*Θεολογία και κινηματογράφος. Το μέλλον της μνήμης και οι περιπέτειες του προσώπου στον Ινγκμαρ Μπέργκμαν*

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* [Νέα](http://users.uoi.gr/kopi/?category_name=%27%CE%BD%CE%AD%CE%B1%27)
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* [Αφιερώματα](http://users.uoi.gr/kopi/?category_name=%27%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%B9%CE%B5%CF%81%CF%8E%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%27)
* [Πρόγραμμα](http://users.uoi.gr/kopi/?category_name=%27%CF%80%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%BC%CE%B1%27)
* [Forum](http://users.uoi.gr/kopi/forum)

**Η έβδομη σφραγίδα**

**Πληροφορίες**

**Σκηνοθέτης:** Ingmar Bergman  
**Σενάριο:** Ingmar Bergman  
**Φωτογραφία:** Gunnar Fischer  
**Μουσική:** Erik Nordgren  
**Ηθοποιοί:** Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, Nils Poppe, Bengt Ekerot  
**Βραβεία:** Ειδικό βραβείο στο φεστιβάλ των Καννών κ.α.  
**Τοποθεσία:** Σουηδία 1957  
**Διάρκεια:** 96’

Το 1957 είναι η χρονιά που ο Ingmar Bergman δίνει το πρώτο του μεγάλο αριστούργημα που αποτελεί συγχρόνως και ταινία σταθμό στην ιστορία του σινεμά, την «Έβδομη σφραγίδα», η οποία τιμήθηκε και με ειδικό βραβείο στο φεστιβάλ των Καννών. Κεντρικά πρόσωπα της ταινίας είναι ο ιππότης Antonius Block, που επιστρέφει στη Σουηδία ύστερα από δέκα χρόνια στις σταυροφορίες, και ο ιπποκόμος του Jons. Ο πρώτος βασανίζεται από το ερώτημα της ύπαρξης ή όχι του θεού και κυρίως από τον παραλογισμό της σιωπής του θεού, που καθιστά την ανθρώπινη ύπαρξη μια μοναχική πορεία μέσα σε ένα κόσμο όπου θριαμβεύει ο θάνατος. Αντίθετα ο ιπποκόμος, κυνικός και μηδενιστής, ανακαλύπτει ότι ο φόβος είναι το μοναδικό θεμέλιο της θρησκείας. Δίπλα στα κεντρικά αυτά πρόσωπα κινούνται διάφοροι χαρακτήρες που αργά η γρήγορα δε θα ξεφύγουν από το δρεπάνι του θανάτου. Μοναδική εξαίρεση ο Jof, η Mia και το παιδί τους, μια οικογένεια σαλτιμπάγκων.

Η πανούκλα απειλεί τη χώρα. Ο ιππότης συναντάει το Χάρο, που έρχεται να τον πάρει, και του προτείνει μια παρτίδα σκάκι με αντάλλαγμα τη ζωή του, αν τον κερδίσει. Ο Χάρος δέχεται. Η σκηνή είναι από τις πιο εμβληματικές στην ιστορία του σινεμά. Ο ιππότης και ήρωας της ταινίας έχει ιδανικά, αλλά κυρίως ερωτηματικά. Η αναστολή που ζητά από το Χάρο δεν είναι από αγάπη για τη ζωή, αλλά από επιθυμία να καταλάβει. Ο ιπποκόμος του, τον οποίο παίζει ο σπουδαίος Gunnar Björnstrand, δείχνει κυνικός γιατί έχει χάσει ακόμα και την περιέργεια των ερωτηματικών. Έχει αποδεχτεί τις αρνητικές απαντήσεις, και το γεγονός ότι ο θεός δεν είναι παρά μια εικόνα, ένα ψευδαισθητικό είδωλο που ο άνθρωπος δημιούργησε υπό την πίεση της άγνοιας, και του φόβου του για το απόλυτο του θανάτου. Οι ηθοποιοί του περιπλανώμενου θιάσου έχουν αποκλείσει από τη ζωή τους τα ερωτηματικά, όχι από χαζομάρα αλλά από ανάγκη και επιλογή, και χαίρονται τη ζωή, το παιδάκι τους, τις φρέσκιες φράουλες, τα ερωτικά παιχνίδια. Σ’ αυτούς χαρίζεται η τύχη ή ο Χάρος.

«Η αγωνία μου δεν είναι ίδια μ’ εκείνη των θρήσκων παρ’ όλο που εκδηλώνεται με τον ίδιο τρόπο», λέει ο Bergman σε μια αποκαλυπτική συνέντευξη. Πραγματικά, η μεταφυσική αγωνία, η έλλειψη ικανοποίησης από τα προταθέντα, και συνεχώς προτεινόμενα, κοσμοθεωριακά συστήματα, ή ανικανότητα της παραδοσιακής ηθικής να ικανοποιήσει το ερευνητικό κι’ ανήσυχο πνεύμα του δημιουργού και, κυρίως, η ενοχλητική παρουσία του αισθήματος του «τέλους», οδήγησαν τον Bergman σε μια μανιασμένη αναζήτηση ενός «προσωπικού» θεού που στα έργα της ωριμότητας γίνεται ολοένα και περισσότερο απρόσωπος, μέχρι που χάνεται τελείως μέσα σε γενικευμένες και αόριστες μεταφυσικές θέσεις. Όπως και να ναι, η μεταφυσική του Bergman, έχει μια εξαιρετικά λεπτή διανοουμενίστικη ποιότητα και αν δεν υπήρχε πίσω της το πανίσχυρο στήριγμα της τιμιότητας και της ειλικρίνειας του δημιουργού για να της δώσει εκείνη την εντελώς προσωπική γεύση της εναγώνιας εξομολόγησης, θα κινδύνευε να καταρρεύσει από μόνη της, εξαιτίας ακριβώς της αοριστίας. Στην «Έβδομη σφραγίδα», αυτή η μεταφυσική αγωνία είναι απόλυτα ξεκαθαρισμένη, η αλληγορία αποχτά μια μοναδική διαύγεια, τα σύμβολα είναι τέλεια αποκαθαρμένα, σε σημείο που να μην αφήνουν κανένα περιθώριο για παρερμηνείες. Η συνεχής παρουσία του θανάτου όχι μόνο σαν αίσθημα αλλά και σαν απτό σύμβολο, ο αυτοσαρκασμός του δημιουργού για την ανικανότητα να δώσει μια προσωπική λύση στο πρόβλημα της σκοπιμότητας της ζωής και του θανάτου, η ισοπέδωση κάθε «σωτηριακής κοσμοθεωρίας», η βασανιστική παραδοχή ενός απλού βιολογικού γεγονότος (του θανάτου), η ειρωνεία των αφελών δογματικών και των εμπόρων της μεταφυσικής αγωνίας οι οποίοι προσπαθούν να «σώσουν» άλλους τη στιγμή που δεν κατάφεραν να σώσουν τους εαυτούς τους, και το σημαντικότερο, η ανικανότητα του κυνισμού ή της «κεκτημένης γνώσης», προσωποποιούμενης τέλεια από τον ιπποκόμο του Max von Sydow, για την εξεύρεση μιας κάποιας λύσης στο πάντα άλυτο πρόβλημα του παραλογισμού της ύπαρξης, όλα αυτά δημιουργούν μια τέλεια ισορροπημένη στη φόρμα της μεταφυσική ιλαροτραγωδία που σαν μόνη λύση προτείνει την άνευ όρων συμμετοχή στο ατέλειωτο παιχνίδι της ζωής και του θανάτου.

Βιβλιογραφία: Βασίλης Ραφαηλίδης/Λεξικό ταινιών τόμος 2 “Εκδόσεις Αιγόκερως”, Μπάμπης Ακτσόγλου/Κριτική για το περιοδικό Αθηνόραμα, Πλάτων Ριβέλλης/Η φανερή γοητεία και η κρυφή συγκίνηση του κινηματογράφου “Εκδόσεις Φωτοχώρος”

[Feature Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/productions) 16 Oct 19613 min read

# Through a Glass Darkly

In the first part of the God and Man trilogy, a writer of popular fiction charts his daughter's mental illness as the basis for a novel.



## Sub pages

* [About the film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#about-film-2)
* [Film facts](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#film-facts-2)
* [Reviews and comments](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#reviews-and-comments-1)
* [Quotations](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#quotations-0)
* [Plot summary](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#plot-summary-2)
* [Images/videos (18)](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#media)
* [Collaborators (23)](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly#people)

You're empty but capable. And now you're trying to fill your void with Karin's extinction. But how will God fit into that? It must make him more inscrutable than ever!

Martin to David

## About the film

The first draft of what was to become Through a Glass Darkly is in the form of a note on the last page of the script for Bergman's preceding film, [The Virgin Spring](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/virgin-spring). It begins with the words: 'THE WALLPAPER. She who is small and gets a story about the room with the mysterious wallpaper. Then one day she experiences it.'  
  
Karin is played by [Harriet Andersson](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/harriet-andersson-0). If her role in [Summer with Monika](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/summer-monika)was her big breakthrough, the aforementioned complex character constituted her second big break. [Gunnar Björnstrand](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnar-bj%C3%B6rnstrand) plays her father, a writer who uses her psychosis in his novels. Of the four actors in this chamber piece, [Lars Passgård](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/lars-passg%C3%A5rd) was definitely the beginner of the bunch. At the age of 18, he was confronted with the challenges of relating to a dead mother, a distant, suicidal father and an insane big sister, who also molests him.  
  
