

Women in the Chamber:
The Influence of the Strindbergian Theatrical Legacy
on Danish Dogma Films

Hanna Maria Laakso

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ABSTRACT

Women in the Chamber:
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Hanna Maria Laakso, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2007

In 1995 Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg wrote the Dogma Manifesto, a document that brought worldwide attention to Danish cinema through the Dogma films made according to the manifesto's rules. While the Danish Dogma films have been widely regarded as constituting the latest new wave movement, the films have not been studied in relation to the Scandinavian artistic and cultural traditions. Moreover, the actor's role in creating this new kind of cinema has also been ignored. By analysing the first six Danish Dogma films, this thesis explores the influence of the Strindbergian theatrical legacy on the Dogma filmmakers' approach to performance. The focus is on Dogma's representation of women and the performance of woman actors found in the films. First, the thesis compares the Dogma manifesto with Strindberg's manifesto of naturalism and studies the impact of these manifestos on redefining the female actor's craft. Second, the thesis argues that the Dogma films continue the Strindbergian chamber drama tradition; the use of authentic space is studied on a formal and thematic level, along with its influence on the creation of authentic performances. The discussion of chamber dramas segues into an examination of hysteria as a dramatic tool to analyse women's rebellion in a domestic space. Hysteria is also juxtaposed with another non-

verbal dramatic means of expression, which is the use of silence in the women actors' performances. The discussion of dynamic use of silence and speech as well as the representation of words as an inauthentic means of expression is inseparable from an analysis of women, modernism and the use of close up capturing the actor's silent face. Finally, the interrogation of the use of words that hide ugly realities leads to an examination of construction of a hell-on-earth, transcendental experience within the realistic framework, the conflict between spiritual minds and sexual bodies. The thesis argues that the Dogma actors' performances of excess and theatricality mark a shift in the Scandinavian performance tradition: Moreover, it illuminates the importance of contextualizing women actors' performances culturally, nationally and historically.

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For Silja Tiittanen

Never have I seen my homeland
and the true life of my homeland
so fully, so clearly, and at such close range,
as I did in my absence when I was far away from it.
-Henrik Ibsen

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Introduction

Since 1995, the year that witnessed the birth of the Dogma 95 movement, Danish cinema has garnered worldwide attention. Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg wrote the Dogma Manifesto as a set of rules that were aimed at producing a new kind of cinema. The manifesto called for “character-driven” films which were simultaneously “instill[ed]...with a thoroughly cinematic feeling” (Müller qtd. in Oppenheimer and Williams 18). While the Danish Dogma films have been widely regarded as constituting the latest new wave movement, the films’ cultural and national contexts have not been sufficiently explored. The views of Vinterberg as a “Danish Bergman in modern Dogma garb” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 269) or *The Celebration* (1998) as a film that “wants to evoke the dramatic breadth of Strindberg and the cinematic panache of Bergman” (Porton 17) have not led to any serious attempt to study Vinterberg’s filmmaking in relation to the Scandinavian artistic and cultural traditions. Likewise, von Trier’s frequent statements regarding the influence of Carl Th. Dreyer, Ingmar Bergman and August Strindberg on his filmmaking have not inspired scholars to examine von Trier’s films in relation to the *oeuvre* of his predecessors.¹

¹ See for instance von Trier in Berthelius and Narbonne 55; Ciment and Rouyer 62; Björkman and Nyman 101; Braad Thomsen 110; Lumholdt 166; Björkman and Smith *Trier*, 202.

Not only has the view of Dogma95 as the latest new wave movement put aside the question of cultural, national and historical contexts, but the actor's role in creating this new kind of cinema has also been ignored. Film periodicals focus on the Dogma filmmakers' method of filmmaking, which records performances by unobtrusive, intimate digital cameras creating a physically close relationship between the director and the actors. Although the authors acknowledge that this "new confluence of emotion and technology" creating "intense, riveting immediacy" (Roman 49) is made possible by a redefined approach to performance, the actors' role as the agent of the new mode of performance has not been examined. However, these films are more than products of technology or of a director/auteur.

The aim of my dissertation is to analyse the cultural and artistic contexts out of which the Dogma films emerge as well as the use of performance in those films. I focus on studying the ways in which the influence of Strindbergian theatrical legacy can be detected in the Dogma filmmakers' approach to performance. Consequently, this theatrical framework enables me to focus on exploring the Dogma's representation of women and on examining the performance of actor (rather than director)-auteurs. The first six Danish Dogma films *Idioterne* (*The Idiots*, von Trier 1998), *Festen* (*The Celebration*, Vinterberg 1998), *Mifunes sidste sang* (*Mifune*, Kragh-Jacobsen 1999), *Italiensk for begyndere* (*Italian for Beginners*, Scherfig 2000), *Et Rigtigt menneske* (*Truly Human*, Sandgren 2001) and *Forbrydelser* (*In Your Hands*, Olesen 2004) are the subjects of my close analysis. The examination of these films highlights the importance of contextualizing the women actors' performances culturally, nationally and historically.

The dissertation begins with a criticism of the auteurist approaches to August Strindberg's "theatre of revolt" (Brustein 1964). My aim is to discuss the role of the woman actor in fighting against the prevailing theatrical conventions (theatricality in the use of space and performance) as well as against the existing notions of Woman in the Strindbergian naturalistic theatre. I compare the theatre of revolt with the cinema of revolt, which is, for many, Dogma 95's mandate. I explore the parallels between Strindberg's manifesto of naturalism (articulated in his preface to *Miss Julie* [1888]) and the Dogma manifesto, which has been viewed as a piece of provocation by rebellious filmmakers von Trier and Vinterberg. I emphasize the importance of exploring the impact that these manifestos of naturalism have had on redefining the woman actor's craft. Both manifestos call for a new type of actor who de- and reconstructs traditional modes of performance and, subsequently, notions of Woman. The actor (rather than the director) adopts "the posture of the rebel" (Brustein 8). Consequently, the dissertation participates in the criticism directed at a "male exclusion of women from theatre [or cinema]." The dissertation seeks to "re-chart the history of theatre [or cinema]" of revolt by finding "the 'lost' female tradition" (Aston "Finding," 38).

To rediscover the lost female tradition of acting I compare the "new school of actors" (Adler 76) that Strindberg's manifesto called for, such actors as Asta Nielsen, Betty Hennings, Betty Nansen and Clara Pontoppidan with the new generation of Dogma actors, such as Bodil Jorgensen, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen, Anette Stovelbæk, Iben Hjejle, Paprika Steen, Lene Tiemroth and Trine Dyrholm. I analyse the theatrical background of the two generations of Scandinavian women film actors, highlighting the importance of paying attention to the experimental theatres where the actors have been able de- and

reconstruct dramatic forms of expression and notions of Woman. Although the experimental theatres on the margins of the theatrical world have played and continue to play a crucial role in the women actors' careers they have not been sufficiently acknowledged. The current experimental theatres are realizations of Strindberg's vision of a small house and a small stage (depicted in his manifesto of naturalism) where the new actor is able to modernise theatrical forms of expression. I argue that experimental theatres still play an important role in the Dogma actors' careers; the new form of intimate filmmaking in Dogma is made possible by the experience the actors have gained at such theatres.

I focus on analysing Asta Nielsen as an example of the new school of theatre actors whose career developed on the margins of a theatrical world. Nielsen was an actor who de- and reconstructed theatrical forms of expression and notions of woman. Moreover, she was a theatre actor who implemented new naturalism in film acting. Her first film performance in *The Abyss* (Gad, 1909) gained her the status of "the first 'modern' screen actress" (Gillett 42) as well as European cinema's "first truly cinematic star" (Dalle Vache 76).

This discussion of the experimental theatres on the margins of the theatrical world segues into an analysis of another kind of marginal space, that of the intimate domestic space, which is the subject of the second section of this dissertation. I examine the ways in which both Strindberg's and Dogma's manifestos emphasize the use of authentic, domestic space as a setting for authentic performances, and thus as a setting in which to investigate women's status in the private realm. This examination of the use of space leads to an exploration of the ways in which the Dogma films align themselves

with the Strindbergian tradition of chamber drama. I discuss Max Reinhardt's influence on Strindberg's reconstruction of theatrical space, on his notion of the "intimate action" (Strindberg *Open*, 19) and on the development of Strindbergian chamber drama tradition. Dogma filmmakers, I want to argue, returned to a Strindbergian chamber space, experimenting with a space that is simplified and emptied of all distracting elements to achieve authentic performances in an authentic space. This experimentation with the realistically rendered chamber space as a setting for domestic dramas encourages a renewed focus on women's domestic identity. More importantly, the dissertation points out how a distinct performance tradition runs parallel to the tradition of male playwrights/directors and filmmakers depicting women in domestic space. The actors performing in a domestic space thus constitute a community of women artists, building a female tradition of acting and, in turn, shaping and controlling that space. How can that tradition of chamber drama be analysed and made meaningful from these women artists' perspectives? My aim is to study how the women actors, through their use of body and voice, have responded to the intimacy created by chamber space and given expression to the experience of female identity.

Any examination of the tradition of male directors/playwrights and filmmakers depicting women in the domestic space is inseparable from an exploration of dramatic tools they have used to study women's rebellion against the restricting social roles and behavioural norms invested in that space. Thus, the third section of my dissertation begins with an examination of the ways in which Henrik Ibsen used hysteria as a non-verbal dramatic tool to study women's domestic rebellion and their subsequent experience of marginality. Any discussion of a theatrical spectacle of hysteria requires an

analysis of specific elements of naturalistic performances. I argue that, although Strindberg expressed his critical view of theatrical acting, he like Ibsen, nonetheless kept exploring theatrical elements in performance. The dissertation studies how Strindberg's interrogation of theatrical elements in performance offers the potential for a feminist reading of his use of performance in naturalist dramas. In his effort to de- and reconstruct forms of performance that reflected the consciousness of the New Woman, Strindberg came close to Ibsen. Furthermore, in his effort to exceed the boundaries of naturalism Strindberg came close to Ibsen's "poetry of feminism" (Templeton 110). Ibsen's way of juxtaposing opposing modes of performance – melodrama and psychological realism – granted women actors, what Elaine Aston would call a "feminist performance register" (*Feminist* 106), "the ability to demonstrate, and to critique, the performative nature of the role of woman" (Cima 30). By juxtaposing two modes of performance "women could make visible the roles granted to 'woman'" (Cima 38). The dissertation argues that Strindberg's effort to exceed the boundaries of the naturalism already in his pre-Inferno period (1869-92) can be detected in his examination of "the simultaneity of the melodramatic and the 'real'" (Cima 45) in such naturalistic dramas as *Miss Julie*, *Comrades* and *The Bond*. Like Ibsen, Strindberg juxtaposes melodramatic forms of expression with psychological realism; consequently, by de- and reconstructing modes of performance he de- and reconstructs notions of woman.

Subsequently, the dissertation analyses how the Dogma filmmakers' quest for naturalism in acting does not prevent them from examining theatrical elements in performance. The filmmakers' critical view of theatrical acting and their simultaneous interrogation of theatrical elements in performance align them with their theatrical

predecessors. Like Ibsen and Strindberg the Dogma filmmakers interrogate spectacles of hysteria and role-playing, along with the experience of life as theatre and the dynamics between mask and face. The dissertation studies the Dogma filmmakers' depiction of "self-dramatizing" female protagonists who must play "a double line of action" (Cima 43). In their juxtaposition of what Roberta Pearson terms "verisimilar" and "histrionic" (7) acting styles the female protagonists perform theatrical hysteria. Following Strindberg, the Dogma filmmakers continue to explore "the histrionic" that characterizes both hysterics and actors' theatricalized poses, as Elaine Showalter, suggests when discussing "cultural narratives of hysteria" (5). The Dogma filmmakers share Strindberg's concern for femininity as masquerade and thus encourage actors to "overlay the representational system of Woman" (Aston *Feminist*, 62-3). By juxtaposing the histrionic and verisimilar acting codes, the Dogma filmmakers take part in deconstructing and reconstructing notions of femininity.

What follows my examination of non-verbal means of expression is my analysis of the use of speech and silence in the fourth section of my dissertation. The Dogma filmmakers' interrogation of the silence and speech dichotomy, I argue, mirrors Strindberg's interest in theatrical silence on a formal and thematic level – an interest that increased significantly when he moved from the naturalist plays to such chamber dramas as *Storm Weather*, *The Burned House*, *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican*. The latter plays explore words as masks used to conceal ugly realities. Peter Brooks' description of words as an inadequate means to locate the "true drama" in the imaginary realm where our deepest dreams and fear lie characterizes Strindberg's use of words in his chamber dramas. My discussion of words as inadequate to authentic expression – words as masks

– segues into an analysis of the use of the close-up. In order to understand the Dogma filmmakers’ experimentation with intimate action, the dissertation discusses how Strindberg’s experiments in detheatricalization influenced such Scandinavian modernist filmmakers as Ingmar Bergman and Carl Th. Dreyer, who found filmic embodiments for the intimate chamber space. Scandinavian filmmakers, I argue, found cinematic equivalents for Strindberg’s chamber dramas by using the close-up to draw the intimacy between the actor and the spectator. The close-up, which emphasizes the actor’s delicate facial expression, also restricts the actor’s other physical forms of expression – including speech. Scandinavian modernists adopted Strindberg’s idea of words as masks, offering for scrutiny only the actor’s silent face, its very silence denoting its honesty. Neither words nor body were relied on as an authentic means of expression. The modernist filmmakers manipulated the close-up in order to demonstrate internalised feelings and to evoke spirituality. The close-up, while attempting to create intimacy and concentration in the chamber space, came to restrict rather than enhance the expressivity of the actor’s body. I interrogate how on a thematic level this leads to the manifestations of suppressed female sexuality, which is inseparable from the emphasis on characters’ spiritual aspirations and ignorance of their physical needs.

Thus, I highlight the importance of examining the ways in which a “Strindbergian manner of expression and perception” (Marker and Marker *Ingmar*, 59) can be detected in the Scandinavian modernist filmmakers’ approach to the craft of the woman actor. Strindberg’s writings lend insight into the relationship between modernism, women actors, and his changing views on the way in which women should respond to the intimacy of theatrical space.

My discussion of the Dogma filmmakers' examination of the silence/speech dichotomy begins with an analysis of words as masks. I then discuss how the Dogma filmmakers redefine Strindberg's "close-up drama[s] of subtle reactions" (Marker and Marker *History*, 201). Dogma filmmaking, which is characterized by the unfelt presence of the digital "hidden cameras" (Vinterberg qtd. in Macnab 18) and by a cinematography that is subordinated to the actor's performance, encourages actors to externalise their emotional states, even to exaggerate them. The dissertation analyses how the Dogma filmmakers' use of the intimacy of a Strindbergian chamber space and experimental cinematography encourage the actor's spontaneity and improvisation. The redefined approach to performance enhances the actor's control over her performance, while also making the Dogma filmmakers' use of intimate chamber space different from their predecessors' experimentation with it. The dissertation argues that the Dogma actors' performances of excess and theatricality mark a shift in the Scandinavian performance tradition.

My analysis of the use of words as masks that hide an ugly reality leads to an examination of Strindberg's post-Inferno period and his construction of a hell-on-earth in the fifth section of my dissertation. This examination begins with a discussion of a stylistic dualism that marks Strindberg's work – a dualism characterized by the artist's "restless search for new forms of meeting the changing demands of consciousness of times" (Marker and Marker *History*, 193). Traditionally Strindberg scholars have periodized Strindberg's *oeuvre* by separating his pre-Inferno (1869-92) from his post-Inferno (1892-1909) works, the latter of which show his willingness to disregard theatre's potential to rely on illusions of realism (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 217). However, as my

analysis of Strindberg's use of space, hysteria, silence and speech suggests, the principles and artistic concerns of his post-Inferno period are already prominent features. In his pre-Inferno works, Strindberg is already veering away from the real, already exploring the conflict between the real and unreal, between subjectivity and objectivity, internal and external, and realism and theatricality. Yet, I highlight how Strindberg's increasing effort to exceed the bounds of the real culminated in his post-Inferno period. Strindberg's examination of the blurring of the boundaries between dream and reality, mask and face, real and unreal, internal and external turned into a modernist exploration of split personality, of characters who, as he argues in his preface to *A Dream Play*, "split, double and multiply" (Strindberg in his preface to *A Dream Play*), in the post-Inferno period. His concern with the use of the mask to hide reality became inseparable from his contemplation of transcendental experience within a realistic framework and, subsequently, from his interrogation of a Hell on Earth. In the post-Inferno period Strindberg gave up on his interest in studying theatre's potential to rely on illusions of realism. And in these later works, as Egil Törnqvist observes, "Illusionism has given way to 'half-reality'" and conflicts are no longer viewed as "interhuman" but as "extrahuman, dramatizing a struggle between the protagonist and what Strindberg called the powers" (*Strindbergian* 217). Strindberg's examination of the metaphysical aspects of life is tied to his belief in a "divine figure that is an answer to the questions of man's existence on earth" (Blackwell 50). Moreover, Strindberg views the divine figure as an answer to humankind's pain and suffering; that is, as an answer to the experience of a Hell on Earth.

The dissertation studies how Strindberg examines what he perceives as man's pseudo-existence on Earth by interrogating the ways in which he represents the dreamlike nature of life. Strindberg claims that since life on Earth is a dream (or a nightmare), living people are dreamlike figures, ghosts or shadows of their true selves in the transcendental realm. The dissertation analyses how Strindberg's spiritual views of living people as ghosts as well as of humankind's aspirations for the life hereafter have important consequences for his depiction of human physicality, particularly in the case of his depiction of female sexuality. For Strindberg, spiritual aspirations are in conflict with one's physical being, and thus in his theatrical chambers sexuality is something incestuous, filthy and degrading, a crucial aspect of his Hell on Earth.

This analysis of Strindberg's view of a Hell on Earth leads to an exploration of the Dogma filmmakers' studies in the incestuous nature of sexuality, in troubled relationships with father figures, in the lost innocence of childhood and in resurrection, all of which reflect their interest in examining themes central to Strindbergian chamber dramas. The Dogma rules highlight the filmmakers' concern for authenticity in cinematic expression as well as in performance. The fact that the filmmakers carefully follow the "rules" regarding the prescribed use of such technical concerns as location, sound, props, camerawork, editing, lighting and filters, reflects their preoccupation with authentic expression. Yet, the Dogma films include elements that illustrate a move away "from letter to spirit, from outward to inward reality" (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 219). The dissertation discusses how the filmmakers want to locate transcendental experience within the realistic framework as well as to convey this experience to the spectator. The spectator together with the characters comes to realize that "what we call reality is

actually at best a half-reality, often a lie and most likely a phantom, a mirage” (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 219). Furthermore, the filmmakers’ main interest in “anchoring” (Marker and Marker *Ingmar*, 63) the dream images in a concrete reality aligns them with Strindberg’s studies in “fantastic realism” (Steene “Bergman’s,” 39).

