4
Bergman, writing, and photographs: the auteur as an ekphrastic ghost

Maaret Koskinen

It is well known that Ingmar Bergman's films make ample use of photographs and that these serve various functions in his works. For example, in his article entitled 'The Holocaust in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*: The Instability of Imagery', Peter Ohlin unravels the many uses and contexts connected with the photograph of the little boy in the Warsaw ghetto used by Bergman in the film. Similarly, Linda Haverty Rugg has shown how photographs in Bergman's films also comprise important components in his autobiographical project and 'construction of selfhood', and how they can serve as both 'portals into the Other and the past'.[1] Moreover, Rugg notes that Bergman makes use of photographs in his writings, too. In the conclusion to his autobiography *Laterna magica* (1987), for example, Bergman describes some of the photographs of his mother with 'affection and extraordinary attention to detail'. Besides, in '[r]evisiting the photographs of his parents again and again', Rugg concludes that Bergman used these as passageways to conceiving yet more narratives, namely the novels based on his parents—*Den goda viljan* (1991)/*The Best Intentions* (1992), *Söndagsbarn* (1992)/*Sunday's Children* (1994), and *Enskilda samtal*/*Private Confessions* (1996).[2]

The present chapter focuses on precisely this kind of detailed linguistic description of photographs in some of Bergman's writings.

1 Peter Ohlin, 'The Holocaust in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*: The Instability of Imagery', *Scandinavian Studies* 77:2 (2005), 241–274; and Linda Haverty Rugg, 'Carefully I Touched the Faces of My Parents: Ingmar Bergman's Autobiographical Image', *Biography* 24:1 (Winter 2001), 72–84 (at 72–73). See also Haverty Rugg, 'Self-Projection and Still Photography in the Work of Ingmar Bergman', in Maaret Koskinen (ed.), *Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008), pp. 107–119.

2 Haverty Rugg, 'Carefully I Touched', 81.

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In this instance, however, my aim is to demonstrate that the uses and functions of such ekphrases extend well beyond their role in imaginative conception and their organic place in the fiction of individual works.

W.J.T. Mitchell defines ekphrasis as ‘a verbal representation of visual representation’; that is, typically an attempt to describe and capture an image or painting in writing. The crucial aspect, he adds, ‘is that the “other” medium, the visual, graphic, or plastic object, is never made visible or tangible *except* by way of the medium of language’.[3] In thus presenting an ersatz, an ekphrasis plays with the *absence* of the image as the presence of the text and does so as if by default. This oscillation between presence and absence takes on an added dimension when considered in the light of Christine Geraghty’s more general definition of adaptation, in which there is always a ‘recall’ (in the reader or audience) that ‘positions an adaptation precisely as an adaptation’.[4] That is to say, Geraghty suggests that here one often finds a ‘layering of narratives, performances, and/or settings in which one way of telling a story is set against another. Such a layering is often indicated by the foregrounding of media signifiers which invite the audience to set one media experience against another.’[5]

I will concentrate on just such invitations to media experiences or media meditations as they occur in Ingmar Bergman’s writings, approaching them by way of a selection of ekphrastic descriptions of photographs, especially in two of his novels mentioned above: *The Best Intentions* and *Sunday’s Children*. However, before looking more closely at Bergman’s writings ‘proper’ (that is, at the novel-like scripts he wrote at the end of his career, which he knew he would not direct himself), it might prove useful to recall the ‘opposite’ phenomenon: the use and function of writing and text in Bergman’s

3 W.J.T. Mitchell, ‘There Are No Visual Media’, in Oliver Grau (ed.), *MediaArtHistories* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 395–406 (p. 402).

4 Christine Geraghty, *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Plymouth and Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), p. 4.

5 Christine Geraghty, ‘Foregrounding the Media: *Atonement* (2007) as an Adaptation’, *Adaptation* 2:2 (2009), 91–109 (at 95), doi: 10.1093/adaptation/app006. Also reprinted under the same title in the same title in Deborah Cartmell (ed.), *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2012), doi: 10.1002/9781118312032.ch20.

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films, since these are abundant and tend to serve a similar function in foregrounding media specificities.