Through a Glass Darkly is often referred to as the first part of the 'God and Man trilogy'  of which [Winter Light](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light) and [The Silence](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence) make up the second and third, respectively. The film was Bergman's second complete collaboration with [Sven Nykvist](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/sven-nykvist) and the first of his films to be shot on [Fårö](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/places/f%C3%A5r%C3%B6). It was, in fact, Nykvist who recommended the island to Bergman.  
  
Harriet Andersson would later comment on shooting the film: 'Back in those days, exterior shots were allowed to take their time, and it shows. There are some insanely long tracking shots that called for extensive rail work. Nowadays they run around with theses tiny cameras, no wonder that they don't need any rails.'  
  
Through a Glass Darkly was Sweden's contribution to the Venice Biennale in 1962. It won the Oscar for best Foreign Language Film the same year.

### Sources of inspiration

Bergman writing on the genesis of the film in [Images: My Life in Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film):

When the film was in its planning stages, it was called The Wallpaper. I wrote in my workbook: "It's going to have a story that moves vertically, not horizontally. How the hell do you do that?" The note is from New Year's Day 1960, and even if it was strangely expressed, I understood exactly what I meant: a film that went into an untested dimension of depth.

My [worbook](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/workbook-no-18) (middle of March):

'A god speaks to her. She is humble and submissive toward this god whom she workship. God is both dark and light. Sometimes he gives he incomprehensible instructions, to drink saltwater, kill animals, and so on. But sometimes he is full of love and gives her vital experiences, even on the sexual plane. He descends and disguises himself as Minus, her younger brother. At the same time as Minus, her younger brother. At the same time the god forces her to swear off marriage. She is the brige awaiting her groom; she must not let herself be defiled. She pulls Minus into her world. He follows her willingly and eagerly since he exist on the border of puberty. The god throws suspicion on Martin and David and creates the wrong impression of them in order to warm her. On the other hand he endows Minus with the strangest qualities.  
  
What I wanted, most deeply, was to depict a case of religious hyteria or, if you will, a schizophrenic individual whith heavily religious tendencies. Martin, the husband, struggles with his god in order to win Karin back to his worl. But since he is the type of person who needs that which is tangible, his efforts are in vain.'  
  
Then I find this in my workbook:  
  
'A god descends into a human being and settles in her. First he is just an inner voice, a certain knowledge, or a commandment. Threatening or pleading. Repulsive yet stimulating. Then he lets himself be more and more known to her, and the human being gets to test the strength of the god, learns to love him, sacrifices for him, and finds herself forced into the utmost devotion and then into complete emptiness. When this emptiness has been accomplished, the god takes possession of this human being and accomplishes his work through her hands. Then he leaves her empty and burned out, without any possibility of continuing to live in this world. That is what happens to Karin. And the borderline that she crosses is bizarre pattern on the wallpaper.'  
  
Parallel with the carefully chosen words exists a contrasting harsh concept of how the god I have created actually looks.

20 May 2012

## Sources

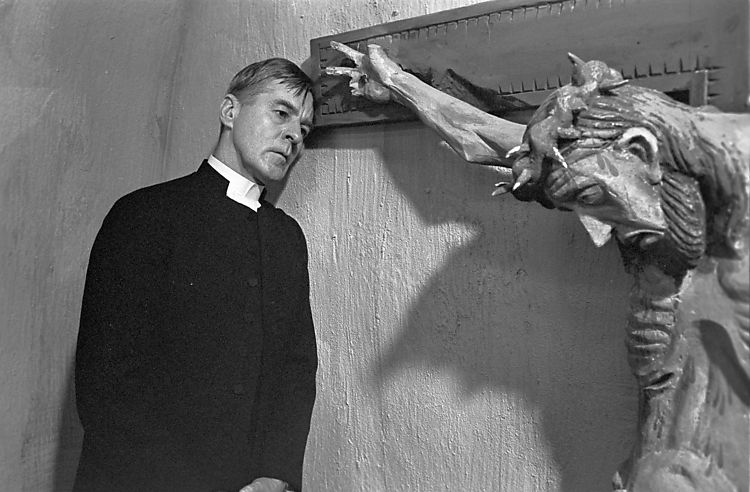
* The Ingmar Bergman Archives.
* Ingmar Bergman, Images: My Life in Film.

[STIFTELSEN INGMAR BERGMAN](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/page/ingmar-bergman-foundation-20765)[PÅ SVENSKA](http://ingmarbergman.se/verk/nattvardsg%C3%A4sterna) [SEARCH](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#search) [MENU](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#main-menu)

[Feature Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/productions) 11 Feb 196323 min read

# Winter Light

A country pastor whose congregation is in decline is beset with growing doubts.



## Sub pages

* [About the film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#about-film-3)
* [Film facts](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#film-facts-3)
* [Plot summary](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#plot-summary-3)
* [Images/videos (20)](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#media)
* [Collaborators (48)](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light#people)

It is satisfying to see Winter Light after a quarter of a century. I believe nothing in it has eroded or broken down.

Ingmar Bergman

## About the film

In January 1961 Ingmar Bergman directs Anton Chekhov's [The Seagull](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/seagull)at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and August Strindberg's [Playing with Fire](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/playing-fire-0) for Swedish Radio Theatre. He is appointed artistic adviser to AB Svensk Filmindustri (a position previously held by Bergman's mentor and idol, [Victor Sjöström](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/victor-sj%C3%B6str%C3%B6m)). He wins his first Oscar, for [The Virgin Spring](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/virgin-spring), voted best foreign language film. On 22 April, the première is held of his now legendary production of Stravinsky's [The Rake's Progress](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/rakes-progress) at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. At the same time he is putting the finishing touches to[Through a Glass, Darkly](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly), the first film, along with Winter Light and [The Silence](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence), of what would later be known as a trilogy.

His success is unprecedented. Bergman's status is such that he can – as he was to do the following year – turn down a 500,000 dollar contract with MGM, 24 times more than he was earning at the time. Yet he hardly feels comfortable with all this success, quite the opposite. 'I found myself in the position of being able to do what I wanted. It was time to risk a death-defying leap.' But this defiance of death is not simply an expression of courage. At the same time as he is cashing in on increasing success – not least internationally – Bergman still appears to feel misunderstood. Swedish critical opinion, although not lacking in admiration, is still basically unreceptive to a director who appears permanently obsessed with religious broodings at a time when the country in general is secularised, modern and hungry for success. Bergman confronts these constant reservations in an uncompromising way. He plans a film that not only features a doubting clergyman, but will also be 'ugly'. No cheap aesthetic tricks like 'a lot of uncalled-for direct light in a pretty girl's hair.' Furthermore, the stars of the film - [Gunnar Björnstrand](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnar-bj%C3%B6rnstrand) and [Ingrid Thulin](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin), two of Sweden's most stylish actors of all time – will be made to appear repugnant.



*Gunnar Björnstrand and Ingrid Thulin in Winter Light.  
© AB Svensk Filmindustri*

During the shooting of Winter Light, the crew give the film the apt nickname 'Snotty John and the Lip Balm'. They speculate on the sequel: 'The Further Tribulations of Snotty John and the Lip Balm'. Briefly speaking, Bergman is hardly expecting a hit. It is therefore no coincidence that during the course of the year he gives two interviews in which he predicts an imminent end to his success: the weekly magazine Se publishes an article in which Bergman compares his international celebrity to an influenza epidemic that 'goes from country to country, reaches its peak and then dies away'. An article in Expressen bears the telling heading 'Foreign interest in me just a fad  soon to be over'.

There is a general tendency in Ingmar Bergman to complain of being misunderstood, yet also to boast about his outsider status. This is hardly the place for a psychological analysis of what lies behind this, yet it is obvious that with such an attitude, success is a double-edged sword. Seen in this light, it is logical that the film he is currently planning seems intended to give his adversaries new ammunition with which to attack him. And perhaps it is not so much an act of 'death defiance,' as one of psychological necessity.  
  
As so often in Bergman, the starting point for Winter Light was a piece of music. Whilst working on The Rake's Progress he listened to a great deal of Stravinsky, and when the 'Symphony of Psalms' was played on the radio one day over the Easter holiday, he decided he would like to make a film set in a solitary church on the plains of Uppland. In his workbook from the time, we can closely follow the film's genesis. This is the first note:

26.3.61  
  
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD  
  
SUNDAY MORNING. Symphony of Psalms.  
  
Work with Rake's progress.  
  
One has to do what is necessary. When nothing is necessary, one should do nothing. The following has suddenly occurred to me. I shall try to write it down as starkly and simply as possible, yet I'm not sure how it will turn out.

In the next entry we find the first description of what was to become Winter Light:

This I know;  
  
"I" go into an empty church to converse with God and to finally fall to my knees, to pray openly, to talk to God. To get answers, to give up my resistance at last or [unreadable] or this [unreadable] complication. The bond [unreadable] to the father, to the need for security or to that which does not exist which is like mice scurrying away in centuries gone by. Well now.  
  
