door and gets the glaring sun in her eyes, making her stop for a moment right in the door opening. She visits a friend and sits quietly in her kitchen while the friend talks about men, dismissing them but still wondering about love. "Love," the friend says. "So few letters and such an important word in one's vocabulary." As the film draws to an end, we see Lena's face as she stands outside on a sidewalk. On the soundtrack, we hear the cars driving past. Interspersed is a reversal of the scene in which the other woman (Fröling) was chained. Then, a brief scene shows a happy community of woman and children, clad in white and pale colors, dancing and playing music. The film concludes with a shot on Lena's face, watching the community and looking content.

Zetterling was fifty when she made this film. Although she had very little in common with the protagonist, she did have the experience of divorce after a long and loving relationship. The break-up with Hughes had been a heavy blow both personally and emotionally. "I was fortunate enough to be able to fall back on my work. What about the others, those who had nothing but the home and their grown-up children, no chance of a job because they were middle-aged and unwanted?"[26] According to her memoirs, Swedish television wanted her to play the lead role. "I used all the pain and misery of the break-up of my marriage. It was a bitter medicine."[27] In a way, this is the strength of the film: Zetterling's starkly vulnerable, revealing performance and the reformulation

of her specific personal experience into something wider, more general. Her full-frontal nudity in the beginning of the film seems to be a challenge, as if she is saying, "This is me, this is a middle-aged woman who bares it all, this is a naked performance without artifice or pretense." Unsurprisingly, Swedish newspapers praised her performance. Her commercial and critical value as an actress was probably what Swedish television was after when they wanted her to play the lead. However, many of the journalists were skeptical of the film's analysis of the relation between the genders and the surrealist elements: "She has not abandoned expressionism in her imagery. Personally, I find this form difficult and that increases my objections to 'We Have Many Faces" [*sic*] as a modern woman's film," wrote Elisabeth Sörenson in *Svenska Dagbladet*. She continued, "It is a strong film, strongly acted, but unfortunately I feel that something of that which Mai Zetterling is trying to air out still exists in the film." Sörenson concluded by asking, "But is it a freedom in relation to men—or a freedom from men? The latter cannot be Mai Zetterling's point, but after that round of ammunition that the protagonist's friend discharges, one can only wonder."[28] In contrast, Allan Fagerström in *Aftonbladet* found the film to be "as far as I can judge a completely true film about the love of women." However, he was not convinced by the visions and fantasies: "The sophisticated extensions with surrealist dreams and fantasies have no artistic value of their own, but work as an accompaniment to her [Zetterling's] face."[29] In *Dagens Nyheter*, the journalist complained that the other characters in the play became "bloodless" in comparison with Zetterling's strong rendering of the "victim of the broken myth about losing oneself in an eternal and dependent security through a marriage."[30]

Colors, Colors, Colors! *The Moon Is a Green Cheese*

Even in Zetterling's motley collection of audiovisual output, *Månen är en grön ost* (*The Moon Is a Green Cheese*) stands out as odd or strange. Inspired by Goethe's theory of colors, it is Zetterling's only children's film, and apart from a screening at the Nordic Film Days in Lübeck, Germany, in November 1977, it was only broadcast on television, two years after it was finished.[31] That one occasion was during Swedish prime time (8 p.m.) on a Friday evening, on one of the two available channels, something a reviewer pointed out as an indication of the puzzlement at Swedish television as to what kind of film this really

was.[32] The reviewer seemed to imply that the intended audience should be in bed by then. But it is not entirely clear who the intended audience might be. In the Swedish film database, Nina Widerberg concludes her comment: "In 1969, Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda had opened the doors of perception in *Easy Rider*. That scene [the LSD trip at the cemetery during Mardi Gras in New Orleans] is nothing compared to *The Moon Is a Green Cheese*, which must have been challenging even during the 1970s."[33]

On the one hand, the film is saturated with gloriously vivid colors and beautiful individual shots. Zetterling's remarkable sense of color, used to great effect in both "You Must Make People Angry!" and *Vincent the Dutchman*, here gets free rein. On the other hand, the film as a whole excruciatingly meanders through more or less poetic nonsense rhymes and more or less comprehensible images. With a loose narrative about a family going out into the archipelago for summer vacation, it mainly takes place in a kind of naturalistic fantasy world, where Orange and Red are two clowns, Yellow is a pair of twins who fry eggs on top of their heads, Green plays the cello in the forest while toads shake, Blue is a skipper on a boat, Indigo is a witch who can twist your mind and trick your eyes, and Violet plays the harp in a lake. The moods of the episodes change in accordance to the colors. An insect gets stuck in a dewy cobweb and struggles until the spider finds it and weaves it into a small pouch. The parents, oblivious to the rich imagination—or experience—of their children, plan grocery shopping and have picnics, while the children fly off with the clowns in a balloon. Toward the end of the film, however, even the grown-ups have succumbed to nature's powers and collect morning dew from grass and leaves. In the review in the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet*, Elisabeth Sörenson captured the film's contradictory qualities by saying, "Far into the film, Mai Zetterling's *The Moon Is a Green Cheese* is kind of genius . . . but unfortunately this does not hold up all the way." Instead, the film becomes "pretentiously inaccessible and sometimes in fact even meaningless."[34]

Although these words may ring true, *The Moon Is a Green Cheese* testifies to Zetterling's tenacity in trying to find creative outlets. The film's producer, Lisbeth Gabrielsson, said that Zetterling had wanted to make a film about corruption within the Olympics. Gabrielsson—who had not produced a film before—objected that such a project would be too big for her, and her responsibility was for the children's film fund at the Swedish Film Institute. So Zetterling suggested a children's film instead.[35]

Love and War: *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*

Cities was a series of documentaries for Canadian television, the first independent production by the newly founded John McGreevy Productions. In thirteen episodes, famous personalities featured their home cities: *R. D. Laing's Glasgow*, *Peter Ustinov's Leningrad*, *Melina Mercouri's Athens*, *Elie Wiesel's Jerusalem*, *Germaine Greer's Sydney*, and so on. The series went on to win two awards at the New York International Film and Television Festival,[36] and there was a book published after the series was concluded.[37]

In *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*, Zetterling dressed up as famous Swedish author August Strindberg and as Queen Christina. The film has recently been found again and received some attention in Sweden.[38] Called "The Native Squatter" in draft manuscript form, the film seems to call into question the issues of identity and nationality, familiarity and strangeness. In the beginning, Zetterling looks at her (former) city from a huge crane above the square Kungsträdgården with a bird's-eye view, somehow fitting to her distant relationship to Sweden and its capital and as a pun ("bird" as in woman). It is winter in the welfare country, and the snowy cityscape and crowded ice floes on Riddarfjärden supposedly mirror the coldness of the Swedish people in Zetterling's portrayal. Even midsummer is evoked by a lonely maypole sticking out of the snow on Skansen, the open-air museum close to the city center. In an interwoven, fragmented structure, the film is made up of various components: there is the voice-over narration by Zetterling, which conveys facts and curious information about Stockholm and Sweden, accompanied by images from Stockholm; the appearance of Zetterling as herself (or maybe as Zetterling the actress), telling short moral anecdotes; the Strindberg scenes, using actual Strindberg quotes; and the Queen Christina scenes, which seem to criticize consumer culture and warfare. On the soundtrack, we hear Swedish folk music, sometimes played traditionally and sometimes in a jazzy manner. Often, the tones glide a bit and become slightly off-key, echoing the notion of something being a bit off, a bit strange in this ideal nation. The juxtaposition of Strindberg's opinions about women with Queen Christina's claim that marriage is warfare, calls to mind the "permanent war" between the genders of Zetterling's 1960s films.

Zetterling sets up her portrayal of Strindberg by showing sculptures and pictures of the author, while in the "blue tower," where Strindberg lived, she puts on a wig, a fake mustache, and the tiny beard patch that

Zetterling as Strindberg in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (1979).

were the author's trademarks. The similarity is quite striking, and she poses with a very straight back, bringing down her voice a notch to sound more masculine.

Since Strindberg famously held many strong views on women, this cross-dressing becomes an ironic commentary: as Strindberg, Zetterling speaks on women, using direct and paraphrased quotes from Strindberg's writings. Images of Strindberg sculptures are juxtaposed with sculptures of women—unidentified nude bodies symbolizing spring, or love, or art. Just as his quotes are the factual utterances of one specific man about women in general, or an abstract idea of women, the sculptures portray the same specific man and a similarly abstract idea of women. Strindberg travels in a horse carriage out to wintry Skansen, where Zetterling's voice-over explains midsummer and Swedish summer light while Strindberg sits cozied up in a huge fur coat. A vision of angels in the park scare him.

Inside a greenhouse, Zetterling (as herself) reads a story about a man who was afraid of fear. Strindberg shows up outside the window and, pressing his face to the glass, whispers, "I am frightened!" He mentions

the arms race and war. Queen Christina shows up, responding to Zetterling's statement that it is all about love: "Love," she says proudly, "is warfare."

In *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*, Zetterling returns to the conceptualization of the relationship between the genders as war, made explicit by Queen Christina's words: not only is she introduced saying, "Love is warfare," but later on, walking with her entourage through an exhibition on violence at Kulturhuset (the Culture House), she writes on a wall: "Marriage is warfare." Following after Zetterling's portrayal of Strindberg, with the selection of quotes and paraphrases and expressing his fear of war and women, Queen Christina becomes the formidable counterpoint to the author. Moreover, the Queen Christina sequence emphasizes larger, societal issues: war, associated with scenes from the Royal Guard and a huge bomb shelter (like in *The Prosperity Race* and *The Girls*) under Stockholm, built to protect people in case of a nuclear attack but used in peacetime as a garage; consumerism, illustrated with the shopping abundance at NK, the upscale department store, and the shop windows in Old Town; and a society obsessed with security, demonstrated through public surveillance cameras and the images they send to flickering black-and-white screens, as well as the manufacturing of keys and locks by ASSA, the internationally successful Swedish lock maker. Consequently, Strindberg comes across as personal and ruled by his emotions, whereas Queen Christina, like Zetterling, has the bird's-eye view on society, conveying a larger perspective and seeing the world as a whole. Unlike Strindberg, who is alone in his scenes, Queen Christina has an entourage. It consists of an anonymous court woman, a little person, a huge shaggy dog, and famous philosopher René Descartes, whom the real Queen Christina brought to Stockholm in the mid-seventeenth century. Descartes's stay in Stockholm lasted less than a year, as he contracted pneumonia and died. In the film, he is played by a woman.

Again, Zetterling presents men as isolated, like in *Night Games*, *Doctor Glas*, *Vincent the Dutchman*, or "The Strongest," whereas women, even one as grand as Queen Christina, are contextualized and placed in a group.

Although Queen Christina is perhaps more sympathetically portrayed than is Strindberg, Zetterling seems to revel in playing larger-than-life, legendary characters with an ironic and exaggerated touch, as if she mocks them while still taking them seriously. Her tone of voice and her posture convey a gleeful self-consciousness, a sheer joy in

play-acting, in turning up her nose just so, in straightening her back and looking down on people, and tuning her actor's voice to sound just a bit haughty.

As a documentary about a capital city, *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* is a willful and irreverent play on the city's and the Swedes' history, culture, and societal characteristics. As in *The Prosperity Race* and *The Girls*, she expresses a sharp criticism of the Nordic welfare state, although more humorously and almost fondly rendered. The choice of protagonists seems to contradict her assessment of Swedes, as both Strindberg and Queen Christina are eccentric and flamboyant characters in Swedish history, far from the meekly reserved Swedes that Zetterling deemed as welfared into isolation and coldness.

In *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*, Zetterling performed three major roles, as well as narrating the voice-over. For the next film, however, she would take a less visible role. In *Of Seals and Men*, Zetterling is not on camera, only on the soundtrack.

Blood and Snow: *Of Seals and Men*

In the 1970s, French actress Brigitte Bardot began an impassioned campaign against the hunting of baby seals in northern Canada. A widely circulated photograph of Bardot on the ice next to an extremely cute white baby seal became iconic in this campaign, and the sale of seal furs began to decline. At approximately the same time, Zetterling "fell in love with Greenland."[39] As described in the introduction, she had been contracted by British explorer Wally Herbert to film his circumnavigation of Greenland for a documentary series for the BBC and visited Thule to prepare filming and get to know the people in the expedition. When Herbert's polar expedition had to be canceled after only a third had been accomplished due to bad weather, Zetterling was left with an irresistible urge to return to Greenland. In Copenhagen, she managed to meet with Jens Fynbo, head of the Royal Greenland Trade Department. He was worried about the plunge in seal fur sales, and Zetterling was eager to find a chance to film in Greenland again. By proposing a small film with a low budget, she managed to convince him to back a pro–seal hunt documentary with funds from the Royal Greenland Trade Department. The crew was minuscule: a cinematographer, Rune Ericson, with whom Zetterling had collaborated before, and young Frenchman Philippe (Glen) Grapinet, who was Zetterling's boyfriend and who did second camera, still photography, and sound recording.

The resulting film, *Of Seals and Men* (1979), is a half-hour documentary about seal hunting in Greenland. When screened on Swedish television in 1981, newspapers reported that Zetterling's film showed the seal hunt as "a bloodbath in which seals are shot and dismembered as on an assembly line."[40] Although this description of the film is somewhat aggressive, rendering either the film as a shock propaganda against seal hunting or Zetterling herself as a blood-thirsty director of gore (or both), it is quite apt. For all its ostensible purpose to speak out on behalf of the seal hunters, the scenes showing the shooting, flensing, and dismembering of the seals are bloody in their carnality, uncanny in their unflinching documentation of detail.[41] As such, the scenes evoke an interesting dilemma, because although the deal made with the Royal Greenland Trade Department may seem like a "sell-out" by an artist, most likely Zetterling did not anticipate any moral or emotional conflicts in depicting the seal hunt favorably for the simple reason that she did not find such hunting morally wrong. In her romanticizing of cultures on the margins of Western mainstream, such as the Sami people of northern Sweden, the Roma people she filmed in Camargue, and Icelandic fishermen, hunting could be perceived as a vital necessity; by providing sustenance and demanding active involvement with the very conditions for existence, such hunting enhanced a sense of "life" and meaning. Again and again, Zetterling returned to her critique of a civilization in which humans are removed from the very essence of living by never having to struggle for survival. This is why she, in several fiction films, focused on aristocrats, the bourgeoisie, or the welfare state, because these three communities so aptly expressed the ennui, alienation, and loss of purpose among people for whom all comforts were bestowed without any effort. Accordingly, the seal hunters, in Zetterling's worldview, are ideal citizens of the natural landscape they inhabit. Reacting with disgust or outrage to images of flensed seals and dogs scratching at the bloody ice would thus be wrong. These are images to revel in, because they portray essential elements of a meaningful life.