Importantly, the filmmakers’ exploration of the collision between unreal and real and their representation of life on earth as Hell are inseparable from their depiction of the characters’ longing for the “paradisaic existence in this life” (Törnqvist *Between*, 152), for the lost innocence of childhood. The effort to recover the lost paradise on Earth, the innocence of childhood, is inseparable from the filmmakers’ Romantic ideas of “growing up” as meaning “growing sinful” (Törnqvist *Between*, 113). They depict the sinful state of humankind through a representation of sexuality that is degrading, filthy and incestuous. The filmmakers juxtapose dream-like visions of purity and lost innocence of the virginal figures with the representation of earth-bound sexuality. The dissertation analyses the filmmakers’ views of one’s possibility of reliving and re-experiencing some semblance of “paradisaic existence” on Earth. Moreover, the dissertation considers how the female Dogma filmmakers Lone Scherfig and Annette K. Olesen redefine Strindbergian studies of a Hell on Earth and the search for the lost innocence of childhood.

1. Reconstructing the “theatre of revolt”

The “Rebels”

The pioneering realism of Henrik Ibsen’s theatre and the radical characterization of his female protagonists have been things that any complete study in Scandinavian drama has to acknowledge. The quest for realism in its more provocative forms, as well as the radicalism of individual will, have been at the heart of Ibsen’s work as a playwright. Although Ibsen was not a modernist as such, his complex representation of women differentiates his work from that of earlier dramatists, as do his staging techniques and methods of characterization. He was a catalyst for theatrical modernism through the realism of his female characters. Consequently, Ibsen’s plays showed “the first signs of the rise of feminism” (Dukes 50). According to one leading feminist Ibsen scholar, Joan Templeton, Ibsen was a writer of feminist poetries for whom society stands as “the enemy” (325). Furthermore, for Templeton, Ibsen’s rebellious female characters are “the fullest embodiments” (335) of his modernism. Templeton considers the characters’ defiance and redefinition of socially prescribed roles essential to the development of modern European drama. ‘Ibsenism’ is “the drama of individualism” (Lukacs qtd. in Templeton 332).

Scholars of Scandinavian drama such as Robert Brustein, Eric Bentley, Ashley Dukes, Inga-Stina Ewbank and Evert Sprinchorn have created a canon of male playwrights/directors by linking Ibsen with August Strindberg (1849-1912), although, paradoxically, they tend to view the two dramatists as each other’s fiercest opponents, critics and rivals. It is true that the depiction of rebellious characters and the radicalism of individual will characterise both Ibsen and Strindberg’s modernist dramas. Although

Gustaf Uddgren's following statement deals with Strindberg and his male characters, it could well be applied to Ibsen, particularly to his female protagonists:

the characters of his [Strindberg's] plays are first of all distinguished. They are not the determinist puppets of the modern realist drama, but virile creatures, gods and fighting men, with wills of their own. It is possible to live with them, feel with them, suffer and triumph with them. Their victory is an inspiration, their defeat a tragedy. They are not content merely to live, but must criticise life. Instinct alone will not satisfy them; they must have a philosophy. And in the clash of emotion and intellect, the subjective and the objective, personality and purpose, their dramatic force lies. More than the characters of any other modern dramatist, they are "transition men," groping their way out of old forms and prejudices into a newer age. (56)

As I will later show, both Strindberg and Ibsen were keen on depicting "transition [wo]men" whose "groping [of] their way out of old forms and prejudices into a newer age" meant an urge to redefine notions of femininity, to blur the boundary between cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. These modern, "fighting [wo]men, with wills of their own," needed a new modern actor who understood her character's motives and enabled the audience to "live with them, feel with them, suffer and triumph with them."

Ibsen's proto-modernism influenced modernist theatre and cinema primarily through the figure of Strindberg. Strindberg's modernism redefined staging techniques by simplifying Ibsen's realistic stage, turning the focus onto new forms of characterization and modes of performance where subdued expressions prevailed in an effort to transcend the surface and to reach the internal, hidden reality of characters. Strindberg's brand of modernism subsequently influenced Scandinavian modernist filmmakers who continued Strindberg's process of detheatricalization.

Scholars have been less interested, however, in the new modes of performance to which Ibsen's and Strindberg's theatrical modernism gave birth than in contemplating the "theatre of revolt" (Brustein 1964) from an auteurist perspective. Scholars examine how the modernisms of Ibsen and Strindberg are based on the dramatists' adoption of "the posture of the rebel" (Brustein 8). Uddgren's statement well illustrates this viewpoint; he writes that, "Strindberg's characters have not only their own battles to fight, but their author's" (59). Thus, the revolt, which determines forms of characterization, dramatic modes of expression and narrative techniques, reflects for such critics, above all else, Ibsen and Strindberg's roles as rebels. These rebels aim to fight not only against existing theatrical conventions but also against social and religious institutions, and social, moral and behavioural norms. What is left unexplored by this approach, however, is the way in which the revolt, which necessitated a redefinition of standard methods of characterization and dramatic modes of expression, also redefined the actor's craft.

Any examination of Ibsen and Strindberg as rebels and of their "transvaluation of all values" (Sprinchorn "Strindberg," 19) is inseparable from scholarly accounts of the dramatists/playwrights' experience of marginality in their native countries. Critics highlight Ibsen and Strindberg's experiences as rebels in Nordic countries, far away from the cultural centres of Europe (Ewbank 12; see also Carlson 67; Brustein 50). To escape the claustrophobia of a small Nordic country, Strindberg, the "fighter for freedom of thought and expression," following Ibsen, left Scandinavia to write his provocative pieces of "cultural criticism" in exile (Ewbank 10, 14-15). Ibsen was in exile between 1864 and 1891 and Strindberg between 1883 and 1889 and again

between 1892 and 1898, both leaving their countries “feeling misunderstood, unappreciated, indeed rejected” (Ewbank 14). In Inga-Stina Ewbank’s opinion the dramatists’ exiles can be regarded as a “release into freedom and as a vantage site for cultural criticism” (10).

Ewbank further writes about how Ibsen’s *oeuvre* from the 1860s until the early 1880s, show the author’s view of “the great, free, and liberating cultural conditions” outside the Scandinavia, whereas in Scandinavia “all the channels of understanding are blocked” (Ibsen qtd. in Ewbank 11). Moreover, Ewbank points out that Ibsen, unlike Strindberg, was focused on using only fictional works as “outlets” for his rebelling spirit (14), whereas Strindberg was as an auteur whose revolt against the political, religious and social conditions in Scandinavia can be detected in both his fictional and non-fiction works. Consequently, Ewbank seems to share Brustein’s auteurist view of Strindberg’s revolt as “self-conscious” (12). To this end, Brustein refers to manifestos which, according to him, best exemplify a dramatist’s role as a “self-conscious” rebel. Thus, Strindberg’s preface to *Miss Julie*, which is considered one of the most important manifestos of naturalism in the history of theatre, illustrates his role as a self-conscious rebel, just as it confirms the play itself as an “act of revolt”(Brustein 11), reflecting his “response to ideas, events, and pressures that affected his thinking and his life at the time” (Törnqvist and Jacobs 11).

What this auteurist approach ignores, however, is the impact Ibsen and Strindberg’s “theatre of revolt” had on the actual women actors, who through their body and voice, embodied theatrical modernism on stage. The revolt, which set forth the redefinition of the staging techniques and methods of characterization as well as the fight

against existing social and religious institutions, is inseparable from both Ibsen and Strindberg's effort to redefine the woman actor's craft and, subsequently, the notion of Woman. If such naturalistic dramas as Ibsen's *A Doll's House* were "the most important Nordic contribution to modern social thought" (Bertilsson and Therborn 17), how exactly did those dramas contribute to redefining the female actor's craft? Certainly, Nora was more than "a puppet for the author's sentimental propaganda" as Uddgren thinks Strindberg saw her (50). Could the fact that Strindberg used fiction and non-fiction for his cultural criticism also mean that Strindberg, more outspokenly than Ibsen, contemplated the actions of the rebellious modern women on and off stage? Could one not read Strindberg's manifesto as part of his effort to redefine the female actor's craft and, subsequently, the notion of Woman?

To answer such questions, I want to reconsider Ibsen and Strindberg as rebel figures by interrogating their theatre of revolt from the woman actor's point of view. Furthermore, the revolt, which determines forms of characterization, modes of performance and pioneering staging techniques needs to be studied in relation to Ibsen's and Strindberg's views of female emancipation. I would argue that their theatre of revolt was inspired by and was a response to the Scandinavian proto-feminist movement and had important consequences in redefining the female actor's craft.

Ibsenism and feminism

Although Ibsen's feminist aspirations have been acknowledged more frequently than Strindberg's, there has been a need to problematize the notion of Ibsen as a feminist. Obviously inspired by Bernard Shaw's "The Quintessence of Ibsenism"

(1913) scholars have frequently asked whether ‘Ibsenism’ can be equated with feminism. Even contemporary feminist Ibsen scholars feel an urge to problematize the notion of Ibsen as a feminist and of Ibsen’s realist prose dramas as feminist artworks. One of the leading feminist Ibsen scholars, Gail Finney, for instance, asks whether Ibsen can be considered “quasi-socialist,” “humanist” or “feminist” (89). She claims that Ibsen’s supporters in socialist circles (such as in British socialist movement) enable one to regard him as a socialist who advocated not only women’s rights but also the rights of other “unprivileged” groups. Furthermore, Finney points out the importance of viewing socialism and feminism as “familiar bedfellows” in the nineteenth century (89). The humanist readings of Ibsen’s dramas, according to Finney, lend credence to the argument that the playwright wasn’t defending women’s rights but was instead preoccupied with human rights and individual freedom in general. Statements regarding Ibsen’s refusal to affiliate himself with any parties or societies support these humanist views. The oft-cited Ibsen speech at the Norwegian Women’s Rights League banquet in 1898 has likewise been used to support the view of Ibsen as a humanist. In this speech Ibsen stated that he “must disclaim the honour of having consciously worked for the women’s rights movement” and that he was not “even quite clear as to just what this women’s rights movement really is” and concluding, “To me it has seemed a problem of humanity in general” (qtd. in Finney 90). Consequently, some humanists have come to use this statement as grounds to deny Ibsen’s feminist aspirations; they argue that “In Ibsen’s timeless world of *Everyman*, questions of gender can only be tedious intrusions” (Templeton 112). Hence, humanists have claimed that in *A Doll’s House* Ibsen focuses on depicting Nora as a genderless individual, not as a nineteenth century woman, who

leaves her present life in order to find autonomy and fulfil her true desires. To such arguments, Templeton rebuts “if Nora’s conflict has essentially nothing to do with her identity as a nineteenth-century married woman, a married woman, or a woman...both Nora and *A Doll’s House* are unimaginable”; if the question of gender is erased, then “there is no play”(120). Both Finney and Templeton claim that the humanist readings of the play have tended to silence Nora as a nineteenth century woman whose desire to educate herself and develop her “moral and intellectual character” shows the “feminist principles” (Templeton 121) of the day as advocated by Ibsen’s feminist contemporaries such as Margaret Fuller, Mary Wollstonecraft, Fredrika Bremer and Harriet Martineau among others.

By ignoring Ibsen’s feminist concerns and contemplating his role as a socialist and a humanist (instead of a feminist), scholars have focused on exploring Ibsen – the author – and his political thinking. This is what Templeton implies when extending her critique of humanist readings of Ibsen, lampooning the ways in which they have tried to “save the author of *A Doll’s House* from the contamination of feminism” (110). A feminist reading of Ibsen would need to ask about the socio-political and historical context out of which Ibsen’s prose dramas emerge. Who are the “real women” who embody the female protagonists’ rebellious forms of behaviour? Templeton remarks upon the ways in which Nora’s actions have been condemned on artistic, literary and moral grounds. She concludes that

Whether she is judged childish, neurotic, or unprincipled, and whether the accuser’s tone is one of witty derision, clinical sobriety, or moral earnestness, the purpose behind the verdict remains that of Nora’s frightened contemporaries: to destroy her credibility and power as a representative of women. (117)

Likewise, Alisa Solomon points out the way in which criticism has tended to silence Nora as a “representative of women” and to shift attention away from Ibsen’s feminist concerns. Solomon argues that non-feminist critics have tended to “rescue” Ibsen from realism and “sweep [him] to an artistic height ‘above’ realism, at once saving him from this debilitating art form and from the related, anchoring weight of social concerns” (49). Thus, non-feminist critics have come to argue that Ibsen’s artistic talent can only be appreciated when contemplating the metaphoric, mythic and non-realist dimensions of his plays.

But if Ibsen wasn’t just interested in the rhetoric of feminism as feminist Ibsen scholars claim, how did his battle of gender equality manifest itself in the actual theatre? If “Nora opened the way to the turn-of-the-century women’s movement” (Finney 91), what consequences did this have on the female actors? We know that five years after the first publication of *A Doll’s House* the Norwegian Women’s Rights League was founded, paralleling Ibsen’s engagement in the battle of gender equality and his advocacy for obligatory separate property rights for married women and universal suffrage.²

And we know, from Solomon’s research, that Ibsen’s feminist sympathies made him popular among the female actors and managers of the Free theatre movement in Europe, inspiring such actors as Janet Archurch, Florence Farr, Elizabeth Robins and Marion Lea to develop a new style of acting, that reflected their “new and liberating self-consciousness” (51). Just as we know, from Robert A. Schanke’s *Ibsen in America*

² For instance, Ibsen made proposals to the Scandinavian Club in Rome that the post of a librarian should be opened to women and that women ought to be allowed to vote in club meetings. Since only the first proposal was accepted Ibsen left the club furious blaming the members of the club for “cowardly resistance” (Templeton 126).

(1988) what American actors learnt from performing Ibsen. But no comparable scholarship examines the Scandinavian actors who performed his feminism on stage.

We can, however, trace Ibsen's legacy, trace the effects of his interest in developing the women actors' craft and, subsequently, making the women actors agents of a new modern Woman. Ibsen made the art of acting a serious profession by highlighting the actor's intellect in the construction of a role. The future generation of Scandinavian actors, who were educated in the spirit of Ibsen, were no longer mere directors' puppets but encouraged to perform the problems, fears, dreams and desires of the women in the audience. The actors thus gave body and voice to the emotional states that had, up until then, remained hidden in the minds of the women in the audience.

Strindberg as “ambivalent feminist”

What about Strindberg's feminist aspirations? Was he a misogynist or a “misunderstood knight of the weaker sex” (Uddgren 25)? Traditionally, auteurist approaches to Strindberg have viewed him as a rebel who responded to Ibsen's radicalism in depicting women's autonomy by defending the woman's place through his own depiction of such half-women as Miss Julie (Templeton 70). However, close analysis shows that Strindberg's interest in reconstructing the limiting notions of femininity and masculinity can be detected in the notion of a half-woman. The construct of the half-woman is considered to be not only Strindberg's condemnation of a woman who rebels against the traditional domestic roles of a wife and a mother but also his conception of the modern woman who blurs the boundary between the cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. Recent scholars have, however, contested

this traditional representation of Strindberg. One of the leading scholars in Scandinavian drama, Birgitta Steene, for example, challenges the auteurist approach to Strindberg and, as Matthew Roy points out, one of her most important

contributions to Strindberg scholarship has been her sparring with traditional views of Strindberg's misogynistic tendencies to present us with a new picture of Strindberg as ambivalent feminist. Strindberg did indeed struggle with the double edged sword of feminist thought, leading him to admire certain women as individuals while at times despising them as [a] sex. (105)

Like Steene and Roy, I disagree with auteurist approaches to Ibsen and Strindberg and with the kind of traditional scholarship that examines Strindberg's naturalist dramas as his *personal* backlash against Ibsen. Strindberg might have been, as Roy argues, an "ambivalent feminist" (105) who had contradictory responses to the proto-feminist movement in Scandinavia, but he was not, as Dukes argues, an anti-feminist who "rejected the whole theory of 'emancipation' for women, and ordered them back to the kitchen" (51). It is in Strindberg's views on the art of acting that we see most clearly his feminist sympathies, his interest in developing the female actor's craft.

Strindberg's theoretical writings on the art of acting present a unique opportunity to discuss the extent to which he was interested in the way performance takes part in modifying cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, they force the reader to excavate the feminist aspirations embedded in his reconstruction of the actor's craft. Strindberg's theoretical writings, together with his dramas, illuminate the ways in which he saw the representation of Woman as a site where the theatrical modernism could find its embodiment.

The rise of feminist thinking evoked both fear and desire in Strindberg, which can be seen in the differences among Strindberg's portraits of women in plays like *Miss Julie*, *Creditors*, *The Father*, *Master Olof*, *Sir Bengt's Wife* and *Lucky Per's Journey*. Eivor Martinus importantly points out that the view of Strindberg as a woman-hater particularly in Britain and America is due to the fact that the works that are being staged in English do not represent the whole of Strindberg's *oeuvre*, with its range from "marital dramas" to "the more intellectual and metaphysical work" (11). I would add that even those plays like *Creditors*, *Miss Julie*, *The Father*, which seem to showcase Strindberg's misogyny and portray a Strindbergian half-woman, offer a more complex representation of women than first readings of the plays would suggest.

Nowhere is Strindberg's attentiveness to redefining the actor's craft more clear than in the preface to *Miss Julie*. Strindberg wrote *Miss Julie* partly as a response to Ibsen's radicalism, particularly as a response to *A Doll's House*, the "Bible" for the "sexless generation" (Törnqvist and Jacobsen 14). Strindberg portrays women's autonomy by defending the woman's place in his depiction of a half-woman, such as, *Miss Julie* (Templeton 70). Strindberg writes:

Miss Julie is a modern character, not because the man-hating half-woman may not have existed in all ages, but because now, after her discovery, she has stepped to the front and begun to make a noise. The half-woman is a type coming more and more into prominence, selling herself nowadays for power, decorations, distinctions, diplomas, as formerly for money, and the type indicates degeneration. (xiii)

Although Strindberg clearly condemns the half-woman here, he also participates in redefining modes of characterization and, subsequently, notions of Woman. The modern character called for a modern actor. These contradictions, which characterize the preface

to *Miss Julie* and the play itself, demonstrate Strindberg's tacit support of, but difficulty with straight out feminism. Furthermore, these contradictions show the ambivalent relationship Strindberg had with Ibsen: although they disagreed over the woman question at times, they were both keen on redefining methods of characterization, modes of performance, and the female actor's craft.

What a feminist rereading of Strindberg's manifesto emphasizes is the need for a reconsideration of Ibsen and Strindberg's theatre of revolt. Because critics have typically viewed their drama within the context of the theatres of Chekhov, Shaw, Brecht, Pirandello, O'Neill, and Artaud, scholars have ignored the feminist nuances of Ibsen and Strindberg's particularized and gendered theatre of revolt.