Next to this primitive altar in this deserted church, this drama about a human life is played out. Individuals materialise and fade away.  
  
I go into the church, lock the door and remain there in a fever. Wait for the miracle which is akin to drinking from a woman's breast.  
  
Blasphemy, contempt, hatred that knows no bounds. He encounters the altar of the church. The despairing silence of the night. The graves, the dead. [unreadable] and the rats. The smell of death and decay. The hour glass. The terror that the coming night will bring. The bottom has been reached. Gethsemane. The crucifixion. [Unreadable.]  
  
I go out of my way, my own way from this thing, that is already obsolete and that I don't want to contemplate. With gratitude I leave my [unreadable], this grey nothing, shrunken, behind me with indifference. With this I am free to go. But Guilt. I strike it out. I will not leave the church before I have received an answer, be that as it may, but I am staying here.

Bergman's friend, the author and (later) film director [Vilgot Sjöman](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/vilgot-sj%C3%B6man) was involved in the project at an early stage. He would subsequently become the film's assistant director, an experience he has documented in his excellent book L136: Diary with Ingmar Bergman. Yet at this early stage, he functions as someone whom Bergman bounces his ideas off: between Easter and Midsummer Bergman writes down various draft fragments which Sjöman reads and comments on. Quite quickly, the person of the initial notes becomes a pastor, and Sjöman is sceptical towards 'yet another film about a clergyman broken down by doubt in his faith' (even though he does not say so explicitly). On 14 June, however, Bergman develops his theme in a way that interests the non-believer Sjöman:

'You see, this person has a hatred of Christ that he won't admit to anyone. He is envious of Christ.'

'Envious?'

'Yes, and jealous. He feels something akin to the elder son's hatred of the prodigal son, who gets all the attention when at last he comes home: fatted calf and all the rest.'

It is also tempting to draw parallels between the clergyman in the film and Bergman's father, Erik. The pastor's name is Tomas Ericsson: Tomas (Doubting Thomas), Erik's son. Might there be an element of self portraiture in the character?  
  
In early July Bergman and his wife go to the summer house they have rented on the island of Torö, where he quickly writes a preliminary screenplay. In the meantime, he lets Sjöman know how the work is progressing. On 20 July 1961 Sjöman receives a report from Bergman in which he confirms that he wants Gunnar Björnstrand and Ingrid Thulin to play the main parts. The pastor's wife, initially alive, is now dead:

I woke up one morning and killed her off. It was a lovely feeling. And right." He gives a loud laugh as he tells me about it.

[...]

Now the parson has a mistress instead. An hysterical, lonely, middle-aged, flat-chested school teacher in the country. So now things are moving.

Other vital elements also fall into place:   
  
'I don't usually give a damn about world politics, but this spring I read in the papers about the Russians and the Chinese, and I discovered that it's not the Americans that the Russians are scared of, but the Chinese. The Chinese who are so regimented that you could easily imagine them starting a nuclear war. And reading all that made me very depressed.'

Bergman describes the ending of the film as the 'stirrings of a new faith'. He finds this a difficult section to write. Yet in a conversation with Sjöman he feels he has found a solution:

Have you ever heard of 'duplication'? On certain Sundays the parson has to hold two services: one in the main parish and then one in the chapelry, the sub-parish in the next district. Now it is custom in the Swedish church that if there are no more than three persons in the congregation, no service need be held. What I do is this: when Björnstrand comes to the district church, the church-warden comes up to him and says: 'There's only one churchgoer here.' Yet the parson holds the service all the same. That's all that is needed to indicate the new faith that is stirring inside the parson.

Later, in [The Magic Lantern](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/magic-lantern), Bergman recalls the ending as having come to him during a visit to a church in the company of his elderly father:

It was an early spring day with mist and bright light reflecting off the surrounding snow. We arrived in plenty of time at the little church north of [Uppsala](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/services/link.asp?guid=%7B5601ACC1-94CA-46BD-B86C-B7E361A3D1C4%7D) to find four churchgoers ahead of us waiting in the narrow pews. The churchwarden and the sexton were whispering on the porch while a female organist was rummaging in the organ loft. Even after the summoning bell had faded away over the plain, the pastor still had not appeared. A long silence ensued in heaven and on earth. Father shifted uneasily in his seat and muttered to himself and me. A few minutes later we heard the sound of a car speeding across the slippery ground outside; a door slammed, and after a minute the pastor cam puffing down the aisle.

When he got to the altar rail, he turned around and looked at his congregation with red-rimmed eyes. He was a thin, long-haired man, his trimmed beard scarcely covering his receding chin. He swung his arms like a skier and coughed, the hair on the crown of his head curly, and his forehead turning red. 'I am sick,' said the pastor. 'I have a high fever and a chill.' He sought sympathy in our eyes. 'I have permission to give you a short service; there will be no communion. I'll preach as best as I can, then we'll sing a hymn and that will have to do. 'I'll just go into the sacristy and put on my cassock.' He bowed and for a few moments stood irresolutely as if waiting for applause or at least some sign of approval, but when no one reacted, he disappeared through a heavy door.

Father rose from his seat in the pew. He was upset. 'I must speak to that man. Let me pass.' He got out of the pew and limped into the sacristy, leaning heavily on his stick. A short and agitated conversation followed.

A few minutes later, the churchwarden appeared. He smiled with embarrassment and explained that there would be a communion service after all, and an older colleague would assist the pastor.

The introductory hymn was sung by the organist and us few churchgoers. At the end of the second verse, Father came in, in white vestments, with his stick. When the hymn was over, he turned to us and spoke in his calm free voice, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most High.'

Thus it was that I discovered the ending to Winter Light and a rule I was to follow from then on: irrespective of everything that happens to you in life, you hold your communion.

The screenplay is inscribed 'Torö, 7 August 1961, S.D.G.' S.D.G. stands for Soli Deo Gloria – 'Glory to God Alone'. Johann Sebastian Bach used to sign the bottom of each page of his compositions with the same initials.

### Sources of inspiration

The immediate trigger for the film may well have been Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, yet there were certainly other sources of inspiration. Given the film's religious theme, it has been the subject of an extensive exegesis, even by the standards of Bergman scholarship: theological interpreters have seen the film as a more or less disguised passion play. It has also been suggested that Tomas Ericsson passes through seven 'stations' which equate to Jesus' Way of the Cross. Others see Märta Lundberg as the film's Christ figure (like Jesus she is 33 years old, and has stigmata-like eczema on her hands and scalp). Bergman would later comment on this as follows:

Märta is something of the stuff saints are made of, i.e., hysterical, power-greedy, but also possessed of an inner vision. All tha business about the eczema on her hands and forehead, for example, I'd pinched that straight from my second wife. She used to suffer from it and went about with big pieces of sticking plaster on her forehead and bandaged hands. She had an allergic excema. But that it had anything whatever to do with stigmatization  that's utterly wrong. For me Märta is something furious, alove, intractable, pig-headed, troublesome. A great and  for a dying figure like the clergyman  overwhelming person.

Yet even though Bergman has refuted certain religious interpretations, they are not without foundation: it is clear, at least, that he himself has viewed the film as a theological parable. This is especially apparent in L-136 where Bergman himself speaks of Tomas' various "stations" (something which in itself may just as likely refer to the Way of the Cross as to Strindberg's To Damascus). And Algot Frövik, the disabled church warden, is an angel. 'Really, literally: an angel. Ther is fifty times more religion in that man than in the whole character of the parson.' In various instances, Bergman interprets the film as a religious allegory: Tomas is the lame man of the New Testament, borne along by Märta and Algot. The relevant verse in the Bible was obviously of major relevance to the film: it is quoted as a motto in the hand-written screenplay:  
  
'And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed:  
and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy;  
Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.  
Matthew,  9:2.'

Winter Light also has parallels with earlier, non-Bergman films. Its pared-down qualities are reminiscent of the work of Carl Theodor Dreyer or Robert Bresson. Bergman sees the latter's [Diary of a Country Priest](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042619/) for the third time shortly before shooting began, in the company of [Ulla Isaksson](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ulla-isaksson)and Vilgot Sjöman. Dreyer's theories about 'abstraction' as a means to reach beyond the surface of things, thereby amplifying the spiritual, is also a method employed by Bergman in Winter Light. Whether or not he had read Dreyer's book About Film: Articles and Interviews, which had been published two years previously, it is clear that he adopted the method in his acknowledged admiration for Dreyer.

### Shooting the film

Almost all of Bergman's films are shot during the summer, for a number of reasons. Partly, he was engaged in theatre work during the rest of the year; and partly, as he himself has said, he made films to provide his actors with work when the theatres were closed. Furthermore, summer is a theme in itself in his films: [Summer Interlude](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/summer-interlude), [Summer with Monika](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/summer-monika), [Smiles of a Summer Night](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/smiles-summer-night), etc.  
  
Nattvardsgästerna, (literally: The Communicants), on the other hand, given the English title 'Winter Light' for US distribution, was to take place in the winter. As Bergman much later would summarise the film: 'A Swedish man in the midst of Swedish reality experiencing a dismal aspect of the Swedish climate.'  
  