As part of a pro–seal hunt documentary, the scenes from the actual hunt may work counterproductively. Judging by the reaction in the Swedish press, they probably did. In comparison with the image of Bardot cuddling with a baby seal in the snow, her long blonde hair framing them both, this is something radically different. Zetterling is not even in her own film, except through the voice-over, which is narrated by her in the English and Swedish versions (the Danish voice-over is made by a man). Instead, the male seal hunters take center stage in *Of*

Seals and Men, very much constructed as masculine men by the narration and the images. As a female director, Zetterling seems to actively engage in the polar explorer dream of intrepid masculinity, the resilient and fearless body of the man.[42]

Of Seals and Men is, in fact, a very complex document. As my colleague Anna Stenport and I have argued, on one hand, it aligns itself neatly within a tradition of using documentary films as colonial propaganda in its production context and funding. On the other hand, it seems to more or less subtly undermine its own messages: less subtly in the case of the seal hunt, more subtly—practically unnoticeable unless you read the production notes—in how the order of events is reversed: the party that ends the film seems to be a celebration of the successful seal hunt.[43] However, these festivities mark the beginning of Home Rule on May 1, 1979, when Greenland received partial independence from Denmark. "Zetterling's decision to reverse the chronological order of events has implications for the status of *Of Seals and Men* as a colonial document. As depicted, the film tells a story of primordial hunting practices as necessarily leading toward independence and presupposes Zetterling as the impartial observer and documenter of this progression."[44]

Regardless of how the film works as a colonial instrument, it would not seem that Zetterling was very interested in those aspects of the project. "I had always wanted to make a film about Eskimos, they had haunted my imagination as much as the Hopi Indians, the Lapps, the gipsies," she wrote in her memoirs.[45] In hindsight, the political incorrectness of such a statement is eye-catching, but it is compatible to the time in which it was written and to Zetterling's worldview. She continued: "Were the days of the Eskimos as hunters numbered? It would seem so. This proud group is no longer needed in their society as it was in the olden days and their shamanistic qualities, which makes them wise and humble, are now ridiculed. No wonder they shoot each other in despair on those frozen tundras, or become alcoholics or drug addicts."[46] Zetterling's fascination with shamanism and folklore went hand in hand with romanticizing the harsh and challenging life of the hunters. In *Of Seals and Men*, there is a brief interlude right after the bloody images of the seal hunt, narrating the myth of Tupilak. In Zetterling's version, she was an orphan girl thrown into the water by the villagers, and as she tried to climb back into the boat, they cut off her fingers. When the fingers fell into the sea, they became seals. The narration is accompanied by superimposed images of ghostly figures over the heaving sea, and at the mention of the fingers, a bloody patch in the snow is shown and the camera tilts up to include two of the guns, placed and

ready, in the framing. Zetterling thereby connects mythology with reality, seeming to understand them as two sides of the same coin.

Zetterling was mostly self-educated. She left school when she was thirteen, and seems to have had an enormous complex about being uneducated. Nevertheless, she read a lot, and her understanding of literature and history was largely instinctive. She was also convinced she was psychic.[47] She did not have a scholar's disdain for parapsychological phenomena but relied on her own understanding and intuition to determine the truth of such stories and experiences. Accordingly, her fascination for narratives about "little ones" that an old Sami hermit recounted to her,[48] for myths such as the one about Tupilak in *Of Seals and Men*, herb lore, and philosophical or didactic allegories (such as the ones she read into the camera in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*), was more than simply a delight in folk mythology. To her, the symbolic comprehension of the world manifested in what other people might discard as "fairy tales" explained and provided meaning to life. The myth recounted in *Of Seals and Men* could be seen as not just an answer to the question of where the animals of the sea come from but also a reason for the double nature of the sea: on one hand, there is food to be found there, and on the other hand, the sea is dangerous and vengeful because it contains the ghost of the drowned girl. In the midst of harsh reality, there is a poetry to make sense of it.

A Transnational Cine-Feminist?

A fifty-minute documentary, shown in two parts with a commercial break in the middle, showcased Zetterling's sense of humor and her feminist sensibilities in the fall of 1979. *Lady Policeman*, produced by Granada television, was broadcast on October 31, 1979, and followed a handful of female police officers of the Greater Manchester Police, in training and at work, intersected with brief Punch and Judy–inspired sketches. The women talk about their choice of career, about how they are regarded by others—colleagues and civilians—and their work. Somehow, Zetterling matter-of-factly captures a vulnerability and a toughness and how gender prejudice works. "You've got to be that much better, then they'll only say you're OK," says one of them. Another one explains that she does not feel that women police officers should have equal rights unless they do an equal job: "We're different." The male police officers dress up in drag at parties and make jokes about gender. "No one sleeps at the back while [Zetterling is] on," wrote Nancy Banks-Smith in *The Guardian* the day after the film was shown.[49]

Zetterling's productions during the 1970s were British, Swedish, Danish, and Canadian. She also made a short film, part of an episode of Michèle Rosier's TV series *Réalité fiction*, in France, called *La Dame aux oiseaux* (1977). In no way can any concept of national film and television cover this dispersed and motley collection of works, which encompasses five nations and two continents, and three languages (actually five, if you count all the voice-over narrations to *Of Seals and Men* that were made in Swedish, English, Danish, and Greenlandish). None of the four different conceptualizations of national cinema that Andrew Higson identifies in "The Concept of National Cinema" include all of Zetterling's audiovisual production. Her work spreads over several different nations; it does not, with a few exceptions, belong within a national canon; it is not particularly "Swedish" even when it is made in Sweden; and its audience is scattered across the globe.[50] Paradoxically, her perceived Swedishness provided her with openings for work, like with "The Strongest" and *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm*. Perhaps her status as Swedish in relation to the Danes as colonial power on Greenland facilitated her chance to make *Of Seals and Men*.

In addition, even including her 1980s output, only six of her productions are feature films that were released in theaters. One might call Zetterling's transnationalism "opportunistic" as she grabbed at any chance to direct a film, a documentary, or a short film for television.[51] Of course, one might also call it a sly strategy to be able to continue her artistic output. It aligns her with several other women filmmakers during this time, who worked in television and in feature film production. As Ingrid Ryberg has argued, Zetterling's work in the 1970s fits into a context of feminist filmmaking and the emergent women's movement in film.[52] Feminism might be regarded as the unifying category under which to place Zetterling rather than as belonging within a national moving image culture, and to some extent it suits her work neatly from the mid-1970s and on. However, placing Zetterling under the label "feminism" risks excluding much of what she made because the focus then is placed on films that either have a more or less explicit feminist or antipatriarchal message (like *The War Game* in Lucy Fischer's reading), the ones that highlight the female perspective, or the ones in which she places herself at the center stage. Zetterling may well be labeled feminist—and she is indeed transnational—but only with a very wide and open definition of feminism, or simply through her sheer determination to keep on filming.

6

RETURNING TO FICTION IN FILM AND TELEVISION

1981–1989

As the 1970s drew to an end, Zetterling returned to fiction, and she eventually returned to Sweden, too. In her later obituaries in the Swedish press, *Amorosa* (1986) was described as Zetterling's "comeback" after her time abroad,[1] but this description only works if you, as many Swedish film scholars and journalists did, regard Zetterling's work in television and documentaries as something else, something not as worthwhile or valuable as directing feature films within the national art cinema institution. One problem with regarding the eighteen years between *The Girls* and *Amorosa* as a kind of artistic and national exile is that Zetterling's career and filmic output becomes more minor than it actually was. There was no dearth of productivity in this time period. Another problem is that Zetterling developed a more nuanced and economic film style in those years by working in forms other than the feature-length fiction film. By being compelled to remain within the limits of restricted budgets to retain artistic control or conform to a television format, she also learned a kind of discipline that was not present in the films she made in the 1960s. Accordingly, from a different perspective, *Amorosa* could be regarded as a kind of relapse rather than a comeback, a relapse into an auteur-centered and maybe self-indulgent art cinema.

Furthermore, the word *exile* only has meaning in relation to the home that is left behind. No one would describe Susan Sontag as being in "exile" for not making any films in Sweden after 1971 because although

she did direct two films in Sweden, she was not a Swede. Both *Duett för kannibaler* (1969) and *Brother Carl* (1971) received negative reviews. In fact, *Brother Carl* was practically demolished by the Swedish critics.[2] Sontag made two more films in her life, *Promised Lands* (1974), a French-Polish production, and *Unguided Tour* (1983, also called *Letter from Venice*), an Italian film. Sontag's years on the Swedish film stage were more of a visit, and hence her exit was not regarded as an exile. In addition, her professional identity was tied not to filmmaking but to her status as an intellectual. Zetterling's professional identity, on the other hand, was wholly entangled within the creative arts, particularly film and theater but also literature to some extent. Most likely this was true to her perception of herself and from the perspective of her environment. More important, she was Swedish and indeed, somewhat ironically, regarded with some possessiveness in the Swedish cultural discourse. She had emigrated in 1947 and her relationship to the "imagined community" of Sweden was ambiguous and complex.

In some ways, the return to fiction in the 1980s was simply a money-making strategy: directing episodes of *The Hitchhiker* and *Crossbow* may not have left much room for artistic freedom, although these episodes show signs of Zetterling's authorial trademarks, such as hallucinatory visions, dream sequences, and flashbacks. In the episode "And If We Dream" of *The Hitchhiker*, for instance, the low threshold between different narrative levels and characters' consciousness that was manifest in Zetterling's films of the 1960s is explored again as the high school teacher protagonist finds himself caught up in the dreams of his student. When he wants to end their brief love affair, she brings him into her dreams, which are somehow real: a ring he gives to her in the dream disappears from his finger and turns up on a necklace she is wearing; his wife wakes up and does not find him in their bed because he is somewhere inside her dream. Finally, when the student locks him up in a dreamed room, he does not return to a wakeful reality.

Zetterling's return to fiction included a return to feature-length filmmaking with the two major productions *Scrubbers* (1982) and *Amorosa*. She continued making short films as well as one commissioned industrial film. The 1980s, until and including *Amorosa*, were just as productive as her 1970s.

A Very Different Follow-Up: *Scrubbers*

Scrubbers (1982) was the first full-length feature film Zetterling directed since *The Girls*, and her development through the years of working in

television and with documentaries can be discerned in contrast with the very polished 1968 film and other 1960s films she made. Superficially, there is a vast difference between the ragged, foul-mouthed young women of *Scrubbers* and her previous work, which featured Bibi Andersson elegantly draped in leopard fur, the turn-of-the century well-tailored Per Oscarsson as Dr. Glas, Ingrid Thulin in stunning creations, or the veneer of World War I nobility. Beneath the surface, Zetterling explores the same questions as before: How does the human spirit prevail? And how is it stifled? In her autobiography, she wrote:

> The judicial way of dealing with female delinquency was in a pitiful state, and magistrates were full of moral judgements against these sad and disturbed girls whose main problems were dealing with parents, school, work and their own sexuality. Tragically, these poor girls who needed love and understanding were locked up in institutions which were originally designed to have as many locks, bolts and bars as a prison. Small wonder that so many of them became true delinquents after their term there. . . . I felt it to be a worthwhile cause to fight for and an excellent subject for a film.[3]

The production context accounts for some of the troubles *Scrubbers* encountered in terms of its reception. British company HandMade Films, originally formed by former Beatle George Harrison and Denis O'Brien to back the Monty Python film *Life of Brian* (1979), produced *Scrubbers* as a female companion piece to Alan Clarke's cult film about the British borstal system, *Scum* (1979), in collaboration with *Scum*'s executive producer, Don Boyd. Like *Scum*, *Scrubbers* is based on a screenplay by Roy Minton. "From its earliest days, *Scrubbers* was stigmatised as the female *Scum*, a largely unfair comparison," film journalist Robert Sellers wrote in his account of HandMade Films from 2013, *Very Naughty Boys*.[4] It was actually described as a "'Scum' in skirts" in *The Observer* upon its release.[5]

According to Sellers, producer Boyd "faced massive pressure to make a *Scum* follow-up."[6] Instead of making a *Scum 2*, *Scrubbers* focuses on a girl's borstal. In an article written during the film's production, Zetterling is quoted as saying, "This film should not be a sequel, though people will inevitably call it that anyway." She explains that Minton's original script has been rewritten and that scenes "too reminiscent of *Scum*" have been taken out.[7] Zetterling's participation did seem to promise something beyond the sequel: "What made the film more than it might have been was the presence of Mai Zetterling as the director,"

wrote Paul Taylor in *Time-Out*, shortly before the film's release at the London Film Festival.[8] The two films are closely related by their producer and screenwriter and by their critique of how the British judicial system dealt with juvenile delinquency. Comparisons between the two films are unavoidable, even though they are actually very different films.

Scum was provocative and scandalous in many ways, not least because it was a remake of a 1977 BBC television play, also by Clarke and also with Ray Winstone in the lead role, that was banned. The remake from 1979 was released in cinemas; only later, after the borstal system had been reformed by the Criminal Justice Act of 1982, was it shown on television. Although violent and graphic, showing among other things an extended male-on-male rape leading to the young victim slashing his wrists, *Scum* has a stark and disciplined approach to its story, centering on the main protagonist Carlin's climb to power (Winstone) and the fates of a handful of other characters. However, it overemphasizes its message by both showing and telling—the critique of the borstal system is conveyed very clearly through the narrative, but to ensure that no spectator misunderstands, it is eloquently expressed through the spoken lines of one of the inmates, the intellectual Archer (Mick Ford).

Scrubbers is more oblique and also more hyperbolic. Zetterling's film centers on two young women, Annetta (Chrissie Cotterill) and Carol (Amanda York), who escape from the open borstal where they have been incarcerated. They hitchhike with a truck driver to Carol's apartment, where Annetta has sex with the driver and tries to track down her baby daughter, whom she hasn't seen in six weeks. After being harassed by the truck driver, Carol steals his keys and drives off clumsily in his truck, crashing it against a building. She is taken to a closed borstal, at her own request because her lesbian lover is an inmate there. Annetta manages to find her daughter at an orphanage, but she is taken away by the police and ends up in the same institution as Carol. Convinced that Carol snitched on her, she is consumed by hatred for Carol; this vendetta is the principal plot driver of the film, whose main purpose seems mainly to show an intersection of life in the borstals through sketchy portraits of some inmates: Mac, who sings bawdy songs and is often in isolation due to her dirty mouth; Doreen, Carol's ex-lover who has left her for another woman and who now taunts her; the butch and fearsome Eddie, who becomes Carol's new love and protector in the borstal; Glennis, who smokes incessantly and sniffs glue when she gets the chance; the skinny girl with short hair who loves pigeons; the obsessive-compulsive cleaner; Carol's well-behaving cellmate who is close to her release date; and so on.

Mai Zetterling directing Chrissie Cotterill and Honey Bane in *Scrubbers* (1982).

Perhaps the main difference between the films is that somehow, in the midst of the depressing atmosphere and the aggressions between the inmates, Zetterling celebrates her characters—their rebellions, their singing, their bawdy humor, their stealthy communications. Although both films critique the borstal system and represent it as dehumanizing, oppressive, and violent, there is a surprising sense of buoyance in *Scrubbers*. If Carlin and the others in *Scum* do what they do just to survive, the women in *Scrubbers* have a resilience and a vitality. They shout, they use dirty language, they sing, they communicate through their windows at night and pass things with help of long strings, they get their hands on cigarettes and even drugs if they can, when they can. They never surrender completely to their circumstances. "My own headline for the movie was one word . . . compassion," Zetterling wrote in her autobiography, and in *Very Naughty Boys*, Don Boyd is quoted as saying, "Mai's big thing was that people had this independent spirit that could shine despite the hellishness of a repressed system. . . . That's what she was on about, dignity, and I think she succeeded."[9]

Compared with her feature films of the 1960s, Zetterling had not ventured so deeply into social realism. She researched her subject by visiting borstals and talking to former inmates. "I had found that the girls out there, in the real prisons, had a tough, earthy humour that pleased me and that I could use in the film. Without their black, ironic way of looking at the world, they would never have been able to stand it inside."[10] The film was shot on location in a Victorian mental hospital in Virginia Water, and she used relatively inexperienced actors and amateurs. The "tough, earthy humour" accounts for much of the vitality of *Scrubbers*, not just in Mac's dirty songs but also in the girls' verbal sparring, and in the theater some of the inmates perform in front of the others and the borstal officers, which concludes with one of Annetta's revenge acts against Carol—she has conspired with two other girls to throw excrement from a chamber pot at Carol as part of the act.

There is an expressionist touch to the film. The actors and what Zetterling in her autobiography described as "long and aching" corridors and walls with "lived-in pain," were portrayed in a kind of bleached-out cinematography that rendered the color film almost black-and-white in some scenes.[11] The color that does stand out is red—red lipstick and blood. When Annetta is put in isolation and given a sedative, she hallucinates her baby crying. An oversized baby is superimposed on the wall, and the cell is shown from a low, exaggerated perspective that cants the angles.

The theme of motherhood—one of Zetterling's pet themes, also included in several of her films about men—is heavily emphasized in *Scrubbers*, as Annetta slowly goes mad from being deprived of her child. In an early scene at the orphanage, she is framed with an image of the Virgin Mary on the wall behind her, the heads as counterpoints in the frame, with hoods over their heads. This juxtaposition draws parallels and opposites: the Madonna and the whore, united in motherhood.