Their theatre of revolt, which Strindberg's preface describes, granted female actors new roles as "author[s] of a potentially subversive theatrical site/sight in mainstream historical stages" (Aston "Finding," 39). Their theatre of revolt gave female actors (rather than male dramatists) a chance to assume "the posture of a rebel" (Brustein 8) and embody the fight against the existing institutions such as Church, God, family, social, moral and behavioural norms on the stage. Just as Ibsen and Strindberg are rebels, in other words, so, too, are Asta Nielsen, Betty Hennings, Harriet Bosse, Clara Pontoppidan and Betty Nansen whose performances explicitly staged the fight against the prescribed social roles and behavioural norms, as the clearest "act[s] of revolt" (Brustein 11) that mirrored the rebellious acts of their contemporaries and proto-feminists in Scandinavia.

I would like to suggest that in his manifesto Strindberg, like Ibsen, calls for the "new school of actors" (Adler 76) who, according to Shaw,

were products of the modern movement for the higher education of women, literate, in touch with advanced thought, and coming by natural predilection on the stage from outside the theatrical class, in contradistinction to the senior generation of inveterately sentimental actresses, schooled in the old fashion if at all, born into their profession, quite out of the political and social movement around them – in short, intellectually naïve to the last degree. (qtd. in Solomon 51)

Tacitly championing the educated women, Strindberg condemns earlier theatre as entertainment which “serve[s] as a grammar-school to young people, women, and those who have acquired a little knowledge” (“Preface” ix). He writes about how these people have “the capacity for deceiving themselves and being deceived – which means again that they are susceptible to illusions produced by the suggestions of the author” (ix). Strindberg’s criticism of authors/directors who “fool” the audience segues into his condemnation of melodrama’s reliance on stereotypes in characterization and overt theatricality in the use of performance and spectacular settings. Like Ibsen, Strindberg made melodrama the target of his revolt; and realistic acting was the antidote to melodrama. As Stella Adler argues, for Strindberg, the new actor was crucial:

Where the action is truly full of suspense or emotion, the acting must shock and leap over the footlights – but not by means of acting “tricks”. The most important thing for the new actor is that his vanity has to go. Like Ibsen, he must think. He must ask questions. A play consisting of absolute reality requires great conviction to bring off. Poetic realism requires seeing a thing and taking it in – understanding and experiencing the problem. Saying something significant about life required a new technique. No actor before Ibsen had to truly *experience* his part. (78)

Strindberg’s criticism of stereotypes in characterization is inseparable from his belief that the actions of modern characters, like the actions of modern people, are determined by the “multiplicity of motives”(Preface xi), or, in Michael Mannheim’s

words “vital contradictions”(2002)³. Strindberg’s manifesto reflects a concern for the actor who has to be able to critically analyse the script and discover the motivation for the emotional states and actions – a concern he emphasizes in directions to his actors in *Open Letters*. This enhanced the actor’s authorship. Consequently, the new actor became a “fellow-creator” (Elizabeth Robins qtd. in Cima 29) in staging the dramas of both Ibsen and Strindberg. Strindberg’s emphasis on “individualism” in the preface has been examined through considerations of the influence of Nietzsche’s “lyrical individualism” (Törnqvist and Jacobs 12), Max Nordau’s theory of the “intellectual superman” (15) and Georg Brandes “optimistic individualism” (16). Likewise, the “psychologically oriented writers,” such as Paul Bourget, the Goncourt brothers as well as the psychologists Ribot, Charcot, Maudsley and Bernheim (17), have been viewed as sources of inspiration for Strindberg. But, as I have suggested, such scholarship ignores the individual as actor, able to comprehend both the psychology of her character and the socio-historical context out of which that character emerged. This new actor, prescribed by Ibsen and Strindberg’s theatrical reforms came to reflect – through performance – the *consciousness* of the new Woman. Yet the very construction of newness was itself historically situated.

Strindberg’s manifesto of naturalism echoes Ibsen’s concerns most strongly when he highlights how naturalistic drama must reflect the time and the place out of

³ In his book *Vital Contradictions*, Mannheim studies how the notion of vital contradictions characterizes the modern drama of Strindberg, Ibsen, Chekhov and O’Neill. He claims that those contradictions also characterize the modern character. Consequently, the author’s interest in contemplating the humanity of the characters in the modern drama of Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov and O’Neill leads him to ignore the time and place out of where the individual plays and playwrights emerge. His thesis regarding the humanity of the modern characters make him ignore not only the socio-cultural differences between the playwrights but also questions of gender. The notion of vital contradictions could explain Strindberg’s redefined approach to the female actors’ craft.

which it emerges for it to have social relevance. It is also important to point out how Strindberg's call for a new "modern psychological dramas" ("Preface" xix) was inseparable from his demand in the manifesto for "a small stage" and "a small house" (xx). Strindberg didn't seem to believe that the new drama could develop within the mainstream theatrical establishment. The new modern psychological drama and the new school of actors were more likely to be found in small houses, outside of the mainstream theatrical establishment. It has not been sufficiently acknowledged that Strindberg's call for small houses implies a criticism of institutionalised theatres. This becomes interesting when exploring the new modern actors who were able to experiment with Strindbergian redefined modes of performance outside of the mainstream theatrical institutions, such as the Royal Theatre.⁴ Although neither Ibsen nor Strindberg believed in Brechtian theatre, which sought to instruct the audience, they demonstrated nevertheless that drama needs to affect not only the audience's emotions but also their thinking. Strindberg's highlighting of theatre's potential to make the audience think – instead of succumbing to illusions or the suggestions of the author – led to the development of his notion of "characterless" ("Preface" xi) characters. Strindberg writes, "my souls (characters) are conglomerations, made up of past and present stages of civilisations, scraps of humanity, torn-off pieces of Sunday clothing turned into rags – all patched together as is the human soul itself" ("Preface" xii). Thus, to embody Strindberg's notion of "characterless" characters, the actor had to be familiar with the social, cultural, historical and political context out of which the character of naturalism emerges and perform with a "new and liberating self-consciousness" (Solomon 51).

⁴ Strindberg's implied criticism of the Royal Theatre could be seen as a continuation for the satire on the Royal Theatre he wrote in *The New Kingdom* (1882); the satire was an attack on the mainstream theatrical establishment.

New modern actors as rebels

This liberating self-consciousness in Ibsen and Strindberg's new school of actors is inextricably bound with contemporary shifts in Scandinavian women's history. It is important that we regard this new school of actors as the major part of it.⁵ When examining the new school of actors and their contribution to the modernisation of Scandinavian theatre and, subsequently, Scandinavian film, it is important to critically discuss the role of the Royal Danish Theatre in maintaining Ibsen's and Strindberg's theatrical legacy. The Royal Danish Theatre was the theatrical institution which staged the realist prose dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg and the institution where Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which epitomized the struggle for gender equality, had its world premiere on 21 December 1879. Betty Henning's performance as the first Nora and her convincing portrayal of her character's transition from "songbird to new woman" (Marker and Marker *History*, 167) marked the beginnings of the new actor, who would subsequently be found among the female actors of the Free Theatre movement in Europe.⁶ Furthermore, the Drama School of the Royal Theatre was an institution in which the new actors were educated – actors who would eventually move from theatre to cinema.

⁵ Carla Waal's examination of Harriet Bosse whom Strindberg called, "the actress of the new century" (Strindberg in Martinus 191) is an important contribution to the rediscovery of the lost female tradition in the theatre of Ibsen and Strindberg. It is an examination of the Scandinavian female actor whose revolt against the prevailing notions of Woman took place on and off stage. Bosse's de- and reconstruction of modes of performance was inseparable from her de- and reconstruction of the prevailing notions of Woman. She was an advocate of new naturalism in performance but also a living embodiment for the notion of the new modern Woman who fought for the rights of female actors, for the better roles and salaries. Furthermore, Bosse combined her role as a single mother and a professional actor and fought for the financial independence and for the rights of equality, mirroring the rebellion of strong-willed heroines in the Scandinavian naturalistic dramas

⁶ See also Gardner's discussion of the relationship between "the new woman" and the theatre (74-79).

Writing about the connection between William Bloch, “the foremost Danish champion of the naturalistic theatre” (Tybjerg 115) and the founder and director of Drama School of the Royal Theatre from 1882 to 1892 and 1899 to 1907 and Henrik Ibsen, Johannes Riis writes that,

Although William Bloch is relatively unknown outside Scandinavia, the first productions of Henrik Ibsen’s plays in Paris, in the 1890s, were based on Bloch’s detailed script notes for the performances of Ibsen at the Royal Danish Theater in Copenhagen [...] The Ibsen production that is only now becoming recognized as a milestone among English-speaking theater historians is the 1883 performance of *An Enemy of the People* (*En folkefjende*) at the Royal Danish Theater [...] It is widely acknowledged that Konstantin Stanislavsky secured Anton Chekhov’s success, as the subtleties of his dialogue was incomprehensible even to Russian audiences prior to Stanislavsky’s training of the actors [...] The same may hold as true of the relationship between William Bloch and Henrik Ibsen. (77)

Both Riis’ and Casper Tybjerg’s dissertations, which deal with early Danish cinema, discuss the theatrical background of the early Danish film actors; and both focus on the naturalistic acting style of the new actor Clara Pontoppidan (1883-1975) whose major cinematic breakthrough was in Dreyer’s *Leaves from Satan’s Book* (1921). Riis analyses the ways in which psychological realism, the “subtle expressive forms” of acting that Pontoppidan learnt under the guidance of Bloch at the Royal Theatre, can be detected in her film performances, particularly in her use of speech and “vocal style” (80). Tybjerg uses Pontoppidan’s acting as a conduit for a discussion of “a distinctly Danish manner of film acting” (Hostrup qtd. in Tybjerg 113), which had its roots at The Royal Danish Theatre. He views Pontoppidan as a typically Danish actor who studied under the direction of Bloch and whose performance style is “subdued and moderate in its expression” (113).

Although both Riis and Tybjerg give credit to Bloch as an important figure who implemented Ibsen's theatrical reforms in the Danish theatre (which had a large impact on early Danish cinema), they view female actors as mere mediators for, and not always of, a new distinctly Danish acting style. This is, of course, the traditional auteurist approach to the naturalistic theatre – to the theatre of revolt – which focuses on male directors/playwrights and such legitimised theatres as the Royal Theatre, on, in other words, the mainstream of theatrical world. The actual female actors who came to act out the principles of the theatre of revolt and embody the revolt on stage were not found in the mainstream theatrical institutions. As Strindberg insisted, with his emphasis on the small stage and small theatre, these actors were to be found on the margins of the theatrical world.

In a re-charting of the lost female tradition in the theatre of revolt, I want to turn to Asta Nielsen, a new actor who dominates the Strindbergian small houses.

At the age of twelve, after appearing in chorus of opera "Mephistopheles" at the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen, Nielsen was accepted into the school of the Royal Theatre where she studied under Bloch's guidance at the same time as Clara Pontoppidan and Poul Reumert. At nineteen, she made her professional debut at Dagmar Theatre where she continued her acting career between 1902 and 1905 and later at the New Theatre between 1908 and 1910.

Nielsen's move away from the Royal Theatre has occasionally been mentioned in studies of Danish actors. Tybjerg, for instance, writes: "Neither Reumert nor Pontoppidan nor Nielsen stayed long at the Royal Theatre. The seniority system there ensured that they would not play attractive roles for years to come, and they hoped to be

better able to realize their ambitions elsewhere” (118). The implied criticism of the Royal Theatre is frequently found in discussions of Asta Nielsen, in which scholars observe the minor roles she was given in mainstream theatres. Robert C. Allen, for example, speculates that Nielsen was marginalized because of her physical qualities: “mouth was too thin, her nose was crooked, she had no figure, her voice was not a female alto but a male tenor” (205). Angela Dalle Vache argues that Nielsen was widely ignored because of her “androgynous voice” and her “brunette appearance at a time when stage primadonnas were blond or tended to look matronly” (77). Nielsen’s perceived masculinity, while denying her access to the respectable, legitimate theatres, nevertheless marked her as the embodiment of new notions of modern Woman. Not only was she a talented and intellectual actor (who acted in seventy-four films during her twenty-two-year career), but she was also a writer, critic, director and an activist who took part in the debates on contemporary film culture and society which were recorded in the pages of Danish film journal *Kosmorama*. In 1920, Nielsen formed her own production company Art Films A.G., which culminated in her determination to have authority over screen images.

Conventional historiographies, which tend to focus on institutionalised, legitimised theatres, haven’t paid enough attention to the female actors whose contribution is often found on the margins of the theatrical world. One could apply Elaine Aston’s idea to the Scandinavian theatre and its new school of actors. Aston suggests that silencing of women “occurs whenever and wherever female authorship critiques or ridicules the forms and ideologies of dominant culture” (“Finding” 38). It seems that the critical male exclusion of women from the theatre of revolt has been inseparable from the women’s redefinition of traditional notions of Woman. The theatre of revolt that took

place in Strindbergian small houses was more than anything a revolt against the limiting notions of Woman. The female actors were rebels who responded to the proto-feminist movement in Scandinavia and whose performances mirrored the action of their contemporary feminists.

But even though, like Ibsen and Strindberg, such new actors as Nielsen, Betty Nansen, and Clara Pontoppidan left Scandinavia, they have yet to be given their rebellious due as authors of the new acting whose influence would eventually alter the course of Scandinavian cinema.

2. The Theatre Actor Who Turned Film into an Art Form

The first golden age of Danish cinema

The marvellous and interesting thing is that when the muse of the cinema lay in her cradle and could not as yet bawl out loud, but had to say everything with the expression in her newly opened infant eyes, we each of us had to be authors of sorts. Characterization, the actual performance of the parts, was to a far greater degree left to ourselves. (Pontoppidan qtd. in Tybjerg 113)

If Asta Nielsen found that her low voice, androgynous figure, and naturalist training under William Bloch relegated her to performing female strength outside of the mainstream companies, she also found that those qualities found perfect expression in film. In film, Nielsen continued deconstructing and reconstructing forms of expression and characterization and, subsequently, prevailing notions of femininity, making the early Danish cinema known around the world. Nielsen became a living embodiment of the new modern Woman who blurred the lines between cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity.

Nielsen has been considered European cinema's "first truly cinematic star" (Dalle Vache 76) and "the first 'modern' screen actress" (Gillett 42). Yet, the way in which her uniqueness as the "modern" screen actor lay in her ability to adapt the naturalistic acting style in the tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg to film hasn't been sufficiently acknowledged.⁷ The realism of her acting, her confident form of self-expression – which put emphasis on the actor's intellect – and her ability to experience her part and live through her role, contributed to legitimising film as a new art form. She gave cinematic embodiment to Strindberg's notion of acting where "the subtlest movements of the soul are to be reflected on the face rather than by gestures and noise" ("Preface" xix). If Strindberg redefined modes of performance so that theatre wouldn't be mere entertainment, the realism in Nielsen's acting granted film a status as art.

But not before film had to move out of the marginal position once occupied by the very non-mainstream theatres in which Nielsen once performed. A turning point in this legitimisation of film as a new art form was the premiere of *The Abyss*, the film that introduced new, modern screen actor Asta Nielsen to the world. One of the major reasons for Nielsen and the film's director Urban Gad (whose background was also in theatre) turning to filmmaking was their aim to draw attention away from the Copenhagen theatre elite and to show how their theatrical background could be successfully used in film. Interestingly, theatre directors didn't attend the film's premiere at the Kosmorama cinema on September 12, 1910 (Allen 205). Despite this, Nielsen and Gad were able to bring film under public scrutiny. As Nielsen points out, "a turning point had been reached in the history of cinema. The papers which had never reviewed films before now praised this

⁷ It is not surprising that later on Nielsen performed in filmatisations of Ibsen and Strindberg's dramas: she played the role of Julie in Felix Basch *Fräulein Julie* (1922) and the title role in Franz Eckstein's *Hedda Gabler* (1925).

first proof of film's claim to being an art form" (qtd. in Allen 206). In his study of Danish silent film, Ron Mottram examines how *The Abyss* had a great impact on redefining "the relationship of Danish theatre people to the cinema" (81). It is worth quoting Mottram's analysis of this impact at length:

Afgrunden [*The Abyss*]...played a key role in convincing Danish theatre people that film was a legitimate medium. As in America, established Danish stage artists would have nothing to do with the cinema. It was the younger stage people, without reputations, who were willing to work in film, and such was the group that made *Afgrunden*. Hjalmar Davidsen, who had met Asta Nielsen at the Dagmar Theater, arranged a special afternoon screening of the film for an invited audience of theatre artists who were so impressed by what they saw, that they changed their minds about the possibilities of film as a dramatic medium. This helped make such well-known theatre people as Otto Rung, Sophus Michaelis, Betty Nansen, and Dr. Karl Mantzius into defenders of the cinema. With this change came a strong influence from the theatre on the style and subject of films. *Unlike the American cinema, however, the theatrical influence was not from melodrama but from a more naturalistic drama, in line with the changes brought about by the plays of Henrik Ibsen.* The film subjects were still melodramatic, but their focus was on the erotic and psychological rather than on actions. *Afgrunden* became the prototype for this kind of film. (81; emphasis added)

Likewise, the leading historian of Danish cinema, Ebbe Neergaard, writes that "because of Nielsen, the aristocratic, sceptical actors of the Copenhagen Royal Theatre could admit the artistic possibilities of the movies" (42). He importantly points out that "the brilliant director William Bloch whose acting school is partly responsible for the fact that Danish actors made such important contributions to the films, also had to admit the great possibilities of the new art" (42).

Thus, if Nielsen was "fundamental in transforming the nineteenth-century melodrama of the theatre into contemporary modes of narration" (Drotner 295), it was film that allowed her to develop a truly naturalistic acting style and give embodiment to

redefined notions of femininity, which could be portrayed with realism and “liberating self-consciousness” (Solomon 51). Consequently, the realism in Nielsen’s acting brought film under public scrutiny and legitimised the place of film actresses in this new art form. It is no wonder that Nielsen exerted lasting influence not only on other silent screen actors, such as Italian silent screen star Francesca Bertini (Dalle Vache 84), but also on the next generation of Scandinavian female film actors such as Greta Garbo, who tried to find cinematic embodiments for strong female personalities.⁸

Most importantly, if Ibsen and Strindberg highlighted drama’s need to be rooted in a specific time and place, Nielsen realized their agenda in film. She showed that film, as a new art form, needs to be viewed as inseparable from its social and cultural contexts. Alisa Solomon points out one of the major reasons why Ibsen found supporters in the new school of female actors was the fact that Ibsen showed that “drama engages and affects the most urgent issues of its times” (53). Since, in Shaw’s words, these women were “in touch with advanced thought” as well as with “the political and social movement around them,” they became supporters of Ibsen’s realist prose dramas, which took part in the debate on women’s changing social positions (qtd. in Solomon 51). Consequently, because of Nielsen’s performances, the “erotic melodramas” (Engberg 63) are not to be considered sensational spectacles of eroticism, but as films which took part in de- and reconstructing notions of Woman.