Shooting began on 4 October 1961. 'The shooting was extremely demanding, and dragged on for fifty-six days. It was one of the longest schedules I've ever had, and one of the shortest films I've ever made.' For various reasons, shooting was beset with difficulty. The fact that only a handful of people believed in the film must have played its part: the people at SF were sceptical; the actors found it hard to get to grips with their roles; and even Bergman's wife, Käbi Laretei, declared after reading the screenplay, 'Yes, it's a masterpiece, Ingmar. But a dreary masterpiece.'  
  
Yet the main source of concern was [Gunnar Björnstrand](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnar-bj%C3%B6rnstrand). No other actor has taken part in so many Bergman films as Björnstrand did; no other was such a sympathetic interpreter, often of characters that bore many similarities to Bergman himself. To Swedish audiences at the time Björnstrand was best known as a comedy actor, and his collaboration with Bergman began with the comedies made in the early 1950s. Now he was set to play one of the most dour characters in cinema history.  
  
The stylish, quick-witted comedian  was to be reduced to a wreck. The fact that his character was a clergyman beset with doubt as to the existence of God cannot have helped matters for Björnstrand, a recent convert to Catholicism. But he was a thorough professional – so all of this should have been possible. Yet the problems ran deeper. In [Images: My Life in Films](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film), Bergman provides a laconic clarification of the situation: 'Gunnar found it painful to portray a person who was unsympathetic to such a degree. His inner turmoil became so acute that he had trouble remembering his lines, a problem that had never happened before. Furthermore, he had health problems, and for his sake we worked relatively short day shifts.'  
  
These "health problems" were rather more than a common cold. On 27 September, a few days before shooting is due to start, Björnstrand goes for a medical check-up. There are many twists and turns to this story, yet according to his wife, the writer Lillie Björnstrand, the check-up was at Bergman's insistence, under the premise that the role was so demanding. Björnstrand protested that he was in robust health, but the SF company doctor prevailed and carried out the examination. The diagnosis was high blood pressure and he was placed under strict doctor's orders: no alcohol, no sex, etc. Otherwise, he warned, the actor would be at risk of cerebral haemorrhage and paralysis. On the other hand, the doctor saw no reason why he should pull out of the shooting, despite Lillie's entreaties.  
  
'Gunnar was frightened to death. He couldn't sleep, couldn't banish the thoughts of death and paralysis from his mind. It was sheer hell. We stayed awake during the nights that remained before he was due up at the film shoot in [Dalarna](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/places/dalarna-dalecarlia).' When he arrives at the studio the next day, the atmosphere is strained. In his book of interviews [Vilgot Sjöman](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/vilgot-sj%C3%B6man) recounts a question he asked Bergman that day: 'You look so goddam smug when you speak of Gunnar's illness.' Bergman laughed and said: 'Well, of course it is wonderful that Gunnar is so off-color and unwell when heäs to play this sort of part. Imagine if I'd gotten a sun-tanned, hale-and-hearty guy to play someone worn out and ailing!'  
  
It is disagreeable to think that the director to some extent welcomed the illness for the sake of the film, yet the situation was to take a further turn for the worse. Björnstrand is so upset by the news that he decides to get a second opinion, and is examined by the heart specialist Clarence Craaford. The results were the exact opposite: his blood pressure was considerably lower, there were no risks either for a heart attack or a cerebral haemorrhage. Craaford also discarded half of the medicines previously prescribed for Björnstrand and after a week he stopped taking any medicine and felt fit once again. It is impossible to apportion any blame, but is clear that Björnstrand himself believed that his director had manipulated him in some way into believing that he was ill. Although Björnstrand did not say so in so many words, the perceptive Sjöman discerned something in the relationship between the two:

There is a tension between Ingmar and Gunnar. It has evidently increased the last few days. What it consists of I dont really know yet. With Gunnar I notice a feeling of not being free; an idea that Ingmar has a deep contempt for actors, 'And when you've done a good job, you still don't get the credit for it yourself.' With Ingmar I notice an aggressiveness which he cannot camouflage: his tone is sharp, and Gunnar tightens up still more. Gunnar is silent or aggressive in return. Ingmar seems disappointed. Gunnar too. How is that tension going to affect the film?

Even after he is declared fit, Björnstrand is still shattered. The role is a difficult one, made all the more difficult by the suspicion that his friend Ingmar has deceived him. Bergman continues to appear unaffected. At one point the make-up artist Börje Lundh is worried that Björnstrand's appearance has changed; that he has become noticeably thinner. They ask Bergman what they should do, since the first half of the film is already in the can: 'It doesn't matter if he's a bit hollow-cheeked. Good thing, in fact. Lose a bit more weight!'  
  
Accusations in respect of Bergman's role in this unpleasant story – which as far as we are aware is only down to a wrong diagnosis and a desire to smooth things over – have not ceased to flow. To coincide with the TV premiere of [Saraband](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/saraband) 2003, Björnstrand's daughter Gabrielle wrote an article for the newspaper Expressen under the heading 'Gabrielle Björnstrand on her father: Bergman psyched out his favourite actor'. She observes that 'no employer has a right to abuse people and there are no special rules for so-called geniuses.' In this context it is apt to draw attention to Bergman's recurrent notion of the artist as cannibal, whose art profits from the sufferings of others: consider David in [Through a Glass Darkly](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly), Elisabet [Vogler](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/17532) in [Persona](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/31) or Elis [Vergérus](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/17532) in[A Passion](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/passion). Björnstrand's performance, especially under the circumstances, is brilliant. One of Sweden's all time great actors in what is perhaps his finest ever role. In Sjöman's words: 'I see Gunnar's performace in Winter Light growing into a great performance – but it is frowing out of a press of anguish.'

The other star of the film was [Ingrid Thulin](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin), recently returned to Sweden following a spell in Hollywood, where she had been shooting [The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/www.imdb.com/title/tt0054890/), directed by Vincente Minnelli. Both she and Bergman were to joke that she had become 'Hollywoodified', yet the role of Märta Lundberg was far from glamorous. And ever though her part was somewhat less demanding than Björnstrand's, her performance was no less brilliant. The long scene in which she in one single take  reads a letter straight into the camera, without the help of an autocue or any other props, is an acting master class. The fact that she does not blink once during the entire eight minutes of the scene is just one of the many feats of her performance. Make-up artist Gullan Westfeldt has also noted that only on one occasion during all the takes when Märta Lundberg cries, did she need to use glycerine; her tears were entirely her own.  
  
Thulin was also subject to external pressures. Her husband [Harry Schein](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/harry-schein) hated the film – one of his complaints was that the lines about the Chinese were so ridiculous that they could have been lifted from Sweden's absurdly satirical magazine Grönköpings Veckoblad. 'I thought it was so bad that I tried to get Ingrid to turn down Winter Light. I intrigued as hell, but I was caught in my own trap.' In between takes Thulin often withdrew, either to her hotel room, or she would lie and rest on one of the church pews, out of sight of everybody. Bergman: 'Ingrid is like the beaver at Skansen [Stockholm outdoor museum and zoo]. Everyone stares at it but can never catch more than a glimpse. It doesn't even appear at feeding time.'  
  
[Sven Nykvist](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/sven-nykvist) and Bergman had worked together on three films, [Sawdust and Tinsel](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/sawdust-and-tinsel), [The Virgin Spring](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/virgin-spring) and the preceding production [Through a Glass Darkly](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly). The latter had proved difficult, not least in terms of lighting. Much of the film took place at dawn or dusk, often giving them just ten minutes in which to shoot a scene before it got too light or too dark. So Nykvist was relieved when he read the screenplay for Winter Light:

– This'll be easy, I said to Ingmar. "Three hours in a church in the middle of the day. The light doesn't change much then.

Ingmar almost flared up:

– You don't know much, do you? That's precisely what it does, and that's precisely what I'm looking for. That gradual, almost indiscernible shift, virtually without a shadow.

The leaden-grey, contrast-free tones of Through a Glass Darkly were to be maintained and the demand for realistic light intensified. In common with everyone else, Nykvist recalls that the shooting was very demanding:

In itself it was no light-hearted film and I have no wish to hide the fact that I went into the project under strong protest. Afterwards, I remember shooting as having been difficult – with lots of irritation between Ingmar and myself. Yet at the same time, we gelled together in a strange kind of way, and for me as a cinematographer that film was probably the major turning point, the one in which I learnt the major significance of reduction, of cutting out all artificial lighting, all illogical lighting. Ingmar quite literally forced me to be one hundred per cent realistic in my lighting.

There is, however, one scene in which Bergman abandons his principles on what he refers to as 'logical' light, and this occurs in one of the last scenes, during Algot Frövik's discussion with Tomas about the suffering of Christ. 'Make a beautiful light, Sven', he had said, 'Frövik is an angel.' Nykvist also recalls that virtually all of the film was shot in cloudy weather.  
  
'Only in one scene, with [Gunnar Björnstrand](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/services/link.asp?guid=%7B5E31B1D0-DAD1-446F-9E7B-442F97B5AE5D%7D) kneeling at the altar rail, was the sun to break through the clouds, God's mercy! It was the most difficult scene of all. In one pan we were supposed to follow the ray of sunshine that breaks through from the darkness of the church entrance, gliding slowly over the windows and finally coming to rest at the altar.' And, as he sums up: 'In terms of light, Winter Light is one of Ingmar's most striking films, yet something that few people think about when they are watching it. Plainness is more thankless than picturesque lighting. Nobody appreciates the work that lies behind it.'