Although it is most clearly and concretely connected to Annetta, motherhood seems to be an underlying and implicit theme in several other scenes. Carol's cellmate is looking forward to leaving and being with her son and husband again. The young women work by assembling various items like Thermoses, and one day, they assemble plastic dolls. They stand gathered around a table overfilled with doll body parts and attach legs, heads, and arms to the torsos. By placing the camera at the head of the table, with the girls lined up on either side and the supervisor at the end, the doll parts and the staring eyes of their plastic heads become a grotesque, abject pile. Later, when Annetta hallucinates, she

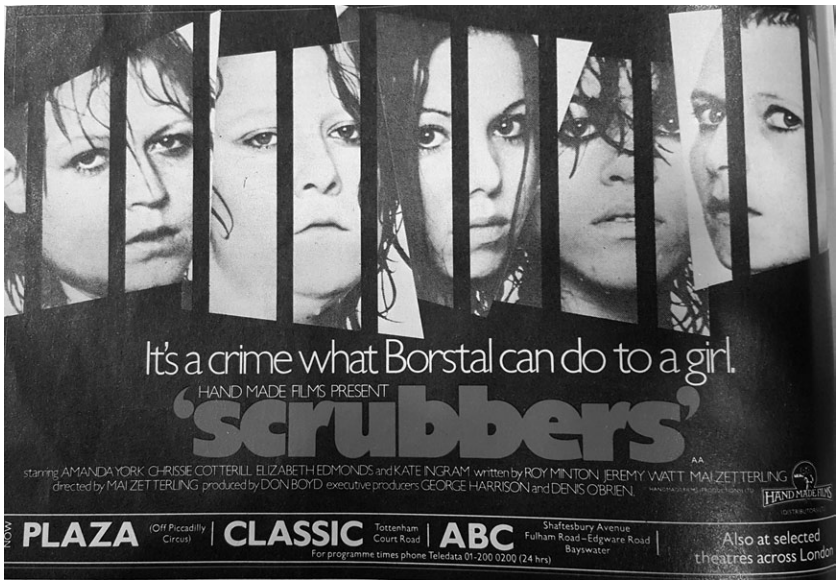
dreams of giving one of the assembled dolls to her baby, but the doll falls to the floor and starts burning.

Compassion and dignity may seem like qualities far from the brutal and bawdy world of *Scrubbers*, as the words are associated with something tender and noble. Nonetheless, compassion and dignity can be found in the way Zetterling approached her work and how she portrayed the young protagonists. Here, human spirit prevails in the face of almost devastating despondency.

The Reception of *Scrubbers*

According to Robert Sellers, Denis O'Brien did not like the film and did not like the involvement of Don Boyd in the production. Consequently, the film was not backed properly for marketing and distribution. The fact that the film was "from the producers of *Scum*" was not highlighted in the marketing campaign, and the movie quite quickly disappeared from the cinema circuit.[12] The ad for *Scrubbers* in *Time-Out*, for instance, only stated, "It's a crime what Borstal can do to a girl," with no mention of *Scum* at all.[13] However, *Scrubbers*'s intersectional characteristics made it a lasting feature on the festival circuit, as it was screened at women's filmmakers' festivals (e.g., Stockholm, 1983, and San Francisco, 1984), at gay and lesbian film festivals (e.g., Philadelphia and Chicago, 1985), and women's prison film festivals (e.g., London 1993).[14]

Reviewers were not convinced, although they were not entirely negative. Reporting from the London Film Festival, journalists inevitably juxtaposed the film to *Scum* and to Peter Greenaway's film *The Draughtman's Contract* (1982), which received the most space in the articles. *Scrubbers* was called "a morality play with Scandinavian knobs on" in *The Guardian* and a "decent, not dishonourable little picture" by Philip French in *The Observer*.[15] French continued by observing all that the film was not: not a "powerful melodrama," nor did it have "the cheap excitement of the sensational women's-prison movies," nor would it provide "authentic evidence of a dour sobering documentary" or "a fully dramatised story of institutional life." Its political import limited itself to breaking down open doors: "Scrubber's confirms what all good liberals now know about the present penal system—it doesn't work."[16] In the United States, reviews were mixed. According to New York's *Daily News*, the film did not add anything new to what was already known about the prison system, although the film was "less sensational than what is usually expected from the category" of women-in-prison films.[17] On the



Ad for *Scrubbers*, *Time-Out,* no. 638 (November 12, 1982). Photograph by Mariah Larsson.

West Coast, sentiments were similar. There is "nothing new in the women's prison genre." *Scrubbers* "comes on strong, yet it's depressing in its overfamiliarity."[18] In contrast, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* saw the film as a "fresh look at the prison genre" and said that Zetterling presents her "case as an unsparing appraisal of the way things are. There is no hysteria or polemic, and that is why it is so devastating."[19] In some of the major Swedish papers, reviewers sided with Zetterling and praised the film, although with some reservations: "assured visual language and sophisticated use of light and colors"; "both tough and tender . . . a well-played social drama with strong verisimilitude"; and "Zetterling's good hand with what might be called architectural excuses: letting the things in a natural way mean more than they say."[20]

The difference in reception internationally and in Sweden has several reasons. First, the comparisons with the subgenre of women-in-prison films were most likely moot for Swedish reviewers because such films were rarely given a theatrical release in Sweden. Second, the assumption by US and UK reviewers that the film was a social realist effort—maybe with *Scum* in the back of their heads, maybe because of the film's subject matter, maybe because to some extent the film adheres to social realism

in its style—would be overridden, I believe, for Swedish reviewers by their contextual knowledge of Zetterling's history. For these spectators, the film's hallucinatory and surrealist qualities would come across as a continuation of Zetterling's previous work rather than failed shock effects. Third, the reception of *Scrubbers* in Sweden demonstrates how it seems to have been easier for Swedish reviewers to praise a Zetterling film when it was not a product of the national cinema. Whether this is an expression of some kind of national pride over accomplishments made abroad is hard to say, but it can be compared with how *Night Games* was defended during the scandal at the Venice Film Festival even when it was negatively reviewed at its domestic release. In addition, there is a weird paradox involved since *Scrubbers*, together perhaps with *Doctor Glas*, is probably the least well-known of Zetterling's feature films in Sweden because it is not part of the national film history. This is another example of how her production falls between categories—reviewers can praise or defend a film by what is perceived of as a national director, when there is a sense of national ownership, when that film is made or attacked abroad but that film is left out when the national canon is assessed.

Women Screenwriters, Women Directors: *Love*

The Canadian anthology film *Love* was produced by Renee Perlmutter and showcased women screen writers and women directors. Consisting of six segments, the overarching theme of love was interpreted in different ways and represented through various perspectives: the illicit love affair, love as superseding the traumas and distance of war, aging love, sexual love, and the break-up. The segments were written by Nancy Dowd, Edna O'Brien, Joni Mitchell, Gael Greene, Liv Ullmann, and Mai Zetterling and were directed by Annette Cohen, Nancy Dowd, Liv Ullmann, and Mai Zetterling. Zetterling actually directed three of the segments: "Julia," by Edna O'Brien, "The Black Cat in the Black Mouse Socks" by Joni Mitchell, and "Love from the Marketplace," which she had written herself.

In the Mai Zetterling Collection at the Swedish Film Institute, one version of the script is preserved. There are also segments written by Germaine Greer, Penelope Gilliatt, and Antonia Fraser that ultimately did not end up in the finished film.[21] Zetterling's "Love from the Marketplace" segment combines in a bizarre mixture her own knowledgeable delight in food with a perverse mother–son relationship. The segment

starts with Tony, the son, shopping for food and delicacies while talking with his mother on the phone. We don't see the mother, we only hear her sultry voice, but it is not clear that it is his mother speaking. Rather, the logical conclusion to draw at this point is that Tony is shopping for a sexy vacation with his lover. When he gets home, it is revealed that the sexy voice belongs to "Mum," and they sit down for a voluptuous dinner of many courses while they arouse themselves with "dirty" talk about food. In the script, the segment ends with Tony dreaming that his mother feeds him from her gigantic breast, but in the actual film he is simply sleeping against her bosom.

Before Quality Television: *The Hitchhiker* Episodes

Since the 2000s, people have talked about "quality television" and about television series being "the new novel." The release of whole seasons on streaming services introduced the word *binge-watching* into our vocabulary, even further emphasizing the novelistic character of TV series: instead of "just one more chapter," series available on streaming services evoke the urge for "just one more episode." In the 1980s, television was still considered a "low" form of culture—mindless, time-consuming, cheap, and commercial in the worst sense.[22] The work of several television scholars, most notably perhaps John Fiske's *Television Culture* from 1987, helped add nuance and change this perception. The surge of interest in original TV programming and the serialized narrative format of a series can largely be regarded as a consequence of changes in television itself in the late 1990s and early 2000s. At the time of *The Hitchhiker* series, HBO had not yet begun producing original programming, which has become more or less synonymous with the new idea of quality television, epitomized through their slogan "It's not TV, it's HBO," and there was still more than a decade to go before the flagship series *The Sopranos* (1999–2007) and *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) began airing.[23] Mystery anthology *The Hitchhiker* (1983–91) was shown on HBO until 1989, but it was produced by a Canadian/American/French company. It took advantage of cable television's freedom from federal regulations over what kind of material could be aired on the regular networks. *The Hitchhiker* featured adult themes of sexuality and violence, and virtually all episodes contained some form of nudity (usually bared breasts).

Zetterling probably agreed to direct episodes of *The Hitchhiker* because it was paid work. The series actually seemed like a perfect forum for her directing style. Her predilection for mental subjectivity and

internal focalization for hallucinations, dreams, and easy access between different narrative levels could play in an open field, fully motivated by this series' particular mode of address. *The Hitchhiker* was a successful enterprise, running for six seasons between 1983 and 1991. Each episode told a dark morality tale, sometimes with a touch of the supernatural.

Several famous directors and actors worked on various episodes at different stages of their careers. Paul Verhoeven directed one episode in 1986, and Karen Black, who starred in one of the Zetterling episodes, had been nominated for an Academy Award for her role in *Five Easy Pieces* (dir. Bob Rafelson, 1970). Framing the series with a ubiquitous hitchhiker (played by Page Fletcher in all episodes except the first three, which featured Nicholas Campbell) as narrator and moral commentator, it mixed some adult material—sexual content, nudity—with horror. Zetterling directed three episodes in 1985: "And If We Dream," "Hired Help," and "Murderous Feelings."

Both "And If We Dream" and "Hired Help" contain the supernatural as a particular space. In "And If We Dream," the high school teacher is abducted by his student into dreamscapes, while in "Hired Help" the supernatural space is more a dimension of hell to which the female protagonist (Black), the evil boss of a textile sweatshop, is transported by her entanglement with a handsome young man whose hand tattoo marks him as the devil. "Hired Help" is an aggressive attack on the exploitation of illegal immigrant workers, beginning its narrative in a sweatshop where Mexican immigrants are bowed over their sewing machines. One of them sews into her finger, and her uncle curses the boss. Later, when the boss drives off to pick up a worker for some handyman help, the only one to respond to her call is a dark stranger, leaning against a mural painting of a birdlike figure. He scares her dog and works in her greenhouse, and she watches him intently with mounting desire. Finally, she lures him into her bedroom, but as they have sex, his wings unfold and his eyes shine with a hellish light. Afterward, he is gone, but her home has acquired an eerie ambience (provided by canted angles, distorted perspectives, and subtle slow motion), snakes slither around potted plants, and the eyes of the dog and of her maid light up with the intense glow from hell. When her husband comes home, his eyes also light up, and she shoots him.

The mise-en-scène of "Hired Help" is worth noting. Zetterling, who preferred shooting on location for her films, worked on studio sets for *The Hitchhiker*, and in this episode the sets are quite distinct: the low ceiling and fluorescent lamps of the sweatshop, the green plants against

the screens of the greenroom, and the saturated wall paint of the boss's home—magenta red, coal black, and dark blue—contrasting with backlit whites in front of which bodies are black silhouettes. The sex scene begins with the man stripping slowly and teasingly, but when it continues as what might arguably be construed as rape, details are obscured by showing most of the sex as a shadow play. In critic and film and television blogger John Kenneth Muir's words:

> The centerpiece sex scene—with Karen [Black] doing the heavy lifting—is spiky, sadistic and memorable. The scene is shot in silhouette, and during intercourse, the Devil Man unexpectedly sheds his human shape and sprouts demonic wings (not to mention glowing emerald eyes). Without warning, this devil—*in media res*, as it were—starts brutally man-handling Black, slapping her around with a belt (!) and contorting her compliant naked body in a vicious, pounding rhythm. What's kinky about this sequence is, well, *everything*. It's arousing in a very perverse, freaky sense. Shakespeare it ain't, but it sure keeps your attention.[24]

"Murderous Feelings," on the other hand, has the male lead, a therapist, as the bad guy. A young woman (Dutch actress Renée Soutendijk) under his treatment has strange and upsetting nightmares because, according to the therapist, of her problematic relationship to her deceased father. She is utterly dependent on her therapist and has a sexual relationship with him. Unbeknownst to her, he exploits her vulnerability and assaults her sexually when she is under hypnosis. When forced to confront her nightmare in real life by boarding the night train that figures in her dream, she finds out that the stalker/rapist is actually her therapist and manages to kill him. This episode is partly shot on location and not only on studio sets, but what mainly characterizes the mise-en-scène of "Murderous Feelings" is the use of smoke—as fog, as dream signifier, or as actual smoke from the train or from burning leaves.

Amorosa

> February 12th, 1984
>
> I am making notes for the feature film which is to be my next big project. It has been accepted by the Swedish Filminstitute [*sic*] and Sandrews. It is based on the life of Agnes von Krusenstjerna, whose family saga I filmed as *Loving Couples*. Why have I come back to this author? She wrote about men and women in conflict with one another.

> She wrote about love, to be sure, and the pain of love. She also wrote about family ties and tragedies: marriage, children, madness. She wrote lyrically, sometimes sentimentally, religious documents, fairy stories for grown-ups that often turned into horror stories. She wrote honestly about the dilemmas that women face. And because she lived her own truth so severely, she broke within. I am in total sympathy with this woman called Agnes. It is probably the most exciting project that I have ever had.[25]

Swedish author Agnes von Krusenstjerna (1894–1940) came from the nobility and opposed her family in marrying David Sprengel, a writer, translator, and critic some fourteen years her senior. After her first trilogy, the Tony novels (1922–26), her most famous books are suites, one in seven volumes narrating the fictitious lives of the von Pahlens—the one Zetterling adapted for *Loving Couples*—and the other one in four volumes about her own family, called *Poor Nobility* (*Fattigadel/Viveca Lagercronas historia*, 1935–38). The novels were highly controversial at the time for their representations of sexuality.

Von Krusenstjerna suffered from mental illness, which ran in her family, although later psychologists and medical doctors have been unsure as to what kind of health problems actually afflicted her. Diagnosed in her time as suffering from the female illness du jour, hysteria, von Krusenstjerna may or may not have performed her diagnosis in various ways. According to Swedish medical historian Karin Johannisson, von Krusenstjerna may have seen her diagnosis and intervals at mental institutions as a space for her to employ agency.[26] With *Amorosa*, Zetterling returned to von Krusenstjerna's works, this time with a biopic that was partly based on *Poor Nobility* and partly based on Olof Lagercrantz's biographical dissertation about von Krusenstjerna.[27] The film, in fact, was close enough to *Poor Nobility* that von Krusenstjerna's estate sued for compensation because Zetterling and Sandrews did not have the rights to the material.[28]

Although more than twenty years had passed, there are many similarities in *Loving Couples* and *Amorosa*. Both films were high-budget prestige productions, and if the first was heralded as the debut of a woman filmmaker, the second was promoted as Zetterling's magnificent return to the Swedish screen. The congeniality of Zetterling as von Krusenstjerna's interpreter in moving images was underscored in both cases. More indirect, however, was the fact that again, Zetterling cast high-profile Bergman actors in the lead roles: Stina Ekblad and Erland

Josephson. As actors of the Royal Dramatic Theater, both had performed for Bergman on stage, and Josephson had a long career of film roles for Bergman, most notably in *Scenes from a Marriage* (*Scener ur ett äktenskap*, 1973). Ekblad and Josephson played pivotal roles in *Fanny and Alexander* (1982). In *Amorosa*, they teamed up as husband and wife.