If *The Abyss* showed how the theatrical tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg could be adapted to film, it also aligned itself with this tradition in its portrayal of a new modern Woman. But how were the erotic melodramas as “modern films” (Engberg 64)

⁸ For Garbo’s comments on the influence of Nielsen on her acting, see, for instance, Drotner 294.

important in terms of “the Woman Question” (Gardner 76)? What are the ways in which the principles of theatrical modernism in the tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg were continued in erotic melodramas? How did the erotic melodramas continue the principles of the theatre of revolt in their portrayal of a new modern Woman?

The New Modern Woman in “erotic melodrama”

Marguerite Engberg considers *The Abyss* to be the first film, at thirty-eight minutes in length, that showed the artistic possibilities of a long film (65). Nielsen’s psychologically realistic performance, her use of subtle expressions and gestures, was a major reason for granting the film the status of art. Engberg also considers *The Abyss* to be the first of the erotic melodramas that were made during the period 1910 and 1915, during the years which witnessed “the last years of the lengthy struggle for [women’s] equality” (Engberg 63). The erotic melodramas, forming one of the most important genres in early Danish cinema, were produced by the production company Nordisk Films Kompagni which Ole Olsen had established in 1906. In 1910, the company underwent radical changes when its new artistic director August Blom abandoned costume films and replaced them with “modern films” set in present time and depicting “modern life” (64). Moreover, with Blom, Nordisk Film Kompagni, following the example of fellow Danish production company Fotorama, began to produce films of several reels. This made the company the second largest one in Europe after Pathé and turned the period into a golden age in Danish film history.

In the Danish erotic melodramas one could see film history’s first “long drawn-out kisses” on screen (Engberg 66). The erotic melodramas were love stories in

which the conflict was brought about by characters' class differences or by two men's fight over the female protagonist (66). Engberg notes that the Danish erotic melodramas were popular all over the world, influencing the early films of Swedish filmmakers Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller, the films in Germany produced by Deutsche Bioscop starring Nielsen, and the development of diva-tradition in Italy. Yet, as Engberg points out, the depiction of "modern, independent woman" in the Danish erotic melodramas made the films different from their foreign counterparts (67). According to her, the female protagonist in Danish erotic melodramas is

as a rule a cocksure, independent person, whereas the man is weak, without much willpower. He is often scared by the independent woman of this own class, and therefore falls in love with a girl from the lower classes, to whom he feels superior. In this attitude to the woman of his own class he demonstrates modern man's fear of the modern woman. Moreover, the woman of the erotic melodrama is as a rule an active partner in the love story. It is she who makes the decisions, she who is the sexually active one. (66)

Engberg observes that the erotic melodramas developed in Denmark, where The Danish Society of Women was founded in 1871 and four years later women gained access to the university, which followed the actions of the Royal Conservatory of Music that had admitted female students already since 1867, the year of its establishment. In 1908, women were given votes in municipal elections, and in 1915 female suffrage in Parliamentary elections was obtained (63). Engberg also points out that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* got its premiere in Copenhagen where the debate on gender equality was fiercest at the time. She nevertheless puts aside the question of the similarities between the naturalistic dramas, such as *A Doll's House*, and erotic melodramas. This is a surprise because she views *The Abyss* as the first erotic melodrama and Nielsen (who

implemented new naturalism in film acting) as a cinematic embodiment of the new modern Woman, the portrait of whom the Danish erotic melodramas primarily aimed to construct.

Urban Gad, one of the major filmmakers of Danish erotic melodramas, explicitly aligned himself with the previous generation of theatre directors, such as Ibsen and Strindberg, whose radical characterization of female protagonists, the quest for realism in its more provocative forms, as well as the radicalism of individual will, were at the heart of playwrights' *oeuvres*. Interestingly, it was Gad's belief in cinema's ability to be "closer to life and reality" (Gad qtd. in Mottram 83) that made him leave theatre and turn to filmmaking. He seemed to view cinema as a tool to realize Ibsen's and Strindberg's call for the engagement of art with life. And thus the theatre of revolt found expression as Danish erotic melodrama, with Gad's depiction of his female protagonists, such as Magda (Nielsen) in *The Abyss*, strongly influenced by the kinds of changes in women's social roles that preoccupied his theatrical predecessors.

If the realism in the tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg was based on bringing drama into the authentic, interior setting, specifically into the middle-class living room, Gad's realism was based on taking drama outside the confines of a theatrical chamber space. Gad emphasized cinema's potential to depict real life outside the confines of a theatrical space, producing some of the first portrayals of "street realism" (Söderbergh-Widding in Soila, Söderbergh-Widding and Iversen 7),⁹ which remains an important characteristic of Danish cinema to this day.¹⁰

⁹ It is important to point out that one of the major reasons for early Danish filmmakers to use cinema's potential to depict the life in the public sphere was the fact that the urbanization came earlier in Denmark than in the rest of the Scandinavia, as Söderbergh-Widding points out. Furthermore, between 1870 and

Whereas Ibsen examined women's prison-like existence in the domestic sphere in *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, Gad explores the redefined relationship between private and public spheres as inseparable from the redefinitions in gender roles at the time he was making *The Abyss*. Nora and Hedda were denied access to the public realm and this denial was a major cause of their traumatic life, but Magda leaves the chamber space and Gad tracks the results. Once Nora slams the door of the doll's house, the play ends. But Gad's camera traces Magda's path from the private to the public realm, from the chamber to the street, deconstructing the familiar "hierarchy of public/male over private/female" (Hansen 114).

The film begins with a medium-shot with Magda facing the camera and being placed as if on the stage. These "static shots," which are repeated throughout the film, reflect the filmmaker's theatrical background. Furthermore, his construction of scenes where the actor's "frontality" in relation to the camera, as well as her place in the "centre of the frame" (Dalle Vache 79), are a "natural match for stage space" (84). Angela Dalle Vache explores Gad's static medium- and long-shots as reflections of staginess in theatre and describes how Nielsen "relied on microscopic and precise gestures distributed up and down the vertical line of her slender body" (83), and how the "use of her body's vertical trajectory compensated for the lack of camera movement because she introduced depth into her character through it" (84). Nielsen's subtlety of expression, which made "visible a human interiority" (84), is clearly evident already at the beginning of the film, in this very first shot. The minimalism in Nielsen's acting compensates for the

1914 the population almost doubled in Denmark and the urbanization was "very unevenly distributed": more than 25 per cent of the population was living in Copenhagen at the outbreak of the war (Drotnér 295).

¹⁰ One could certainly argue that "street realism" is something that characterizes contemporary Danish cinema, such as the Dogma films. See, for instance, the use of authentic location for authentic expression in *The Idiots* (Lars von Trier, 1996).

theatricality of the actor's frontality to the camera, begging the spectator to explore the inner psychology of Nielsen's character. More importantly, the theatricality of the set-up is counterpointed by the realism of the surrounding space – the street. Gad emphasizes the role of the surrounding space in introducing Nielsen's character to the spectator. Magda is seen in a tramcar that drives through the urban landscape of modern Copenhagen. Thus, she is, from the very beginning of the film, characterized as an urban woman experiencing city life. Gad's depiction of Magda as one of the women of urban Copenhagen becomes evident when Magda leaves the tramcar and disappears into the crowd. Her back, which is facing the camera, turns her into one of those "faceless moving anonymous bodies" (Dalle Vache 78) in the urban space.

The first shot of the film both introduces Magda as an urban woman and also introduces her suitor, Knud (Robert Dinesen), whom she later agrees to marry. One could even argue that Knud, seen in the tramcar beside Magda, is there to legitimise the presence of a "single 'girl' alone, 'on the town' and 'adrift' in the city" (Balides 72), whose sexuality was a great concern during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century (73-80). Yet, typical of Danish erotic melodrama, Knud's inferior autonomy to Magda's is soon established. The camera shows us as Knud follows Magda to a park where they go to an outdoor café. The scene culminates in a moment when Magda acts out her independence and pays her own bill, making Nielsen, what Aston would call, a "feminist performer [who] disturbs the sign of the feminine" (*Feminist* 63). This moment leads Gad to show how women's behaviour in the public realm has also led to changes in the private realm: the filmmaker cuts to the domestic "chamber" setting after the scene in the outdoor café. The third scene depicts Magda at home, in her private realm, with a

particular focus on illustrating her professional life as a music teacher. With this scene, Gad refers to the unique act of the Royal Danish Academy of Music (that began to allow female students as early as 1876), as well as to the redefined role of female artists in Danish society. Moreover, the scene is an overt reference to Gad's interest in exploring women in chamber space in relation to the social and cultural context out of which they emerge, which aligns his concerns with his theatrical predecessors' "poetry of feminism" (Templeton 110).

If Gad explores what happens when women leave the chamber space and face the outer world, as I have previously argued, he does so by dynamically juxtaposing shots depicting the private realm with the ones showing the public world. The dynamic between private and public spaces is emphasized by Gad's comparison of shots depicting Magda's home as a closed space filled with domestic signifiers, with the shots depicting the public world as a space of freedom, fantasy and entertainment. (The scenes that depict the public realm focus on leisure activities.) After the opening shots, Magda receives a letter from Knud in which he invites her to the countryside. Soon after, Magda is seen in the countryside meeting Knud's parents. Gad's characterization of Magda as an urban woman is emphasized by his depiction of Magda's boredom outside the city. Magda's frustration is emphatically depicted in the scene that shows her dissatisfaction with playing the role of Knud's fiancée. Rather than going for a walk with Knud and his parents in a park, she prefers to stay alone and read her book. But Knud forces her to walk to the gates of the park where Magda sees a travelling circus troupe and meets the cowboy performer Rudolph (Poul Reumert), with whom she immediately falls in love. Next, Gad cuts to a scene in which we see Magda showing Knud the poster of the circus

show. This leads into a scene depicting the couple coming from the show and Magda making friends with circus performers, one of whom is Rudolph. In her study of the characterization of Magda and Gad's depiction of the public sphere of what Miriam Hansen would call "new leisure culture" (117), Dalle Vache claims that Magda approximates the female spectator at the time Gad was making his film: she is a "bored-middle-class fun-seeker lured to ruin by the glittering world of cabaret and circus" (80). More importantly, Gad juxtaposes women's dissatisfaction with the traditional roles in the private realm with the redefined "definitions of female identity" in the public realm, consequently, "superimposing values of motherhood and domesticity with the appeals of pleasure, glamour, and eroticism" (Hansen 117).

Gad's juxtaposition of private and public spaces culminates in the scene that follows the one depicting Magda and Knud coming from the circus show. In this scene, Magda is alone, restlessly wandering around the room, not unlike Nora within the confining walls of *A Doll's House*, or Hedda Gabler in the Tesman home. Magda's desperate looks outside emphasize her prison-like existence and her dissatisfaction with the traditional role as Knud's fiancée. Moreover, the window plays an important role in this scene: the window functions as a liminal space, a place of transgression that gives the lie to the seemingly inescapable domestic prison. The outside world that Gad presents is one that evokes women's desires for freedom, fantasy and sexuality, which he emphasizes when Rudolph steps into the room through the open window, kisses Magda passionately, and then drags her out from her imprisoning domesticity. Before escaping with Rudolph through open windows, Magda writes a note to Knud in which she finally articulates her feelings of dissatisfaction with her traditional role in the private realm – a

role that Nielsen herself was uncomfortable about playing, except in so far as she could portray that role, both dramatically and cinematographically, as constraining and deadening for the New Woman.

3. The Cinema of Revolt and Its Rebels

In my first chapter I criticized the ways in which theatrical modernism has been studied from an auteurist perspective that emphasizes only Ibsen and Strindberg as rebels and not the women actors who embodied gender revolt on stage, and later on screen. Such an overlooking of the lost female tradition in theatrical modernism and subsequently early Danish cinema fails to account for Ibsen and Strindberg's specifically gendered influence on the golden age in early Danish cinema, which succeeded in giving authentic portrayal to rebellious female characters.

My examination of the golden age of early Danish cinema, (which was ushered in with Asta Nielsen's performance in *The Abyss*), becomes even more relevant when bearing in mind that the successful period Dogma95 initiated in the Danish cinema has often referred to as "a return of the golden age of Danish cinema" (Hjort and Bondebjerg 9) or a "second 'golden Age'" (Stevenson *Lars*, 2) in Danish cinema. Unfortunately, the historical reference in such descriptions has been left unexplored.

Here I want to discuss the second golden age in the Danish cinema that was created by Dogma95, a project which modernized cinematic expression as well as the actor's craft. The "new generation of Danish actors" ("Dansk" 8) in the second golden age of Danish cinema is, I suggest, comparable to the new school of actors in the first

golden age, especially in terms of the women actors, Dogma actors, have, interestingly enough, similar theatrical backgrounds to their predecessors.

Dogma95 hasn't inspired studies that situate Dogma filmmaking within the context of Scandinavian cultural and artistic traditions. Not only has the view of Dogma95 as the latest new wave movement put aside the question of cultural, national and historical contexts, but it has also ignored the actor's role in creating this new kind of cinema. If the theatre of revolt by Ibsen and Strindberg has been added to the canon of the theatres of Chekhov, Shaw, Brecht, Pirandello, O'Neill and Artaud, Dogma95 as an act of revolt has been compared with other new wave cinemas such as the French *nouvelle vague*, New German Cinema, Cinema Direct or the British New Wave films. Consequently, the focus has been on the authorship of the Dogma filmmakers. Scholars argue that the Dogma brothers' take on authorship is what makes them different from such other new wave filmmakers as the auteurs of the French *nouvelle vague*. In order to ground this argument, scholars refer to the Dogma manifesto, which contains von Trier's and Vinterberg's criticism of the French *nouvelle vague* for "stylistic individualism." The Manifesto states that,

slogans of individualism and freedom created works for a while, but no changes. The wave was up for grabs, like the directors themselves. The wave was never stronger than the men behind it. The anti-bourgeois cinema itself became bourgeois, because the foundations upon which its theories were based was the bourgeois perception of art. The auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby...false. To Dogme95 cinema is not individual! (qtd. in Kelly 226)

It is surprising that this statement hasn't inspired scholars and critics to study the democratisation of filmmaking that Dogma aims to achieve from the actor's point of view. The actor's role as the co-creator of the new kind of cinema has been ignored while

the Dogma films have been examined from auteurist perspectives, despite the filmmakers' effort to deny their status as auteurs.

If the auteurist approaches view Strindberg's manifesto of naturalism as a piece of cultural criticism by Strindberg the "rebel," the Dogma manifesto has been considered an act of revolt by Vinterberg and von Trier, "*agent[s] provocateur[s]* of the new Danish cinema," (MacKenzie 55) against "the state of the cinema," as well as against the existing social, political, religious institutions in Denmark. The auteurist thus constructs the Dogma filmmakers as self-conscious rebels and their manifesto as part of the canon of manifestos written by such male directors in the history of cinema such as Dziga Vertov, Lindsay Anderson, Louis Buñuel, Sergei Eisenstein, and Jean-Luc Godard. The canonization is evident in Richard Kelly's statement:

Now, call it a mental tic, but it seemed to me that if I held this [Dogma] Manifesto up to the light, I would clearly discern the shadow of Godard, smoking a small cigar and chuckling. Lacing between every line was a red thread, linking these Rules to Godard's pronouncements and actions across four decades. Case in point: somebody clever, whose name escapes me, once claimed that all revolution in art marks a return to realism. (10)

Scott MacKenzie writes about a "cinematic manifesto genre" (50), and asks what makes the Dogma manifesto differ from previous manifestos in the history of cinema. He studies "Vows of chastity" as a set of rules and as an accompaniment to the Manifesto and emphasizes the role it plays in interpreting the filmmakers' motives behind the manifesto. "Vows of chastity" shifts the tone of the manifesto from seriousness to irony. He argues that, "combined with this unholy marriage of the spirit of the protestant work ethic and Catholic flagellation, one finds that the vows themselves are pervaded with an irony that is typically missing in the modernist manifestos" (53-54). Furthermore, MacKenzie

points out that the “sins” to which the filmmakers have confessed, in case they have broken the rules, add another level of self-reflexive irony to the Dogma manifesto, which, he argues, aims to provoke and initiate debate rather than to force filmmakers to literally follow the rules. Although MacKenzie is interested in the ways in which the Dogma filmmakers break the tradition of writing manifestos, he is still situating von Trier and Vinterberg within the canon of manifesto writing – he is still reading the Dogma manifesto from an auteurist perspective, emphasizing the role of filmmakers who are redefining “the notion of film manifesto and its function within both the cinema and the public sphere” (56).

The main auteur, around whom much of the debate about Dogma revolves is, of course, Lars von Trier. A growing number of studies position von Trier as “the main reason that Danish film is today experiencing its second ‘golden Age’” (Stevenson *Lars*, 2), as “one of Europe’s most principled and iconoclastic auteurs” (Roman 134). Several scholars, such as Jack Stevenson, Mette Hjort, Ib Bondebjerg, Jan Lumholdt, Stig Björkman and Richard Kelly, have published important work on von Trier and conducted interviews with the filmmaker. Their aim is to view von Trier as a rebel whose effort to create the cinema of revolt was already present before Dogma95. Peter Schepelern argues, for example, that “Trier from the beginning marked his distance to Danish cinema, to Danish traditions, and to the contemporary trends in Danish cinema” (“Making” 110). As Jack Stevenson contends that von Trier began his rebelliousness at the University of Copenhagen, where he “became determinedly apolitical and began to go around in a lounge suit and tie as a kind of new provocation” (*Lars* 14). This provocation was, for Stevenson, an expression of “A KAP overdose” (Kommunistisk

arbejderparti – Communist workers’ party) that von Trier felt at the time, because he had been a communist, grown up in the spirit of “anti-Americanism,” and had been raised by a communist mother (11).

In their constructing of the figure of von Trier, the agent provocateur, Stevenson and Schepeleern typically trace his development from seminal moments in the National Film School of Denmark (where Henning Camre was the head at that time), where he studied from 1979 to 1982 and where he got the reputation of being “shy but also provocative, respectful towards his chosen craft but also colossally self-confident” (Stevenson *Lars*, 19). It was von Trier’s *The Orchid Gardener* (1977) that impressed the jury as did his “remarkably straight-forward” opinion of the “state of the Danish cinema” later on (19). It was at the Danish film school where “the Trier style” (Schepeleern “Making,” 114) developed. Furthermore, it was at the Film School where “von Trier” was born as a result of his “stubborn” character. He used school “as a sparring partner” (Stevenson *Lars*, 21) by taking advantage of the school’s facilities to make his own films. One particular incident at the Film School has been considered as the clearest act of revolt by von Trier. Stevenson recounts how

One evening Fredholm [Gert Fredholm, the teacher] tried to close up an editing suite where a bunch of students were working late, Trier among them. They protested so energetically that finally the teachers got fed up. Fredholm accused them of behaving like the gentry of Sealand. They might all just as well have ‘von’ for a middle name, he added angrily. Hence was born Lars von Trier. (*Lars* 20)

Von Trier’s films made at the film school, *Nocturne* (1980) and *Images of a Relief* (1982), were not only “stylistically inventive explorations of themes and symbols which would later play a central role in his feature films” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 208), but also

the ones that “announced the arrival of a new and strange Danish auteur” (Schepelern “Making,” 114). Likewise, his first trilogy, consisting of *The Element of Crime* (1984), *Epidemic* (1987), and *Europa* (1991), are viewed as paving way for his Dogma film and establishing his reputation as a filmmaker whose bold experimentations with cinematic styles, genres and thematic issues augured what was to come later in the decade.