### Epilogue

Winter Light is the first of Bergman's films for which editing begins while the film is still being shot. A room in the hotel in Rättvik where the crew is staying serves as a makeshift cutting room. On 22 November 1961, Bergman, [Nykvist](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/sven-nykvist) and the editor Ulla Ryghe run through all the takes of the church interiors that have been shot in the church at nearby Skattungbyn. Scrutinising these takes, Bergman and Nykvist decide that the images are too beautiful: 'All that brilliance! All that charming light, don't you think it's wrong, Sven?'  
  
They resolve that the scenes have to be shot again, and they decide to reconstruct Skattungbyn church in the Råsunda Film Studios. Later, Ulla Ryghe tells [Vilgot Sjöman](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/vilgot-sj%C3%B6man) that during the conversations between the cinematographer and his director she sat in silence, hoping they would re-shoot the scenes, otherwise for the rest of the filming they would have plagued themselves and everyone around them over the takes that were not quite right.  
  
Shooting comes to an end on 14 January 1962. The actors are probably relieved that the ordeal is over, but for Bergman, Nykvist and Ryghe the work continues relentlessly. For the mixer Olle Jacobsson and sound engineer Evald Sandersson it has only just begun. During the editing Bergman contemplates cutting down the introductory communion scene. It is one of the most uncompromising scenes in his entire filmography; the original idea being that this consciously deathly-dull scene would take up half the film.  
  
Sjöman is opposed to the idea on the grounds that they have put so much work into the scene. Bergman's response: 'Do you think that is an obstacle? Never. If it's wrong, it's wrong; and it must come out. However hard you have worked on it.' Ulla Ryghe is also sceptical of editing down the scene: a certain inexorability would be lost, she feels. Bergman, however, believes that there might be an audience-related reason to shorten the scene. 'People can get so exhausted by it that they are not receptive to the rest of the film. If they are bored at the beginning, they won't listen to the rest.' Even in this, his most uncompromising film to date, he cannot disregard public demand – the 'audience whore' – as he has mockingly referred to himself, is still present within him.  
  
The letter scene had been a baptism of fire during the shooting, not only for [Thulin](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin), but also for the sound engineer who had had great difficulty in placing the microphone so that all the nuances of sound were picked up, but not the whirr of the camera. With a certain degree of bitterness Bergman remarks when they are mixing the sound that nobody will understand what a technical challenge the scene was: 'They think all you have to do is stick a camera straight in front and that's it.' He also regrets what an international audience will miss in the scene: 'The entire letter will be ruined in the international market, because the spectator's eyes will move up and down between the subtitle and Ingrid's eyes. Pity. It will spoil the whole fascination with her eyes. This is indeed a specifically Swedish film.'  
  
There is no place for sentimentality when editing the sound. The scene where Märta comforts Tomas at the altar had been extremely moving during the shooting (as it is in the finished film), but right now Bergman is fairly brusque, as he orders the mixer and sound technician to "Keep the dialogue down, boys, so we get all these nasty, messy kisses  it must be so that we want to spew on the woman "  
  
Later on in the mixing process, a dog is supposed to bark in the Persson's yard ('and none of your dachsuhunds, it must be a Lapland spitz'). New barks are attempted by the unfortunate sound engineer Evald Andersson: 'That's a dog from the sound effects department. We can't have that! [...] Another recorded dog. Now look here, boys, you'll damn well have to get a real dog. We can't go on like this.'  
  
When the work is finally finished and the premiere is approaching, Bergman observes once again, as he did while writing the screenplay, that this will hardly be a blockbuster. [Kenne Fant](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/kenne-fant) and the director estimate that the film will make 400,000 kronor in Sweden, the lowest sum for very many years in Bergman's film career. Yet they also count on receiving a quality subsidy of 200,000 kronor. International rights to the film have already been sold for half a million kronor ("poor bastards, they don't know what they've bought!"). So in financial terms, the film should pay for itself. But only just.  
  
The film has its public premiere in Stockholm on 11 February 1963 (the evening before there had been a special preview in Falun for the benefit of the church in Skattungbyn, where shooting originally took place). Press reactions can be summed up in the telegram that Kenne Fant sent to Bergman, on holiday in Switzerland: 'Two for. Two against. An in-betweeny.' Robin Hood, writing in Stockholmstidningen was decidedly against: 'What, to me as an individual, are Bergman's religious introspections hither and thither? A person's dealings with God should be kept private and behind closed doors, not charged for via an admission ticket weighed down with entertainment tax.'  
  
Lill in Svenska Dagbladet was for, but notes that she could well be alone:

Ingmar Bergman puts his audience to the ultimate test. If they take on board this doomsday sermon without grumbling and with an open mind, he will have definitively won them over and likewise won a victory over all conventional opinion regarding the cinema. Personally I was, as always, a helpless victim of Bergmanesque suggestion, of the energy that certainly does not lie in surface events and devices, of the seriousness and urgency whereby he conveys his Jacob-like struggle and demands participation. I can imagine that many people will be bored and unreceptive, that they will oppose, criticise, make fun of and deride the film.

She was right. The film was seen by a considerably smaller audience than Bergman was accustomed to (even if his subsequent film [The Silence](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence) would have them flocking back again in ever greater numbers, but probably for dubious reasons: the film attracted the label 'pornographic'). Bergman's predictions, when on the second day of shooting he observed: 'This morning I got stuck in a goddam great traffic jam. I sat there looking at the drivers in the other cars. And thought: You won't come and see Winter Light, and you won't come and see Winter Light, and you won't come and see.' were to come true.  
  
Winter Light sparked off a theological debate, not least because a number of daily newspapers sent questionnaires to clergymen asking their opinion of the film. As Vilgot Sjöman points out, the film, through no fault of its own, was used as a weapon in the debate raging at the time between the high and low church, the former of which saw the film, to quote Bishop Bo Giertz, as: 'a mighty and upsetting document about the Swedish church in its deepest abasement'. As expected the film was quite badly received abroad . It would have been convenient to blame this on the notion expressed by Bergman that the film was so typically 'Swedish' as to make it incomprehensible for an international audience, were it not for the fact that the Swedes did not understand it either. 'Boring" was the general opinion, both at home and abroad. Newsweek carried a telling heading for its review: 'Wake Up, Ingmar'.  
  
Winter Light picked up a couple of awards at minor festivals, yet the contemporary view was that this was an 'in between' film. It would take time before it came to be regarded as a masterpiece (if indeed it ever truly has).

22 May 2012

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[Feature Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/productions) 23 Sep 196312 min read

# The Silence

Two sisters torment each other, while a boy wanders around the corridors of a hotel among old people and dwarves.



## Sub pages

* [About the film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence#about-film-4)
* [Film facts](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence#film-facts-4)
* [Plot summary](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence#plot-summary-4)
* [Images/videos (15)](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/silence#media)
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Not for the prudish. It demands maturity and sophistication from the viewer.

The New York Herald Tribune

## About the film

In February 1962 it was reported in the press that Ingmar Bergman was going to take a break for a year to devote himself entirely to the study of J. S. Bach. His wife, the concert pianist [Käbi Laretei](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/k%C3%A4bi-laretei), was to help him with his studies. 'Once in a lifetime', he is quoted as saying, 'one has to try to realise one's dreams'. No full-time Bach studies actually materialised. However, in the film that Bergman worked on instead The Silence the composer was to play a small yet important role: when Bach's 'Goldberg Variations' are played on the radio in the film, the emotional and linguistic distances are bridged for a short moment. This is the only time in the film that the characters appear to connect with each other.  
  
In his book about the making of [Winter Light](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light), [Vilgot Sjöman](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/vilgot-sj%C3%B6man) describes how Bergman told him about an idea for a new film:

'Two women and a thirteen-year-old boy in a completely strange city. The older woman has a hemmorrhage and they stop at a hotel. Ingmar explains that some of the material goes back to an old radio play [The City](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/city). The rest is quite fresh and is based on a dream he had during his illness in December.'  
  
The dream was a frequently recurring one. Bergman in [Images: My Life in Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film):

'I am in an enormous, foreign city. I am on my way toward the forbidden part of town. It is not even some dubious area of ill repute with its steaming flash pots, but something much worse. There the laws of reality and the rules of society cease to exist. Anything can happen and everything does.'

Another dream he had at the time appears to have been incorporated into the film, yet only by association. When putting the finishing touches to Winter Light , Bergman wrote down a dream he had about an old man being pushed around some hospital grounds by four women. In her exertions, one of them falls down and lies flat out on the ground, whereupon the others laugh uncontrollably.  
  
There is a short association to a similar incident in The Silence, when Anna and Ester talk about how difficult it was to carry their dead father's coffin since he was so extremely heavy. (Another, much later film, [Cries and Whispers](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/9324), invites similar comparisons.)  
  
As Bergman expanded on his idea to Sjöman, he explained that the film would be set in an Eastern European state 'with troop transports, in smoke and grime'. Wondering about a suitable location, he settled on Grenoble: 'I recall it as grimy and awful and lacking in culture: no concert hall, no theater, only striptease.'  
  