The film opens on a sunset view of the sea outside of Venice, Italy. A gondola is approaching the city, where a masquerade is taking place, transporting Agnes and David. Agnes's heightened mental state, alternating between manic hysteria and painful anxiety, is exaggerated through the masks that people are wearing, providing an eerie ambience to the scene. She is bundled up in a white sheet that leaves her shoulders bare, and, as they enter the city, a white mask is placed over her head. In a hospital, David speaks Italian to the doctors, and they confine the couple to separate rooms where they are locked up. The echoing corridors of the hospital and the couple's talk about the "baby"—Agnes's manuscript for *Poor Nobility*—bring to mind the beginning of *Loving Couples*, which also starts with a hospital and talk of a baby. In the morning, the doctors take the manuscript from David, who has tried to keep it safe, and bring it to Agnes, who in her madness begins to methodically tear it up. When David hears this through the walls, he shouts to her not to harm the child, upon which Agnes realizes what she is doing, panics, and vomits on the scattered pieces of the manuscript. The prologue ends with David, whistling to himself, painstakingly piecing together the bits of paper and mending the manuscript with glue. This touching image of a husband devoted to his wife's work is actually based on an event that happened in the 1920s, when von Krusenstjerna was in a mental hospital in Lund and tore up the pages of one of her Tony novels. Her doctor and his wife carefully reassembled the manuscript.[29]

The rest of the film is an extended flashback, beginning with an engagement party on a riverboat, where young Agnes and her family are introduced. Agnes is courted by Gerhard, a young man of good standing, who is best friends with her brother, Adolf. The party is opulent, with plenty of food and live music, but there are dark undercurrents: an uncle seems to have lost his mind and a young female cousin keeps turning in circles in a melancholy madness. The uncle is played by Börje Ahlstedt, famous for his role as the male lead in Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious* films (1967 and 1968), but he also appeared as another somewhat addled uncle in *Fanny and Alexander* only a few years earlier. In its feminine version, mental illness has a tragic streak: the spinning cousin may

Gondola at sunset. Stina Ekblad and Erland Josephson in *Amorosa* (1986). Photograph by Glen Grapinet. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

well refer to Viveka Hamilton, von Krusenstjerna's cousin who killed herself; at the party, it is whispered that love caused her madness.[30] That is a recurring line in the film: Agnes claims that love makes the women of her family sick. The film seems to pin the root cause of Agnes's mental problems on the claustrophobically restrictive conventions of her family: the first case, which is a prolonged sequence in the film, is shown after Agnes breaks her engagement with Gerhard. Later, her mental illness resurfaces each time she is conflict with her family, and her final breakdown, which begins and ends the film, is related to the confrontational disclosures of her manuscript for *Poor Nobility*.

Although Agnes's breakdowns are portrayed as following conflicts with her family and convention, there is a connection made in the film between sexuality, reproduction, and mental illness. Together with Krusenstjerna, Zetterling shared an ambivalent fascination with the carnality of female reproductive biology, which her film adaptation underscores. The live birth that concluded *Loving Couples* has a counterpart in *Amorosa* in an interlude that takes place between the end of her engagement with Gerhard and her marriage to David. Agnes's reaction to the break-up is depicted as an erotic fever: the lecherous family physician,

Specimen jars. Stina Ekblad in *Amorosa* (1986). Photograph by Glen Grapinet. Courtesy of Svensk filmindustri / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

who has earlier made discreet passes at young Agnes, becomes the object of the bed-ridden Agnes's attempts at seduction, and he is visibly enticed and disturbed by her frank physical invitation, suggesting that they meet later, when she is well. Now, he says, she needs to go to the hospital. In the following segment, Agnes walks around in a park, and on the soundtrack, we hear the voices of her relatives. They are scandalized and gossip in hushed voices about female relatives who are mad, or pregnant, or hysterical, and whisper that Agnes's menarche came late and that she becomes agitated when she writes, so she can be no true author. In the beautiful greenery of her walk, scenes from an amusement park play out: a man is throwing balls at china plates hanging in a stall; a woman conjures up a white pigeon from a shawl; an escape artist hangs upside down with a straightjacket on and contorts his body to wriggle out of his bonds. Agnes walks into some kind of room or a cave, where specimen jars with body parts sit on a shelf.

Added to the tingling music on the soundtrack is a low sound of human panting. As Agnes turns around, a man in a suit stands beside a life-sized doll of a pregnant woman. He looks at Agnes, and then opens

the abdomen of the doll and picks out the baby, complete with umbilical cord still attached. Agnes faints.

On the one hand, this sequence clearly aligns itself to the sciences of medicine and psychiatry at the time—the jars of specimens; the dark, basement-like room (the realm of the repressed unconscious) in which Agnes finds them—and to the moral sense of the early twentieth century, capturing a kind of zeitgeist. On the other hand, it also aligns with Zetterling's own oeuvre, almost as a comment on Lagercrantz's critique of the conclusion of *Loving Couples*, that von Krusenstjerna would never have been so carnal and concrete in her depiction of childbirth. Zetterling lets the author-character faint at the view of the realistic dummy of a baby, taken out of the mannequin's womb.

"And because she lived her own truth so severely, she broke within," Zetterling wrote about Agnes von Krusenstjerna in her autobiography as she commenced preproduction on *Amorosa*.[31] As with Vincent van Gogh, creative madness or mad creativity is alluring and bewildering to the recipients of the artists' work. In von Krusenstjerna's case, it is perhaps doubly so, because she was a woman and her medical history was intertwined with a social and gendered medical practice of the mentally unstable female patient and the authoritarian, male psychiatrist's diagnostic and scholarly gaze, perhaps most prevalent in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. From Sigmund Freud's case studies to postwar psychiatric medicine, the neurotic or psychotic woman is depicted, studied, probed, analyzed, and represented in various case descriptions by doctors.[32] On the one hand, female madness during this time period and after can be understood as an exaggeration of the normative, desired feminine traits—nervousness, fragility, sensitivity. On the other hand, it can also be understood as a failed rebellion against the constricting norms regulating women's behavior.[33] Being mentally ill could be one way of expressing those things that were repressed in women: aggression, sexual desire, outspokenness, loud voices, physical exertion.

As mentioned previously, *Amorosa* seems to understand Krusenstjerna's mental illness as a rebellion against the restrictions placed on her by family and convention, thereby reading her hysteria in a tradition of feminist analysis begun with Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* and continued with, for example, Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*, right around the time when *Amorosa* was in the works.[34] This alignment with a feminist discourse on mental illness distinguishes Zetterling's representation of von Krusenstjerna from that of Van Gogh. As discussed in a previous chapter, in *Vincent the Dutchman*, madness is more

Gondola at sunrise. Stina Ekblad and Erland Josephson in *Amorosa* (1986). Photograph by Glen Grapinet. Courtesy of SF / Sandrews / Swedish Film Institute.

of a natural consequence of becoming one with one's art, an obsession that is misconceived by society as madness. In these cases, however, there is a strong, somewhat sentimental romantic streak in the construction of the creative genius, "because she lived her own truth so severely" (something that could apply to Van Gogh as well). This is a genuinely continuous streak in all of Zetterling's work: people who conform to society's norms and live conventionally, without honesty, will be tragic (with Dr. Glas as the foremost example: "life passed me by"), whereas those who attempt to be true to themselves might end up unsuccessful or deemed tragic, but at least they lived in full. Von Krusenstjerna and Van Gogh are not portrayed as tragic figures, only as people who took their own creative urges and their art seriously. In the conclusion of the film, Agnes is abducted by her relatives in eerie white masks, but David manages to reach her, and in the final shot, they travel in a gondola on the silvery waters of Venice at sunrise. This shot mirrors the initial one, but here, Agnes sits upright and unrestrained and looks around her. In the beginning of the film, the sun is setting—although the light is ambiguous, night has fallen when they enter the

hospital—whereas in this closing shot, it should logically be morning because Agnes was lured out of her bed at night. Thus, the ending offers an alternative version of what happened in the beginning—one of hope and optimism rather than darkness, pessimism, and a descent into madness.

A Swedish Comeback

In Sweden, *Amorosa* was much publicized even before production began. The deal was struck with the production company Sandrews, backed by the Swedish Film Institute with Bengt Forslund as "artistic advisor," when Zetterling was in Stockholm for the Women's Film Festival in 1983. In an interview in the weekly journal *Vi* (*We*), Zetterling talks about her next production about von Krusenstjerna, described by the journalist in a comparison with Zetterling as a "desperate bird of passage—who during her constant attempts at breaking free beat her wings bloody on society's cage and the bars of her family."[35] Other articles from the festival also mention the von Krusenstjerna film.[36] In the fall of 1984, Zetterling was in Sweden to promote her forthcoming autobiography and scout locations for *Amorosa*.[37] The film journalist of southern Sweden's largest newspaper, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*'s Jan Aghed, went to Venice and wrote an article about the shooting of the introductory scenes, almost gleefully quoting Erland Josephson's lines as David: "Sodomites, dirty old men, perverted pigs. Satan fucked your mothers, you bloody shrinks."[38] There was also coverage in the main Swedish film journal, *Chaplin*.[39]

The focus on Zetterling and Krusenstjerna not only reflects a significant event in Swedish film. Budgeted at 9 million SEK with funding from the Swedish Film Institute, Sandrews, and Swedish television, *Amorosa* was a big production with respected actors in many roles, tapping into a high literary canon and reconnecting with film history (through the association with Zetterling's 1960s film *Loving Couples*). Although the 1960s film had occasioned discussions and mentions about womanly films, *Amorosa* received much more attention in relation to feminist issues. The articles from the Women's Film Festival in 1983 are written from a decidedly feminist perspective, and in 1985, Zetterling was sympathetically interviewed in the feminist journal *Kvinnobulletinen*. The article emphasizes von Krusenstjerna as a writer who brought up matters concerning women and points to Zetterling's struggles to finance her films. "Women filmmakers consistently get less money than

their male colleagues," Zetterling says.[40] Nevertheless, when the film premiered in Sweden, on March 14, 1986, feminist solidarity gave way to a more nitpicking attitude. In the same feminist journal, literary scholar Birgitta Svanberg complained that *Amorosa* "confirms a prejudiced image" of the author because of its focus on her mental illness. "The radical, socially critical, more and more consciously feminist author gets completely lost in Zetterling's interpretation, which is a shame—who better to highlight this female dilemma than a radical female film director who herself has had to struggle against the tiger streak of prejudiced opinion."[41]

For the most part, reception was favorable, albeit with reservations. Reviewers complained about what might, in short, be called Zetterling's tendency to overdo it. The saying "biting off more than you can chew" introduced one review, whereas another said that "there are some parts one wishes she would have sacrificed."[42] The word *overburdened* appears in at least two major reviews.[43] On the whole, there seems to be a much stronger inclination to embrace Zetterling's burlesque exaggerations and strong, suggestive imagery than in the 1960s, not least because she was nominated for the national film award, the *guldbagge* (golden bug), for best directing. She lost out to Suzanne Osten, for *Bröderna Mozart* (*The Mozart Brothers*), who thus became the second woman to win for best directing after Marianne Ahrne for *Långt borta och nära* (*Near and Far Away*, 1976) in 1977. Ekblad won a golden bug for her performance as Agnes—in combination with her performance in Bo Widerberg's *Ormens väg på hälleberget* (*The Serpent's Way*). Josephson also received a golden bug that year for his role in *Offret* (*The Sacrifice*, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky).

As a comeback, *Amorosa* was not a complete triumph for Zetterling. Although the Swedish art cinema institution seemed willing to embrace her and welcome her back, both critics and the guldbagge jury held back somewhat. Feminists had gained a certain foothold within the cultural sphere and were happy to highlight a female director, but even among feminists, Zetterling had some detractors.

Concrete and Irony: *Concrete Grandma*

Amorosa received a great deal of attention and left a definite mark on Zetterling's legacy. The same year *Amorosa* premiered, Zetterling made another Swedish film that, for several reasons, is much more obscure.

This is the commissioned industrial film *Betongmormor* (*Concrete Grandma*), a twenty-six-minute film promoting the construction company Skanska.[44]

Skånska cementgjuteriet was founded in 1887 in Malmö, southern Sweden. During the twentieth century, it developed into one of the major construction companies in Sweden, not least because they specialized in large-scale construction with prefabricated concrete components. They built much of the so-called million-dwelling program (Miljonprogrammet, 1965–75), which was a drive by the social democratic government to provide cheap apartment housing for the masses, but they also made power stations, freeways, bridges, tunnels, and so on. In the 1970s, Skanska branched out and became an internationally significant construction company, dropping the circle over the "a" and the latter part of its name ("cementgjuteriet," which means concrete foundry) to make its pronunciation more manageable for non-Swedish speakers.

Of Zetterling's films, *Concrete Grandma* compares most clearly to *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* in that she appears extensively in the film, playing on her star persona in a tongue-in-cheek, somewhat ironic and self-conscious manner. In *Stockholm*, she performed as herself, August Strindberg, and Queen Christina. Here, she performs as the grandmother of a young man, applying for work at Skanska. She drives him to his job interview and falls asleep in the lobby while she waits for him. In her sleep, she dreams about how she travels the world and explores different Skanska construction sites, while being followed by corporate spies who try to find Skanska's key to success. Like in *Stockholm*, she dresses up in various costumes, including cross-dressing, such as the construction worker's dungarees and hard hat or in other scenes in a well-tailored man's suit. Her self-conscious, ironic humor is also similar. The irony is further underscored by how Zetterling has used architecture—in particular, the large, modernist constructions Skanska specialized in—in her previous films: the construction cranes and new modern high-rises in *The Prosperity Race*; Golden Lane Estate in *The War Game*; Ralph Erskine's apartment buildings in Kiruna and shopping center in Luleå as well as the bomb shelter in *The Girls*; the neighborhoods in *Lady Policeman*; and of course in *Stockholm*.

These were the last films Zetterling made in Sweden. She would direct two more television productions in 1990, but most of her time was dedicated to projects that remained unrealized.

The Final Television Productions: "Sunday Pursuit" and "The Stuff of Madness"

Although many of her proposed projects led to nothing, Zetterling directed a couple of TV productions broadcast in 1990: "Sunday Pursuit" is a half-hour episode from 1990 of a television series called *Love at First Sight*, coproduced by several European broadcasting companies (among them HTV International, French Télécip, Portuguese and Spanish Radio Television) and with the collaboration of Belgian television RTBF and the Centre National de la Cinematographie. She also directed one episode of a series of adaptations of short stories by Patricia Highsmith, produced by HTV in association with Crossbow films, Vamp productions, M6, and Tesauro. The series was called *Mistress of Suspense* and Zetterling's episode, "The Stuff of Madness," is forty-five minutes long.

Although *Love at First Sight* was a pan-European enterprise, Zetterling's episode had more than a touch of Britishness to it. Starring Rita Tushingham and Denholm Elliott (who passed away shortly after the episode was aired), it is a very British short film about an elderly man, Thomas Wilkins, who is laid off from his work as a clerk in a gentlemen's dress store. He is looking for love in the "lonely hearts" advertisements, but he rarely gets a reply to the letters he sends. However, one day the phone rings, and the woman on the other end of the line sets up a date for tea at Palm Court on Sunday. He goes there in a rented suit and sees a woman sitting under a palm tree, just as agreed on; when he approaches her, it becomes apparent for the viewer (but not for the man) that it is not the woman who called him. Nonetheless, as they talk, they seem to find each other pleasant and even attractive. They start to make plans to go to a concert together, but the woman from the ad—played by Dana Gillespie—shows up and makes a scene. Thomas has to run after the first woman and follow her in a taxi before they clear up the mistake. They are obviously but cautiously attracted to one another, and she invites him along to sell her father's old car. The buyer is Thomas's former boss, and he tries to buy the car cheaply. Thomas steps in and explains how much the car is worth, and in exchange, she extorts the buyer to rehire Thomas as a manager.