The latest examination of von Trier as auteur is Peter Schepelern’s essay “The Making of an Auteur: Notes on the Auteur Theory and Lars von Trier.” Here, Schepelern explores von Trier’s filmmaking career from his childhood (when he already directed, scripted, edited his films) through the days at Copenhagen University (where he learnt about auteurs such as Bergman, Dreyer, Buñuel) and at the Danish film school into the days of Dogma95. Schepelern argues that von Trier belongs to a group of “auteurs who create an artistic ego, implementing their personality... Lars Trier’s project was not primarily to make films but to construct Lars von Trier, the auteur filmmaker. He is not an accidental auteurist but a very deliberate one” (“Making” 111). Schepelern’s study finds similarities with previous examination of male directors/playwrights as self-conscious rebels. These auteurs use non-fictive and fictive means by which to promote their status as social rebels.

Schepelern discusses the inherent contradiction in von Trier’s deliberate effort to construct himself as an auteur and Dogma’s aim to deny the auteur status of the filmmakers: “It could be seen as a paradox that Trier is behind Dogma 95 in which a clear anti-auteur attitude is stated” (“Making” 122). Schepelern doesn’t develop this discussion any further and views the denial of auteurism in Dogma as von Trier’s “self-therapy”: “the rule demanding anonymity of the director is a medicine against the

egocentricity of an auteur. Only an auteur needs a cure of anti-auteur medicine” (“Making” 122). Interestingly, Schepeleern doesn’t interrogate von Trier’s denial of auteur status in Dogma filmmaking any further. He relates this paradox to yet another paradox of von Trier, namely “the paradox of Trier’s split between eccentricity and solidarity”:

He has established himself as a great artist, an individual genius, going his own unpredictable ways. But he has also encouraged collective spirit, instituted the brotherhood of dogma⁹⁵, that at least in Danish film, has resulted in a wave of inspiration. He has established the company Zentropa that not only produces his own films but is also generally very active in the Danish film world, and he has established Filmbyen, the film city, that houses Zentropa, Nimbus, and other companies. But at the same time, he continues to be the shy eccentric artist who “wants to be alone”. (“Making” 122)

Interestingly, Schepeleern writes about how von Trier, “the eccentric loner,” “created himself in the tradition from another loner”: Carl Th. Dreyer, who also worked outside the mainstream cinematic establishment. Moreover, he describes how von Trier has inspired a new generation of art filmmakers such as Thomas Vinterberg and Christoffer Boe to follow eccentric paths. Schepeleern’s discussion of von Trier’s denial of auteur status leads to the creation of a canon of male directors whose relationship with authorship is often contradictory. Whether it is the denial of auteur status or the active construction of it, it is still the male directors whose authorship is being emphasized and canonized.

The Danish cinema gained worldwide attention with the birth of Dogma⁹⁵, and this has also led to the publication of new works on the Danish cinema more generally. In 2000 Hjort and Bondebjerg published *The Danish Directors*, which is an important contribution to the analysis of the Dogma filmmakers. However, the book’s focus on the male filmmakers makes it one of the latest examples of canonization.

Likewise, the latest, and one of the most complete, works on Dogma 95, *Dogme Uncut*, discusses the role of technicians, scriptwriters, directors and producers in Dogma filmmaking, but doesn't include any analysis of the actors, which reflects the neglect of actors in all film scholarship. This critical tendency to ignore the role of the actor in the Dogma filmmaking becomes even more surprising when keeping in mind how the Dogma filmmaking gives cinema back to its actors and constructs stories around the actors' performances.

The Dogma Manifesto

The discussion of von Trier's neglect of the actor's craft and storytelling in favour of being a "masterful manipulator of images" (Hjort and Bondebjerg 217) in his early work before Dogma95, has certainly enhanced the notion of him as a filmmaker, an auteur, who wants to be in control of the production and whose presence can be detected in the actual films. The fact that von Trier has admitted that he didn't want "to engage in a dialogue with the actor about their views on the psychology of a given character" (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 217) has certainly helped to shift the attention away from the actors to the filmmaker as auteur. Interestingly, although von Trier has admitted his changed relationship with the actors and stated that it was his "conscious decision not to be too close to the actors" (von Trier qtd. in Björkman "Naked," 14) in his early work, this acknowledgement hasn't inspired scholars to shift attention from the director to the actors. His Dogma film (like his earlier work) is viewed as a piece of provocation, an act of revolt, by von Trier alone.

Although Schepeleern argues that von Trier's disavowal of auteur status is a form of bad faith, I want to contend that von Trier moved away from his earlier *enfant terrible* position of not wanting "to engage in a dialogue with the actor about their views on the psychology of a given character" and embraced the collectivity articulated in the Dogma Manifesto, which redefined the actor's craft and returned to the principles of naturalistic dramatic expression. Just as Strindberg's manifesto called for a new school of women actors, so, too, did the Dogma manifesto call for a new generation of actors. Like the new school of actors spawned by Strindberg, who modernized theatrical and cinematic expression, Dogma actors redefined forms of characterization and modes of expression in film acting. And nowhere is this more clear than in the woman actor and her relationship to space.

Both the Dogma manifesto and Strindberg's preface to *Miss Julie* formulate a concept of intimate action in simplified, authentic chamber space. Strindberg writes,

I have also contended myself with a single setting, and for the double purposed of making the figures becomes parts of their surroundings, and of breaking with the tendency toward luxurious scenery. But having only a single setting, one may demand to have it real. Yet nothing is more difficult than to get a room that looks something like a room...(xviii)

The Dogma rules state that, "Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. The sound must never be produced apart from the images and vice versa. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. Optical work and filters are forbidden. The film must not contain superficial action. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. Genre movies are not acceptable" (qtd. in Kelly 227). Like Strindberg's manifesto, Dogma's rules emphasize an authenticity of space used in order to create authentic performances. Authenticity of space helps the actor to live through

his/her role and to create the truth of inner reality.¹¹ Echoing Strindberg's words, von Trier and Vinterberg state, "My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings" (qtd. in Kelly 228).

Strindberg's idea of an authentic space is inseparable from his demand for "a small stage and a small house" ("Preface" xx). The authentic space is simple, intimate and emptied of all distracting elements. The authentic, intimate theatrical space is a setting where "a new dramatic art might rise" and where "the theatre might at least become an institution for the entertainment of people with culture" ("Preface" xx). Strindberg's call for a small stage and a small house in his preface to *Miss Julie* reflect his desire for a small, experimental theatre (Intima Teatern) which he wasn't able to establish until 1907 when The Intimate Theatre opened in Stockholm. More importantly, as I pointed out, his vision of a small stage and a small theatre reflects a criticism of major theatrical institutions wherein artificiality was something that characterized acting and the use of space. Interestingly, Walter Johnson in his introduction to *Open Letters*, points out how it was Strindberg's criticism of the melodramatic acting expressed in the preface to *Miss Julie*, which inspired Falck to work with Strindberg on The Intimate Theatre: "Falck had been very much impressed by the preface to [*Miss*] *Julie*, had taken his stand against the artificiality of acting then dominant in the Swedish theatres and was quite convinced that he could help make Swedish theatre exciting and alive" (6). Like Strindberg, the Dogma filmmakers' emphasis on authentic space as a setting for authentic performances is inseparable from their criticism of "the decadent illusionism of contemporary cinema" (Matthews 39). The filmmakers criticize "decadent film-makers"

¹¹ The authenticity of space as a setting for authentic performances is also what the actors regard as one of the most important characteristics of Dogma filmmaking; see Stovelbæk.

who “fool the audience” by using technology to create “superficial action” and “illusions via which emotions can be communicated. To Dogma95 the movie is not illusion!” (Kelly 227). If Strindberg criticized mainstream theatrical establishments such as the Royal Theatre, the Dogma filmmakers’ target contemporary cinema, obviously referring to the dominance of commercial filmmaking, where technology replaces the actors as conveyors of emotions. Thus, Dogma not only gives cinematic embodiment to Strindberg’s vision of a small stage, which directs the focus onto the actors and the portrayal of raw emotional states, but also continues Strindberg’s criticism of the mainstream venues of art.

Furthermore, Strindberg’s ideas of a small authentic room as a setting for intimate dramas reflect his desire to enhance the role of an actor in theatrical productions. Strindberg uses the stage machinery together with the small stage so that the focus is on the actor. Likewise, Dogma filmmaking enhances the role of actors since the actors are the only means by which the story is to be told. Thus, “Dogma gives cinema back to its actors” (Jorgensen).

The spatial simplification in Dogma is supported by cinematography which is consistent with the film’s focus on the actor. This focus is what von Trier already successfully achieved in *Breaking the Waves*. Concerning this film, von Trier has said that

the actors were allowed to move within the scene as they pleased and they never needed to follow any determined action. When we later cut down scenes, our only thought was to increase the intensity in the performance, without regard as to whether the image is in focus, well composed or as to whether we cross the line. This has resulted in sudden jumps in time within the scenes that you perhaps don’t comprehend as jumps in time. Rather, they give an *impression of compression*. (qtd. in Björkman “Naked,” 14; emphasis added)

Emily Watson, the film's leading actor, recalls that, "Lars wanted the characters and the emotions to be right at the center of everything, and everything else was peripheral to that" (qtd. in Paterson 29).

Like Watson, the Dogma actor Bodil Jorgensen remarks on how the use of cinematography is subordinated to the actor's performance, saying that the lack of distractions make it easier to be "in the moment" in Dogma films. In Jorgensen's opinion, the high footage ratio and the unfelt presence of the cameras make a continual, unbroken growth of feeling possible: "In Dogma, there are moments when you are not aware of filming and you are still in the picture. Nothing disrupts the flow of the actor's stream of consciousness. There is space for using your own memory and making pictures in your mind. I've never been so close to what I love in acting" (Jorgensen). The lack of agitation in the cinematography and the quietness of the aesthetic space add to this feeling of intimacy in the environment (Jorgensen). This use of simplified space in both films enables the actor to "attend to the role, to concentrate all his thoughts on it, and not let himself be distracted from it" (Strindberg *Open Letters*, 22).

Geoffrey Macnab reports what the actor Henning Moritzen told the press during the 1998 London Film Festival about the novelty of experience in acting in *The Celebration*: "the camera followed him rather than him having to follow the camera. He didn't have to worry about hitting marks and was therefore able to give a performance much closer to what he would have attempted had he been playing the corrupt old patriarch on stage" (16). Interestingly, "the Dogma technique [that] functions primarily as a means of guaranteeing the dynamic of the actors in a flexible cinematic flow" (Schepelern "Kill," 65), or as the subordination of the cinematography to the actor's

performance, makes acting in Dogma films bear similarities to acting in theatre. Yet, it is insufficient to merely state that acting in Dogma films bears resemblance to acting in theatre. The close resemblance between acting in Dogma films and acting in theatre reflects a dynamic between Danish film and Danish theatre; the actors whose theatrical background is taken advantage of in Dogma filmmaking need more careful analysis.

The Danish Dogma Actors

To study this dynamic between the Danish cinema and theatre, I will now take a closer look at the major Dogma actors and their theatrical backgrounds. This group includes performers such as Bodil Jorgensen, Anette Stovelbæk, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen, Trine Dyrholm, Lene Tiemroth, Paprika Steen and Iben Hjejle. All these Dogma actors are professional actors who were educated at the National Theatre School: Bodil Jorgensen graduated in 1990, Stovelbæk in 1997, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen in 1993, Dyrholm in 1995, Hjejle in 1996, Steen in 1992 and Tiemroth in 1966. After graduating all of them have combined work in theatre, film, and television, which has enabled them to choose the challenging roles and projects that speak to their heart and mind.

Before getting a permanent position at the Royal Theatre in 1997 Bodil Jorgensen gained experience in acting at experimental theatres such as Dr. Dante, Grønnegårds Theatre, Mungo park, Betty Nansen Theatre and Cafeteater as well as Folketeater. In addition to her performance in *The Idiots*, for which she received both the Bodil and Robert Awards (the Danish equivalents of the Oscars), she acted in films *Mirror of the Planet* (1992), *Russian Pizza Blues* (1992), *Just a Girl* (1995), *Sunes familie* (1997) and *Agnus Dei (Nonneborn)*, (1997). After her Dogma film, she has

appeared in such films as *The Lady from Hamre* (2000), *Send More Candy* (2001), *At klappe med een hånd* (2001), *The Greenbutchers* (2003), *The Pact* (2003), *Silkevejen* (2004), *Anklaget* (2005), *Grown-up People* (2005), *In Transit* (2005), *The Amazing Death of Mrs Müller* (2006), *Skymaster: A Flying Family Fairytale* (2006), *Partus* (2006), *Hjemve* (2007), *With Your Permission* (2007), *Erik Nietzsche – The Early Years* (in post-production).

Stovelsbæk's performances at Norrebros Theatre, Folketeater, Betty Nansen Theater and Grønnegårds Theatre have been the subject of criticism more often than her performances at the Royal Theatre, which haven't been written about. She had her breakthrough role in *Italian for Beginners*; before that she had acted in Scherfig's *Morten Korch – Ved stillebækken* (1999). After the *Dogma* film, she has acted in films such as *The Bench* (2000), *Feeding Desire* (2001), *The Man Who Couldn't Say No* (2002), *This Charming Man* (2002), *Someone Like Hodder* (2003), *Drømmegaven* (2003), *Les Amours perdus* (2005), *1:1* (2006), *Clash of Egos* (2006), *Father of Four: Living Large* (2006), *Island of Lost Souls* (2007), and *Pop* (2007).

Ann Eleonora Jorgensen has been an actor at Mungo Park, Betty Nansen Theatre, Husets Teater, Caféteater, Brutal Teater, Norrebros Theatre, Grønnegårds Theatre, Kanonhallen, Kaleidoskop, Rialto Teatret and Aveny Theatre. In addition to her performances in the two *Dogma* films *Italian for Beginners* and *In Your Hands*, Jorgensen has acted in *Last Round* (1993), *On Our Own* (directed by Scherfig, 1998), *Den Bedste af alle verdener* (directed by Vinterberg 1999), *At Klappe med een hand* (2001), *Mountain Craze* (2002), *Kick'n Rush* (2003), *Agatha and the Storm* (2004), *Hjemve* (2007), and *The Golden Horns* (in post-production). *Italian for Beginners*

brought her international recognition in the form of a Shooting Star at The Berlin Film Festival.

Iben Hjejle has acted at Betty Nansen Theatre, Østre Gasvaerk Theatre and at Det Danske Teater in addition to the Royal Theatre. Before her performance in the Dogma film *Mifune*, she had performed in films such as *Portland* (1996), *Sinan's Wedding* (1997) and *Possessed* (1999). *Mifune* was her cinematic breakthrough, a performance which brought her a Shooting Star at The Berlin Film Festival and the European Film Award nomination for Best Female Performance. This international recognition is also reflected in her film performances she did after *Mifune* such as *High Fidelity* (2000), *Flickering Lights* (2000), *The Emperor's New Clothes* (2001), *Old Men in New Cars: In China They Eat Dogs II* (2002), *Annas dag* (2003), *Sweet Dreams* (2003), *Manden bag døren* (2003), *Dreaming of Julia* (2003), *The Good Cop* (2004), *Monsterthursday* (2004), *The Collector* (2004), *Him, Her and Strindberg* (2006), and *The Boss of It All* (2006).

Paprika Steen has acted at Bådteatret, Dr. Dante, Kaleidoskop, Gladsaxe Teater as well as the Royal Theatre. Before acting in several Dogma films such as *The Celebration*, *The Idiots* and *Mifune*, she performed in *Rami og Julie* (1988), *Black Harvest* (1993), *Just a Girl* (1995), *The Biggest Heroes* (Vinterberg 1996), *Hannibal & Jerry* (1997). After her first Dogma film, she performed in *The One and Only* (1999), *When the Sun Goes Down* (2000), *Max* (2000), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), *Okay* (2002), *Open Hearts* (2002), *The Boy Who Wanted To Do the Impossible* (2002), *Stealing Rembrandt* (2003), *Forty Shades of Blue* (2005), *Adams Apples* (2005), *Run* (2005),

Vikaren (post-production), and *Erik Nietzsche – The Early Years* (in post-production). In 2004 she made her directorial debut with *Aftermath*.

Trine Dyrholm has acted at Grønnegårds Theatre, Betty Nansen Theatre, Dr. Dante, Teater Ved Sorte Hest and Østre Gasværk Theatre. She has been an actor in the two Dogma films *The Celebration* and *In Your Hands*, for which she received the Robert Award. Her other film performances include her film debut *Springflod* (1990), which brought her the Bodil Award, *Casanova* (1990), *Shadows of Clouds* (1996), *The Biggest Heroes* (Vinterberg, 1996), *A Regular Thing* (1998), *Indien* (1999), *In China* (1999), *They Eat Dogs* (1999), *P.O.V.* (2001), *Bungalow* (2002), *Okay* (2002), *Gemini* (2003), *Den Store dag* (2005), *Flies on the Wall* (2005), *A Soap* (2006), *Sophie* (2006), *Istedgade* (2006), *Below the Belt* (2006), *Skymaster: A Flying Family Fairytale* (2006), and *Daisy Diamond* (2007).

Lene Tiemroth has acted at Det Nye Teater, TV-Theatre, Det Danske Teater, Bådteatret, Fredericia Teater, Boldhus Teatret, Hvidovre Teater, Caféteater, Folketeater, Aveny Teater and Husets Teater. After a twenty-three year break from film, she made a comeback in *Italian for Beginners* for which she received a Bodil Award. Before the Dogma film she had acted in *Pigen og greven* (1966), *Det Blå billede* (1967), *Det var en lørdag aften* (1968), *Deadline* (1971), *The Normans* (1976), *Forraederne* (1983), *Hipp hipp hurra!* (1987). Her performance in the Dogma film led to a more permanent return to the film scene. After the Dogma film she has performed in *Manden bag døren* (2003), *Gemini* (2003), *The Good Cop* (2004), *True Spirit* (2005), *The Art of Crying* (2006), *How to Get Rid of Others* (2007), and *Cecilie* (2007).

