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Ingmar Bergman's afterlife

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DEAR EDITORS OF THEATRICALIA,

I HAVE NOTICED THAT YOU ARE DEVOTING THE ISSUE 1/2019 TO MY WORK. I FIND YOUR PERSPECTIVE INTERESTING ALTHOUGH I MYSELF WOULD BE VERY CAREFUL WHEN DEALING WITH WHAT I LEFT BEHIND.

REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING I HAVE DONE FOR THEATRE IS GONE, EVERYTHING I HAVE WRITTEN IS A SKETCH EVEN THOUGH JAN HOLMBERG WOULDN'T AGREE WITH ME. AND MY FILMS WELL, WHO IS ACTUALLY WATCHING THEM TODAY?

TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST, I REGARD ART AND NOT ONLY THE ART OF THE CINEMA AS LACKING IMPORTANCE. LITERATURE, PAINTING, MUSIC, CINEMA, THEATRE BEGET AND GIVE BIRTH TO THEMSELVES.

NEW MUTATIONS AND COMBINATIONS EMERGE AND ARE DESTROYED SEEN FROM THE OUTSIDE, THE MOVEMENT POSSESSES A NERVOUS VITALITY, THE MAGNIFICENT ZEAL OF ARTISTS TO PROJECT, FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR AN INCREASINGLY DISTRACTED PUBLIC, PICTURES OF A WORLD THAT NO LONGER ASKS WHAT THEY THINK OR BELIEVE IN.

1.

IN A FEW PRESERVES ARTISTS ARE
PUNISHED, THEY ARE REGARDED AS DANGEROUS
AND WORTH STIFLING OR STEERING. BY AND
LARGE, HOWEVER, ART IS FREE, SHAMELESS,
IRRESPONSIBLE AND, AS I SAID, THE MOVEMENT
IS INTENSE, ALMOST FEVERISH IT RESEMBLES,
IT SEEMS TO ME, A SNAKESKIN FULL OF ANTS.
THE SNAKE ITSELF IS LONG SINCE DEAD, EATEN
OUT FROM WITHIN, DEPRIVED OF ITS POISON BUT
THE SKIN MOVES, FILLED WITH A BUSY LIFE.

HOWEVER, I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR
YOUR INDULGENCE, AND I HOPE ESPECIALLY FOR
YOURSELF THAT THE ISSUE WILL BECOME A
SUCCESS.

DE HJÄRTLIGASTE HÄLSNINGAR TILL ER
ALLA

INGMAR BERGMAN

FÅRÖ DEN 2 FEBRUARI 2019, S. D. G.

Editorial

Ingmar Bergman's Afterlife

Looking for the topic of this issue of the journal *Theatralia*, Ingmar Bergman's 100 anniversary in 2018 appeared to be a perfect opportunity to approach the extensive work of the Swedish filmmaker, theatre director, and writer from various perspectives related to diverse national or transmedia contexts in which his work was and still is approached. Not to mention the fact that Ingmar Bergman continues to be, according to the statistics, one of the most staged Scandinavian playwrights.

Bergman himself was occasionally rather sceptic about the nature of art (see his essay 'The Snakeskin', which he also quotes in the fictive salute addressed to *Theatralia*)¹. He claimed that 'religion and art are kept alive for sentimental reasons, as a conventional courtesy to the past, or in benevolent concern for the increasingly nervous citizens of leisure.' On the other hand, he identified with a happy and curious ant moving the empty snakeskin, thus giving the old art a new form. In this issue, we too scrutinize the new forms of Bergman's works. This is apparent especially in the article by Andrea Hanáčková and Tomáš Bojda on Czech radio productions of Bergman scripts, focusing on silence and how differently various directors handled it. Eva Stehlíková concentrates on several theatre productions of *The Seventh Seal* on Czech stages and explores in what way these pieces step out of Bergman's shadow. Romana Švachová's article about the shifts between the script of *Persona* and the actual movie also rethinks Bergman's potential. Švachová is trying to define what and why got lost during the production of the film and what it means for adaptation theory, using the social constructionist approach of the positioning theory. Bettina Perregaard catches the fluid nature of Bergman's partly autobiographical text *The Best Intentions*, which, despite its proximity to a novel, has many theatrical features. She asks how this fact relates to Søren Kierkegaard's concept of character, role, and self. Jan Dlask looks at the theological context of the film *Winter Light* and tries to uproot the widely spread theory that this Bergman's work is an atheistic proclamation.