"Sunday Pursuit" neatly epitomizes Zetterling's evolution as a proficient and skillful mainstream director. Constrained by the twenty-seven-minute format and adapting to television's mode of address, she

is here, like in *The Hitchhiker* episodes she directed, a craftswoman with an efficient yet personal narration. The tightly narrated, visually engaging yet unchallenging TV episodes she made in the 1980s and early 1990s are a far cry from the over-the-top grotesque and epic storytelling in *Amorosa*. The "twist" of the story—Thomas Wilkins misapprehending the woman as the caller and thus daring to speak to her—is simple but works, and the ending stretches the realm of probability but ties the story together in a sweet, feel-good way.

"The Stuff of Madness" does not have any of the feel-good qualities of "Sunday Pursuit." On the contrary, the episode, originally broadcast on May 9, 1990, exudes a creepy ambience. The middle-aged couple, superbly acted by Ian Holm and Eileen Atkins, are decidedly spooky: Mr. Wagoner still entertains the memories of his mistress, Louise, whom he has not seen in twenty years, and Mrs. Wagoner keeps all her dead pets as either taxidermized animals in her "garden of remembrance" or as artifacts made from their fur. Mr. Wagoner holds his own remembrance in his office at home, where he has hidden away a photograph of Louise, behind a framed photograph of his wife, and other memorabilia in a desk drawer, the key to which is hidden in the back of a framed calendar on his desk. As the narrative progresses, he becomes increasingly obsessed with a mannequin that resembles Louise and rents it from the store manager with the flimsy excuse that it will be used in an amateur play production. He buys underwear and clothes for her, brings her surreptitiously to his home, and dresses her lovingly in exquisite underwear and the blue dress that Louise wore in the photograph. Husband and wife are basically living in shrines of their own construction, indulging in a sort of necrophilia with inanimate objects.

The plot of the film revolves around the visit of a journalist and a photographer, who want to come and do a feature on Mrs. Wagoner and her stuffed pets. She is flattered by their attention and takes them seriously, although it is clear they think she is a tragic nutcase. Her husband is completely against the visit. The night before they arrive, he brings his mannequin into the garden and places her on a bench under a pergola, opposite one of the taxidermy dogs. When the journalist and the photographer enter into that part of the garden and set their eyes on the mannequin, they wolf whistle, whereas Mrs. Wagoner just breathes "Louise!"—she obviously recognizes her husband's former lover. She has a mild heart attack and is taken away in an ambulance. Mr. Wagoner schedules a return visit with the journalist the following day, then

proceeds to commit suicide with pills and drink. He dies next to the mannequin in the garden and is found by the journalist and photographer the next morning, ending up on the front page of *The Gazette*.

The "stuff of madness" obviously refers to the stuffed animals but can also be understood on a deeper level: not being able to let go of the past. Mrs. Wagoner is at first the one who seems most intent on keeping death at bay with her garden of remembrance. Her lifeless animals are uncanny, and she seems odd, to say the least. Her husband seems kindly tolerant of her antics. Gradually we understand that Mr. Wagoner is at least as creepy. His interactions with the shopkeeper when he rents the mannequin evolve into a perverse display of desire. The scene verges on the humorous as the shopkeeper seems to appreciate his customer's inclinations and suggests different types of underwear for the dummy. When Mr. Wagoner, in his locked office, dresses the mannequin, his nostalgic desire for his former mistress evolves into a kind of necrophilia. For an uncanny moment, in a close-up, the mannequin's eyes become Louise's eyes. Zetterling uses reflections to underscore Mr. Wagoner's descent into necrophilia: we see the mannequin being carried down from the attic in the reflection of a grand piano being played by a young man. Later, Mr. Wagoner's room is reflected in a round mirror; his final drunkenness is shown in a mirror, too. Another indication of the couple's deathlike condition is that they never really eat, although they sit down for dinner and breakfast at several occasions during the film. Instead, they give the food to their living pets, a dog and a cat. Much like Jan in *Night Games*, they cannot let go of the past, but where Jan finally manages to break free of his dead mother, the Wagoners are doomed.

"The Stuff of Madness" was broadcast as an episode of the *Mistress of Suspense* series on British television and as an episode of *Chillers* on US television, both of which were series of Patricia Highsmith adaptations.

Comeback, Relapse, Return?

In hindsight, Zetterling's 1980s can be considered a triumphant peak of her career. Seemingly effortlessly, she moves between mainstream, at times edgy entertainment television, national art cinemas, feminist filmmaking, and made-to-order documentary, following the intrinsic norms of each genre and format while deftly setting her personal touch to each work. Just as effortlessly, she shifts between transnational productions and national film industries. The Swedish producer and artistic

adviser on *Amorosa*, Bengt Forslund, later claimed, "I have rarely worked with a more professional director."[45]

Her obsessions are still present, not least reflected in the varied output of this decade, during which, just like in the 1970s, she very likely took on several projects because they paid the bills and, more important, provided opportunity to work with any kind of audiovisual directing. The obsessions can be seen in the treatment of her subject matter. Regardless of whether it is a film about female juveniles or an author from the national literary canon, Zetterling's urge to display human authenticity and dignity—her own definition of what constitutes some kind of essence of life—is a common theme. Her television productions as well as her films use her knack for eerie ambience and her notion of low thresholds between different levels of reality. In her 1980s productions, she continues to explore gender, sexuality, and reproduction. What is relatively new—appearing in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* and continuing in *Concrete Grandma*—is a more assured sense of humor. Perhaps connected to this is a developed sense for oddities, weird coincidences, and Dahlesque twists.

Although tempting, comparing *Amorosa* with *Loving Couples* is a risky venture. The relative successes of her first and her last feature films, both drawing on Agnes von Krusenstjerna, say more about what the audience and critics expected of her (a female director telling a female writer's stories). Zetterling's fascination with Krusenstjerna is better contextualized with her other fascinations and obsessions and her other films. For Zetterling, von Krusenstjerna is someone who struggled against society's expectations of her in order to stay true to herself and her art. In *Loving Couples*, she adapted the Misses von Pahlen series and brought out a von Krusenstjerna that critics, reviewers, and journalists could recognize and feel a bit at odds with, particularly Olof Lagercrantz, who reacted strongly to the final shot of the baby.[46] In *Amorosa*, she adapted von Krusenstjerna's own life, in a manner that, again, resonated with some and disturbed others.

Mai Zetterling passed away in March 1994, shortly before her sixty-ninth birthday. Her final works, "The Stuff of Madness" and "Sunday Pursuit," may reflect her persona and her directorial skill, but they were in no way the end of her pursuits. From *Amorosa* onward, Zetterling had several projects that would never come to fruition, although she used all the strategies she had learned and approached a wide variety of potential financial backers.

EPILOGUE

Nevertheless, She Persisted

After *Amorosa*, Mai Zetterling planned to make another biopic. This one would be focused on another Swedish author, Carl Jonas Love Almqvist (1793–1866). In his time, Almqvist was a controversial writer. His 1839 novella *Det går an* (translated into English in 1919 as *Sara Videbeck and the Chapel*) argued against the traditional institution of marriage and proposed a different way of organizing intimate relationships between men and women.[1] Posterity has come to regard Almqvist as ahead of his time, a proto-feminist, and a free thinker. With a relatively successful biopic recently on Zetterling's résumé, this project seemed to be the perfect follow-up.

Nonetheless, Zetterling's proposals for this film were declined. Her first screenplay draft was titled "Älskade underbara" ("Beloved Wonderful"), but she rewrote it as "Törneros" ("Rose of Thorns"). Although producer Bengt Forslund tried to promote the screenplay at the Swedish Film Institute, describing it as a "radical and very cinematic transposal of Almqvist's ideas to our days," neither the institute or the production company Svensk filmindustri wanted to back the project.[2]

The struggle to finance this and other films would dominate the stage for the last few years of Zetterling's life. She had several projects that would not be realized during this time period. In the Mai Zetterling Collection at the Swedish Film Institute's archive, outlines, drafts, proposals, and various script rewrites testify to her relentless attempts at

getting something financed and completed. Some of the films or TV productions that were projected were "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (dated around 1994); an adaptation of Swedish author Sara Lidman called "Och trädet svarade eller Bli som folk" ("And the Tree Responded, or Become Like People," dated 1993/94); an adaptation of Danish author Karen Blixen, "The Angelic Avengers" (1990/91); a biographical (TV) film about New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield (1991); an adaptation of her own novel, *Bird of Passage* (1990–94); and her final and most obsessive project, "The Woman Who Cleaned the World."

As film scholar and Scandinavianist Claire Thomson has observed, the concept of the "unfilmed film" is highly auteurist, and "auteurship and the archive produce the unfilmed film in all its unfilmedness."[3] Zetterling's unfilmed projects are well known, in particular her envisioned adaptation of Maja Ekelöf's *Rapport från en skurhink* (1970), and mentioned in her obituaries and later essays and articles. They may largely be responsible for the reputation of obsessive that Zetterling accrued. Nonetheless, without the archive and the proposals, treatments, drafts, and versions of screenplays saved therein, the unfilmed Zetterling works would only be known by rumor and reputation. As it is, each project's trajectory can be traced somewhat through the Mai Zetterling Collection at the Swedish Film Institute Archive. As Thomson points out, a director's death does not inevitably shelve a production for all eternity—Lars von Trier made *Medea* (1988) twenty years after screenplay writer Carl Dreyer's death, for instance,[4] and "The Woman Who Cleaned the World," Zetterling's adaptation of *Rapport från en skurhink*, may yet be realized. Swedish artist and filmmaker Fia-Stina Sandlund has received support from the Swedish Film Institute and the Swedish Arts Grants Committee for this purpose.[5]

Beloved Wonderful—Rose of Thorns

Zetterling began working on her next project as soon as she was finished with *Amorosa*. She researched Almqvist and composed a first version of a screenplay called "Älskade underbara." This narrative tells the story of Carl Jonas Love Almqvist, with emphasis on his radical and romanticist ideas, but it also contains key events of his life and takes place in the past. In spring 1987, Zetterling contacted her ex-husband David Hughes, asking if he would like to collaborate on the screenplay, and the two of them proceeded to rewrite it. In June, Hughes had read the first screenplay and had the spontaneous reaction that the story needed

to be brought into the twentieth century: "I suggest this mainly because I think Love as pictured in your outline is very difficult for a modern mind to identify with, despite the fact that in many ways he was ahead of his time. But if we could find a way of showing him bursting into the future—of going beyond not only the 19th century but even the 20th—then I think we would have brought off a triumph. I don't quite yet know how to do it."[6] This spontaneous suggestion—inspired by the experiences from *Vincent the Dutchman*—to make the film into "a kind of up-to-the-minute drama documentary, somewhat on the Van Gogh pattern, like a cry from the wilderness of the past" entailed a drastic rewrite of the screenplay.[7] In the version that was presented in late fall 1987 to producers, other influential people at the Swedish Film Institute, and potential supporters of the project, the screenplay alternates between a present-time young man called Paul and scenes with Almqvist in the past. Sometimes the time levels converge. Paul is soon to be married to his fiancée, Monika, and works at his father's company. He plays melodies composed by Almqvist and has a futuristic computer he can communicate with. At a subway station, his attention is drawn to Lizzie and Oscar, who do street performances and play the same Almqvist music Paul had just played. They fascinate him, and he makes contact, but it does not really develop. Lizzie and Oscar appear again and again at important points in the film, compelling Paul to make a choice and take a stand in his life. In the past, Almqvist explains his ideas to his wife and friends. Paul breaks up with his fiancée, even though she is pregnant, and her brothers are furious with him. In the past, Almqvist tries to put his ideas about open relationships into practice, but it ends badly with his two friends committing suicide by drowning. Paul goes out into nature with Lizzie and Oscar, and he reads up on Almqvist in the library. Almqvist becomes progressively more persecuted. Paul, Lizzie, and Oscar organize a big protest in Kungsträdgården in Stockholm. Greenpeace is there and, although there are some altercations with the police, the manifestation ends on a positive note, with fireworks and film projections on the face of the surrounding buildings. The end shows Almqvist dying in a hospital bed, with Paul, Lizzie, Oscar, and Monika around him. A dog rose (rose of thorns) is in a vase by his bed. As Almqvist dies, the camera follows his spirit to the ceiling, looking down on the others; to prove that he is not dead, he makes the rose float up with him. His last words are that he will write a book about life after death.[8]

I provide a detailed description of the narrative because the film was never made. This description quite clearly demonstrates what would prove to be the stumbling block for the potential financial backers as well as people Zetterling turned to for moral support, perhaps in the hope that they could exert some pressure on the people in power: the division into two protagonists and the focus on the modern-day narrative with Paul. Bengt Forslund, who had been involved in the production of *Amorosa* as "artistic adviser" and who had worked at the Swedish Film Institute for many years, was the only one who seemed enthusiastic about the prospect of the film. In a letter to Katinka Farago and Klas Olofsson, the two people who could greenlight the project at the Swedish Film Institute, he argued for the screenplay and for Zetterling, vouching that he had "rarely worked with a more professional director" and claiming that the film could be "a quite typical 'feather-in-our-hat' production, that we proudly can show off both to the state powers and in international film contexts."[9] Sadly, he was quite alone in advocating for the film to be made. Several of the people to whom Zetterling had sent the screenplay more or less delicately explained that the modern-day narrative took over to the detriment of the Almqvist narrative. Rune Waldekranz, by now retired, wrote in an otherwise very friendly letter: "Jonas Love is already there on the way to become a secondary figure and his scenes are sometimes unexplained. . . . We have come too far from CJL:s mysticism and imagination for it to work. . . . Unfortunately, dear Mai, it has turned into much more of didactic sentences (pointers) explaining to an ignorant world how modern and before his time Almquist was."[10] Stina Ekblad, who had just performed the role of Tintomara in the production of Almqvist's *The Queen's Tiara* (*Drottningens juvelsmycke*, 1834) at the Royal Dramatic Theater, was more circumspect but still honest in her assessment: "There is by the way so much in the first little screenplay I received, 'Älskade underbara,' that I liked and which is gone in 'Törneros'—of course, because it is a completely different story. I do feel Love's presence much stronger in 'Älskade underbara' even if he might be more unreachable and distant than in 'Törneros' where he has stepped right into our world. . . . Otherwise what is most lacking in 'Törneros' is that Love somehow disappears."[11]

Others expressed similar opinions. Former arts section editor of *Dagens Nyheter*, Olof Lagercrantz, was confounded by how elusive Almqvist was in the film and observed that "it becomes so abstract that you cannot really find the time to be interested."[12] More devastating

was the final verdict from Valdemar Bergendahl at Svensk filmindustri (SF), who simply stated that SF would not enter into the production of the film because it was hard to judge "whether this could be a widely appealing cinema film." His biggest surprise, he wrote, had been "that the screenplay consisted of something entirely different from what I had been brought to believe once upon a time, but of course, Almqlvist's [*sic*] strange living can be told just the way you do it."[13] Without willingness from SF and the Swedish Film Institute to back the production, the project came to an end.

"The Woman Who Cleaned the World"

The struggle to finance the Almqvist film set the stage for the last few years of Zetterling's life. Although she had several ideas in different stages of development, her biggest project was an adaptation of a social realist diary novel by Maja Ekelöf, *Rapport från en skurhink* (*Report from a Washbucket*, 1970). Ekelöf was a cleaning woman, and the manuscript for *Rapport från en skurhink* won a publisher's competition and received critical acclaim after publication. The narrative follows the everyday life of main character Maja, a single mother of five who works as a cleaning lady. Diary entries about the drudgery of work and managing the household are combined with reflections about literature, news events, and the state of the world during the last few years of the 1960s. Zetterling's adaptation used the original story as a starting point and inspiration for a tale of a cleaning woman who takes on the world, in particular pollution, oppression, and hypocrisy. Over the course of her attempts at financing the production of the film, the project swelled, meandered, and changed.