One particular instance of this kind is one that I have used previously as a paradigmatic example of 'intermedial overdetermination'.[6] It is a sequence at the beginning of *The Passion of Anna* (1969), in which Anna knocks on Andreas's door (played by actors Liv Ullmann and Max von Sydow, respectively) and asks to use the phone. She forgets her purse when she leaves, which prompts Andreas to open it. Finding a letter there, he cannot resist the urge to read it. Bergman employs a cut-in on the letter as he reads, so that the audience first sees it in full as we read over Andreas's shoulder, so to speak. Before long, however, a couple of sentences that speak of 'violence both mental and physical' are made to stand out in focus; and later we come to understand that the letter is from Anna's previous, now-deceased husband.

It just so happens that Anna and Andreas later move in together, and one evening Anna begins to tell Andreas about her former husband and how happy their marriage was. 'Of course, we had our conflicts', she admits, 'but the words between us were never bitter or harsh.' As she ends her story, Bergman includes a quite surprising flashback to the letter—specifically to those lines containing the words 'violence both mental and physical'. In other words, a strong sense of ambiguity is introduced here between what Anna is saying—her spoken words—and the written words in the letter, raising the question of just what we are to believe regarding her supposedly happy marriage. Our interpretation is further complicated by the fact that Bergman here shows Anna in tight close-up. Indeed, her entire, lengthy story is recounted during one long, mesmerizing take of Ullmann's face, which lasts for several minutes. Arguably, this further underlines the ambiguity between what is spoken (Anna's monologue) and what is seen (her face), if for no other reason than that the facial close-up has, with time and use, come to be interpreted as signifying 'truth' in one sense or another (at least in mainstream feature-fiction film). That is to say, as soon as something is about to be revealed, confidences

6 Maaret Koskinen, *Ingmar Bergman's* The Silence: *Pictures in the Typewriter, Writings on the Screen* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press and Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), particularly pp. 109–112. Jan Holmberg and Anna Sofia Rossholm have returned to analysing the tactile and material dimensions of the letter in this sequence in 'Screened Writing: Notes on Bergman's Hand', *Word & Image* 31:4 (2015), 459–472 (at 464 and 465), doi: 10.1080/02666286.2015.1053040.

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disclosed, or someone's character unveiled, there almost invariably follows a facial close-up, which serves as a kind of visual corroboration of our somehow getting 'closer' to the truth.

It seems to me that it is precisely this associative cluster or built-in connotation of 'closeness' and 'truth' that we observe in this scene, albeit with the exact opposite intention compared with the norm—to create ambiguity rather than clarity—while at the same time calling into question the received, conventional use or putative 'nature' of the cinematic close-up. In other words, if speech and language are just as often used to hide and betray as to inform and clarify (according to Bergman's many pronouncements on the subject), in his films the face may serve as the best kind of mask, the best kind of lie. Moreover, in this particular case Bergman has the added advantage of using a facial close-up of a very good actress.[7]

It is of particular interest that the letter, too, is shown in close-up—indeed, extreme close-up—through scrutinizing pans back and forth, so that the entire screen is filled with its text. In fact, the very size of the close-up of its individual lines creates an oddly menacing, impenetrable, grid-like 'lettrification' of the image, which matches or mirrors (so to speak) the nature of the equally inscrutable facial close-up of Anna. In other words, although the letter is literally 'in our face' (or rather, precisely *because* it is in our face), it becomes inaccessible. We can barely see its words, let alone comprehend them. We cannot get at the truth, no matter how close it appears to being within our grasp. Thus, just like the facial close-up, the letter hides in plain sight owing to its conspicuous visibility. This scene constitutes an example of the cinematic spatialization of text and words as though they were spatial objects. As such, there is an intermedial overdetermination at play here too; a kind of aggressive appropriation of the image by the text, of one medium by the other.

In this context, it is worth bearing in mind that Bergman's works not only conflate various media, but often also include a kind of *uncertainty as to the choice of medium*. While this might be a result of entirely pragmatic considerations (and, later in his career, a result of his undeniably privileged position—a script by Bergman was sure to be produced in some shape or form), to me it also seems to stem from Bergman's acute awareness of the sheer abundance of media

7 For Bergman's comments on the subject, see numerous quotes taken from both interviews and his notebooks, in Koskinen, *Ingmar Bergman's* The Silence, pp. 68–74.