1 Incomplete English translation of this essay can be found at: <http://www.ingmarbergman.se/en/production/snakeskin>. Originally published in *Daily Mail Expressen*, 1st August 1965. Reprinted as a foreword to *Persona* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1966).

These Bergmanesque studies are supplemented by two interviews with people, who continually work with Bergman's texts. The first one is Jan Holmberg, the CEO of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation in Stockholm, published a book *Forfätteren Ingmar Bergman* about Bergman the writer last year (the book is also reviewed in this issue). Ingmar Bergman Foundation is administering an archive preserving the complete work of Ingmar Bergman. Jan Holmberg also kindly let us publish the translated version of his paper 'Cinema as a Detour', which he delivered at the conference *Ingmar Bergman: 100 Years* in Lund, Sweden in June 2018 (and later also in Prague during the *Bergman Theatre Week*). In this paper, he explores the unique nature of Bergman's scripts and demonstrates how easily can Bergman be misinterpreted when the translator is not sufficiently observant. The other interviewee has been carefully studying Bergman's language and style for a long time. The translator Zbyněk Černík provided subtitles for most of Bergman's movies and he was also the editor of the very first Czech edition of Bergman's scripts in 1982. The most recent edition of Bergman's texts, containing the scripts of *Hour of the Woolf*, *Shame*, *The Passion of Anna* and *From the Life of the Marionettes*, was published in 2018 and is reviewed in this issue too. Černík speaks about his encounters with Bergman which were mostly spiritual but did not lack refreshing moments.

In the Reviews section, the reader will find reviews of three recently published books related to Ingmar Bergman. The already-mentioned publications are complemented by the review of the posthumously published book *The Serious Game* by the Swedish scholar Egil Törnquist, in which the author analyses the chosen productions of the plays directed by Ingmar Bergman together with the dramaturgical shifts Bergman made.

Two reports about events organized in honour of Ingmar Bergman in the Czech and Slovak Republic in 2018 might be found in the Events. The reflected festivals belong to the type of events that did not narrow Bergman to a mere filmmaker but, on the contrary, subjectified him through theatre, writing, dance, or psychology. An astonishing scale of similar events took place all over the world. Let us mention for example the conference *Faithless: Luther in Bergman and Bergman in Luther* taking place at the School of Theology in Sweden, several screenings of a dance film *Ingmar Bergman Through The Choreographer's Eye*, or many stagings of various Bergman scripts (*Scenes From a Marriage* appearing simultaneously in Copenhagen, Madrid, Hamburg, Barcelona, Bilbao, Queensland, Hämeenlinna and Reykjavik).² The very last text in the Events section is the obituary of a scholar Helena Kadečková, a dear teacher and colleague of several people who participated on the preparation of this issue. As the author of the obituary mentions, Helena Kadečková was a passionate moviegoer. People who knew her said she loved films by Ingmar Bergman. We hope, that she would be satisfied knowing she is remembered in the journal devoted to his work. Milan Žitný, a Germanist, Scandina-
vianist and translator, has unexpectedly died while we were preparing this issue. Žitný (*1948) has translated four Bergman's texts into Slovak and also wrote several articles about him. In a recent radio interview, he recalled that Bergman had sent him the

² See the timeline of selected Bergman 100 events presented in September 2017 at the official launch of Bergman 100-Year Jubilee in London: <https://mb.cision.com/Public/7795/2348268/904e160341f84c1e.pdf>

Slovak translations back with personal dedication, which made Žitný very happy. Both Slovaks and Czechs lose in him a prolific translator and a highly qualified scientist. May he rest in peace.