Inga Landgré, Zetterling's childhood friend, was promised the lead role as Maja. Landgré and Zetterling had been students at Calle Flygare's drama school at the age of fifteen and knew each other very well. In a personal entry on the website Nordic Women in Film, Landgré reminisces about their lifelong friendship and tells the long and winding story of "The Woman Who Cleaned the World." In Landgé's account, the project began in fall 1989, when Zetterling composed a short treatment based on the novel. Ingrid Edström and Peter Hald at the Swedish Film Institute were interested in the film and gave Zetterling the go-head to write the screenplay. According to Landgré, Zetterling was "enthusiastic about her meeting with Ingrid. To finally get to meet a woman with a braid on her back in the office of the boss!"[14] Landgré

was happy to be asked to play a lead role in a Zetterling film—previously she had only played small parts in *Loving Couples* and *Amorosa*. She began to do research for the part and tried to arrange her schedule so that it would fit with the plans for shooting. However, rewriting took longer than expected, and shooting was postponed. When the revised screenplay reached the Swedish Film Institute, Hald and Edström rejected it. The proposed low-budget production had turned into an expensive film, with too many fantasy sequences.

Zetterling then got in touch with a British producer. The new screenplay in English was, according to Landgré, the best version she had read. But in 1991, a letter arrived from Zetterling, explaining that the adaptation might become a French-British production with Jeanne Moreau in the lead. Landgré quotes the letter: "Well, yes, I am very sorry on your behalf and I hope you can understand my problem. *I have to be able to do Maja!*"[15] Landgré writes expressively about how disappointed she felt, and how she tried in vain to get in touch with Zetterling. Finally, Zetterling called back and was very uncertain about whether the film would be made. In 1992, the screenplay had been revised again, now to a version about three cleaning women in Europe, but there was little hope the project would be realized. In spring 1993, Zetterling was diagnosed with cancer and had a tumor removed. The cancer later returned and in March 1994, Landgré heard about Zetterling's death on the radio.[16]

Landgré's memories from her friendship with Zetterling are fond and loving but at the same time tinged with frustration and disappointment. She describes her as "rare, courageous and remarkable."[17] The broken promise seems to have been resolved and forgiven, not least because Landgré understands Zetterling's underlying frustration of being thwarted in her attempts to make this film and by the Swedish film industry in general. In the letter that Landgré quotes, Zetterling says that she feels

> *schadenfreude* to be able to thumb my nose at the Film Institute. They have absolutely not been on my side. And neither have they understood the project, they have not seen the humor. . . . Damned stuck-up Swedes who don't want to stand by me! I am too much of a hassle for them. *The Girls* has become a cult film and is always shown out in the world, the same with *Amorosa*. The Swedish Institute says that it is Ingmar's and my films that travel in the world, but none of this is good enough when one wants to make a new film.[18]

To follow this process through the documents in the Mai Zetterling Collection is frustrating, not least because of the sense that it does not provide a complete picture. On December 2, 1991, Mica Films in France received 33,000 ECU—around US$40,000—from the European Script Fund for the project "Maja."[19] Most likely, this is the Jeanne Moreau version, which in Landgré's recollection would be a French-British production. In March 1992, however, Zetterling seems to have attempted to interest the Gothenburg branch of Swedish television in the venture. There is a letter from Lars Dahlquist, SVT Göteborg, who apologetically explains that they are too tied up with contract directors to finance anything outside their usual program.[20] Similarly, there is a handwritten letter from David Aukin, head of drama at British Channel 4, saying, "It's difficult to see how the style and ideas can sustain a full length film, although I respect the boldness of your approach."[21] In summer 1992, Zetterling tried unsuccessfully to get funding from cosmetics and skincare company The Body Shop, but there is also an agreement with Zoombell Ltd. that Zetterling and her cowriter, Andrew Hislop, will receive £10,000 in writers' fees.[22] The number of treatments, drafts, and screenplay revisions is staggering, and as Landgré describes it, there are versions in Swedish and English, with one cleaning woman (sometimes Maja, sometimes Mrs. Mop, and sometimes Yvette) and with three (Yvette, Mika, and Greta).[23] Some of them are credited to Mai Zetterling; some to Mai Zetterling, Andy Hislop, and David Hughes; and yet others to Mai Zetterling and Andy Hislop. A letter, dated November 2, 1992, from Jo Manuel Productions, tries to interest Max von Sydow in the role of Max.[24]

The gist of the narrative in these screenplays is that Maja works by cleaning factories, offices, and public spaces in either a not-too-distant future or a somewhat exaggerated version of our world. Much like *The Girls*, it mixes reality with scenes of fantasy or Maja's inner visions. She gets in trouble, because in addition to being a cleaner she is a bit of a busy-body who speaks up against hypocrisy, pollution, and oppression. For instance, when there is a press conference about the pollution from an arms factory, Maja grabs the microphone and tells the truth because she has seen the factory's henchmen create a false impression of a healthy environment around the premises. Wherever she goes, the world is in a disgusting state, and she does her best to clean it up. The antagonists are the capitalists and bosses who pollute the environment and obstruct her efforts to stop them. In one sequence, a new supermarket is opened, and it has the concept of saving the world from famine. Some of the

money goes to starving people in other parts of the world. "The more you eat, the more they eat!" The opening ends in chaos because everyone tries to get to the buffet and stuff themselves with free food. All versions end with a camera movement up into the skies to reveal Heaven as full of dust and dirt as the Earth below.

Bird of Passage

"Bird of Passage" was based on Zetterling's own novel from 1976, and is about a woman, Irene, whose little daughter wanders off and is killed in a traffic accident while Irene is distracted by the discovery that her husband has cheated on her.[25] This back story is revealed in flashbacks during the road movie narrative of Irene's grieving. Irene drives aimlessly around in the Cévennes in southern France, spies on a little girl who reminds her of her daughter, drinks wine, and takes suicidal risks on the mountainous roads, while experiencing hallucinatory flashbacks from the accident and her husband's affair. She encounters a shepherd and his dog, and toward the end of the film is taken care of by an African woman living on the beach. The shepherd and the beach woman help her, in their ways, toward healing.

The lead was supposed to be played by Renée Soutendijk, whom Zetterling had worked with in the 1980s on the *Hitchhiker* episode "Murderous Feelings." It seemed as if the film—quite small-budgeted—would be possible to finance with Dutch money.[26] However, when Zetterling was diagnosed with cancer, the production was put on hold. It was never resumed.

Nevertheless, She Persisted: The Legacy of Mai Zetterling

The phrase "Nevertheless, she persisted" became a feminist meme in 2017 after the silencing of US Senator Elizabeth Warren as she attempted to object to the confirmation of the US Attorney General. In an explanation as to why she was silenced, the phrase was used and then quickly appropriated and became viral. It is a very apt phrase to describe Zetterling, not least in her final years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As I observed in the introduction, Zetterling's life and career provide perspective on issues that are currently in the limelight, particularly the navigation of women filmmakers in a male-dominated industry. Her story is part of a past that illuminates how the structures of the industries worked and, in many cases, continue to work. For instance, in her

negotiations for the production of *Of Seals and Men*, she constructed the film as small and low-budget to be able to finance it and maintain some control over the finished product.[27] As Maria Jansson points out in her article on equality in Swedish film, many women directors work in small-budget productions to retain some artistic freedom and control over their films.[28] The strategy is not limited to women filmmakers. Recently, it has been argued that Ingmar Bergman's 1960s filmmaking style, with its *kammerspiel* aesthetics and few actors, had to do with budgetary deliberations to maintain artistic freedom.[29] In her work on TV series, Zetterling had no problem confining herself to the limits of the format of an episode, whereas despite her experience with low-budget work, she had a tendency to go over the top when granted comparatively big budgets and the artistic freedom of a national (European) art cinema institution. Her work on "The Woman Who Cleaned the World" demonstrates both a compulsive lack of restraint and a willingness to endlessly rewrite, revise, and rethink to adapt to potential backers. "Bird of Passage," on the other hand, shows her ability to rein in a project, make it smaller, and attach an actress to find funding. She knew Renée Soutendijk from their collaboration on *The Hitchhiker* episode, and she used the networks she had formed throughout her career to their full extent.

What the case of Zetterling clearly shows is that to fully map the work of female filmmakers, narrow definitions of film and national cinemas or even national audiovisual production do not open the scope wide enough. As mentioned in the introduction, in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, the editors highlight the theme of "decentering."[30] By *decentering*, they mean a transnational turn in film studies, which "extends the interventions of feminist film inquiry beyond the hegemony of the West, but also beyond the limitations of the national as a paradigm in film studies."[31] Moreover, they look to topics that decenter heteronormative and cis-normative perspectives, a decentering with regard to hegemonic whiteness, and a decentering of media itself, through social media and the intersections of various media forms such as films, videogames, music videos, and TV series.[32] Although Zetterling's case does not neatly encompass all these ways of decentering, it does function as an example of how these issues are not merely a result of the situation of the early twenty-first century but have been relevant in certain degrees for at least fifty years. In particular, perhaps, her case shows how the restrictions placed on women filmmakers oblige them to find outlets for their work in unpredictable contexts.

The life and career of Zetterling, a former actress and film star who changed professions, point to the matter of object and subject, of female agency, and of how women are perceived by a patriarchal establishment. Although she only very carefully touched on such subjects in her memoirs—apart from her experiences in Hollywood, there are recollections of harassment and abuse, but most of these are from her teenage years—they shine through in the media coverage of her.[33] The paternalism in articles in the Swedish press when she was working on *Loving Couples* presaged the condescension of Bart Mills's description of her in the *Los Angeles Times* at the release of *Scrubbers*: "Zetterling today would never be mistaken for a former movie star. At 57, she has chosen to look her age. She has a matronly hairdo and wears a figure-concealing garment of many folds and ruffles."[34] On the one hand, Zetterling most certainly chose not to cling to a passing youthful look, for ideological and professional reasons. As an aging former actress and film star, she might have experienced some relief at not looking "sweet and blonde and defenseless" anymore, instead embracing the physical changes of her face and body.[35] On the other hand, the comment from the journalist on her looks seems born out of a male privilege of having the right to judge a woman's looks and her choices.

This may be why her symbolic value has remained and even increased in the past fifteen years or so. Already in the 1960s and 1970s, her presence in the Swedish film industry was highlighted as a sign of the progressiveness of the welfare state and its film culture.[36] Since around 2005, Zetterling is the name of a scholarship for filmmakers and the subject of an arts installation, and *MAI* the name of an online journal of feminism and visual culture. Zetterling has also been the focus of one special issue of the Swedish film journal *FLM* dedicated to her for her ninetieth anniversary in 2015, and has had an online resource created for her works.[37] As mentioned, Fia-Stina Sandlund recently received support from the Swedish Film Institute and the Swedish Arts Grants Committee to realize Zetterling's script for "The Woman Who Cleaned the World."[38] In an interview, Sandlund points to the relevance of the script today and to Zetterling in relation to the #MeToo movement and sees the project as an opportunity to question patriarchal dramaturgical norms.[39]

Things may have improved for women in the film industry, and one can only speculate whether Zetterling would have been one of those to come out with stories in the #MeToo movement if she had been still alive. Regardless, her obsessive persistence to continue demanding the right to speak and make films regardless of what Los Angeles journalists

or European film producers and policy makers thought of her would seem to make her into a kind of ambivalent role model for twenty-first-century feminism, not because she always was a beacon of feminist light herself (remember her patronizing of Rosemary Ackland in "You Must Make People Angry") but because she audaciously claimed that space in spite of it all.

Accordingly, Zetterling functions as an inspiration and a source for creative productivity. Her legacy seems mainly limited to the Scandinavian countries, however, and one of the problems indicated here is that a narrow national or even regional focus limits our view of her accomplishments. Zetterling's work took her around at least the northwestern part of the world. Rather than seeing that as detrimental, she probably relished being an explorer of audiovisual creative imaginings and of the world.

Notes

Introduction

1. Wally Herbert papers, Mai Zetterling collection, Swedish Film Institute Archive.

2. For a more thorough description of the production circumstances and for a close reading of the film, see Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda and Cinefeminist Intervention."

3. J. Smith, "The MacDonald Discussion Group."

4. *MAI: Feminism and Visual Culture*, accessed April 2, 2018, https://maifeminism.com.

5. The Faceted Zetterling Project can be found at the following websites: https://sites.google.com/site/themaizetterlingarchives/home and https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJeH7pnLgqMKdBCjdoJoLfA.

6. Unni Gjertsen, *The Mai Zetterling Project*, accessed April 2, 2018, http://www.unnigjertsen.com/archives/gallery/new.

7. Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 11. My dissertation dealt with Zetterling's feature films from the 1960s and has formed the basis for parts of chapters 2 and 3 in this book. Writing in Swedish for a Swedish readership, I chose to focus on Zetterling's Swedish reception and historiography.

8. See, for instance, Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar"; Mörner, "Vissa visioner," 108–19; Dofs Sundin, "Två gånger Doktor Glas"; Jordahl, "Trevlighetsfascismen släckte nyfikenheten"; Åhlund, "Mai Zetterling—kvinna och filmregissör." Since I made that observation, Tytti Soila published "Passion at the Threshold,"

and Zetterling was the object of a one-hour documentary by filmmaker Lena Jordebo, *Regissören—en film om Mai Zetterling*.

9. For the interviews made by the Faceted Zetterling Project, see https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJeH7pnLgqMKdBCjdoJoLfA.

10. *Betongmormor* is available (in Swedish) at Filmarkivet.se, accessed December 10, 2017, http://www.filmarkivet.se/movies/betongmormor/. At Filmarkivet.se, you can find a short interview with Mai Zetterling from 1984, her appearance in the Swedish LUX commercial in 1963, a brief report from the shooting of *Lek på regnbågen* (Lars Erik Kjellgren, 1958) in a newsreel from 1957, and trailers for *Loving Couples*, *Night Games*, and *Amorosa* (all in Swedish). *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (in two parts) can be found at Archive.org, accessed December 20, 2017, https://archive.org/details/maizetterlingstockholm. *Amorosa* can be streamed (with English subtitles) on Vimeo, accessed March 30, 2018, https://vimeo.com/208174387l. *The War Game*, *Night Games*, *Doctor Glas*, and *The Girls* can sometimes be found on YouTube.

11. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

12. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema." See also Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema"; Hjort and MacKenzie, "Introduction."

13. Elsaesser, *European Cinema*. For the concept of transnationalism, see Hsiao-peng Lu, *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*; Nestingen and Elkington, *Transnational Cinema in a Global North*; Ezra and Rowden, *Transnational Cinema*; Ďurovičová and Newman, *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*.

14. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," 53.

15. Ryberg, "Zetterlings taskiga tajming."

16. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema."

17. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," 52–53.

18. Freud, *The Uncanny*.

19. Sontag, "Letter from Sweden."

20. White, *Women's Cinema, World Cinema*, 7.

21. Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, and Petro, "Introduction: Decentering Feminist Film Studies," 4–5.

22. Lauzen, "The Celluloid Ceiling Report 2017."

23. EWA, "Where Are the Women Directors in European Films? Key Findings."

24. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality."

25. See, for instance, Karin Badt, "Cannes 2016: The 'Feminist' Government of Sweden Promotes Gender Equality in Film," *Huffington Post*, May 18, 2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/karin-badt/cannes-2016-the-feminist_b_10020074.html; Stephen Heyman, "How Swedish Cinema Gave Women Directors a Bigger Role," *New York Times*, October 7, 2015.

26. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality."

27. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality," 6–7.

28. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality," 9.
29. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality," 8.
30. Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 188–92.
31. Leif Furhammar, "Mai Zetterling död," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 19, 1994. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Swedish are mine.
32. Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar," 63.
33. Cowie, *Sweden 2*, 241.
34. Sundgren, *The New Swedish Cinema*, 45.
35. Werner, *Den svenska filmens historia*, 203.
36. Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige*, 298.
37. Elley, "Hiding It under a Bushel."
38. Swedish television news, *Aktuellt*, January 17, 1966.
39. Among them are Elley, "Hiding It under a Bushel," also published as Elley, "Mai Zetterling: Free Fall"; Thornburg, "Mai Zetterling: The Creation of a New Mythology"; Heck-Rabi, "Mai Zetterling (1925–)"; Fischer, *Shot/Countershot* and "Feminist Forms of Address"; Sloan, "Making the Scene Together"; Soila, "Passion at the Threshold." There is, of course, also Larsson, "Deceptive Femininity," "Skenet som bedrog," "Modernity, Masculinity and the Swedish Welfare State," "Transnational Cinefeminism"; and Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonial Propaganda and Cinefeminist Intervention."
40. Inger Marie Opperud, "'Hon var besatt av att göra film,'" *Expressen*, March 19, 1994.
41. Mai Zetterling collection, Swedish Film Institute archive.
42. Langré, "Minnen av Mai."
43. See, for instance, Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*.

Chapter 1. The Star as Documentarist and Filmmaker

1. Telephone interview with Anita Björk, conducted by Mariah Larsson, February 15, 2004.
2. See, for instance, Siwertz, "Fantasilek och underhållning" and "Vingsus och flugsurr."
3. "Filmbyrånytt."
4. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 79.
5. Edvardson, "Jag har behållit mina ideal," 61.
6. Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 243–44.
7. Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 33.
8. "Filmens pressfront," 8.
9. Telephone interview with Anita Björk, February 24, 2006; telephone interview with Inga Landgré, February 24, 2006.
10. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 49.
11. See, for instance, Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*.

12. Martin, "Refocusing Authorship in Women's Filmmaking," 30.

13. For a discussion on Zetterling as an explorer/auteur of the Arctic, see Larsson and Stenport, "Women Arctic Explorers."

14. This is the credit title of the film. In all other instances, the film is called *Lords of Little Egypt: Mai Zetterling among the Gypsies*.

15. Nichols, "The Ethnographer's Tale," 62–65.

16. See Dyer, *White*, 3.

17. Nichols, "The Ethnographer's Tale," 63.

18. Larsson and Stenport, "Women Arctic Explorers."

19. Hughes, "Iceland: The Do-It-Yourself Democracy."

20. "Mai Zetterling råkar i isländskt blåsväder," *Stockholmstidningen*, May 18, 1963.

21. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 180.

22. The international image of Sweden during the Cold War has been discussed by several scholars, among them historian of ideas Lena Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*, 89–98.

23. This obviously also had to do with a couple of films that showcased beautiful young women in sexual situations, like *One Summer of Happiness* (dir. Arne Mattsson, 1951) and *Summer with Monika* (dir. Ingmar Bergman, 1953). See Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*; Arnberg and Marklund, "Illegally Blonde"; Glover and Marklund, "Arabian Nights in the Midnight Sun"; Schaefer, "'I'll Take Sweden.'"

24. Edvardson, "Jag har behållit mina ideal."

25. Ulf Nilsson, "Aftonbladet visar de första bilderna ur Mai Zetterlings skandalfilm om Sverige," *Aftonbladet*, April 21, 1962.

26. Maurice Richardson, "Television: Unfair to the Swedes," *Observer Weekend Review*, April 15, 1962, 26.

27. Mary Crozier, "Swedish Television," *The Guardian*, April 11, 1962, 7.

28. Mary Crozier, "Television," *The Guardian*, January 4, 1961, 5; "Mai Zetterling råkar i isländskt blåsväder."

29. My thanks to Lawrence Webb at the University of Sussex for identifying the location for me.

30. That it really is a playground is confirmed by a document from 2016 pertaining to the refurbishing of the "sunken playground" at Golden Lane Estate. See City of London, 2016, accessed April 27, 2018, http://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/documents/s61197/Golden%20lane%20play%20area%20G4-5_FINAL.pdf. Thanks to Dr. Webb, who pointed me to the document.

31. Fischer, "Feminist Forms of Address," 40.

32. Fischer, "Feminist Forms of Address," 40.

33. The interview is approximately nine minutes long. Kevin O'Kelly, interview with Mai Zetterling at the Cork Film Festival 1963, Kino, RTÉ, accessed April 27, 2018, http://euscreen.eu/item.html?id=EUS_AC22B0978BF247EEB1FE9E6CA1E6360D.

34. Andersson, *Beauty Box*, 49–50.

35. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 182.

36. Koskinen, "P(owe)R, Sex and Mad Men Swedish Style," 156.

37. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 182–83.

38. According to small newspaper items: Sign. Camp., "Mai Zetterling i musical med budskap om nazismen," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 26, 1963; Peter Himmelstrand, "Mai Zetterlings man skriver bok om Sverige . . . 'ofarlig'!," *Expressen*, March 28, 1963; "Mai Zetterling förhandlar med SF om svensk comeback," *Arbetet*, March 29, 1963.

39. Interview with Rune Waldekranz, by Mariah Larsson, Södertälje, May 10, 1999.

40. Lundin and Olsson, *Regissörens roller*, 49–50.

41. Interview with Harry Schein, by Mariah Larsson, Danderyd, July 10, 2003.

42. Waldekranz, "Kvinnliga regissörer."

43. See Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar"; Vesterlund, *Schein: En biografi*; Ilshammar, Snickars, and Vesterlund, *Citizen Schein*; Nycander, *Citizen Schein*; Koskinen and Wallenberg, *Harry bit för bit*.

44. Schein, *Har vi råd med kultur?*

45. Vesterlund, "Vägen till filmavtalet."

Chapter 2. Return to Sweden as a Feature Filmmaker

1. Fischer, *Shot/Countershot*, 84; Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*.

2. Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

3. Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* 88.

4. Mauritz Edström, "'Älskande par'—en imponerande debut," *Dagens Nyheter*, December 22, 1964.

5. Higson, "Concept of National Cinema."

6. Harry Schein's significance in Swedish film culture, the Swedish Film Institute, and the Swedish film policy have all been discussed thoroughly by Swedish film scholars. See Vesterlund, "Institutionalized Sexploitation?"; Koskinen, "P(owe)R, Sex and Mad Men Swedish Style"; Ilshammar, Snickars, and Vesterlund, *Citizen Schein*; Timm, *Dröm och förbannad verklighet*; Åberg, *Tabu*; and Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog."

7. The film reform has been discussed and analyzed by several scholars and by Schein himself. See Schein, *I själva verket*; Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog"; Åberg, *Tabu*; Timm, *Dröm och förbannad verklighet*; Vesterlund, "Vägen till filmavtalet."

8. In October 2015, the minister of Culture, Alice Bah Kuhnke, announced that the deal between the government and the industry would be abandoned. In 2017, a new state film policy replaced the old film agreement.

9. Bengtsson, "A Film Maker Strikes Back."

10. See the first chapter of Björklund, *Lesbianism in Swedish Literature*, or Williams, "Contested Freedom."

11. Soila, "In a Broken Dialect."

12. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 184.

13. Lumholdt, *Harriet Andersson*, 171–72.

14. Lumholdt, *Harriet Andersson*, 177.

15. Turim, *Flashbacks in Film*, 143, 170–88.

16. Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar," 63.

17. Cowie, *Sweden 2*, 241; Sundgren, *The New Swedish Cinema*, 45; Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige*, 298.

18. To say that the film was an adaptation of the novel is not entirely correct, since the novel was not finished when the film was made. Zetterling, *Night Games*.

19. Koskinen and Rudberg, "Måste vara bättre än manliga kolleger."

20. Turim, *Flashbacks in Film*, 89.

21. See Freud, *On Sexuality*.

22. Freud, *On Sexuality*.

23. Freud, *On Sexuality*.

24. Swedish television news, *Aktuellt*, January 17, 1966.

25. Quoted from Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 188.

26. Koskinen, "Spel och speglingar," 92.

27. Mazzarella, *Agnes von Krusenstjerna*, 110–12. See Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

28. According to audience statistics in Schein, *I själva verket*, 138, 142.

29. Koskinen, *The Silence*, 44–48.

30. Schein, *I själva verket*, 138–42.

31. Krantz, "Kärlek på svenska."

32. All these headings are from December 22, 1964, the day after the film's premiere in Stockholm.

33. Kerstin Matz, "Boken som var sju gånger 491 blir film om kvinnovärlden," *Expressen*, November 8, 1964.

34. "Kvinnligt."

35. "Kvinnor till tusen för över miljonen," *Expressen*, April 11, 1964.

36. Sign. Robin Hood, "Sex på svenska är svårt att förstå," *Stockholms-Tidningen*, May 19, 1965.

37. Jan Aghed, "Zetterlings lånta fjädrar," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, September 3, 1966.

38. Lasse Bergström, "Mai Zetterlings 8½," *Expressen*, September 3, 1966.

39. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

40. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 50.

41. Krantz, "Kärlek på svenska," 460.

42. Nordberg, "Vi går på bio: Älskande par."

43. Jan Aghed, "Mai Zetterling och gangsters," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, September 13, 1966.

44. Leif Furhammar, "Mai Zetterlings anfäktelsefilm," *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 13, 1966.

45. Zetterström, "Nattlek" (review).

46. Vyth, "Dessa nattliga lekar."

47. Nordberg, "Vi går på bio: Nattlek."

48. Svedberg, report from Venice Film Festival, 62.

49. Herb Caen, "Up the Hills, Down the Alleys," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 9, 1966; Setlowe, "Shirley Temple Quits Fest over Incestuous 'Night Games.'"

50. Joanne Stang, "In Sweden, It's Easier to Play 'Night Games,'" *New York Times*, October 9, 1966.

51. Vincent Canby, "Mai Zetterling Comments about Directorial Role," *New York Times*, September 15, 1966.

52. Stang, "In Sweden, It's Easier to Play 'Night Games.'"

53. A. H. Weiler, "Amour: Illicit and Otherwise: 'Loving Couples' Opens at 34th Street East," *New York Times*, September 20, 1966.

54. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 94–108.

55. Stang, "In Sweden, It's Easier to Play 'Night Games.'"

Chapter 3. The Tide Turns

1. "Lone Hertz til Cannes: 'Doktor Glas' udvalgt som eneste skandinaviske filmbidrag til festivalen," *Berlingske Tidende*, April 17, 1968.

2. Björkman, "Mondo Cannes."

3. Grey, "Flashback: Cannes 1968."

4. "Mai Zetterling manade förgäves till förnuft," *Göteborgs Posten*, May 19, 1968.

5. Jonas Sima, "Mai Zetterling höll brandtal," *Expressen*, May 19, 1968.

6. Thornburg, "Mai Zetterling," 13.

7. See Mörner, "Vissa visioner."

8. Jan Aghed, "Ny Zetterling utan stil," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, October 8, 1968 (review of *The Girls*).

9. Hanserik Hjertén, "Bara snygga bilder," *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 14, 1969 (review of *Doctor Glas*).

10. Mörner, "Vissa visioner," 25–27.

11. Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 81–82.

12. Mörner, "Vissa visioner," 108–19.

13. Jurgen Schildt, "Hjalmar Söderberg på T-banan," *Aftonbladet*, February 14, 1969 (review of *Dr. Glas*).

14. See, for instance, Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*.

15. Göran O Eriksson, "Mai Zetterling låter Doktor Glas stanna i 1800-talet," *Dagens Nyheter*, February 14, 1969.

16. Hjertén, "Bara snygga bilder."

17. See, for instance, Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*.

18. See Balio, *The Foreign Film Renaissance on American Screens*.

19. Lunde, "The Story of a Bad Girl!"

20. Linda Williams, *Screening Sex*, 68–70.

21. Schaefer, "'I'll Take Sweden!'"

22. Letter from Mogens Skot-Hansen, October 28, 1966, to Maj [*sic*] Zetterling, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute Archive, A1.4.3 Dr. Glas (correspondence).

23. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 196.

24. Soila, "Passion at the Threshold," 6.

25. Lumholdt, *Harriet Andersson*, 36.

26. A part of the monologue (in Swedish) can be viewed on YouTube, accessed January 24, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g63xJJC_1VM.

27. Thornburg, "Mai Zetterling," 14. The shot is similar to the ones shown in a montage in Lukas Moodysson's *Lilya 4-Ever* (2002).

28. Goodnow, *Kristeva in Focus*, 66.

29. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*. See also Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, 65–112, and Grant, *The Dread of Difference*.

30. Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar," 63.

31. Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 134.

32. Zetterling mentions a few fleeting relationships with and crushes on women in her autobiography. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 218.

33. Elley, "Mai Zetterling: Free Fall," 216.

34. See Larsson, *Skenet som bedrog*, 136.

35. Fischer, *Shot/Countershot*, 81.

36. Mörner, "Vissa visioner," 170.

37. See Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 118.

38. See Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 116–17.

39. Fischer, *Shot/Countershot*, 85; Mörner, "Vissa visioner," 118.

40. For instance, Jurgen Schildt, "Mai Zetterlings nya film 'Flickorna' ett halvfabrikat," *Aftonbladet*, September 17, 1968. See later in this chapter.

41. See Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 155.

42. Larsson, "Modernity, Masculinity, and the Swedish Welfare State."

43. See, for instance, Leif Furhammar, "Mai Zetterling död," and Martin Vårdstedt, "Många stormar kring filmerna," both in *Dagens Nyheter*, March 19, 1994.

44. See Bendjelloul, "Regissören som kom in från kylan," 32.

45. Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige*, 316.

46. Letter from Göran Lindgren, Sandrews, to Mai Zetterling, February 26, 1969, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, uncataloged material (November 16, 2016).

47. These numbers are based in the films listed in Donner, *Svensk filmografi 6*, and Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi 7*.

48. Contract May 11, 1967, signed Mai Zetterling and Göran Lindgren, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, uncataloged material.

49. Economic report to Mai Zetterling from AB Sandrews-ateljeerna, August 20, 1965, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute Archive, A.1.2.4.

50. Interview with Rune Waldekranz, conducted by Mariah Larsson, Södertälje, May 10, 1999.

51. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 205.

52. Bo Strömstedt, "Jag ser . . . ," *Expressen*, September 23, 1968; Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 204; letter from Simone de Beauvoir, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, uncataloged material.

53. Schein, *I själva verket*, 138–44.

54. Jurgen Schildt, "Mai Zetterlings nya film 'Flickorna' ett halvfabrikat," *Aftonbladet*, September 17, 1968.

55. Mauritz Edström, "Verkliga kvinnor och spöklika män," *Dagens Nyheter*, September 17, 1968; Strömstedt, "Jag ser . . ."

56. Hanserik Hjertén, "'Flickorna' når inte fram," *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 17, 1968.

57. Schildt, "Mai Zetterling's nya film 'Flickorna.'"

58. Edström, "Verkliga kvinnor och spöklika män."

59. Edström, "Verkliga kvinnor och spöklika män."

60. Axelsson, Review of *The Girls*.

61. Nordberg, "Vi går på bio: Flickorna."

62. Roger Greenspun, "Festival of Women's Films Presents Mai Zetterling's The Girls," *New York Times*, June 7, 1972, 51.

63. Eriksson, "Mai Zetterling låter Doktor Glas"; Hjertén, "Bara snygga bilder"; Karl-Eric Brossner, "Doktor Glas," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, February 14, 1969.

