



LIV ULLMANN: FACE TO FACE

# The Passion of Anna

## (En passion)

### A contemporary review

The implacable silence of God has been a central theme of Bergman's films for the last fourteen years; and if man, as Bergman shows him, is made in God's image, this is reflected not in his spiritual and creative aspirations but in his incommunicability, his inability to provide his fellow humans with the reassurances (in the form of steadfast love or unequivocal moral laws) that might enable them to transcend their lack of purpose. Isolated, man is tormented by feelings of emptiness and guilt, while in his attempts to sustain relationships of trust or affection with others, these feelings – since each human life provides an unbearable mirror image of every other – are intensified to the point where they engender 'terrible mental disorders, and physical and psychical acts of violence'. These words from the letter Andreas finds in Anna's handbag apply with equal force to every relationship in the film.

That isolation and emptiness are the laws of the universe is established effortlessly in the opening shots of the film (only the second that Bergman has made in colour), as Sven Nykvist's exquisite camera work reflects the meaningless, amorphous beauty of the island landscape. Though the only character in the film not given to philosophical formulation, Andreas in his initial retreat is close to Anna's ideal of 'living in the truth'. But it is a truth unbearable to him (as we see in the early scene where, paralytically drunk, he wanders through the snowy woods shouting his own name), equally unbearable to those who encounter it and mistake its silence for strength; the complacently cynical Elis who picks him for a confidant; Eva, seeking momentary respite in his arms from her restless search for a purpose; and most of all, Anna, with her starry-eyed lies of an idyllic marriage that she attempts to recreate with him. All their relationships are lies and compounded by more lies (Andreas lies to Anna about his affair with Eva, Elis' worldly composure conceals a jealousy about Eva's infidelity), yet they persist in scrutinising one another eavesdropping, spying, searching for clues-as if beneath the lies they might discover a truth that could provide the basis for a fresh start.

Similarly Bergman scrutinises his characters, using close-ups more relentlessly than in his previous films, interrupting his barren narrative for obviously scripted interviews with his actors about the roles they play, scanning with equal attention their faces as actors and as characters. Only to deny that the camera can be a source of revelation. Elis collects photographs of the human face and demonstrates that 'the camera cannot reach into the human soul' by showing Andreas a serenely smiling picture of Eva, taken as she was starting a migraine. Similarly, the claustrophobic camerawork in *The Passion of Anna* compels the audience to participate in the protagonists' elusive quest for certainty. We witness their acts (even, sometimes, their dreams) without ever entirely grasping their motivations; and the denouement seems less conclusive and provides less relief than in any of Bergman's earlier films.

Direct allusions to earlier works occur (in the names Vergerus and Winkelman, or the nightmare that links Anna to the Liv Ullmann character in *The Shame*) and their themes survive, particularly those of private guilt, public injustice and the impossibility of changing either. Immediately after Johan has explained that no one can protect him from his persecutors and Anna and Andreas have watched a Vietnam newsreel on TV, Andreas kills a wounded bird because it is ‘too badly injured to survive’. An obvious symbol for the two main characters, except that each of them resists the other’s attempts to put him out of his misery. Instead they prefer to remain in the spiritual wasteland between life and death, mirror images of their creator who continues – even while asserting the powerlessness of art to modify them – to make art from contemporary neuroses and to scrutinise the infinite varieties of human suffering.

Jan Dawson, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1970

THE PASSION OF ANNA (aka A PASSION) (EN PASSION)

Director: Ingmar Bergman  
Production Companies: Svensk Filmindustri, Cinematograph  
Production Manager: Lars-Owe Carlberg  
Unit Production Manager: Brian Wikström  
Unit Manager: Lennart Blomkvist  
Assistant Director: Arne Carlsson  
Script Supervisor: Katarina Faragó  
Screenplay: Ingmar Bergman  
Director of Photography: Sven Nykvist  
Camera Assistant: Roland Lundin  
Grips: Einar Carlsson, Stig Limér, Börje Krogstad  
Gaffer: Gerhard Carlsson  
Electrician: Jan Nilsson  
Stills Photography: Christer Strömholm, Lennart Nilsson  
Editor: Siv Kanälv  
Art Director: P.A. Lundgren  
Properties: Karl-Arne Bergman  
Props Assistant: Jan Söderkvist  
Costumes: Mago  
Costume Assistant: Ethel Sjöholm  
Make-up: Börje Lundh  
Make-up Assistant: Cecilia Drott

Sound: Lennart Engholm  
Sound Mixer: Olle Jacobsson  
Sound Effects: Ulf Nordholm  
Transportation: Gillis Roosvall  
Narrator: Ingmar Bergman

Cast

Liv Ullmann (*Anna Fromm*)  
Bibi Andersson (*Eva Vergérus*)  
Max von Sydow (*Andreas Winkelman*)  
Erland Josephson (*Elis Vergerus*)  
Erik Hell (*Johan Andersson*)  
Sigge Füst (*Verner*)  
Svea Holst (*Verner’s wife*)  
Annika Kronberg (*Katarina, girl in day time dream*)  
Hjördis Pettersson (*Johan’s sister*)  
Lars-Owe Carlberg (*policeman 1*)  
Brian Wikström (*policeman 2*)  
Birger Malmsten (*Andreas Fromm in photo*)  
Barbro Hiort af Ornäs, Malin Ek, Britta Brunius, Brita Öberg,  
Marianne Karlbeck (*women in dream*)  
Lennart Blomkvist

Sweden 1969  
100 mins

LIV ULLMANN: FACE TO FACE

The Passion of Anna (En passion)

Thu 7 Apr 18:15; Thu 14 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large); Sat 23 Apr 14:20

Persona

Fri 8 Apr 20:40 (+ intro by Liv Ullmann); Sun 17 Apr 18:40; Mon 25 Apr 20:50

Faithless (Trolösa)

Sat 9 Apr 18:15 (+ extended intro by Liv Ullmann); Sat 23 Apr 16:40 (+ intro by Nellie Alston, freelance programmer and member of T A P E Collective); Wed 27 Apr 20:00

Autumn Sonata (Höstsonaten)

Sat 9 Apr 12:10 (+ Q&A with Liv Ullmann); Mon 18 Apr 18:20; Tue 26 Apr 18:10 (+ extended intro by Melanie Iredale, Director, Birds’ Eye View)

Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur ett äktenskap)

Sun 10 Apr 17:40; Sat 30 Apr 17:15

An-Magritt

Tue 12 Apr 20:40; Wed 20 Apr 18:20

Shame (Skammen)

Wed 13 Apr 18:10; Wed 27 Apr 18:00

The Emigrants (Utvandrarna)

Sat 16 Apr 14:10 (+ intro by Sarah Lutton, season programmer); Sun 24 Apr 13:45

The New Land (Nybyggarna)

Sat 16 Apr 18:50; Sat 30 Apr 12:40

Face to Face (Ansikte mot ansikte) + intro by Sarah Lutton, season programmer

Sun 17 Apr 14:15

Saraband

Tue 19 Apr 18:20; Sat 30 Apr 20:50

The Wayward Girl (Ung flukt)

Thu 21 Apr 18:20 (+ intro by Anna Smith, film critic and broadcaster)

Miss Julie

Sun 24 Apr 17:50; Fri 29 Apr 20:20 (+ intro by Elaine Wong, short film programmer, BFI London Film Festival)

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