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specificities at hand, not least the fact that *by default, the presence of one chosen medium entails the absence, yet lingering presence*, of another. Significantly, Bergman seems to be keenly aware that whichever medium he chooses determines what can be said; therefore, there is always another 'truth' (artistic or otherwise) that remains unreachable and unarticulated. The medium at hand is always negotiable, conditional, and tentative, as is 'Being' itself. This state of things seems to be suggested by the frequency with which Bergman 'conflated' the titles of his manuscripts, as though fully aware that if the work could not be realized in one medium, another would have to do. There are numerous examples of this practice among Bergman's titles, such as 'Trolösa. Partitur för en film/Faithless. Musical Score for Film' (manuscript dated 14 May 1997) and 'Anna. Scener för valfritt medium av Ingmar Bergman. Första versionen/Anna. Scenes for any medium by Ingmar Bergman. First version' (manuscript undated), which also remained in the typed script dated 18 September 2001.

Perhaps the best example of this hint of uncertainty or medial conflation ('scenes for any medium') is found in the script for *En själslig angelägenhet* (1980)/(*A Spiritual Matter*), which was first conceived in the form of a script for a cinematic experiment consisting entirely of close-ups. According to a telephone conversation with Bergman (14 May 2000), it was also written with Liv Ullmann in mind as the lead character; but after she declined the role as Emilie in *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), the script remained dormant for seven years before Bergman resumed work on it. However, Ullmann's part in this course of events may not have been the only factor—or even the decisive factor—in this hiatus, as it seems that the problems concerning the nature of this script existed from its inception. The initial description of the protagonist Victoria found in Bergman's notebook seems at first to be quite straightforward. However, Bergman soon experiences problems with what he calls the course or chain of events (*händelseförlopp*):

> When I try to devise a course of events for Victoria, I feel so unhappy and I just want to cry. Could it be that *something else* is more important, could it be that there is no real course of events, could it be that this whole thing is a *study*, is there something that wants to be said through this face, these hands, this voice[?]
>
> (Diary entry dated Thursday 22 May 1980)[8]

8 In Swedish: '*När jag försöker konstruera ett händelseförlopp för Victoria vill jag bara falla i gråt och känner mig olycklig. Är det så att* något annat

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'Could it be that there is no real course of events?' Indeed, it seems as though the story about Victoria was unsure of its own nature. That is, it seemed to want to be something other than a film. Was it a play, a television show, or perhaps even something for radio ('this voice')? As we now know, it turned out to be the latter. As Bergman himself explained in an interview with journalist Eva Ekselius in 1988: 'I've had the script since 1982. But then I looked at it again and suddenly I saw—this is a play for the radio! Then I finished it this summer.' As Ekselius rightly notes: 'The play is an example of plays that have been left unfinished because they hadn't found their proper medium.'[9]

Put another way, it seems that in Bergman's mind—and certainly in his practice—*all* media are ontologically flawed, and that there is, and always will be, a divide between that which is mediated and that which mediates. Naturally, it goes without saying that a medium can never be complete, otherwise it would conflate with the reality it tries to represent. Nonetheless, in Bergman's case it is precisely this slippage that seems to render any and every medium so very rich and attractive, but also challenging and scary—especially in relation to writing.

In fact, *A Spiritual Matter* could very well be one of the clearest manifestations of Bergman's ambivalence towards writing. After all, he began his career as a frustrated playwright who, from the very beginning, filled his film scripts not only with well-wrought dialogue but also with highly literary descriptions, notably of visual, tactile, and olfactory impressions. Then, in mid-career, Bergman attempted to retreat to puritan experiments with silences (supposedly more 'cinematographic' in nature, in his own words), only to become a willing writer again, with all that this entails. 'In the beginning was the Word', so to speak, although words were ever—and

är viktigare, är det så att det inte finns något verkligt händelseförlopp, är det så att det hela är en studie*, är det något som vill bli sagt genom det här ansiktet, de här händerna, den här rösten. (tors. 22.5.80).*' Diary no. 37/F:024:03, Ingmar Bergman Archives.

9 '*Det var en sak som jag haft liggande sedan 1982. Men så tog jag fram den igen och då såg jag: detta är ju en radiopjäs! Sedan skrev jag den i somras.*' Interview by Eva Ekselius, 'Ingmar Bergman om radioteatern och kulturbyråkratin: Det exklusiva är livsviktigt', *Dagens Nyheter*, 7 February 1988: '*Pjäsen är ett exempel på pjäser som blivit liggande därför att de inte hittat sitt rätta medium.*' Translations mine.