It is important to acknowledge that the combination of film and theatre work has demanded from the actors the ability to modify their acting skills to the demands of each medium. This need to be flexible and adaptable has developed them as actors and made their acting skills diverse and broad, which the new form of Dogma filmmaking emphasizes. Their awarded performances in the Dogma films reflect the fact that the actors succeeded in adapting to the new form of Dogma filmmaking very easily. The need to combine a career as a film actor with a career as a theatre actor is something the actors view as an advantage, and they want to continue pursuing careers as both theatre and film actors. For Iben Hjejle, theatre is good training, particularly, for her lack of discipline: “I am a very restless, and I love the dynamic, fast-paced nature of filmmaking; theatre teaches me concentration and how to refine my expressions... this is what makes my film performances stronger” (qtd. in Schmeichel). Yet, when she chooses a role she looks for a good script, whether it’s in film or theatre. Ann Eleonora Jorgensen thinks that the actor learns the technique in theatre. The “handicraft of acting” (qtd. in Lykke) takes place in theatre. “In theatre you can do your role differently each day and thus make your performance better each time. In film it’s the one time that matters” (qtd. in Lüttichau). Jorgensen states that her strength as actor lies in the fact that she can do both theatre and film, even within the same day.

Dyrholm thinks along the same lines as Hjejle and Jorgensen and emphasizes how theatre develops the actor: “you have two months to construct your character, talk about psychology of your character and try out various physical expressions” (qtd. in Thorsen). Whereas for Hjejle theatre is a “training laboratory,” for Dyrholm it is an “experimental laboratory” (qtd. in Thorsen). According to her, film

needs a different kind of concentration than theatre: “in film you need to focus on details; film is an art of explosions where everything has to come out in one scene” (qtd. in Thorsen).

Lene Tiemroth revealingly states that in Denmark there is no clear boundary between film and theatre acting: “actors constantly use their experience as film actors in theatre and see if what they have learnt in film works in theatre” (Tiemroth). This is also what Steen highlights when she states that she can use her experience of film acting in her theatre acting. For instance, the idea that “less is more” is something one should use in theatre as well. Thus, it is no wonder that Hjejle talks about “filmic theatre” (qtd. in Schmeichel), when theatrical acting, particularly acting in small, experimental venues allows her to use the small, realistic expressions that one usually associates with film acting. When Hjejle talks about “filmic theatre” she highlights the role of Dr. Dante. This experimental theatre played an important role in redefining theatrical acting and teaching the actor the importance of subtlety of expression. Hjejle’s talk about the “cinematic acting” at Dr.Dante is an important part of her analysis of the similarities between the Dogma filmmaking and experimental theatres (qtd. in Schmeichel).

Both Bodil Jorgensen and Anette Stovelbæk seem to share Tiemroth’s idea that there is no boundary between film and theatre acting in Denmark. For Jorgensen, whether she is in front of the camera or on stage, she gives everything she has to the role. In each medium she maintains a total commitment to the art of acting, using, according to her, everything she has experienced and learnt in life as an inspiration for her performance: “it’s a brief moment on stage as well as on screen when you give your input to your art” (qtd. in Greve) For Stovelbaek, acting in both mediums is about “being

present, being as honest as you can and giving yourself completely to the role” (Stovelbæk).

What all the actors share is the view of acting as a constant learning process, which is one of the reasons they have chosen to work as freelancers. For them acting is a vocation they approach with seriousness, total commitment and love. They take roles that speak to them on emotional and intellectual level, which further enables them to portray the characters with honesty and authenticity.

Thus, when looking at the theatrical background of the Dogma actors who work on the freelance basis, one needs to pay particular attention to the experimental theatres where the actors have been able to develop as actors, diversify their skills and take on the performances in which their artistic input is clearly present. I would argue that experimental theatres have served as the training grounds for acting in the Dogma films. Interestingly, an equivalent to the move away from the Royal Theatre, which characterized the careers of the new school of actors such as Asta Nielsen, Clara Pontoppidan and Betty Nansen, is to be found in the examination of the Dogma actors’ careers. The examination of the careers of the new school of actors shows us that Strindbergian “small stages” and “small houses” were the theatrical venues where the new modern actors were able to de- and reconstruct modes of performance and notions of Woman. Interestingly, as the careers of the Dogma actors demonstrate, the smaller, experimental theatres (rather than the Royal Theatre) play an important role in reconstructing modes of performance and notions of Woman. The freedom at the experimental theatres is something that the actors keep mentioning when they talk about the experimental theatres in relation to the Royal Theatre.

Tiemroth, who was also the teacher of many Dogma actors, was a spokeswoman for experimental theatres in the 1960s. Her demand for more experimental theatres was a part of her desire to rejuvenate the Danish theatrical scene and provide Danish actors with new challenges. Her desire for renewal and emphasis on the importance of continuing to develop one's acting skills were reasons why she left for New York after graduating from the School of the Royal Theatre. She studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Art in 1968-1969 in order to learn such skills as singing, dancing and improvisational techniques. Her decision to leave Denmark after her graduation was considered a sort of rebellion against the existing theatrical system at the time. Although her choice to continue her studies in the U.S. included a criticism of the School of the Royal Theatre, she nevertheless praised one particular Danish teacher, Poul Reumert (Nielsen's co-actor in the film *The Abyss*) for teaching her authenticity, honesty and the importance of being present in acting. This theatrical legacy is something that she has wanted to teach her own students, including the Dogma actors Bodil Jorgensen, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen, Ulrich Thomsen, Peter Gantzler, among others (Tiemroth).

Tiemroth's call for more experimental theatres was also a part of her criticism of the Royal Theatre, which she saw as bound up with tradition – a tradition she rejected early on in her career when she left to act at the revue "Dronningmølle." Her departure from The Royal Theatre and decision to work as a waitress instead of accepting bad roles at the established theatres were widely reported as radical disaffections for a young actor in the 1960s, who even then actively took part in the debate on Danish theatrical scene in the pages of *Berlingske tidende* and *Politiken*, and openly criticized the Royal Theatre for its lack of opportunities for young actors to diversify their acting skills.

Interestingly, in 2005 Tiemroth is still of the same opinion regarding the Royal Theatre which, according to her, doesn't allow room for experimentation and renewal: "At experimental theatres, there is a freedom to try, because you are there for only one reason, and that is 'let's try'" (Tiemroth).

It is important to notice how the actors' discussion of their experiences acting at experimental theatres parallels their analysis of acting in Dogma films. The new generation of Dogma actors was born in the experimental theatres where a redefined approach to acting was developing. This redefinition, which enhances the actor's role in an artistic production, was continued in Dogma filmmaking. Iben Hjejle has spoken of the connection between her acting in Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre (particularly her performance in *Donna Juanna*) and acting in Kragh-Jacobsen's *Mifune*. The challenges both experimental theatres and Dogma films offer for the actor made Hjejle want to be a part of the film and theatre scene in Denmark. That is why she is not willing to take part in international projects, which have been offered to her after her performance in *Mifune* (Hjejle in Schmeichel). Like Hjejle, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen emphasizes the role of unestablished theatrical venues where, according to her, progression and renewal takes place. Furthermore, Jorgensen states that Dogma filmmaking, which emphasizes authentic portrayal of people and honest stories, is something that other countries could learn from (Jorgensen in Lykke). Thus, for both Hjejle and Jorgensen the changes that Dogma and the experimental theatrical scene in Denmark have brought about are reasons why actors are willing to be a part of the national filmic and theatrical scene where such a renewal is taking place.

Also like Hjejle, Dyrholm refers to the increased authorship of the actors when she discusses the new generation of actors and the changes in both contemporary theatrical and filmic scene in Denmark: “There was a need to shake up the traditions and do things differently” (qtd. in Rix). She explains the enhanced authorship of the actor by linking it with the feeling of freedom. Furthermore, she describes how freedom has to do with a different way of preparing for a role. For instance, the actors take part in writing the script, which is not finished when the project begins and can be re-written to accommodate the actor’s improvisations. This makes the dialogue more alive. Another form of freedom is due to the fact that the new generation of actors are not afraid on stage, where “we will see blood, tears and sweat” (qtd. in “Dansk” 8). Moreover, the directors are open to the actors’ suggestions and work on the same level with the actors. Thus, it is no wonder that Dyrholm described the experience in acting in Dogma film *The Celebration* as the best experience she had had: “The dogma rules were not restricting, on the contrary, we filmed more than normally because there were no time for waiting, setting up the lights, etc.” (qtd. in Lange). According to her, Dogma is “the actor’s cinema” (qtd. in Rebensdorff), which also means that actors become more responsible for creating their roles than they would normally. For example, if there is not enough light the actors have to come up with a different solution, for instance using a lighter (Dyrholm in Lange). Dyrholm is willing to take part in the projects that are experimental (Dyrholm in Meier Carlsen), as well as projects which allow her to take part in the creative process. Dyrholm’s depiction of the enhanced authorship of the actor, for instance the actor’s contribution to the writing of a script, was certainly highlighted in *In Your Hands*, which

was her second Dogma film. Annette K. Olesen highlighted the actor's role in constructing a character from the start (qtd. in Fredensborg).

Moreover, Dyrholm contends that experimental theatres have aimed to reflect the time and place out of which the plays emerge. For Dyrholm, the actor's responsibility is to reflect the time in which she is living, and such experimental theatres as Dr. Dante have enabled that reflection (Dyrholm in Rix). The fact that the Dogma rules call for films which are taking place here and now, and thus portray social reality, makes them share the experimental theatres' aim to mirror their times.

Interestingly, the fact that both experimental theatres and Dogma filmmaking allow such freedom in acting, and thereby enhance the actor's role in productions, can represent a difficulty when the actor adapts these working methods at the Royal Theatre. This is what happened when Paprika Steen played the role of Lucretia in Holbergs *Den Vaegelsindede*. The Royal Theatre didn't know how they would use her acting skills (Steen in Steen Olsen). It is no wonder that Paprika Steen calls herself a "rebel" (qtd. in Madsen). This experience at the Royal Theatre made the Danish newspaper *Berlingske tidende* write that Steen is known as an actor who fills the space, as an intuitive actor, who identifies with her roles, none of which is acceptable at the Royal Theatre (Steen Olsen). The newspaper saw a contrast between Steen's experience at the Royal Theatre and the experimental scene at Dr. Dante, reporting that Steen was more at home at Dr. Dante, where she was allowed the freedom, the spontaneity in her use of body, voice and speech. Furthermore, this acting style embodied her "generation's ideal of femininity" (Steen Olsen).

Not surprisingly, Steen has openly criticized the institutionalised Danish theatres and the way in which they are bound up with the past and tradition. Her fight for the unestablished theatres (Steen in Hildebrandt) is inseparable from her open revelation of own experience in acting in big theatre, where she hasn't felt at home (Steen in Madsen). For her, acting is about renewal, about "trying to transcend the old and the traditional although you work within the traditions" (Steen qtd. in Hellmann). Thus, it is no wonder that Dogma filmmaking offered what she had always wanted to do: to de- and reconstruct forms of filmmaking; the very principles of Dogma acting are reflected in the statement she made in 1995, wherein she characterized her ideal form of acting as understating, discussed her desire to act without props, and outlined her refusal to be instructed too much (Steen in Hildebrandt). If Dogma gives cinema back to its actors, as Bodil Jorgensen and Trine Dyrholm have stated, and enhances the actor's authorship by emphasizing the actor's responsibility in constructing a character, then in Dogma filmmaking Steen found the form of acting she had always desired. Like Hjejle, she has underscored the role that the ensemble played in the Dogma film *The Celebration*. She knew her co-actors well and spent weeks with them in the mansion before shooting the film, and she trusted the director completely. Together, such circumstances created an environment where she was able to discover and be in touch with her deepest emotions, dreams, fears, and desires (Steen in Hellmann). Tiemroth also acknowledges the similarities between acting in experimental theatres and the Dogma film. Because of the small cast at experimental theatres, there is more time to discuss the characters with each other. Likewise, she was able to spend much time discussing the characters with her

fellow actors in *Italian for Beginners*, which also relied on the principles of ensemble acting.

In Dogma, you use lots of the experience you have gained in theatre. Dogma gives you lots of space. As in theatre, nothing disrupts the continuous flow of your emotions. You know your character, what does she want, where does she come from and where is she going; within these limits you are free to experiment. In Dogma you can just try and see where it takes you. The important thing in acting is “not to stop the impulse,” and in Dogma you can do that. Most importantly, there is freedom to fail in Dogma. (Tiemroth)

My examination here of the actors’ own thoughts about acting in Dogma films attempts to reorient critical treatment of the cinema of revolt from the director’s to the actor’s point of view. If studies of Dogma95 emphasize the filmmaker as a rebel, this rebellion becomes even clearer when studying the Dogma actors. The Danish newspapers are the only media outlet which reports the actors’ thoughts about acting in the Dogma films. Thus, for the non-Danish-speaking audience the Dogma actors have remained unknown. It is possible that their background on the margin of the theatrical world is the reason why the actors haven’t been brought under academic scrutiny. But it is far more likely that studies focused on the male directors (instead of the woman actors) and the institutionalised theatres (instead of the experimental theatres) haven’t paid enough attention to the Strindbergian “small stages” and “small houses.” Thus, with the auteur perspective firmly in place in much of the English-speaking critical world, critics are not interested enough in the actors to even get their perspectives translated.

Interestingly, this dynamic between Danish experimental theatres and the Royal theatre, the margin and the center, is inscribed in the Dogma filmmaking. Mette Hjort has studied the tensions between the margin and the center by exploring the Dogma

filmmaking in relation to a small, marginalized country such as Denmark. Hjort writes that,

What commentators have systematically overlooked, I argue, is the connection between Dogma95 and small nationhood, which is where the politics of Dogma lie. My claim, in brief, is that the rules imposed by Dogma95 amount to a novel and insightful response to the inequities of globalising processes. Dogma95, then, is best thought of as a form of cinematic expression that comes to us from, and a defense of, the margins of cinematic production that small nations and minor cinemas inevitably are. ("Dogma 95" 32)

What Hjort's analysis of the margin and the center inspires one to contemplate is the ways in which the dynamics can also be detected *within* the Danish cinema and theatre. The dynamics between the Royal Theatre and the experimental theatres parallels the dynamics between Dogma and the mainstream cinema. Thus, the actors who have gained experience in acting on the margins of the theatrical world (at the experimental theatres), where they have been able to de- and reconstruct modes of performance, have been able to use this experience in Dogma filmmaking, which began on the margins of the filmmaking world. Both experimental theatres and Dogma filmmaking take part in the criticism of the mainstream theatrical and cinematic institutions and call for experimental spaces where the actor is able to redefine her craft.

A Closer Look at the Individual Performances

Because performance is, of course, the end result of the actor's efforts – which, I have suggested, are more expansive and authorial in experimental theatre and Dogma productions – I want to turn here to an examination of particular performances, especially those demonstrating the link between the two performative mediums. Trine

Dyrholm's performances for the experimental theatre are a good place to begin, because they had such an obvious influence on her performance in the Dogma film *In Your Hands*. Two years before acting in *In Your Hands*, Dyrholm did a monologue *4:48 Psykose* by English dramatist Sarah Kane in the intimate space "Edison" of the Betty Nansen Theatre. The monologue deals with a young woman on the verge of suicide (Meier Carlsen). The idea of standing alone on the stage scared the young actor who has repeatedly talked about her insecurities in the Danish press. Moreover, for the actor, who was used to ensemble-acting, the monologue didn't seem like a dream job in the first place (Dyrholm qtd. in Thorsen). Yet, Dyrholm's performance ended up being a success and become a "milestone" in her artistic career (qtd. in Thorsen), garnering her a Reumert Prize for the best female role of the year. Director Annette K. Olesen used Dyrholm's experience in performing alone in the intimate space of the Betty Nansen Theatre in *In Your Hands*, focussing on the intimacy between the actor and the camera that is characteristic of Dogma films. In *In Your Hands*, Dyrholm's character Kate is often isolated from the rest of the group and filmed alone. The camera focuses on the delicate and subtle movements of her facial expressions in an empty surrounding. Facing the Dogma film's inherent difficulties for the ensemble-actor, Dyrholm describes how she felt "ungenerous as an actor. Kate does not want to be in the film. She does not like the fact that the story will be told. There are many scenes where the others want to act with her, whereas she just sits. I am used to giving and acting along, but Kate doesn't want to give anything. And it's really difficult to be with oneself all the time" (qtd. in Thorsen). Yet, as with the monologue in *4:48 Psykose*, her Dogma performance was a success, earning her a Robert Award. Despite the difficulties she faced at the beginning, Dyrholm

found both performances to be challenges because they “cross the boundaries”; they enabled her to develop herself as an actor precisely because they were difficult, and she relishes difficulty (qtd. in Ravn).

In addition to their formal similarities – their use of intimacy – the monologue at the Betty Nansen Theatre and the Dogma film share similarities in terms of their portrayals of female protagonists. If the monologue enhances the notion of Dyrholm as “the new femme fatale of the Danish Theatre” (“Dansk” 8), so does the Dogma film with its portrayal of Kate, the child-murderer. Dyrholm points out that she has done depressive roles in the past few years, roles which deal with life’s darker side (Dyrholm in Thorsen). Both the monologue and the film focus on the female protagonist’s extreme sorrow, which doesn’t find an outlet. Dyrholm describes the monologue’s portrayal of the woman on the verge of suicide as a person who needs love but cannot love herself (Dyrholm in Carstensen).

The monologue, obviously, uses verbal means of expression to depict the character’s extreme emotions such as deeply felt sorrow, whereas Dyrholm’s character in the Dogma film uses hardly any words during her entire performance. Yet, when she prepared for the role and contemplated her character, she wrote about Kate’s inner reality. These writings functioned as sort of “inner dialogues” (qtd. in Ravn). Whether it is through verbal or non-verbal means of expression, both the monologue and the film succeed in focusing on the actor, who is in turn responsible for portraying deeply felt emotions and constructing the intimacy between the actor and the audience.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the monologue and the film, which both give contemporary incarnation in the Danish theatre and cinema of the femme fatale,

serve as a striking contrast to the portrait of innocent girl that prevailed at the beginning of Dyrholm's career, in, for example, her film debut in Eddie Thomas Petersen's *Springflod* (1990) for which she received a Bodil Award. Petersen remembers the impression the young actor made on him, describing how Dyrholm "looked like female Jesus" (qtd. in Blix). Certainly, Vinterberg's *The Celebration*, in which Dyrholm made her *Dogma* debut, took advantage of the image Dyrholm had gained by that time as an innocent girl. In that film Dyrholm plays the character Pia, who embodies the male protagonist's view of innocent childhood.

Like Dyrholm, Bodil Jorgensen has used her experience in performing a monologue in the intimate spaces of the Betty Nansen Theatre in her performance in the *Dogma* film *The Idiots*. In 1992 she made her theatrical debut in performing in the monologue *The Human Voice* by Jean Cocteau. Interestingly, like Dyrholm's character in *In Your Hands* Jorgensen's character in *The Idiots* is a silent being. The camera focuses on her facial expressions, which express the extreme sorrow she feels after having lost her child. Jorgensen describes how the Cocteau monologue that she performed in an intimate theatre taught her to make the absent present, a technique which she later used in her *Dogma* performance; she describes, for example, the similar scenes in both the monologue and the film where she talks on the phone (Jorgensen). The scene at the beginning of the film depicts Jorgensen's character Karen in an empty room talking to her husband Anders (Hans Henrik Clemensen) on the phone. The space is theatrical and allows the camera's total concentration on the actor. One could argue that Dyrholm and Jorgensen's experience in acting in monologues, which they use in the *Dogma* films, supports the view that theatrical expression relies on verbal expression while the

cinematic expression emphasizes the actor's subtle facial expressions as conveyors the characters' inner reality. However, such an argument fails to register the crucial role of facial expression when performed on an intimate theatrical stage like the Betty Nansen Theatre, in which the audience's proximity to the actor mirrors the audiences in the cinema.

