



LIV ULLMANN: FACE TO FACE

Faithless (Trolösa)

+ extended intro by Liv Ullmann

The enigma that is *Faithless* has been created by at least seven storytellers, none of whom can be trusted. At its simplest, the film consists of the fantasies of an ageing writer who constructs – perhaps from his remembered past – a quartet of recalcitrant fictions: three adults, one child, and their involvement in a series of misdemeanours, in particular an extra marital affair. Although of central concern, the child can be presumed an innocent bystander already garrulous with her own stories but also anxious to learn from example. This scenario offers a painful if open-ended meditation on the pleasures and perils of infidelity and its impact on the next generation. If this were all, the single and singularly unhelpful lesson *Faithless* appears to offer would be that parents can only be relied on to indulge in strange behaviour which we seldom survive unscathed.

The director, however, has other claims. ‘I don’t really believe,’ says Liv Ullmann, ‘that a film should have a message’, but to avoid the risk of reducing *Faithless* to a collection of inconsequential anecdotes, she grants that an observer’s response is likely to be: ‘I will treat people around me more carefully.’ Less tritely, she also suggests that ‘the light in the story is that we can forget the hours that were full of suffering’ – yet the film’s characters are laden with painful memories which show little sign of fading away. On the contrary, a more persuasive theme might be that past errors are recycled, with fresh suffering as a result. Faithlessness, in short, is more pain than gain.

From a child’s point of view, the peculiar compulsion that drives adults to disregard this truism must seem incomprehensible. The void at the centre of *Faithless* is caused by the hardly avoidable discretion with which sexuality is portrayed or, rather, overlooked until the shock of explicit description when the wife tells of her husband’s attack (he rapes her when she agrees to meet him to discuss the custody of their child). Earlier the illicit couple squirm beneath the overhead camera like specimens on a slide, frantic to cover themselves from our gaze or perhaps from that of a higher authority. Erotic tension, which should provide the pulse for their affair, is instead implied by a banality of suffocating red drapes, a silk nightgown and some sinuous bedsteads. Sex itself, instead of being its own reward, becomes symbolic – of complicity, habit, power, control and punishment.

Scripted by Bergman, who even lends his name to the reclusive author portrayed by his frequent on-screen alter ego Erland Josephson, *Faithless* offers itself, with appealing guile, as authentic autobiography. The first signs are that it reconstructs the summer of 1949, when the volatile genius, two families already in collapse behind him, turned 31 and gatecrashed another marriage by way of a Parisian interlude, seemingly with few pangs of conscience. His new partner’s husband furiously attempted to win her back, finally resorting to rape. Afflicted (as he tells it in his memoir *The Magic Lantern*) by retrospective jealousy, Bergman gave the girl not the slightest sympathy, later married her, and in due course ran off with Harriet Andersson. Over the years a gradual penitence overtook his disregard for conventional restraint, charted in his films by a succession of anguished couples who, like the wretched Almans in *Wild Strawberries* (1957), subject each other to endless humiliation.

Bergman couldn’t forgive himself, according to Ullmann, for the ‘rape and rage’ episode, yet to interpret *Faithless* as exorcism would seem mistaken.

‘Much of it,’ she says of his script, ‘did not happen, that I am sure of’, while in his *Magic Lantern* description of the crucial scene Bergman himself admits, ‘I have never found out what really happened.’ On screen, Marianne’s description of her ordeal is luridly detailed, enough to raise questions about the level of her compliance but also aligning her with the many confessors in Bergman’s work (the nurse in *Persona*, 1966, for instance) who reveal dark secrets direct to camera. If, by simple omission (other than the occasional church bell) *Faithless* reflects on the melancholy condition of a literally faithless society – despite Bergman’s claim to be no longer concerned with such matters – the ritual penance of the confessional is scrupulously observed by all the film’s characters.

In an unexpected reversal, the screen Bergman asserts at one point that he never met Marianne’s husband Markus, whose manipulative influence turns out to have infected their collective behaviour for so long he almost has best claim to being the author of the piece. Since we’ve been given every reason to suppose that ‘Bergman’ and David are one, and we know David has been a family friend for years, this denial is either mischievous or mistaken, either a fanciful confirmation that the characters are primarily fictions dreamed up by ‘Bergman’ (we only properly hear Markus’ voice by letter, after all), or an absent-minded throwback to the realities of 1949. Or it could simply be that remembered fact (the visit to Paris) is in the course of the drama overtaken by the demands of fantasy. In the film Marianne has an abortion; in fact, their child grew up to be Ingmar Junior who (according to *The Magic Lantern*) loathed his father. Which ‘truth’ is the more painful?

Marianne’s luckless daughter Isabelle, to whom Ullmann claims to have devoted more attention than Bergman when she revised his screenplay, similarly has no place in *The Magic Lantern* (the custody battle was fought over two small sons). Even so, her forerunners are to be found everywhere else in Bergman’s work, from the entranced redhead who punctuates *The Magic Flute* (1975) to the wandering youth in *The Silence* (1963), the raptly attentive schoolboy at the end of *To Joy* (1949, a preface to *Faithless* just as *Scenes from a Marriage*, 1973, is its clearest rehearsal), and, of course, *Fanny and Alexander* (1982). The collision between generations is as much a part of Bergman’s iconography as rowing boats, music boxes, the proscenium arch and the Fårö shoreline. Knowing them well, Ullmann fits them all into her film.