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acutely—present throughout Bergman's career.[10] In short, the author and wordsmith in Bergman could neither deny nor escape his fate. Ironically, the story of Victoria, a film meant to consist entirely of ('cinematographic') close-ups, turned into a monologue for radio—the quintessential medium for the speaking voice and the spoken word.

Let us now return to Bergman's writings in printed form, since 'media meditations' are also present in both his published and unpublished scripts, either through referencing or through the appropriation of one medium by another. As previously mentioned, these meditations are especially conspicuous in a number of ekphrastic descriptions of photographs and paintings found in Bergman's notebooks, drafts, and manuscripts, although ultimately only traces of them may be visible in his finished works.

In my book referenced earlier, *Ingmar Bergman's* The Silence: *Pictures in the Typewriter, Writings on the Screen*, I highlighted some examples from Bergman's notebooks regarding what have been dubbed the 'trilogy films'. One such example concerns Bergman's lengthy description of a painting by Swedish artist Axel Fridell (1894–1935) entitled *Den gamla antikvitetshandeln* ('The old antique shop'). Although Bergman describes the work in a typical ekphrasis in his notebook (and in extreme detail at that), there is no trace of it in the published script, nor in any of the three finished films. My conclusion was that this description, which runs to several pages, served as a self-imposed writing exercise more than anything else, in this case executed by someone who, at the time, claimed to be fearful of writing and of words owing to previous poor reviews by literary critics (at least according to Bergman himself).

This is precisely why it is noteworthy that Bergman retained such ekphrastic descriptions in his much-later writings, in the novel-like scripts he wrote after his final film made for the cinema theatre, *Fanny and Alexander*, knowing full well that he would not direct them. Now, why is this? After all, by this time there was hardly any

10 The fact that Bergman began his career as writer, and passionately desired to be accepted as such by the literary establishment, is the main argument in my book *I begynnelsen var ordet: Ingmar Bergman och hans tidiga författarskap* ['In the beginning was the word: Ingmar Bergman's early writings'] (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 2002). In his excellent book *Författaren Ingmar Bergman* ['Ingmar Bergman the author'] (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2018), Jan Holmberg also argues that, ultimately, Bergman is likely to be remembered more as an author than as a film and theatre director.

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need for 'writing exercises', given the glowing reception accorded to his autobiography, *Laterna magica* (among other written works). *Laterna magica* not only became a best-seller, but also the book that prompted critics worldwide to anoint Bergman as a master of words, of writing. That is to say, as a 'real' author, and not 'just' an auteur.

In fact, the presence and importance of photographs in and for Bergman's stories are already emphasized in the prologue to *The Best Intentions*:

> The Åkerblom family were great ones for taking photographs. After my father's and mother's deaths, I inherited a marvelous collection of albums, the earliest dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, the most recent from the beginning of the 1960s. There is undoubtedly a great deal of magic in those photographs, particularly when looked at with the help of a gigantic magnifying glass: the faces, the faces, hands, postures, clothes, jewelry, the faces, the pets, views, lighting, the faces, curtains, pictures, rugs, summer flowers, birches, rivers, coiffures, angry pimples, budding breasts, handsome mustaches—this could continue ad infinitum, so it is best to stop. But most of all the faces. I go into the photographs and touch the people in them, the ones I remember and those I know nothing about. It is almost more fun than old silent films that have lost their explanatory texts. I invent patterns of my own.[11]

First of all, the narrator makes sure to point out that these photographs do, in fact, exist, while simultaneously underlining their relationship to fiction and imagination. Unsurprisingly, Bergman returns to the photographs mentioned here later in the novel, in the form of more detailed ekphrases. One prominent example from the published novel/script is a photograph that Bergman used previously in his short film *Karin's Face* (1986), which is based entirely on pictures of his mother. Here again, the narrator emphasizes the physical existence of the photo, while at the same time stressing its connection with fiction and imagination:

> Ernst has been given a camera with a delayed action release as a birthday present, and a family photograph is to be arranged. (The photograph actually exists, though it is from a somewhat later period, probably the summer of 1912, but it fits better into this context, and anyhow this isn't a documentary.) After breakfast, the clan reassembles

11 Ingmar Bergman, *The Best Intentions: A Novel*, translated from Swedish by Joan Tate (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1993), 'Prologue', n.p.