The Betty Nansen Theatre ties the two generations of women actors together: the new school of actors (Nansen and Pontoppidan among others) and the new generation of Danish actors. Nansen, performing as she was the Ibsen and Strindberg naturalist dramas that required the intimate stage, established the theatre, which became a space that allowed the actor to experiment with new forms of expression. The Betty Nansen remains one of the more important theatrical venues where actors have been able to develop their broad and diverse acting skills. Despite its status as an experimental theatre – a status that parallels Dogma's status as experimental cinema – the Betty Nansen has had sufficient influence that the larger, institutionalized theatres now court its actors. Bodil Jorgensen, after her performance at the Nansen and in *The Idiots*, gave a masterful performance as a silent being at the Royal Theatre in 2001. Jorgensen finds parallels between her role in the Dogma film and her title role in *Anna Sophie Hedvig* written by Kjeld Abell and directed by Emmet Feigenberg. The play tells a story about a teacher in a provincial girls' school. Anna Sophie is a victim, a martyr and a criminal who pushes the school's hated director Moller down a set of stairs to rescue the others (Jorgensen in Myhre). (This play was first produced at the Royal Theatre in 1934 and starred Clara Pontoppidan.) Jorgensen describes how the calm facade of Anna Sophie Hedvig hides a strong soul of a woman who takes power into her own hands, a soul not

unlike that of Karen in *The Idiots* and Kate in *In Your Hands*. All three internalise their inner emotional reality. Jorgensen describes how her character of Anna Sophie Hedvig sits still without saying a word almost during her entire performance; yet, “there is lots of going on in her mind,” which is “consuming” for the actor (qtd. in Schnettler). Furthermore, like Karen and Kate, Anna Sophie Hedvig doesn’t have a physical outlet for her emotions, though there is much sorrow and pain hidden beneath the surface (qtd. in Greve). Jorgensen describes how in both performances (in the play and the film) she internalised the characters’ sorrow so strongly that she had physical pain after the performances (qtd. in Greve).

If Jorgensen’s and Dyrholm’s careers demonstrate the close dynamic between the Dogma film and the experimental stage of the Betty Nansen Theatre, then the dynamic between the Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre (another experimental theatre) and the Dogma film is obvious when looking at the career of Iben Hjejle. The Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre has become known as the theatre where the director, dramatist and actor Lars Kaalund has been able to experiment with new forms of dramatic expression. To international audiences Kaalund is familiar as the actor in Lone Scherfig’s *Italian for Beginners*. But less is known about his ground-breaking work on the Danish experimental theatrical scene where contemporary actors such as Iben Hjejle have been able to develop as artists.

Kaalund graduated from The National Theatre School in 1992. After graduation he got involved with the experimental theatre Dr. Dante in Allerød, outside of Copenhagen. When the director Nikolaj Celderholm left for Copenhagen, Kaalund used the space of Dr. Dante and reopened it as the experimental theatre Mungo Park. At

Mungo Park he gained reputation as the director and writer of *Kuppet* (1993) and *Egoisten* (1994). In 1998 Kaalund took up the position of a director at Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre, which granted him the unique opportunity to further develop an experimental theatrical scene in Denmark. Kaalund describes his ideal theatre as “the theatre of emotions” (qtd. in Grove), in which all the particles have to come together to create impressions on the audience: the story and the actor together create a theatrical experience (Kaalund in Grove).

When Kaalund took up the position as a director of the Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre after Morgen Grunwald, Iben Hjejle called him up and told him about her interest in being part of the ensemble. Since then Hjejle has been a part of Kaalund’s ensemble and performed in *Romeo and Juliet* (1998), *Donna Juanna* (1999) and *Monument* (2001) with other Dogma actors such as Peter Gantzler, Thomas Bo Larsen and Karen Lise Myster. Interestingly, Hjejle finds similarities between her work with Kaalund and the work with Kragh-Jacobsen. She highlights the directors’ openness to the actors’ suggestions in creating and constructing their roles. Hjejle also highlights the role of ensemble acting in both projects; it is in a group she thinks that she learns most. Furthermore, the ensemble acting in both the Dogma film and Ostre Gasvaerk has been made possible by the directors’ willingness to include the actors in the creative process (Hjejle in Schmeichel), because both Kaalund and Kragh-Jacobsen put the actors in the center of the dramatic production. Kaalund’s notion of the “theatre of emotion,” where the story and the actor are responsible for delivering drama, is certainly continued in the Dogma filmmaking, which focuses on the portrayal of raw emotional states.

The dynamic between the experimental theatre and the Dogma film can also be detected in the reception of the Dogma film *Mifune*, in which Hjejle made her cinematic breakthrough. In the same year as *Mifune* was released, Hjejle performed in *Donna Juanna* which was directed by Kaalund at the Ostre Gasvaerk Theatre. *Donna Juanna* was part of Kaalund's effort to update classics and see how they worked on the experimental theatrical scene. This effort to shake up traditions belongs to Kaalund's "shock effects" (qtd. in Grove), which his experimental theatre aims to create. A year before *Donna Juanna*, Kaalund directed *Romeo and Juliet* and the year after he staged *Othello*. The character of Donna Juanna, the female version of Don Juan the seducer, was compared with Hjejle's character Liva in *Mifune*. Both the play and the film focus on the representation of female sexuality on the outlet for women's desires. Donna Juanna explores what happens when a woman follows her desires (Ludvigsen). Kaalund is not interested in the psychology behind Donna Juanna's motives, (Ludvigsen), which explains why the actor needed to focus on the physical manifestations of the Donna Juanna's desires. Hjejle revealingly points out that her character in *Mifune* keeps her emotions hidden, while Donna Juanna acted hers out (Hjejle in Schmeichel). *Mifune* portrays Liva as a woman who, in confronting love, simultaneously confronts her own angst about surrendering to it (Schmeichel). Donna Juanna, on the other hand, is a vampire who sucks the life out of others. She follows her desires but doesn't take responsibility for her actions (Frank).

As Dyrholm, Bodil Jorgensen, Kaalund, and Hjejle's observations and experiences reveal, there is a coherent dialogue between experimental theatres and the Dogma films. Although the Dogma performances often focus on the actor's presence,

silence and subtlety of expression (whereas the theatre performances combine the physical and verbal means of expression), the actors use their experience in acting on the experimental stage in their Dogma performances. Because experimental theatre gives them freedom to experiment with different modes of acting and to break free of limitations on a psychological as well as on a physical level, the actors adapt well to the intimate form of Dogma filmmaking, which demands an actor's total commitment to the project and willingness to expose her or his deepest being to the penetrating gaze of the camera.

4. Chamber Drama Tradition

If anyone asks what it is an intimate theatre wants to achieve and what is meant by chamber plays, I can answer like this: in drama we seek the strong, highly significant motif, but with limitations. We try to avoid in the treatment all frivolity, all calculated effects, places for applause, star roles, solo numbers. (Strindberg *Open*, 19)

There is, as I have suggested, no question that the Dogma actors refined their craft on the stage of experimental theatres. But such a claim needs to be further substantiated with a more in-depth examination of Strindberg's experimentation with a small intimate chamber space on a formal as well as a thematic level. As we will see, Strindberg's call for a small stage and a small house is inseparable from his development of chamber drama tradition, that is a drama that takes place on a small intimate domestic setting and highlights a small cast, the unity of time, place and action as well as the intimacy between the actor and the audience. Here I want to analyse closely Strindberg's use of intimate space in his chamber plays with a particular focus on *Storm Weather*, which was the first one of his chamber plays written for the Intimate Theatre in 1907.

When studying Strindberg's growing concern for "a small stage" and "a small house" (which culminated in 1907 when he wrote the actual chamber plays for the Intimate Theatre that he opened in the same year), one needs to begin this analysis by paying attention to the decade of the 1880s. It was in 1882 when Strindberg wrote his first attack on the Royal Theatre in *The New Kingdom*, which included a satire on the Royal Theatre. This attack on the Royal Theatre can be seen as a predecessor for Strindberg's call for "a small house" in his preface to *Miss Julie* in which he expressed his concern for the "the prolonged theatrical crisis": "The drama is as dead as are most of the other fine arts" ("Preface" ix); "Like almost all other arts, that of the stage has long

seemed to me a sort of *Biblia Pauperum*, or a Bible in pictures for those who cannot read what is written or printed” (ix). The preface clearly reflects Strindberg’s frantic thinking that “new modern psychological drama” (xix), devoid of “all frivolity, all calculated effects, places for applause, star roles, solo numbers” (Strindberg *Open*, 19) could develop only on a small intimate stage in small houses outside the mainstream theatrical establishments.

In 1886, he began to write *The Marauders*, which appeared as *Comrades* the year after. Bertil Nolin writes that

the process of writing *Comrades* is interesting as a step towards the dramaturgy of the chamber plays.... When rewriting *the Marauders* into *Comrades* he excluded the first act which was to take place in Sweden and concentrated the course of events to the Paris setting. It is a comedy but with obvious similarities in its new version to the chamber plays with a limited cast. (72)

Thus, the use of small cast, which doesn’t allow “star roles” and “solo numbers,” and the single setting, that together form the “concentrated form” (Strindberg “Preface,” xvi) essential to a modern chamber drama, is already present in the dramaturgy of *Comrades*. This concentrated form Strindberg tried, yet failed, to realize in the one-act play *The Outlaw* in 1872 – a failure he confesses to in his preface to *Miss Julie*. The use of a small cast, together with an intimate space already apparent in *Comrades*, shows Strindberg’s concern for the new “modern psychological drama” (xix) where the focus is not on the external events but on “the fertility of the soul-complex” (xii). As Strindberg states in his preface, “I have noticed that the psychological processes are what interest people of our own day more than anything else. Our souls, so eager for knowledge, cannot rest satisfied with seeing what happens, but must also learn how it comes to happen” (xvi).

In addition to the preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg wrote another important manifesto “On Modern Drama and Modern Theatre,” which was published in the Danish journal *Ny Jord* in 1889. It has been viewed as a part of Strindberg’s more practical desire to reconstruct dramatic expression and theatrical experience. Michael Robinson points out that the ideas expressed in this essay “were largely driven by practical considerations” (238), derived from his effort to found a small experimental theatre in Copenhagen in 1888 and 1889. What the essay, written almost the same time as preface to *Miss Julie*, shows is Strindberg’s growing concern for experimenting with the simplification of theatrical expression: small cast, intimate chamber space and the unity of time, place and action. Moreover, the essay also shows that Strindberg was responding to the theatrical reforms which were taking place all over Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. Certainly, Copenhagen, “the dynamic, cultural centre of the modern breakthrough in Scandinavia” (Nolin 72) gave him a unique opportunity to follow the theatrical changes in the rest of Europe.

Although Strindberg’s effort to open the first Scandinavian experimental theatre in Copenhagen never materialized, he had received support from such playwrights as Herman Bang, Gustav Wied and Nathalia Larsen. Moreover, in “On Modern Theatre” his vision of Intimate Theatre where chamber plays could be performed is explicitly linked to André Antoine’s Théâtre Libre (established in 1887). Strindberg writes that Antoine,

was alert to the fact that the new repertoire could not be played by old-style actors, and therefore he began again from the beginning. But he also realised that the new psychological drama, which he guessed would come, and of which he already had some examples, could not be performed on the large stage designed for tournaments. Therefore he started his enterprise in a room and with dilettantes, with the result that after six months the Théâtre

Libre was hailed as a pioneering undertaking when an adaptation of the novel *Sœur Philomène* by the long-decried, abused and persecuted Goncourt brothers was presented on stage. (“Modern” 80)

It is no accident that Strindberg admired the Théâtre Libre - *Miss Julie* was performed there in 1892; and, as he remarks approvingly, at the Théâtre Libre, “there are none of those superb settings which dazzled the eye and lead one to overlook the emptiness of the action; none of those widely celebrated virtuositities that conceal the poverty of the form as in a purple cloak” (“Modern” 81). Thus, Strindberg’s vision of an intimate chamber space that draws the focus on the actor derives from his admiration towards the reconstruction of space at Théâtre Libre.

Furthermore, when Strindberg was struggling to open his experimental theatre in Copenhagen he had asked playwrights to send him scripts, following Antoine’s lead in producing plays by writers who “belonged to the frontline of European literature at that time” (Nolin 73). Strindberg wrote a letter to Georg Brandes, a letter which, according to Nolin, reflects “the basic ideas behind the dramaturgy of the chamber plays” (73):

You will find however an attempt to give *la nouvelle formule*, adapted to our needs: get it over quickly, let it rage out at once! As to myself, I have found my belief in my experimental form strengthened, after having read 25 tragedies submitted to my theatre. In every tragedy there is just one scene! It is that I will have; what have I to do with that other lot, and to trouble six eight actors to learn it! (qtd. in Nolin 73)

Nolin points out that in Copenhagen at the end of the 1880s, Strindberg wrote his first chamber plays *The Stronger* (1888), *Creditors* (1888), *Samum* (1889) and *Paria* (1889), all of which demonstrate his concern for an “extremely short type of play” (Nolin 73) – his version of the Théâtre Libre’s *quart d’heure*[s] (“Modern” 84). Thus, Strindberg’s

call for the intimate small chamber space was inseparable from his emphasis on short plays with a specific focus on the psychology of modern characters and, in turn, a small cast that would draw the audience's focus to the actors.

I have been trying to highlight Strindberg's desire to rejuvenate dramatic expression towards a chamber play format already in the 1880s, that is before he left for Berlin in 1892. One shouldn't assume that the model for Strindberg's chamber play comes solely from Max Reinhardt, the originator of "Kammerspiele", chamber play. Like Nolin, I would suggest that "mutual impulses and influences can be observed in the relationship Strindberg-Reinhardt" (74).

J.L. Styan relates Reinhardt's theatrical experimentations such as spatial reconstruction at his intimate theatres to the theatrical changes that were taking place all over Europe. Styan points out that "the revolutionary independent theatres of Paris, Berlin, London and Moscow had made their breach in the defences of the established commercial theatre in the west" (3). Styan also describes how Antoine's Théâtre Libre, the "first modern laboratory theatre" (11) in Paris staged new realistic pieces such as Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. Antoine then influenced Germany's Otto Brahm, who opened Freie Bühne in Berlin in 1889 with a production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Styan highlights how, through Brahm, Reinhardt came to learn about Ibsen and Strindberg (11). Reinhardt's theatres in Berlin ended up presenting 491 performances of Strindberg (36) and 306 of Ibsen (19). Particularly before the war, Strindberg was "the most frequently performed modern dramatist in the German theatre," and Reinhardt "first among his supporters" (15). Yet, Reinhardt soon showed his difference from Brahm who was following Antoine's lead in naturalism. "Too much had been happening in the

French and German theatre of quite another kind, and by 1900 a more attractive force had to be reckoned with, that of the new symbolist theatre”(Styan 11). Thus, Styan importantly remarks that ”When it came Reinhardt’s turn to direct a naturalistic play he would not exclude the imagination” (18).

It is no wonder that Strindberg, who was fascinated by the blurring boundary of dream and reality and in life’s mystical qualities, caught Reinhardt’s interest. Moreover, Strindberg’s chamber plays, with their focus on the “concentrated form,” were well suited for Reinhardt’s intimate theatres. At *Schall und Rausch* Reinhardt presented Strindberg’s one-act plays *The Stronger* and *The Bond*. When the theatre was turned into Kleines Theatre he continued with *Crimes and Crimes* and *Intoxication* in 1902 and with *Miss Julie* in 1904. In 1906 Reinhardt founded another intimate theatre, Kammerspiele, which became “the prototype for Strindberg’s Kammarspel and chamber theatres all over Europe” (Styan 109). According to Strindberg, Kammerspiele “by its very name indicates its real program: the concept of chamber music transferred to drama. The intimate action, the highly significant motif, the sophisticated treatment” (*Open* 19). Styan describes the theatre where the auditorium was of the same size as the stage and where no orchestra pit divided the stage from the auditorium. The theatre “seated only 292 people, and the front row was only three feet from the stage, so that players at the back were closer to the spectators than they had formerly been on an apron” (110). Interestingly, it was again Ibsen’s *Ghosts* with which he opened his Kammerspiele on 8 November 1906. Reinhardt transformed Ibsen’s realistic drama *Ghosts* into a chamber piece by paring down and dematerialising the setting. The importance of this spatial transformation (in addition to the detection of excessive impulses in the play) is that it shifted the focus to

the actor. It also helped the actor to achieve the right emotional state. The Kammerspiele was Reinhardt's "truly intimate theatre" (110), where the actor and the audience could become united. For Reinhardt, drama was to be expressed through the actor: "Today and for all time, man must stand at the centre of the whole art of the theatre, man as actor" (qtd. in Styan 16) At the Kammerspiele Reinhardt also produced Strindberg's chamber plays: *The Storm*, *The Pelican*, *The Ghost Sonata*, *The Black Glove* and *After the Fire* (36-38), whose concern with psychological depth of character offered in turn a unique opportunity to concentrate on the actor. Moreover, what fascinated Reinhardt was the way in which Strindberg's chamber plays "attempted to dominate the theatre by a musical intensity of feeling" (Styan 15).

When Strindberg left for Berlin in 1892, new intimate theatres there certainly inspired him. Max Reinhardt's Kleines Theater and Kammerspiel-Haus stimulated Strindberg to further study the idea of chamber drama in theatre. Yet, it is important for us to remember that Strindberg's concern for "a small stage" and "a small house" had already developed in the 1880s, before Reinhardt's experimentation with new intimate theatrical expression. The reason why Reinhardt is such an important figure is that he "adopted the idea and organised for the first time a theatre where the term chamber play (Kammerspiele) was used" (Nolin 74).

It is also worth pointing out that Strindberg was in Berlin at the time when Scandinavian artists were attracted to a German nation that was undergoing major industrial and military changes (Lagercrantz 287). Thus, Reinhardt's fascination with Strindberg has to be viewed as part of Germany's general interest in, and "romantic nostalgia" (287) for the Scandinavian countries. Furthermore, the presence of other

Scandinavian artists in Berlin also meant that Strindberg was greatly influenced by his native contemporaries, not only by Reinhardt. It was in a tavern, Zum Schwarzen Ferkel, at the corner of Unter den Linden and Neuer Wilhelmstrasse where Strindberg met the other artists such as Edvard Munch, Adolf Paul, Holger Drachmann among others. Biographer Olof Lagercrantz writes how the tavern was a sort of cultural institution comparable with museums, theatres and salons where artists and politicians met and exchanged ideas. Lagercrantz also implies that the period in Berlin wasn't that productive for Strindberg after all. The other artists were also his rivals who created a pressure on Strindberg and with whom Strindberg nevertheless led a bohemian lifestyle.

