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the construction, not entirely to its advantage.

The most startling (because so unexpected) anticipation of a later work has yet to be noted. In one of the flashbacks Dr Ernemann talks to Nix, confiding in her (as they become more relaxed and intimate together) rather more than

Stills: Smiles of a Summer Night. Below: Egerman (Gunnar Björnstrand) shows the theatre tickets to his young second wife (Ulla Jacobsson), while his son Henrik (Björn Bjelvenstam) looks on. Right: Charlotte (Margit Carlquist), Egerman, Anne and Henrik.

he intends. 'Everything leaves me cold', he says. Nix quickly grasps the implications of the words. 'Even Mother and me and Pelle?' she exclaims, hurt. Father and daughter are played by Gunnar Björnstrand and Harriet Andersson; we suddenly find ourselves confronted with the embryo of *Through a Glass Darkly*.

Smiles of a Summer Night was one of the first films to establish Bergman's reputation in Great Britain. One might be tempted to regard it, ignorantly, as an early work, and to try to see his subsequent films as growing out of it.



Of course it is no such thing; and now that so much more of Bergman's earlier work has become accessible, one can see that *Smiles* is less a beginning than an end: it has something of the nature of a combined culmination and retrospect, its achieved perfection associating with its consolidating rather than exploratory character. It marks Bergman's farewell to Eva Dahlbeck and Harriet Andersson: or, more precisely, to the Dahlbeck and Andersson personalities built up through the succession of films from *Waiting Women*. When they reappear (in *So Close to Life* and *Through a*

Glass Darkly respectively) it is in roles quite distinct from Bergman's earlier use of them; or in that more deliberate retrospect *Now About These Women*. In *Smiles*, both actresses give the definitive versions of the *personae* they had developed. The film offers a foretaste as well: among the girls in the play Eva Dahlbeck is appearing in near the start of the film one notices Bibi Andersson, who was to become prominent in Bergman's next four films.

It is also possible to see Ulla Jacobsson's role as a reference back to those taken earlier by Mai-Britt Nilsson; though the character is

altogether slighter and shallower. The change is significant. The intensity with which Bergman could feel the vulnerability of young love – his balancing of its immense value with its frailty – was the great quality of *Summer Interlude*, and of the central episode of *Waiting Women*. But he had passed beyond it when he made *Smiles*, and doesn't attempt to treat it with the same intimacy and inwardness. If one found any fault at all with the film, in fact, it might be in the almost cruelly ironic treatment of Henrik, the young son by a previous marriage of the lawyer Egerman (Björnstrand), studying for the church and hopelessly struggling with unmanageable sexual feelings. It can be felt, however, to balance the irony with which the amorous entanglements of Henrik's elders are also treated; the movement towards establishing a balance of sympathies between idealistic young love and the compromises of Experience that Bergman began rather clumsily in *Waiting Women*, reaches its final and perfect expression in *Smiles of a Summer Night*.

The eight main characters resolve themselves in the course of the film, with what is felt as a perfect appropriateness, into four couples: Egerman and his mistress (Dahlbeck); Henrik (Björn Bjelvenstam) and his father's young second wife (Ulla Jacobsson); Count Malcolm (Jarl Kulle) and his own wife (the remarkable Margit Carlquist – sadly, almost her only appearance in a Bergman film); the maid Petra (Harriet Andersson) and the coachman Frid (Åke Fridell). None is exempt from the pervasive irony; on the other hand, none is treated without sympathy. Count Malcolm gets rather less than anyone else: he anticipates Don Juan in *The Devil's Eye* (played by the same actor), except that he is a Don Juan who hasn't yet recognized his own emptiness. The complex interaction of the characters in the course of the intrigue makes the film a continually shifting kaleidoscope in which different

relationships and attitudes to love become juxtaposed, to be compared and evaluated.

Balance, then, is the keynote of the film: the balancing of irony and sympathy, the balancing of different attitudes. The period setting increases the total effect of a formally conceived summation, enabling Bergman to achieve a stylised, patterned quality. It seems clear that part of the inspiration came from Mozart opera. The formalised effect of the film reminds one at times of Mozart's *ensembles*. At one point Bergman has Gunnar Björnstrand hum a few bars of 'La ci darem la mano', the Zerlina Don Giovanni duet. (The effect is ironic: Egerman, caught in absurd night attire in the rooms of his ex-mistress by her present lover, is in a thoroughly ignominious position which his attempt at a careless composure via the great seducer's love music merely underlines.) But it is the parallels with *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute* that are most striking. The overall construction in terms of a complicated love-intrigue in which upper-class characters and their servants are involved and in which different sorts of love are juxtaposed offers a general likeness to *Figaro*. In both works there is a philandering yet insanely jealous Count and a Countess who wants her husband to herself. But it is the actress, played by Eva Dahlbeck, who most resembles Mozart's Countess (both are anxious about advancing years, and feel the need for emotional security), and she takes the role of a Countess in the play Egerman takes Anne to near the beginning of the film. Henrik is like Cherubino in his tendency to be attracted to every girl he comes in contact with. Petra in some ways resembles Suzanna. As in *Figaro*, the last 'act' moves out closer to the world of nature (the pavilion in the garden) for the resolution of the intrigue and the final sorting into couples. Petra's Frid is not much like Figaro, but he is rather like Papageno from *The Magic Flute* (an opera Bergman said



recently that he has long wanted to produce, and which plays a prominent part in *Hour of the Wolf*). The servant-lovers are separated much more from their social superiors than in *Figaro*; the paralleling of a comparatively serious love story with a comic, earthy one is more reminiscent of *The Magic Flute*. Towards the end of the opera Papageno, apparently unable to obtain his Papagena, tries to hang himself; he is prevented by the Three Boys (part of the