Even at this early stage he had decided that the language in the film should be a made up one, but that he would use his wife's mother tongue, Estonian, as a basis. One working title for the film was 'Timoka', which is the name of the city where the action takes place. In Bergman on Bergman:

'Timoka, the name of the city, I saw in a book belonging to my wife at that time. She's Esthonian. It was a book of poetry. The word 'timoka' stood there on a line by itself, and without knowing what it meant I baptized the city Timoka. Then I asked her what it meant, and she said there are a lot of cases in Estonian it means 'appertaining to the executioner'. Otherwise it was just a language I made up.'

Those to whom Bergman presented his idea were not especially impressed. His wife, a number of his friends and even [Kenne Fant](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/kenne-fant), the head of Svensk Filmindustri, tried to dissuade him from making the film: "But I had a tremendous desire to make it. So I did anyway."  
  
As usual for Bergman, the actual writing process was swift: the screenplay is dated 18 April 1962.

### Sources of inspiration

Just as [Winter Light](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light) had begun with Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, The Silence also started with a piece of music: Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra.

In Bergman on Bergman:   
  
'My original idea was to make a film that should obey musical laws, instead of dramaturgical ones. A film acting by association  rhythmically, with themes and counter-themes. As I was putting it together, I thought much more in musical terms than I'd done before. All thats left of Bartók is the very beginning. It follows Bartóks music rather closely  the dull continuous note, then the sudden explosion.'

The dream which gave rise to The Silence, of 'sinking into an enormous city, absorbing it, becoming anonymous within it' originates from a short story by Sigfrid Siwertz. In The Circle (1907) there is a story set in Berlin entitled 'The Dark Goddess of Victory' which 'must have hit me like a bullet straight into my young consciousness.'   
  
The theme of the city, although not especially common in Bergman's films, has nonetheless been one of his recurrent themes. Bergman in [Images](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film):  
  
'Before The Silence I wrote the outline for a film that was never made. It dealt with a couple of acrobats who have lost their partner and are caught in some German city, Hanover or Duisberg. The time is toward the end of the Second World War. During the course of repeated bombings, their relationship begins to fall apart. Within this outline is concealed not only The Silence, but also [The Serpent's Egg](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/serpents-egg).'

Furthermore, in 1951 he had written a radio play that he called [The City](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/city). In a[sketch for t he play](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/notes-city) he writes: 'I see myself as an infinitely reduced person standing at a juncture of consciousness that has suddenly taken on the appearance of a busy road junction in a large and dirty French industrial city. The city itself is on the right bank of a river, the factories and the disused mines on the left bank. It is a summer evening, an evening heavy with thunder, sheet lightning over the rooftops and lots of people in motion.'

### Shooting the film

Shooting began on 9 July 1962, and took place entirely at the Råsunda Film Studios.   
  
The film, as Bergman explained it to [Sven Nykvist](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/sven-nykvist), was certainly meant to be dream-like, but there were to be no hackneyed dream effects such as soft focus images or fades. The challenge lay in the fact that the film itself must have the character of a dream. The director and cinematographer decided to use Eastman Double-X negative, developed to a higher gamma than usual. Coming after the ascetic imagery of [Through a Glass Darkly](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/through-glass-darkly) and [Winter Light](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/winter-light), they decided to be far less restrained. Bergman describes it as 'a cinematic sensuality that I still experience with delight. To put it simply: we had an enormous amount of fun making The Silence.'  
  
Nykvist also recall the shooting as being 'child's play' compared to the rigours of Winter Light. Yet it gave rise to the only real quarrel that Bergman and Nykvist ever had. Nykvist's mother was dying, and shooting the scene in the train compartment he received a telephone call from the hospital telling him that the end was near:

Naturally I was upset, and I went up and interrupted Ingmar as he was rehearsing the actors, something that nobody was allowed to do. Ingmar was furious. I explained the situation.

'Don't you dare leave now  right in the middle of a shoot! If you go now, you bastard, you can stay at home for good,' shouted Ingmar.  
  
'If you call me a bastard when my mother's dying, then I really won't come back,' I said as I left.

Yet during the afternoon Nykvist did come back, and Bergman apologised. But he added: 'Listen, Sven, the most important thing is still what's left. What's up there on the screen. There's nothing else for you.'  
  
As it turned out, The Silence is one of Bergman and Nykvist's most outstanding cinematographic achievements: not, perhaps, as striking as the Oscar-winning camera work of [Cries and Whispers](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/9324) and [Fanny and Alexander](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/fanny-and-alexander-0), yet scenes such as those in the train compartment, or those between Anna and Ester by the hotel window must have been very difficult to shoot, despite what their creators might claim.  
  
The leading roles were played by [Ingrid Thulin](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin) and [Gunnel Lindblom](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnel-lindblom), the latter in her greatest ever performance for Bergman. She had been a key player in his band of actors since [Don Juan](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/dom-juan-0) at the Malmö City Theatre in 1955, and had played minor parts in [The Seventh Seal](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/seventh-seal), [The Virgin Spring](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/virgin-spring) and Winter Light. This, however, was her first lead.  
  
Thulin was one of Bergman's most regular actresses, with major roles in most of his films since [Wild Strawberries](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/wild-strawberries). One interesting aside is that the characters she played became less and less attractive: from the elegant Marianne in Wild Strawberries, she played a hermaphrodite in [The Magician](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/magician), the snivelling and wretched school teacher in Winter Light, and now a bitter, compulsively masturbating invalid. Later, she would play other unpleasant roles, such as the corpse in [Hour of the Wolf](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/hour-wolf), the self-harming Anna in Cries and Whispers or the fading actress in [After the Rehearsal](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/after-rehearsal). Bergman has occasionally expressed a certain jealousy over the fact that the beautiful Thulin was married to [Harry Schein](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/harry-schein), but it is hard to determine whether or not this had any bearing on the matter.  
  
Bergman was, in any case, delighted with their efforts: 'Furthermore, the actresses were talented, well-disciplined, and almost always in a good mood. That The Silence in some ways became their undoing is another story. The film made them all internationally known. And other countries chose, as usual, to misunderstand the uniqueness of their respective talents.'  
  
Anna's son Johan was played by [Jörgen Lindström](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/j%C3%B6rgen-lindstr%C3%B6m). He would also take part in Bergman's next film [Persona](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/31), and in [Mai Zetterling's](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/mai-zetterling) [Night Games](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060740/). Some twenty years after the première of The Silence he was interviewed in the newspaper Aftonbladet to coincide with a TV broadcast of the film. Thirty-three years old at the time, he was working in a film laboratory in Stockholm. He said that he could not recall much about the shooting, other than that Bergman was 'quite avuncular' and that Gunnel Lindblom 'had such an amazing car – a black Cadillac. It was the car that made her exciting.'  
  
The old room service waiter was played by the veteran [Håkan Jahnberg](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/h%C3%A5kan-jahnberg), formerly the leading actor at the Gothenburg City Theatre. He had a problem remembering his lines in Bergman's made-up language, and struck a deal with the director that he could revive his childhood ability to speak backwards. Attentive Swedish-speaking listeners might notice that some of Jahnberg's lines are well-known Swedish nursery rhymes recited backwards!

### Epilogue

Shooting came to an end on 19 September 1962. Reminiscing in Bergman on Bergman: 'When [Kenne](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/kenne-fant) and I had run though the film together for the first time I said to him: 'Well, one thing you can be sure of is that nobody will be rushing to see this film.' One can see how badly one can misjudge a situation, because that's exactly what they did.' The question remains as to why they flocked to see it.

Following the première in September 1963 the press were in competition with headlines such as 'Moral outrage' and 'Indignation and abhorrence for Bergman film' as to who could quote the most shocked viewer of all. The Christian magazine Dagen was the most harsh in its censure, and even though none of its staff had seen the film, they had 'read enough' to declare that the film not only showed scenes of intimacy, but also 'other abominations, such as a girl's self-abuse'. Pastor John Hedlund summed up their feelings: 'If Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, however artistic that may be, he is still Satan nonetheless'.  
  
The Swedish Board of Film Censors had passed the film without cuts, prompting a probation officer from the Prison and Probation Service and an assistant pastor from the Stockholm parish of Bromma to bring a civil action against the Board before the Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman. This was triggered by a reported statement from the deputy head of the Board, Torsten Eklund: 'How would it be seen if we started interfering with Bergman [...].' 'It is not reasonable', claimed the litigants, 'that skilful direction and editing should excuse content that all normal people must realise has a brutalising effect.'  
  
One salient point that sparked off a separate debate was the fact that the film had been sent in for censorship when the head of the Board of Film censors was on holiday. The man in question, Erik Skoglund, had previously asked Svensk Filmindustri when the film would be submitted, and when he was told 'not before autumn' he blithely went off on his summer vacation. In the meantime SF's plans were changed and the film was submitted during the summer. After the premiere Skoglund let it be known that, had he been involved, he would have opposed the decision to release the film uncut. The head of SF, Kenne Fant, vigorously denied the claim that the Board had been misled and provided a number of explanations which were eventually accepted by Skoglund himself.  
  