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> in the little meadow at the edge of the forest. It is a warm, sunny day, and everyone is in light clothes. Well then [...] two chairs have been taken out. On one sits the traffic superintendent with his cane and breakfast cigar. *If you look carefully with a magnifying glass, you can see that his calm, handsome face is distorted with pain and sleeplessness*. Next to her husband sits Karin Åkerblom. *There is no doubt whatsoever* which of the two is the head of the household. The plump little person *radiates authority and possibly smiling sarcasm*. She has a stately summer hat on her well-tended hair, a kind of seal on her authority, clear eyes looking straight at the camera, and a small double chin. She has got herself into position to be photographed, but *a few seconds later, she gets up full of vitality to issue orders*.[12]

This is a true ekphrasis, in that the description also encompasses interpretations. The traffic superintendent's face is said to be distorted (which, when looking at the picture, is certainly not that obvious), whereas his wife, Bergman's grandmother, is identified as the head of the household, and so on. All this is followed by the ensuing exhortations:

> Go into the photograph and recreate the following seconds and minutes! Go into the photograph as you want to so badly! Why you want to so badly is hard to make out. Perhaps it's to provide some somewhat tardy redress to that gangling young man at Ernst's side. The one with the handsome, naked, uncertain face.[13]

This imperative is multi-layered: on the one hand, it is an appeal to the narrator himself, which is of course part and parcel of the self-conscious, self-reflexive literary style, since it includes the reader as a conscious participant in the production and process of the text, as it were. As Louise Vinge and Rochelle Wright among others have pointed out, Bergman's published scripts contain many self-conscious interjections of this sort.[14] Indeed, there are numerous examples: 'Now I shall describe a quarrel that is soon to explode between Anna and Henrik. [...] Go ahead, you can browse and

12 Bergman, *The Best Intentions*, p. 76 (italics added).

13 Bergman, *The Best Intentions*, p. 77.

14 Rochelle Wright, 'The Imagined Past in Ingmar Bergman's *The Best Intentions*', in Roger W. Oliver (ed.), *Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey: On Stage, On Screen, In Print* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995), pp. 116–125; and Louise Vinge, 'The Director as Writer: Some Observations on Ingmar Bergman's *Den goda viljan*', in Sara Death and Helena Forsås-Scott (eds), *A Century of Swedish Narrative: Essays in Honour of Karin Petheri* (Norwich: Norvik Press, 1994), pp. 281–293.

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speculate; this is a party game' and 'Lighting? It's dramatic and full of contrasts!'[15]

The point, however, is that the photographs described in ekphrasis serve a similar function. Not least, they constitute exhortations to those who Bergman knew would turn his text into a film—both director Bille August and the actors, whom he encourages 'to go into the photograph and recreate'. Thus, these photographs function as regular stage directions, or, more precisely, as *film direction emanating from the written page*. And yet, in complete contradistinction to the self-reflexive interjections mentioned earlier, they are oddly *hidden as such*. Note, for instance, the subtle shift in tempo/tense: 'but a few seconds later, she gets up full of vitality to issue orders'. Here the narrator verbally inserts cinematic time and movement into that still image, as if anticipating the film he knew would be made from his script. In this instance, then, there is a literary and pragmatic, fruitful tension between stasis and movement—a 'still life' or a 'still in motion', as it were, pregnant with its own cinematic future.

As Swedish theatre critic Leif Zern pointed out in his review of Bergman's book: 'The director's gaze falls over the stage. It both sees and interacts with the performing shadows.'[16] The narrator thus becomes the director of the text, so to speak, his sharp gaze falling over the activity on as well as the lighting and setting of the stage. But he does so in a way that transcends the general notion according to which one can always argue that the manuscript of a film is itself a kind of direction. As James Schamus, the scriptwriter for Ang Lee's films, once wrote, it is sometimes all about 'taking ownership of the image by creating it in a dense and sensuous forest of words'.[17] In this case, the narrator does exactly and quite literally that—takes ownership of the photographs—*nota bene* by referencing a medium that arguably comes as close as is possible

15 Bergman, *The Best Intentions*, pp. 174–175. Oddly, however, such interjections have been excluded from the translation at times. One example is the phrase '*Nu finns det inte mer att säga om den här scenen*', which simply does not exist where it should in the translation, after the dialogue between Anna and Henrik, in Bergman, *The Best Intentions*, p. 242.