Still: Smiles of a Summer Night. Egerman, Desiree (Eva Dahlbeck) and Count Malcolm (Jarl Kulle).

opera's supernatural machinery), who tell him to play his set of chimes; when he does so, Papagena is given to him. In *Smiles*, Henrik, confronted with the apparent impossibility of his love for Anne, tries to hang himself in his bedroom. He falls, and grabs at an ornamental



knob to save himself; by an apparent miracle (though the mechanism has been explained to the audience earlier) the wall slides open and, to the accompaniment of musical-box chimes culminating in a comic little fanfare by ornamental cherubs, a bed glides through from the next room with his beautiful young step-mother asleep in it. The parallel is at once too free to constitute a 'borrowing' (Henrik as a character is utterly unlike Papageno) and too close to be coincidental.

More important than such incidental echoes is the Mozartian emotional complexity of much

of the comedy: that delicate and flexible movement to and fro between humour and pathos, between different shades of emotion, that is supremely characteristic of Mozart's music. Examples abound in *Smiles*: one of the most striking is the transition from bitter comedy to near-tragedy and out again to farce at the pavilion climax. Count Malcolm challenges Egerman to Russian Roulette to settle their love disputes once and for all. Egerman's cowardice is both funny and disturbing; Malcolm's unruffled aplomb funny and cruel. It reaches the point where the next

shot must almost certainly release the single bullet. It is Egerman's turn. He presses the gun to his temple and hesitates; we are ready for some twist or reversal to resolve the tension into comedy. Abruptly, Malcolm reminds him quietly that Anne has run away with Henrik. In one of the most poignant moments in any Bergman film we see all desire to live drain from Egerman's face, and his finger squeezes

Stills: Smiles of a Summer Night. Left: Anne delivered to Henrik. Below: the elopement. Henrik, Anne and Petra (Harriet Andersson).

the trigger. Cut to long-shot, from outside. The shot shatters the silence, the women run to the pavilion. The film has astonishingly turned to tragedy. They open the pavilion door. Malcolm is roaring with laughter, Egerman is sitting upright in an absurd attempt at preserving his dignity, his face blackened. The bullet was a blank.

The earlier scene of Anne and Henrik's elopement offers a parallel between Bergman's *mise-en-scène* and Mozart's *ensembles*, where different characters express contrasting emotions and attitudes simultaneously. The young



lovers, filled with a sense of joyous release, ride off wildly in a carriage. Frid and Petra help them: their presence adds the sort of extra emotional dimension to the scene that the presence of, say, Zerlina, Masetto and Leporello adds to the *Don Giovanni* sextet. From the shadows, meanwhile, unseen by the others, Egerman watches, deeply hurt yet not feeling he has the right to stop them. Bergman makes us share his despair and the lovers' joy simultaneously, maintaining very precisely the balance of sympathies on which so much of the film's complexity of effect depends. The complexity can be localised in the detail of Anne's veil, blown back by the wind as the lovers ride off, to fall at Egerman's feet: it is the token at once of Anne's release (the casting off of virginity) and his own failure (the long-unconsummated marriage).

Still: Smiles of a Summer Night. Petra, Anne.



This much said, it must be added that Bergman isn't Mozart. *Smiles* makes use of the formalised effect of Mozartian opera and captures a similar emotional complexity. It is quite different in flavour, the astringent bitterness that relates the film to *Journey into Autumn* and even *Sawdust and Tinsel* being quite alien to Mozart. One sees the difference most readily by placing the film beside what is perhaps the most truly Mozartian film ever made, Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu*, which has not only the Mozartian charity and generosity but the seemingly effortless flow of spontaneous invention that is another aspect of the same basic human gift. Beside it, the effects in *Smiles* look calculated. Though this implies to some extent a limiting judgment, I mean it more as definition than as criticism. With its own individual and complex flavour, the astringency balanced and modified by qualities of warmth, tenderness and charm, *Smiles of a Summer Night* remains one of Bergman's perfect films.

If *Smiles of a Summer Night* has its source in Mozart opera, *Wild Strawberries* is founded on Bach fugue. Again Bergman provides a concrete clue: during the central dream sequence (while Isak Borg dozes in the car), Bibi Andersson, as the Sara of Isak's youth, picks out the first bars of the E flat minor fugue (the eighth of the 'Forty-Eight') on the piano. The film's construction can best be explained in terms of a time-fugue. Each generation of the Borg family – Isak, his 95-year-old mother, his son Evald – constitutes a statement of the fugue subject, with Alman (the Catholic husband from the car accident) as a variant. The two Saras – past and present – represent statements of the counter-subject. The various parts are developed contrapuntally in continually shifting combinations; the point of maximum contrapuntal involvement is the central dream sequence.