The Silence was even discussed in the Swedish parliament, when the right-wing member of parliament, Birger Isacson, asked the minister in question why censorship was being successively liberalised. He claimed that young people regarded The Silence as a superior form of pornography, travelling miles 'to see the blatant sex scenes, elements of perversion and sick depravity.'  
  
Of all the letters published in newspapers on the subject (one of Bergman's accusers called him 'a common peeping Tom'), one which is signed 'Fond of children' deserves a special mention: 'Thank you Ingmar Bergman for the truly stimulating film 'The Silence'! For five years our marriage has been childless. Yet since my wife and I went to see 'The Silence', it is with great joy that we can announce that we are expecting an addition to the family. We shall never forget that wonderful film.'  
  
The result of all this commotion was, as one could almost have predicted, that The Silence became SF's biggest success ever up to that time. It was not until his immensely popular TV series [Scenes from a Marriage](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/scenes-marriage) that Bergman was to reach such a large audience, and this for his most inaccessible film to date. One point of special interest to football fans is that when the legendary Italian team AC Milan was in Sweden to play a friendly match against IFK Norrköping in November 1963, the entire team was bussed up to the Röda Kvarn cinema in Stockholm to see this notorious film. Their Swedish coach Nisse Liedholm acted as interpreter. The Milan players liked the film a great deal, especially the direction and cinematography, and [Ingrid Thulin's](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin) performance in particular. The sex scenes, however, they thought were 'a bit on the strong side'.  
  
The film's international launch caused a similar furore, and consequently it was also an export success for SF. The Silence received the dubious distinction of being labelled a semi-pornographic film; In the USA, posters for the film featured a review from the New York Daily News: 'On incest, self-defilement and nymphomania, this Bergman latest is the most shocking film I have ever seen. I couldn't believe my eyes.' In New York it went on release in cinemas including the Rialto, notorious for its striptease shows.  
  
In Argentina the film's distributor Juan Antonio Muruzeta was given a one year suspended prison sentence. The judgement lamented the fact that 'modern art makes use of the ugly, the outlandish, the abnormal, and raises it to the level of beauty; traditional harmony and peace of mind as orthodox artistic effects are replaced in the troubled world of our day with dissonance and confusion, which now serve as a means of recreation.' Summing up, the judge's decision was that the film contained at least three scenes that were 'repulsive, even for the most liberally-minded of audiences'.  
  
Artistic freedom, however, know no bounds, and an astute entrepreneur in the film business decided to screen the film in the town of Colombia, Uruguay, a mere 30 kilometres from Buenos Aires. In Uruguay the film was passed for screening uncut, and prospective Argentinean viewers were offered a package deal that included a boat trip and a ticket for The Silence. Yet the film's scandalous reputation was to prove short-lived. A few years later considerably more explicit Swedish depictions of sex were to cause new storms and new box office successes. With later films like [Vilgot Sjöman's](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/vilgot-sj%C3%B6man) [I am Curious  Yellow](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061834/), The Silence suddenly seemed rather tame by comparison.  
  
Watching the film again many years later, Bergman was still largely satisfied. Writing in [Images](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film):

While you see The Silence today, you have to admit that it suffers from a severe literary list (as a ship with an unbalanced load) in two or three sequences. First and foremost, that is true in the confrontations between the two sisters. The tentative dialogue between Anna and Ester with which the film ends is also unnecessary. Other than that, I have no objections. I can see details we could have improved upon if we had had more time and money; a few street scenes, the scen in the variety theater, and so on. But we did what we could to make the scenes comprehensible. Sometimes it's actually an advantage not to have too much money.

20 May 2012

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# Wild Strawberries

Professor Isak Borg re-evaluates his life during a road-trip between Stockholm and Lund.



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Who can forget such images?

Woody Allen

## About the film

Winter 1956-1957 was a time of intensive and fruitful labour for Bergman. The summer had been devoted to [The Seventh Seal](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/seventh-seal), followed by three productions at the Malmö City Theatre: [Cat on a Hot Tin Roof](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/cat-hot-tin-roof), [Erik XIV](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/erik-xiv) and [Peer Gynt](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/peer-gynt). But his general health was poor. As spring approached he was admitted to Stockholm's Karolinska University Hospital where he remained for almost two months 'for general observation and treatment.' It was during this period that he wrote the screenplay for Wild Strawberries.

In an interview from the 1960s he speaks of a journey to [Dalarna](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/places/dalarna-dalecarlia) during the autumn of 1956 when he stopped off in [Uppsala](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/node/20035) at his grandmothers' house on Slottsgatan [though in fact it was Trädgårdsgatan]. He was overcome by a particular feeling: just imagine if the old cook Lalla were to open the door, just as she had done so many times before?

Then it struck me: supposing I make a film of someone coming along, perfectly realistically, and suddenly opening a door and walking into his childhood? And then opening another door and walking out into reality again? And then walking round the corner of the street and coming into some other period of his life, and everything still alive and going on as before? That was the real starting point of Wild Strawberries.

Later he would revise the story of the film's genesis. [In Images: My Life in Film](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/images-my-life-film) he comments on his own earlier statement: 'That's a lie. The truth is that I am forever living in my childhood.'

Nevertheless, the screenplay was begun in earnest during his stay in hospital in the spring of 1957. The project had been given the seal of approval by [Carl Anders Dymling](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/carl-anders-dymling), who had been shown a short synopsis. Bergman's doctor at Karolinska was his good friend Sture Helander, who invited Ingmar to attend his lectures on psychosomatics. Helander was married to [Gunnel Lindblom](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnel-lindblom) who was to play Isak's sister Charlotta in the film. In general, casting and other preparations seem to have progressed with remarkable speed, since the completed screenplay is dated 31 May and shooting began on 2 July. The fact that many of the actors came from the Malmö City Theatre company probably helped in the process.

The casting of the heavyweight principal role – Isak Borg – is a story in itself. Given that Wild Strawberries is probably the one film of Bergman that bears the closest relationship with his favourite film [The Phantom Carriage](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0012364/), one might imagine that the participation of [Victor Sjöström](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/victor-sj%C3%B6str%C3%B6m) was planned from an early stage. Yet this does not appear to be the case. In Bergman on Bergman he has stated that he only thought of Sjöström when the screenplay was complete, and that he asked Dymling to contact the great man. Yet in Images: My Life in Film he claims that: 'It is probably worth noting that I never for a moment thought of Sjöström when I was writing the screenplay. The suggestion came from the film's producer, Carl Anders Dymling. As I recall, I thought long and hard before I agreed to let him have the part.' We shall never know the true story, but in the finished film, Sjöström's role was of fundamental importance.

### Sources of inspiration

Of all Bergman's works, Wild Strawberries is one of the most widely imitated and referred to (see below). It is also one of only a few films in which Bergman's own sources of inspiration and creative borrowings are most clearly discernible.

The influences of August Strindberg – widespread in Bergman – are immediately apparent. Strindberg's introduction to A Dream Play (which is later quoted openly in [Fanny and Alexander](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/fanny-and-alexander-0)) might also appear to be the credo of Wild Strawberries:

Time and space do not exist. Upon an insignificant background of real life events, the imagination spins and weaves new patterns; a blend of memories, experiences, pure inventions, absurdities and improvisations.

Given that during the five years prior to Wild Strawberries Bergman produced no fewer than three Strindberg plays ([The Crown Bride](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/crown-bride), [Ghost Sonata](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/ghost-sonata-0), [Erik XIV](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/erik-xiv)) the affinities are hardly surprising. Strindberg's sworn enemy Henrik Ibsen also appears to have had a key influence on Wild Strawberries. Not least Peer Gynt, [which Bergman had produced](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/peer-gynt) just before he wrote the screenplay for the film. Like the eponymous hero of that play, Isak in Wild Strawberries takes stock of his life.

The many borrowings of the film were noted in one of the few negative reviews it received, criticising the film for too many literary references and a lack of originality:

From the Ibsen era comes the old cliché about the living who are actually dead. From His Lord's Will [Hjalmar Bergman's Hans nåds testamente] the amusing quarrels with the faithful servant. In skilfully contrived dream sequences the influence of Pär Lagerkvist can be discerned, when Strindberg is not making his contributions with the distinguished academic who is forced to undergo a viva.

As mentioned, one obvious cinematic influence is Sjöström's The Phantom Carriage, the film which, according to Bergman, was: the film of all films. 'I saw it for the first time when I was fifteen; to this day I see it at least once every summer, either alone or in the company of younger people. I clearly see how [The Phantom Carriage](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0012364/) has influenced my own work, right down to minute details.'

The first dream sequence, with its funeral  - albeit without a driver - is a clear example of the influence of Sjöström, as is the clock without hands, which can be found in [Karin Ingmarsdotter](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0011362/). But the most obvious celebration of his cinematic hero is naturally the appearance in the film of the man himself. According to Bergman, Sjöström 'took my text, made it his own, invested it with his own experiences':

[...] loneliness, coldness, warmth, harshness, and ennui. Borrowing my father's form, he occupied my soul and made it all his own - there wasn't even a crumb left over for me! He did so with the sovereign power of a gargantuan personality. I had nothing to add, not even a sensible or irrational comment. Wild Strawberries was no longer my film; it was Victor Sjöström's!