16 '*Regissörens blick faller över scenen. Den både ser och blandar sig med skuggorna som agerar.*' Leif Zern, 'Tystnad, tagning, kärleksroman', in the large Swedish tabloid *Expressen*, 2 December 1991.

17 James Schamus during a panel discussion held at Cinemateket, Film House, Stockholm, 19 March 2008.

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to the film medium from a visual perspective, namely the written page.

It is interesting that just after Bergman began writing the script for *The Best Intentions* in Munich in May 1988, he noted a number of historic events relevant to the story in his diary. First, he observed the intellectual mood in the Swedish university towns of Uppsala and Lund: 'Symbolism, Nietzscheanism, flaneur philosophy. People hung [pictures of] Böcklin on the walls and discussed Baudelaire and Verlaine and Stefan George.' He adds: 'In the spring of 1914, Pär Lagerkvist published his polemic *Literary Art and Pictorial Art*.'[18] This is nothing less than a reference to the classic paragone battle waged between poets and painters/image creators ever since the fifteenth century—a highly relevant detail, it would seem, at a time when Bergman the filmmaker was about to surrender to Bergman the writer.

Indeed, while busy working on this same script just a few days later, Bergman suddenly interjected in his diary that he should perhaps write a drama about Swedish silent filmmaker Georg af Klercker: 'I might as well, while I'm at it', he wrote. While at what, exactly? While writing a script that he knew he would not direct himself. In view of that, why not at least write something *directly linked to film*, something about a director who supposedly had to grapple more with moving images than with words? Ultimately, Bergman did just that in writing a 'drama' on af Klercker as well as on the circumstances and tribulations involved in making silent films.[19]

One can also find 'stage directions' emanating from the written page, similar to those in the manuscript for *The Best Intentions*, in *Sunday's Children*, which Bergman wrote a few years later. Take the following example in which the boy Pu accompanies his father, the parish parson, to a church sermon:

> He couldn't care less—the service is so boring it's almost incomprehensible. Pu looks around, and what he sees keeps him alive: the altarpiece, the stained-glass window, the murals, Jesus and the robbers in blood and torment. Mary leaning toward Saint John: 'Look upon your son, look upon your mother.' Mary Magdalene, that must be the sinner; have she and Jesus been screwing? In the west vault of

18 Diary, '*Den goda viljan*', no. F:025:01, date: 28 May 1988. Translation mine.

19 '*Jag tror att jag ska skriva ett sorts dialogdrama om Georg af Klercker. Det kunde jag göra medan jag ändå är i farten.*' In Bergman's diary, '*Den goda viljan*', no. F:025:01, date: 31 May 1988. Translation mine.

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> the church sits the Knight, loose-limbed and bowed. He's playing chess with Death: I have long been behind you. Close by, Death is sawing down the Tree of Life, a terrified jester sitting at the top, wringing his hands: 'Are there no special rules for actors?' Death leads the dance to the Dark Countries, holding the scythe like a flag, the congregation in a long line behind and the jester slinking along at the end. The demons keep things lively, the sinners falling headlong into the cauldrons [...], and the Serpent wriggling with malicious glee. The flagellants proceed along the south window, swinging their scourges and wailing with the mortal dread of sinners.[20]

This is clearly a regular ekphrasis of some details of Albertus Pictor's murals in the parish church of Täby, the most famous being 'Döden spelar schack' ('Man playing chess with Death'). Most of all, though, this is an unabashed and humorous ekphrasis of scenes from Bergman's own film *The Seventh Seal* (1957), as is evidenced by the distorted quotation taken from the film's dialogue: 'I have been walking by your side for a long time' is here rendered 'I have long been behind you', which, in the Swedish original, is both more concretely expressed and aptly childish in its formulation: '*Jag har länge funnits bakom din rygg*'/'I have long been behind your back'. In reality, this passage makes greater use of Bergman's own film than of any mural painting, as it is unlikely that Pictor ever painted a jester.[21]

The narrator and Bergman thus evoke Bergman's own iconic film in the form of a 'flashback into the future', in what is also a nod to the film's director.[22] Here, again, it appears that Bergman the director has had difficulty relinquishing control. Or, more precisely, that Bergman the author seems to have had a hard time denying the director within. In such a situation, what strategy could be more suggestive than sneaking a kind of intermediary—some sort of ersatz—into the text in the form of ekphrases, detailed descriptions

20 Ingmar Bergman, *Sunday's Children*, translated from Swedish by Joan Tate (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1994), pp. 136–137.