64. Hjertén, "Bara snygga bilder."

65. Morten Piil, "Systematisk Søderberg-forgrovelse," *Information*, June 13, 1968.

66. Bent Mohn, "Teknik uden ånd," *Politikken*, June 13, 1968.

67. Erik Ulrichsen, "Ukristeligt," *Berlingske aftenavis*, June 13, 1968.

68. Kell, "Dr. Glas," *Variety*, June 19, 1968, emphasis added.

69. Kell, "Dr. Glas."

70. See Larsson, "Representing Sexual Transactions."

Chapter 4. Isolation and Obsession

1. Bergman, *Laterna Magica*, 284–97.
2. *One Pair of Eyes*, BBC, accessed February 9, 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00t92l9.
3. Thanks to Tytti Soila for drawing my attention to this scene.
4. Mary Holland, "Television: Post-Parable Apoplexy," *Observer*, March 7, 1971, 23.
5. Vincent the Dutchman, undated, unsigned document, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute.
6. See, for instance, Bhattacharyya and Rai, "The Neuropsychiatric Ailment of Vincent van Gogh"; or Correa, "Vincent van Gogh." The mystery of Van Gogh's health is such that in 2016, a symposium with medical experts was organized in Amsterdam to discuss whether the artist really suffered from any mental or physical disease. See "Vincent van Gogh Was Not Psychotic or Bipolar When He Cut Off His Ear, Medical Experts Decide," *National Post*, September 16, 2016, http://nationalpost.com/news/world/vincent-van-gogh-was-not-psychotic-or-bipolar-when-he-cut-off-his-ear-medical-experts-decide.
7. Stone, *Lust for Life*.
8. Correa, "Vincent van Gogh," 144.
9. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 207.
10. Elley, "Hiding It under a Bushel," 32.
11. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 207.
12. For instance, "Vincent the Dutchman," *Gazette* (Montreal), April 14, 1973; "A Portrait of van Gogh," *Times Herald*, April 15, 1973.
13. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 208.
14. Tomlinson and Young, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*, 118.
15. Roger Greenspun, "The Screen: New 'Visions of Eight' Studies Olympics," *New York Times*, August 11, 1973.
16. Modrey, "Architecture as a Mode of Self-Representation."
17. Modrey, "Architecture as a Mode of Self-Representation," 694.
18. See Diffrient, "An Olympic Omnibus," for more on the construction of the documentary.
19. "*Visions of Eight*."
20. Castell, "Sex Symbol to Earth Mother," 105.
21. Diffrient, "An Olympic Omnibus," 23.
22. Diffrient, "An Olympic Omnibus," 22.
23. Krüger, Nielsen, and Becker, "The Munich Olympics 1972," 536.
24. Elley, "Hiding It under a Bushel," 29.
25. Roger Ebert, "*Visions of Eight*," *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 20, 1973.
26. Elley, "Hiding It under a Bushel," 28.

Chapter 5. Transnational Feminist Filmmaking

1. Undated letter from Simone de Beauvoir to Mai Zetterling, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute Archive, uncataloged material.

2. Brison, "Beauvoir and Feminism," 197.

3. *The Second Sex*, proposal draft, in English, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute archive, vol. 3, A1.6.2.

4. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 165.

5. K. G. Björkman, "Nu satsar hon helt på kvinnokampen," *Aftonbladet*, August 15, 1975.

6. Björkman, "Nu satsar hon helt på kvinnokampen."

7. Annika Gustafsson, "Mai Zetterling kräver: Hälften av filmjuryn i Cannes åt kvinnor," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, November 27, 1976.

8. Sloan, "Making the Scene Together," 98.

9. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 2.

10. There are several important books from this era that provided lucid criticism of patriarchal society and contributed to feminist thought. Greer, *The Female Eunuch*; Millett, *Sexual Politics*; Morgan, *Sisterhood Is Powerful*; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*; and many more. The history of second-wave feminism is chronicled in, for instance, Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution*; Molony and Nelson, *Women's Activism and "Second Wave" Feminism*; Laughlin and Castledine, *Breaking the Wave*.

11. Thorgren, *Grupp 8 & jag*; Witt-Brattström, Å alla kära systrar! See also Sarrimo, "När det personliga blev politiskt."

12. Sarrimo, "När det personliga blev politiskt"; Lennerhed, *Frihet att njuta*.

13. Koenig Quart, *Women Directors*, 2.

14. Soila, "Sweden."

15. Ingrid Ryberg, "Genustrubbel på 1970-talet: När kvinnorörelsen greppade filmkameran," Filmrummet (screenings and panel discussion), Stockholm, October 17, 2014.

16. See Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi 7*.

17. Soila, *Att synliggöra det dolda*, 20; Butler, *Women's Cinema*, 2–5; Fischer, *Shot/Countershot*, 3–4.

18. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 218–19.

19. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 209–11, 211.

20. Interview with Sheila LaFarge.

21. Rich, *Chick Flicks*.

22. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 217–18.

23. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 218.

24. Ryberg, "Zetterlings taskiga tajming," 50.

25. Ryberg, "Zetterlings taskiga tajming," 50.

26. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 217.

27. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 217.

28. Elisabet Sörenson, "Mot vilken frihet?," *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 8, 1976.

29. Allan Fagerström, "Fin och sann film av Mai Zetterling," *Aftonbladet*, April 8, 1976.

30. Ove Säverman, "Mai Zetterling om kvinnolivet," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 7, 1976.

31. Jurgen Schildt, "Folk i farten: I Lübeck talar man om blandade karameller," *Aftonbladet*, November 13, 1977. In more recent years, *The Moon Is a Green Cheese* has been screened at the Swedish Cinematheque.

32. Elisabeth Sörenson, "Bildpoesi för barn—på kvällstid," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 19, 1979.

33. Widerberg, "Om filmen" (translation mine).

34. Sörenson, "Bildpoesi för barn—på kvällstid."

35. Anna Linder, "Den där dagen vi inte visste vad vi egentligen fann," flm.nu, June 4, 2015, http://flm.nu/2015/06/den-dar-dagen-vi-inte-visste-vad-vi-egentligen-fann/; telephone conversation with Lisbet Gabrielsson, October 22, 2018.

36. See John McGreevy Productions, "Recognitions & Awards," http://www.johnmcgreevyproductions.ca/Recognition.html.

37. McGreevy, *Cities*.

38. Ryberg, "Zetterlings taskiga tajming"; Linder, "PS," 53.

39. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 219.

40. Rony Bengtsson, "Skådespelerskan Mai Zetterling försvarar säljakten," *Expressen*, July 22, 1981.

41. For a more extensive analysis of the film and its production context, see Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda."

42. See Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda," 116–17.

43. Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda."

44. Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda," 124.

45. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 220.

46. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 220.

47. See "Interview with Sheila LaFarge." See also Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, for instance, 46–49 or 202–3.

48. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 165–66.

49. Nancy Banks-Smith, "Television: Lady Policeman," *The Guardian*, November 1, 1979, 11.

50. Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema."

51. See Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism."

52. Ryberg, "Zetterlings taskiga tajming."

Chapter 6. Returning to Fiction in Film and Television

1. Leif Furhammar, "Mai Zetterling död," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 19, 1994.

2. See comment on "Susan Sontag," Svensk filmdatabas, http://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=person&itemid=68559#biography.

3. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 220.

4. Sellers, *Very Naughty Boys*, 31.

5. "Briefing," *The Observer*, November 21, 1982, 31.

6. Sellers, *Very Naughty Boys*, 132.

7. Chris Auty, "The Borstal that May Backfire," *The Guardian*, March 11, 1982, 13.

8. Paul Taylor, "Raw Material," *Time-Out*, no. 638 (November 12, 1982), 24.

9. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 221, and Sellers, *Very Naughty Boys*, 138.

10. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 221.

11. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 221.

12. Sellers, *Very Naughty Boys*, 137.

13. Ad for *Scrubbers*, *Time-Out*, no. 638 (November 12, 1982), 28.

14. *Kvinnor i svensk film*, published at the occasion of the Women's Film Festival in Stockholm, February 12–20, 1983; "In the Bay Area," *Press Democrat*, June 28, 1984; "Films that Show Gays in a Fairer Light," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 26, 1985, H1, 195; Sid Smith, "AIDS Film on Roster of Gay Festival," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1985; *The Guardian*, September 20, 1993, 29.

15. Derek Malcolm, "An Easel Way to Die," *The Guardian*, November 11, 1982, 13; Philip French, "Quite a Contract," *The Observer*, November 14, 1982, 30.

16. French, "Quite a Contract."

17. Ernest Leogrande, "British Girls Behind Bars," *Daily News*, February 1, 1984, 38.

18. Kevin Thomas, "Special Screenings: 'Wallenberg': Tribute to a Shrewd Yet Naive Hero," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1984, 69.

19. Desmond Ryan, "Film: A Fresh Look at the Prison Genre," *Philadelpha Inquirer*, June 15, 1984, 22.

20. Jannike Åhlund, "Våld, hat, ömhet och humor i en våldsam blandning," *Aftonbladet*, March 17, 1983; Bernt Eklund, "Tuffa tag på flickhemmet," March 17, 1983; and Maaret Koskinen, "Färglös värld penslas grovt," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 18, 1983.

21. "Love," manuscript, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A1.11.1.

22. Fiske, *Television Culture*.

23. For several insightful discussions on "quality television" and HBO, see Leverette, Ott, and Buckley, *It's Not TV*.

24. Muir, "Cult TV Flashback #68."

25. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 223.

26. See, for example, Johannisson, *Den sårade divan*.

27. Lagercrantz, *Agnes von Krusenstjerna*.

28. Archival document, letter from von Krusenstjerna's estate, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, uncataloged material.

29. Lagercrantz, *Agnes von Krusenstjerna*, 214–15.

30. Lagercrantz, *Agnes von Krusenstjerna*, 112.

31. Zetterling *All Those Tomorrows*, 223.

32. Johannisson, *Den sårade divan*.

33. See, for instance, but also most notably, Chesler, *Women and Madness*. See Johannisson, *Den sårade divan*.

34. Chesler, *Women and Madness*; Showalter, *The Female Malady*.

35. Nordberg, "Min konst har fäste i krisen," 22.

36. Elisabeth Sörenson, "Agnes von Krusenstjerna Mai Zetterlings nästa," *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 20, 1983; Koskinen and Rudberg, "Måste vara bättre än manliga kolleger."

37. Mia Tottmar, "Zetterling liksom Krusenstjerna ofta i motvind: 'Men varför skall allt vara lätt?,'" *Dagens Nyheter*, September 9, 1984; Viveka Vogel, "Mai lever nu: 'Att leva i nuet är livet för mig,'" *Göteborgs-Posten*, September 15, 1984.

38. Jan Aghed, "'Tack,' sa Mai Zetterling 'Vi tar det en gång till,'" *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, October 6, 1985.

39. Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar"; Hagman, "I kretsen av Agnes."

40. Fasth, "Möten i systerligt samförstånd," 33.

41. Svanberg, "Mai Zetterlings 'Amorosa.'"

42. Jurgen Schildt, "Respekt och tveksamhet för Mai Zetterlings Amorosa," *Aftonbladet*, March 14, 1986; Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar" 63.

43. Koskinen, "Syskonsjälar"; Elisabeth Sörenson, "Amorosa," *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 15, 1986.

44. For a more elaborate discussion of *Concrete Grandma*, see Larsson, "Documentary Elsewheres by Mai Zetterling."

45. Letter from Bengt Forslund, November 21, 1987, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute Archive, A2.15.3.

46. Olof Lagercrantz, "Agnes von Krusenstjerna och 'Älskande par,'" *Dagens Nyheter*, February 10, 1965.

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1. Almqvist, *Det går an. Sara Videbeck and the Chapel* can be downloaded from the Internet Archive, accessed May 3, 2018, https://archive.org/details/saravidebeckandoobensgoog.

2. Letter from Bengt Forslund to Katinka Farago and Klas Olofsson, November 21, 1987, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute; letter from

Valdemar Bergendahl to Mai Zetterling, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, January 5, 1988, A2.15.3.

3. Thomson, "The Archive, the Auteur and the Unfilmed Film," 101.

4. Thomson, "The Archive, the Auteur and the Unfilmed Film."

5. Åhlund, "Mai Zetterling—rätt in i samtiden!"

6. Letter from David Hughes to Mai Zetterling, June 14, 1987, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.1.3, vol. 7.

7. Hughes to Zetterling, June 14, 1987.

8. "Törneros: En film av Mai Zetterling," Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.1, vol. 7.

9. Letter from Bengt Forslund to Katinka Farago and Klas Olofsson, November 21, 1987.

10. Letter from Rune Waldekranz to Mai Zetterling, February 21, 1988, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

11. Letter from Stina Ekblad to Mai Zetterling, February 16, 1988, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

12. Letter from Olof Lagercrantz to Mai Zetterling, December 10, 1987, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

13. Letter from Bergendahl to Zetterling.

14. Inga Landgré, "Minnen av Mai," Nordic Women in Film, March 2016, accessed May 3, 2018, http://www.nordicwomeninfilm.com/minnen-av-mai/.

15. Landgré, "Minnen av Mai."

16. Landgré, "Minnen av Mai."

17. Landgré, "Minnen av Mai."

18. Landgré, "Minnen av Mai."

19. Letter to Denise Briton, Mica Films, from Renée Goddard, European Script Fund, December 2, 1991, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

20. Letter from Lars Dahlquist, SVT Göteborg, March 3, 1992, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

21. Letter from David Aukin, head of drama, Channel 4, to Mai Zetterling, March 25, 1992, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

22. Letter from John Jackson, The Body Shop, to Mai Zetterling, August 5, 1992, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute; agreement between London Management (on behalf of Mai Zetterling) and Zoombell Ltd., July 30, 1992, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

23. Various treatments and screenplays in the Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, for example, "Maja—Städerska i tiden av Mai Zetterling & David Hughes. Fantiserat och baserat på Maja Ekelofs bok 'Rapport från en skurhink' november 1990," which is very close to a biography of Maja Ekelöf at the time of writing her diary novel; "The Woman Who Cleaned the World, producer Jo Manuel, director Mai Zetterling, writers: Mai Zetterling

and Andrew Hislop"; "Maja, producer Jo Manuel, director Mai Zetterling, writers Mai Zetterling and Andy Hysslop [*sic*], based on the book Rapport från en skurhink by Maja Ekelöf, cast Jeanne Moreau," Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.1.

24. Letter from Tracey Seaward, Jo Manuel Productions, to Max von Sydow, c/o Needful Productions, November 2, 1992, Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.15.3.

25. Zetterling, *Bird of Passage*.

26. Fax from Krijn Meerburg to Mai Zetterling, June 25, 1992; letter to Fabian Scriber from Mai Zetterling, July 15, 1993, both in Mai Zetterling Collection, Swedish Film Institute, A2.17.3.

27. See also Larsson and Stenport, "Documentary Filmmaking as Colonialist Propaganda."

28. Jansson, "The Quality of Gender Equality."

29. Hedling, "Bergman and the Business."

30. Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, and Petro, "Introduction."

31. Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, and Petro, "Introduction," 4.

32. Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, and Petro, "Introduction," 4–5.

33. Zetterling, *All Those Tomorrows*, 94–108 ("In the Monkey Cage"), 28, 32–36, 39–40.

34. Bart Mills, "Zetterling Is Back in Ring," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1982, 257.

35. Furhammar, "Mai Zetterling död."

36. Larsson, "Skenet som bedrog," 188–92.

37. See Mai Zetterling-stipendiet, http://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=11726; Unni Gjertsén, The Mai Zetterling Project, 2005; *MAI: Journal of Feminism and Visual Culture*, see http://maifeminism.com; *FLM*, no. 31 (May 2015), special issue on Mai Zetterling, http://flm.nu/2016/03/mai-zetterling-special/; Mai Zetterling Digital Archives/The Faceted Zetterling Project, https://sites.google.com/site/themaizetterlingarchives/home.

38. Jannike Åhlund, "Mai Zetterling—rätt in i samtiden!," Nordic Women in Film, May 2018, http://www.nordicwomeninfilm.com/mai-zetterling-ratt-in-i-samtiden/?lang=sv.

39. Åhlund, "Mai Zetterling—rätt in i samtiden!"

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Mai Zetterling's Stockholm, 1979, short. John McGreevy Productions. Screenplay by Mai Zetterling. https://archive.org/details/maizetterlingstockholm.

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