It looks just as Bergman might have filmed it: formal, precise and demanding of its cast an astonishing surrender to a gallery of unflinching close-ups. Nothing in the camerawork is overstated, although every lighting change (gold to blue at the flick of a switch, ominous shadows when a window blind is lowered) is of calculated significance. When the camera moves, it’s with reluctance (in keeping with the mature Bergman’s dislike of tracking shots) but with exemplary relevance, as in the prowling around an apartment that ends up in the bedroom or the sudden retreat into the air above the writer as he recognises the full horror of what he’s done.

If Ullmann has unquestionably appropriated from her years with Bergman (and Josephson) a magnificent empathy with her players, she is also rewardingly attentive to visual detail. Note, for instance, the framing of the hospital sequence, the deployment of sculptures in the lawyer’s office, or the timing of the ‘discovery’ as the lovers giggle helplessly in embarrassment and desperation. By design, the final Mozart theme plays to a halt during the end credits, not two shots earlier while the writer wanders towards the sea. It is the project, with all its ambiguities, that has been put to rest, not the troubled spirit that conceived it.

Philip Strick, *Sight and Sound*, February 2001

FAITHLESS (TROLÖSA)

Director: Liv Ullmann
©/Production Companies: Sveriges Television, Svensk Filmindustri
Production Company: SVT Kanal 1 Drama
In Co-operation with: SF Norge, Norsk Rikskringkasting, YLE, Classic Srl, RAI – Radiotelevisione Italiana, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen
With the Support of: Svenska Filminstitutet, Nordisk Film- och TV-Fond
Executive Producer: Maria Curman
Producer: Kaj Larsen
Producers: Ingmar Bergman, Johan Mardell *
Production Manager: Elisabeth Liljeqvist
Paris Team Production Manager: Jacques Foussat
Post-production Manager: Hjalmar Palmgren
Paris Team: Benjamin Boucher, Stephanie Wozniak, Arnaud Million
Assistant Director: Roland Lindmark
1st Assistant Director: Gunnlaugur Jónasson
Continuity: Lotta Gummesson
Screenplay: Ingmar Bergman
Director of Photography: Jörgen Persson
Fårö 2nd Unit Photographer: Arne Carlsson
First Assistant Cameraman: Carl Persson
Clapper Loader: Lars Gustafson
Grips: Adrian Harkins-Wester
Steadicam: Mike Tiverios
Electricians: Lars Stålberg, Bent-Inge Hertzman, Tommi Andersson
Paris Team Electrician: Eric Pescher
Stills Photography: Joakim Strömholm
Editor: Sylvia Ingemarsson
Editing Assistant: Ise Wentzel
Art Director: Göran Wassberg
Art Director Assistant: Åsa Persson
Prop Man: Jan-Erik Savela
Stand-by Prop Man: Rasmus Rasmusson
Prop Man Assistant: Per Eriksson
Construction Co-ordinator: Love Malmsten
Carpenters: Jerker Malmsten, Lars Görans Kask
Painters: Teddy Holm, Per Johansson

Upholsterer: Karin Sheppard
Costume Designer: Inger Elvira Pehrsson
Costume Assistant: Inger Eiserwall
[Costume] Trainee: Einar Bjørge
[Costume] Runner Assistant: Anneli Oscarsson
Make-up: Cecilia Drott-Norlén
Grading: Sten Lindberg
Harmonica Improvisation: Love Malmsten
Music Producer: Jan P. Larsson
Music Technician: Ian Cederholm
Sound Mixer: Gabor Pasztor
Sound: Bengt Wallman, Gunnar Landström
Synchronizing: Nadja Glans
Sound Editors: Per Boström, Christer Melén, Thomas Krantz, Bo Persson
Negative Cutting: Susanne Lund
Foley: Lars Klettner, Ulf Olausson
Publicity: Patrik Westman, Jan Erik Westman

Cast

Lena Endre (Marianne Vogler)
Erland Josephson (Bergman)
Krister Henriksson (David)
Thomas Hanzon (Markus)
Michelle Gylemo (Isabelle)
Juni Dahr (Margareta)
Philip Zandén (Martin Goldman)
Marie Richardson (Anna Berg)
Therese Brunnander (Petra Holst)
Stina Ekblad (Eva)
Johan Rabaeus (Johan)
Jan-Olof Strandberg (Axel)
Björn Granath (Gustav)
Gertrud Stenung (Martha)

Sweden/Norway/Finland/Italy/Germany 2000©
154 mins

* Uncredited

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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
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 Passion of Anna (En passion)
Thu 14 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large); Sat 23 Apr 14:20
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

Persona

Sun 17 Apr 18:40; Mon 25 Apr 20:50
Autumn Sonata (Höstsonaten)
18 Apr 18:20; Tue 26 Apr 18:10 (+ extended intro by Melanie Iredale, Director, Birds’ Eye View)
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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