Apart from obvious borrowings from other works, the inspiration for Wild Strawberries can also be traced to Bergman's more personal experiences. As usual, Bergman himself is forthcoming with his own biographical details, not least in this case his relationship with his parents, a relationship that was particularly troubled at around this period: 'I tried to put myself in my father's place and sought explanations for the bitter quarrels with my mother. [...] Isak Borg equals me. I B equals Ice and Borg (the Swedish word for fortress). Simple and facile. I had created a character who, on the outside, looked like my father, but was me, through and through'

The painful identification with the father from whom he had distanced himself is central to the razor-sharp portraits of Isak Borg and his world-weary son, Evald. And the presentation of one and the same person as both old and young is a theme dear to Bergman's heart right up to his very latest works. The theme can be traced back to the prose work [Bo Dahlin's notes on the divorce of parents](http://ingmarbergman.se/verk/bo-dahlins-anteckningar-ang%C3%A5ende-f%C3%B6r%C3%A4ldrarnas-skilsm%C3%A4ssa) (1951), which contains a scene between a jealous son and his mother's lover. Maaret Koskinen has recognised this as one of the familiar stylistic devices in Bergman's work's: 'At times, one gets the impression that Bergman himself has, in places, confronted a younger and older version of one and the same ego, who enter a conversation between themselves (also a favourite device in later works).'

Another, more intriguing source for the device of portraying oneself in two versions can be found in an [entertaining article](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/ingmars-self-portrait) by Bergman in the popular Swedish magazine Se, written shortly before the filming of Wild Strawberries. The article is an ironic self portrait based around an alleged event at the Cannes Film Festival, where they played 'festival roulette with my film [Smiles of a Summer Night](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/smiles-summer-night).' A Russian artist asked if he could draw Bergman's portrait, placing his subject half turned towards a large mirror:

'After a while the picture was finished and I was allowed to see it. There were two Bergmans: one, as it were, direct, and one in the mirror. The first had a childish, almost foolish expression on his face. The image in the mirror was of an old man, a ghost with a weary look.'

It is hard not to regard one of the key scenes of Wild Strawberries, a dream sequence where Isak is forced to look at himself in a mirror held up by Sara, in which he sees an old man, in the light of this anecdote. Whether or not it is actually true is of minor significance.

Finally, one may also speculate as to whether a number of well-known paintings provided the inspiration for some of the shots in the film (although this has never been confirmed by Bergman). The dream sequence scene in which Isak Borg is forced to witness his wife's infidelity bears both pictorial and thematic similarities with Edvard Munch's 'Jealousy'. And some of the more idyllic scenes of childhood bear distinct parallels with Carl Larsson's 'Crayfishing'.

### Shooting the film

Shooting began on 2 July 1957, and took place for the most part at the Filmstaden studios in Råsunda, just outside [Stockholm](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/places/stockholm). A couple of scenes were filmed in Stockholm's old town, Gamla Stan, and scenes from the car journey were shot on location: Slussen in Stockholm; Gränna (including lunch at the Gyllene Uttern restaurant); Dalarö and Ängsö in the Stockholm archipelago; and at the University Square in Lund  
  
During the shooting, the health of the 79-year-old [Sjöström](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/victor-sj%C3%B6str%C3%B6m) gave cause for concern. Dymling had persuaded him to take on the role with the words: 'All you have to do is lie under a tree, eat wild strawberries and think about your past, so it's nothing too arduous.' But in the event, it proved to be rather demanding. During the first few days Sjöström had problems with his lines, which made him frustrated and angry. To unburden his revered mentor, Bergman made a pact with [Ingrid Thulin](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/ingrid-thulin) that if anything went wrong during a scene, she would take the blame on herself. Things gradually got better, especially when they changed filming times so that Sjöström could get home in time for his customary late afternoon whisky at 4.30. And the old charmer's obvious delight at playing opposite the 22-year-old [Bibi Andersson](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/bibi-andersson) was another plus.



*Gösta Ekman, Ingmar Bergman, Victor Sjöström and Lena Bergman (yes, daughter) on set.  
Foto: Luis Huch; © AB Svensk Filmindustri*

Sjöström's presence on the set was also a source of entertainment and cinema history education for the team. In Bergman's words: 'Victor Sjöström was an excellent storyteller, funny and engaging – especially if some young, beautiful woman happened to be present. We were sitting at the very source of film history, both Swedish and American.'

The film's cinematographer was [Gunnar Fischer](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/gunnar-fischer). Recalling the famous, deliberately over-exposed nightmare scene at the start of the film, Fischer has observed that he and Bergman attempted to intensify the impact of the nightmare with the light effects.

We agreed we would try to create hard images, try to eradicate all the softness of the grey scales. And unusually enough, I managed to acquire a few metres of spare film to experiment with. In general we had to make do with a bare minimum of film[...] I think I opted for a very fast, light-sensitive film. And then we were lucky with the street we were about to film. The sunlight was very strong indeed, ideal for the kind of black and white images we wanted. Yet when we returned after lunch the sun had moved – as it does – right in the middle of the street was the shadow of a large birch tree. What could we do? I could hardly contact the studio and say: 'Can you saw down that birch tree?' Maybe you can do that sort of thing in Hollywood, but not in Stockholm. I don't remember what we did exactly, but you can still notice that shadow at times.

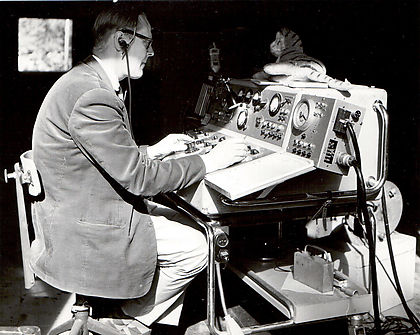
The nightmare sequence was shot for the most part in the Filmstaden studios, apart from a couple of takes of the funeral, which were filmed in Gamla Stan at around two o'clock in the morning (there is clear daylight at that time of the year in Stockholm). According to Fischer, the crew suddenly heard the cheery song of revellers on their way home from a night on the town. When they caught sight of a funeral coming towards them without a driver, their singing quickly fell silent.

One of the most peculiar incidents during the shooting of the film involves the many hundreds of snakes that were intended to serve as extras in the dream scene where Isak witnesses his wife's infidelity. 'Wherever I looked it seemed that snakes were coming to life, springing out of the porous, swamp-like earth.'

It was probably just as well that the scene never came off, since the symbolism of the snakes would have been so overtly Freudian. But the actual reason why the snakes never featured in the film is worth recounting: the night before shooting they had all escaped from the terrarium in which they were being held and moved off into the neighbouring woods.

### Epilogue

Filming came to an end on 27 August 1957, and the technical work started almost immediately. [Oscar Rosander](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/oscar-rosander) was the principal editor. The film was premiered in seven Swedish cities on 26 December 1957. The reviews were keenly enthusiastic, with one or two exceptions.



*Sven Persson (?) mixing.  
Foto: Luis Huch; © AB Svensk Filmindustri*

The film was selected to compete at the Berlin Film Festival, where it won the Golden Bear Award as Best Film. Reporting for Cahiers du cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard's short telegram to the home office is worth quoting: 'Golden Bear Wild Strawberries proves Ingmar greatest stop script fantastic about flas conscience Victor Sjöström dazzled beauty [Bibi Andersson](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/collaborators/bibi-andersson) stop multiply Heidegger by Giraudoux get Bergman stop.'

Wild Strawberries remains Bergman's most successful film in terms of the number of awards it has received, and it firmly established Bergman's reputation as a filmmaker on the international stage.

With the possible exception of [The Seventh Seal](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/seventh-seal), Wild Strawberries is the Bergman film that other filmmakers have referred to most. Philip and Kersti French have even described it as 'the real ur-road movie', claiming that other films in the genre – such as [Easy Rider](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064276/) – owe an implicit debt to Bergman's film. This may be an exaggeration, but whether in the form of parody or homage, there are numerous references to Wild Strawberries in the films of directors as diverse as Pedro Almodóvar ([High Heels](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103030/)), André Téchiné ([My Favourite Season](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107471/)), David Cronenberg and Tim Burton. Yet the most tireless devotee of the film is surely Woody Allen, who has made at least three films that – wholly or in part – be seen as appendages to Wild Strawberries: [Another Woman](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094663/), [Crimes and Misdemeanors](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097123/) andDeconstructing Harry.

Finally, given that Bergman himself has said that he attempted to model Isak Borg on his own father, with whom he was in bitter feud at the time, it is interesting to see Bergman senior's reaction to the film. In a letter to its leading actor he wrote:

Dear Victor Sjöström!

Permit me, Ingmar's father, to send you my respectful greetings and my heartfelt thanks for your brilliant performance in Ingmar's latest film. – And thank you for all you have given to Ingmar and to me, and to countless others through your noble artistry and the spiritual inspiration of your entire work. – I will always remember with gratitude the friendly, encouraging words you spoke to me about Ingmar when he was still very young, and I stood before you in doubt and uncertainty.

My wife joins me in expressing our warm thanks.

Respectfully yours

Erik Bergman

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by [Jan Holmberg](http://ingmarbergman.se/en/%2523) – 20 May 2012

## Sources

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## Film facts

## Reviews and comments

## Quotes

## Plot summary

## Images/movies