In the appendix, one can find a small collection of posters by Czech and Slovak designers, which were created when Bergman's films entered the Czechoslovak distribution. Instead of using photos from the films, they were usually conceived as distinctive visual expressions providing us with the image the film inspired in these artists. It is not surprising that some of the posters are surrealistic and expressionist.

The article by Dorota Sosnowska included in the Spectrum section is not related to Bergman. It addresses the issue of performative character of workers' strikes in Poland between 1945 and 1948, asking who is the actual author of the discourse when it comes to the revolutions and what should thus be the source of historical narration.

After explaining what is to be found in our Bergman issue, it is time to reveal what cannot be found here. As might be apparent, there is no article written by a film specialist. The Czech film historians interested in Bergman's films – Stanislava Příkladná from the Film Studies Department of Charles University in Prague and Jaromír Blažejovský from the Department of Film Studies and Audiovisual Culture of Masaryk University in Brno could not for various reasons contribute. Let us nevertheless mention, that they contributed to Bergman centenary in another way. In July 2018 they were guests of the special issue of the radio programme *Film: Reflexe!* dedicated to Bergman at *Český rozhlas Vltava* (Czech Radio), which was hosted by their younger colleagues Šárka Gmíterková and Pavel Sladký. In this programme, it became evident that the younger generation of Czech film historians (and probably also Czech audience) do not find Bergman as intriguing as the older generation did. The question 'Why is this so?' was raised. Is it because Bergman's psychoanalyzing approach, amplified by slow narration, is not attractive for film historians? Radomír Kokeš from the Department of Film Studies and Audiovisual Culture of Masaryk University offers another explanation. According to him, today's easy accessibility of any film via streaming and other channels causes that young film historians rather concentrate on various, sometimes very narrow or even random phenomena (such as for example Japanese anime, Italian Western or Bulgarian sci-fi). They also do not find it binding to know the modernistic canon (to which Bergman with his films undoubtedly belongs to) in detail. The last generation for which the film history was, first and foremost, a collection of influential works by distinctive authors, which had to be watched and studied, was probably born around 1980.³ It would be interesting to know whether this observation could be generalised or if it is a particularly Czech phenomenon.

Subsequently, the essayist and teacher at Janáček's Academy of Music and Performing Arts Pavel Švanda, who has monitored the introduction of Bergman's films into the Czech environment (starting profoundly in the 1960s and who since the 1990s for two decades used to organise the screenings and seminars about Bergman in Brno),

³ From an e-mail correspondence between K. Stehlíková and R. Kokeš, 25. 10. 2018, personal archive of K. Stehlíková.

admitted during the discussion on different faces of Ingmar Bergman held in Brno in June 2018 that the youngest generation has to overcome more obstacles when wanting to reflect Bergman. No wonder, Bergman's movies are becoming more and more distant. They are already a closed chapter of film history. That is the reason why it is so fascinating to watch Bergman's afterlife to be still lived on paper, in radio and especially in theatre. The snakeskin continues to move.

I would like to thank the team of the Department of Theatre Studies, the executive editors Dominika Polášková and Klára Škrobánková. I would also like to thank the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University, who supported our efforts in editing this volume, to the authors who contributed to the volume and to the peer-reviewers of the essays. Last but not least, I would like to express broader thanks to all the institutions, which helped to make the Czech Bergman year so colourful by organizing and funding various events, namely to Swedish embassy in Prague, National Film Archive, several film distributors and festivals (*Film Europe*, *Be2Can*, *Scandi*, *Association of Czech Film Clubs*, *Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště*), Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, family Kolowrat Krakowský, Terry Posters and the Scandinavian House.

Karolína Stehlíková