21 Pia Melin, 'Death Playing Chess with Man and Related Motifs: Painted Allegories by Albertus Pictor in some Uppland Churches', in Olle Ferm and Volker Honemann (eds), *Chess and Allegory in the Middle Ages: A Collection of Essays* (Stockholm: Sällskapet Runica et Mediævalia, Münster, Stockholm, and Uppsala Universities, 2005), pp. 9–16.

22 In fact, Bergman used the term 'flashback into the future' in this book when inserting a passage about his elderly father. Bergman, *Sunday's Children*, p. 85.

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of photographs and paintings which come as close as possible to the visual aspect of film in a written text, and which function as intermediaries between pure text (author) and moving images (director) while also reminding the reader (as well as the professionals on the film set) of the director's presence in his absence? In this way, too, Bergman seems continuously to conjure forth his own biographical legend, as if to remind the reader of just who is really in charge in the context of these pages. This conclusion is supported by an analysis of the earlier (unpublished) version of the script for *The Best Intentions* vis-à-vis what has been cut from the final, published manuscript. For instance, when the female protagonist Anna is about to answer a letter, a long passage follows that was eventually cut from Bergman's script:

> Wrinkled foreheads, worried expressions! Our dramaturge has to find strength in a plastic cup of coffee and a pipe of smoke. What on earth are these excursions? Bergman should know that lengthy letters are impossible in our fast medium! And on top of that, all these descriptions. Does he really think that it is possible—practically feasible—to materialize even partially his instructions as to wallpaper, weather conditions, intonations, lighting, and expressions? For sure, he will soon start describing people's thoughts—it's only a matter of time […] Then I will have to write a polite letter to say that, yes, of course, it's all very interesting and even somewhat gripping, but that our finances, etcetera, and all that. My defence is brief, but brilliant. I don't write for the dramaturge. I don't write for the possible viewers, although they're constantly on my mind. I don't even write for the decision-makers. I write for the actors […], who desire material and stimulation for the imagination.
>
> A director thinks that each piece of information is important, but then shapes everything according to his own mind. The cinematographer enjoys receiving suggestions regarding the lighting, but, being a practical fellow, he knows exactly what can be done. The prop master has his preferences and knowledge, which might be much more substantial than the author's: every educated person surely knows that our city didn't get trams until 1912. […] Not to mention the costume designer: just throw your information my way, important and unimportant, large and small, wise and inane, and we will decide ourselves what to keep and what to discard.[23]

23 From an early, typed version of the manuscript that includes edits made by hand, no. B: 080. Translation mine.

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In effect, the narrator here *admits* to his urge to direct from the written pages, even to the extent that he anticipates the protests that are sure to be voiced by writing them into the script itself! Even so, as mentioned earlier, this passage was cut from the published version in the end, as though Bergman realized that it too readily revealed his wish to meddle in future proceedings.

In conclusion, Bergman seems to have opted for a much more elegant solution in keeping his directorial impulses in check (and yet allowing them to be present), not only through a constantly and overtly present narrative voice but also by means of ekphrastic descriptions of photographs and images that achieve their purpose in a much more covert, invisible manner. This invisible quality comes in layers. Firstly, in that the descriptions of the photographs are ekphrastic in the traditional sense: that is to say, the written-language medium captures an existing image, rendering the absent medium present in and through language only, thereby pandering to an author's medium. And yet, writing is simultaneously used to evoke a different absentee: the director and wielder of moving images, who hovers like a phantom over the textual proceedings.

It is hence evident that the ekphrastic descriptions of the photographs in Bergman's novels are scarcely employed for their documentary veracity only. Neither are they included for his own imagination's sake, nor primarily for the benefit of the actors, the latter being Bergman's own claim. The author of the text also recruits the auteur as an invisible presence, a spectre vicariously directing from the printed page.

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