Nevertheless, after Berlin Strindberg returned to Stockholm where he was ready to open his own Intimate Theatre, the first Scandinavian experimental theatre, with theatre director, actor and manager August Falck. Although the Intimate Theatre survived only three years, from 1907 to 1910, and suffered from insufficient financial support, it paved the way for the theatrical reforms that were later put into practice by Scandinavian modernist theatre and film directors who continued a Strindbergian tradition of chamber drama.

Following Reinhardt's example, Strindberg redefined staging techniques at the Intimate Theatre by simplifying the realistic stagecraft that Ibsen had previously brought to stage. If Ibsen's realism brought drama into the interior setting, specifically into the middle-class living room, Strindberg's innovation at the Intimate Theatre was to empty the Ibsenian space of all the domestic signifiers. For Strindberg, "intimate action" (Strindberg *Open*, 19) was to be achieved through the reconstruction of theatrical space. The Intimate Theatre demonstrated the ways in which scenic simplification of theatrical

expression could enhance the focus on the actor and draw him/her closer to the audience. Furthermore, Strindberg's use of simplified and condensed theatrical chamber space illustrated how the minimal amount of distractions could help the actor in his or her psychological introspection: "With simplicity one wins the solemn calm and quiet in which the artist can hear his own part" (Strindberg qtd. in Marker and Marker *History*, 216). Thus, the guiding principle that Strindberg seemed to have adopted from Reinhardt was his emphasis on the actor's role.¹² As Reinhardt has stated, "Ever since I've been in the theatre I wanted to pursue one definite purpose, and I've finally achieved it: to bring the actor and the spectator together – as close together as possible" (qtd. in Styan 110). The Intimate Theatre's stage, which was six meters wide and four meters deep, in tandem with the auditorium, which had only 161 seats, helped to create the intimate space where the audience could focus solely on the actor. Helge Wahlgren, one of the actors at the Intimate Theatre, recalls that the close presence of the audience as well as the size of the stage allowed for a "subdued tone" in acting (Schumacher 315). The audience was able to follow the actor's subtle facial expressions, his minimal bodily gestures and listen to "the spoken word... the most important element in the scenic art" (Strindberg "Notes," 210). If Strindberg had already argued that "the subtlest movements of the soul are to be reflected on the face rather than by gestures and noise" (xix) in his preface to *Miss Julie* in 1888, his anti-big-theatre attitudes are most provokingly pronounced in *Open Letters*:

We wanted a small theatre in order that the actors might be heard in every corner without having to shout. There are, as you know, theatres so huge that everything must be said in a strained voice, which makes everything

¹² Styan further writes how for Reinhardt "on the technical side, the acoustics and sightlines could not be faulted, and the focus of attention was everything an actor could ask." (110) and to make the theatre its best everyone involved, such as the director, writer, designer and composer, had to put himself in the actor's place. Reinhardt's actor had to find "the style the play itself dictated" (16).

sound false. A declaration of love is bellowed forth, a confidence expressed like a call to arms, a secret of the heart whispered hoarsely from the bottom of the throat and lungs. (208)

At the Intimate Theatre Strindberg finally had a chance to realize his vision of “a small stage” that draws the audience attention to the actor of the new modern psychological drama, that creates an intimacy between the actor and the audience. And thus Strindberg’s theatre resembled Reinhardt’s, which, as Styan points out, “offered the opportunity of intimate acting, and began to reveal an enduring principle that the response of an audience varies in direct relationship with both the style of the play and the scale of the playhouse” (Styan 109).

Perhaps the most productive way to think about the connection between Strindberg and Reinhardt would be to view Reinhardt as the interpreter of Strindberg. Strindberg writes about the gap between the time when his plays were performed in Freie Bühne and then at Reinhardt’s Kleines Theater, “A certain silence then ensued, and the drama resumed fairly old lines until Reinhardt at the beginning of the new century opened Kleines Theater” (*Open* 18-19). Reinhardt was an irreplaceable figure in detecting the modernism of Strindbergian chamber plays, that is Strindberg’s unrivalled talent at depicting life’s mystical, visionary qualities and embodying them on stage. For instance, in the chamber plays *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican* the realistic milieu becomes more and more entangled with the mysterious dimensions of reality as the plays progress. Reality and dream become fused in Strindberg’s chamber plays. The realistic depiction of the modern house – a house that resembles Strindberg’s own house in Stockholm’s Östermalm district – at the beginning of *The Ghost Sonata* is pushed aside as soon as Strindberg depicts the Old Man’s vision of the Milk Maid by the fountain

whom the Student can't see. Interestingly, the dream-like elements, which confused the critics and the audience at the play's premiere at the Intimate Theatre on 21 January 1908, were the source of Reinhardt's powerful production of *The Ghost Sonata* in Stockholm and Gothenburg in 1917. If Reinhardt had helped Strindberg gain a reputation as a writer of chamber plays in Germany in the first place, his productions in Sweden opened the eyes of the Scandinavian audience to the transcendental elements of Strindberg's dramas.

However, it is important to point out how it was Swedish director Olof Molander who managed to revive Strindberg's vision of the blurring boundary between dream *and* reality. The first of Molander's staging of *The Ghost Sonata* took place at Dramaten in 1942.

For Molander, it had seemed vital to recognize in this and other Strindberg's works the razor-sharp fragments of observed (specifically autobiographical) reality embedded in this writer's dramatic vision. As a result, the 'façade of a new house on a city square' that is described in such close detail at the beginning of *The Ghost Sonata* was shown in his production as a virtually exact copy of Karlaplan 10, the stately mahogany-and-marble building in the Östermalm district of Stockholm where Strindberg resided after his marriage to Harriet Bosse. (Marker and Marker *Ingmar*, 284)

Interestingly, this blend of dream and reality, which became Molander's trademark, influenced Ingmar Bergman who staged the play in Malmö in 1954. Although the Markers acknowledge Molander's influence on Bergman, they state how Bergman's production "charted a middle way between outright expressionism (the Reinhardt tradition) and the blend of naturalism and mysticism patented by Molander" (284). They write that,

the core of this concept was his structural image of the play as a dreamlike progression toward purification and tenuous secular salvation – a

progression measured here in three distinct scenic tempi, from the oneiric, film-gray 'reality' of the first act to a much more stylised milieu of heavy drapes in the macabre universe of the ghost supper and, finally, to a completely simplified, overtly symbolic hyacinth room. (284)

When Bergman staged the play again at Dramaten in 1973 he used a "virtually naked stage, stripped of every object and every item of scenery" (285). What was emphasized in the production was "human faces and figure compositions that exerted a pressure from the stage toward the auditorium and eliminated all sense of distance" (286).

Thus, one shouldn't ignore the expressionistic qualities of Strindberg's chamber plays that caught Reinhardt's attention in the first place; at the same time however, to focus solely on them would be to forget Strindberg's fascination with the real. Strindberg was a dreamer who was able to discover the dream-like nature of reality and the reality of the dream. It is this blend of dream and reality that is continued in the Dogma films.

The Use of Space in Chamber Plays: Intimacy and Claustrophobia

If Strindberg's call for small houses in his theoretical writings brought the attention to the stages on the margins of the theatrical world, the chamber plays simultaneously brought yet another marginal space to the public eye, that is the private domestic space. Strindberg not only called for a small intimate stage where new modern psychological dramas could be played out but also used the intimacy of the domestic space as a locus of drama. Consequently, the domestic space, usually thought of as women's private realm, was being scrutinised by the (male and female) public, because it was often experienced by male characters. Nowhere is this more clear than in his first chamber play *Storm Weather*.

Storm Weather premiered at the Intimate Theatre on December 30 in 1907. Impressed by Beethoven's chamber music, Strindberg had wanted to adapt the principles of chamber music to drama; he kept highlighting that, as music, drama was to affect the spectator's emotions directly. Thus, like all chamber plays *Storm Weather*, as "a modern drama of pure feeling" (Sprinchorn "Introduction," xi), depicts how Strindberg was less interested in developing causal relationships than in "sustaining a mood at almost the same level of intensity throughout" (xi) the play. In *Storm Weather*, this idea finds its embodiment in the evocation of a mood of approaching death, decay and mortality. The protagonist is an old Gentleman who suffers from loneliness after his wife and daughter have left him. The Gentleman's longing for death is revealed when he states how, "after you reach a certain age, nothing changes anymore – everything goes downhill, like a sled on a slope" (23). Furthermore, the fact that the play takes place in the fall adds to the feeling of decay, which is also highlighted by the Gentleman's restless waiting for the streetlamp to be lit as a sign of the end of the summer – metaphorically, the end of his life.

But what is the actual "chamber," a domestic intimate space, from which only death releases the Gentleman in *Storm Weather*? Although the play focuses evoking a mood of the Gentleman's approaching death and melancholia, Strindberg doesn't abandon the use of authentic space as a setting. The Gentleman's domestic space resonates as claustrophobic as a sort of prison that he hasn't been able to leave all summer. He wanders around and gazes out from the windows like a bored Ibsenian protagonist, denied life in the midst of domesticity. The formal intimacy of a chamber space, that parallels the thematic exploration of the protagonist's claustrophobia, is one of

the major traits of Strindberg's chamber plays. That's why Strindberg often uses the metaphor of fire to describe how the only way out of the misery is the burning of the house or a death as in *The Burned House* and *The Pelican* where the house, depicted as a space of mortality, has been a prison for its inhabitants.

The house in *Storm Weather* is called "The Quiet House" where "there've been dramas" (5). In a typical Strindbergian manner, the Gentleman views life as theatre and condemns the inhabitants of the house as role players: "red shades look like theatre curtains with bloody melodramas in rehearsal behind them" (5). As in other chamber plays, life's deep secrets will be revealed and the masks stripped off as the play progresses. In this play, the revelation of secrets means that the Gentleman eventually faces the repressed anxieties of his past, by unexpectedly confronting his former wife.

Before he faces his wife, though, the Gentleman connects his claustrophobia with that repression: "I've become immobilized – I'm rooted to this apartment by my memories" (6). Strindberg is keen to describe how the Gentleman can't escape the past, the memories of which are kept alive by the household and the domestic signifiers (such as the portrait of Gerda and his child on the mantle). For the Gentleman, to leave the house would be to forget the past, which he refuses to do. As the play progresses Strindberg enhances spatial constraint by making the Gentleman's wife and her new husband move above the Gentleman's household, a movement the Gentleman's brother, the Consul, describes as, "like a red thundercloud hanging over us" (16). Later, the Gentleman describes the "terrible racket upstairs" which feels "as if they were stamping on my head" (21). The space above, hanging over him embodies the feeling of claustrophobia which the Gentleman ever more strongly feels when finding out that his

child is living with and raised by another man, which make the Gentleman share the angst felt by the Captain in *The Father*. The quiet house has now become a space that is filled with disturbing sounds and images from his past. Some of these sounds are real while others are imaginary such as the footsteps of his daughter, Anne-Charlotte, which certainly bear resemblance to Strindberg's depiction of the Mother's hallucinatory visions of a rocking chair in *The Pelican*.

Explaining how "the past is dramatized and made present" in *Storm Weather*, Birgitta Steene argued for "the house as memory and illusion," because "the house contains, as it were, both memory and presence; it has a temporal dimension that is a kind of extended now" ("House" 40). According to Steene, this "extended time line is concretely linked to a spatial dimension" in the way that the objects such as the portrait of Gerda and the child are his "attempt to freeze time" (41). Although Steene focuses on one particular contemporary production of Strindberg's play, that is Wilhelm Carlsson's production of *Storm Weather* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm in 1991, her analysis of the blurred boundaries of memory and present, of the real and unreal, is important for the consideration of Strindberg's theatrical modernism in the chamber plays. Steene emphasizes how the "chamber plays are associated with the breakthrough of modernism in the theatre, which emphasizes stage imagery over and above rhetoric and seeing above speech" (41). Strindberg's modernism lies in his ability to show the unreal in the real. As Steene states, the houses of the chamber plays are for Strindberg "specific, yet expansive stage metaphors," both "physical perimeters and major symbolic references" (41).

When talking about the memory that will be embodied by the imprisoning house in *Storm Weather* and Strindberg's interest in blurring boundary between real and unreal, one can't ignore the house's resemblance to Röda Huset on Karlavägen where Strindberg lived after marrying Harriet Bosse in 1901. If Röda Huset was a model for the Quiet House in *Storm Weather*, are the Gentleman and Gerda, 29 years younger than the Gentleman whom she was married and has a child with, Strindberg's and Harriet Bosse's alter egos? Strindberg's longing for his family and feelings of anxiety over their child Anne-Marie's upbringing certainly support the interpretation of the play as a playground for the blurring realms of past, present, memories and illusions at the time he wrote the play.

Why does Strindberg focus on depicting the Gentleman's household as a space where there is no trace of life left, a space that makes him the prisoner of the past? What or who has taken the life out of the household? In other words, who is the woman who has the courage to leave the domestic chamber space to fulfil her true desires? What made Bosse a perfect model for the character of Gerda?

When studying the chamber plays, Bosse becomes an important figure since Strindberg's marriage to her ended before he began writing the plays for the Intimate Theatre in 1907. The first chamber play *Storm Weather* shows that Strindberg was still dealing with the divorce. Furthermore, his depiction of Gerda as Bosse's alter ego reflects his contradictory view of a New Woman who rebels against the prevailing notions of femininity.

In *Storm Weather*, the Gentleman adores his former wife, a fact which is evident in the way in which he keeps the portrait of her with the child on the mantle like

Strindberg who, after their marriage was over, kept the portrait of Bosse as Puck on his wall. At the same time, the Gentleman views Gerda as a murderer who sucked him of life and left him in misery. “Do you think I want a tyrant in my house to rob me of my life, my honor, *and* my property?” answers the Gentleman to his brother’s inquiries about the possibility of a re-marriage. Thus, Gerda seems to be a predecessor for a vampire, who refuses to feed the children and falls in love with her daughter’s husband in *The Pelican*.

In *Storm Weather*, Gerda remembers the time in the Gentleman’s household and recalls, “when I used to sit cooped up here, I knew it wasn’t the fault of the jailer I was miserable but the fault of the jail” (30). It was Bosse’s independence and her refusal to comply with the domestic roles as a mother and a wife that are reflected in Strindberg’s depiction of Gerda as a woman who “sat and suffered” (33) in the domestic household. Bosse didn’t give up her career ambitions after getting married. It was Bosse’s double roles as an actress and a mother/wife Strindberg had contradictory feelings towards.

This backstory helps one to interpret both Strindberg’s aggressive intent “to write you and our child out of my heart” (Strindberg qtd. in Martinus 235), as well as *Storm Weather* as a series of “storms of passion” (43). Although *Storm Weather* focuses on the Gentleman’s angst, it is a drama that studies woman’s refusal to comply with the domestic roles of a wife and a mother. The “extended time line” in the Gentleman’s household and his “attempt to freeze time” (Steene “House,” 41) refers to the fixed, unchangeable quality of things embodied in the Gentleman’s apartment, which has remained the same for years. It is the same dramatic vision of a domestic sphere where fixed roles cause the turmoil for Ibsen’s Nora and Hedda. It is the domestic sphere which

Gerda, like Nora and Hedda, needs to escape in order to change their lives, to become something more than they've been, to find out who they really are.

It is important to remember that *Storm Weather*, as the first chamber play, set the model for an authentic, intimate space as a setting for domestic family drama that the other plays kept exploring. What becomes important is the way in which Strindberg's chamber plays depict the oscillation between realism and excess. On the one hand, Strindberg was keen on giving authentic depictions of a recognizable milieu – an authenticity that later generations of theatre directors and filmmakers like the Dogma filmmakers have kept exploring. On the other hand, Strindberg was equally intent on exploring the expressionistic dimensions of the chamber plays, the play of moods that swirl around the realistic space. This same dialogue between the real and unreal can be detected in the Dogma films and their representation of the female protagonists in the intimacy of a chamber space.

The Cinematic Embodiments of the Chamber Play

The Idiots

The Dogma filmmakers share Strindberg's interest in redefining the actor's craft through the reconstruction of space. The lack of aesthetization, spatial simplification and the use of cinematography serve to highlight the actors and enhance the audience's concentration on them. Furthermore, by returning to a domestic chamber setting, the Dogma filmmakers continue a tradition of male playwrights/directors depicting women in the domestic space. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *The Idiots*, in which the use of space together with cinematography make the creation of psychological drama possible:

the intimate space and undisturbing cameras give a cinematic embodiment to a Strindbergian “concentrated form” (“Preface” xvi) of a chamber play.

The deserted middle-class living room, where most of the scenes take place in *The Idiots*, push the filmmaker’s examination of empty, condensed, intimate space to the extreme. The beginning of the film shows how the chosen space mimics an intimate, theatrical chamber space. Karen withdraws from the group and retreats into one of the empty rooms. She stands alone by the window holding a phone. Her unawareness of the space surrounding her helps the actor to strive towards heightened introspection. This scene is an example of the way in which von Trier takes advantage of the actor’s background. Von Trier uses Jorgensen’s experience as a theatre actor and adjusts it to film by building intimacy through theatrical means. During the whole scene the camera is relatively static, as if recording the performance on stage. The emptiness and quietness of the room further enhance our concentration on the actor, who is performing for the privileged gaze of the camera. All distractions are absent from the room. Karen stands by the window. She turns to look towards the door, approaches it, and then closes it. She comes back to the window, to her own spot, under the close scrutiny of the camera, and dials the number. Her face is filled with subtle, yet intense expressions. She places the phone against her ear and stares outside, motionless except for her eyes which blink a few times. She is in her own world that is being disrupted by the voice “Anders speaking.” The camera moves closer to her face, set against a white wall in an extreme close-up. Still, she stares outside, at a distance. After hearing a voice, her eyes become moist with tears, which she tries to hold back by stiffening her mouth. When the emotion overcomes her, she puts her head down, simultaneously hiding her face with her hands. We only hear

her crying. The camera doesn't move. She raises her head and we briefly see her tearful face, while she keeps looking outside, hiding from the camera. She then quickly turns towards the camera, but closes her eyes to retreat to her own world, immediately swinging her head to turn away from the camera's gaze.

Von Trier's direction of her performance is the clearest example of the adoption of Strindberg's modernist principles to film. Jorgensen is a Strindbergian modern actor, able to listen to her own performance due to the peacefulness of the surroundings – able, in other words, to “attend to the role, to concentrate all his thoughts on it, and not let himself be distracted from it” (Strindberg *Open*, 22). The lack of agitation in the cinematography and the quietness of the aesthetic space add to this feeling of intimacy in the environment, allowing the actor to become, for Strindberg, the artist who “gets into a trance, forgets himself, and finally *becomes* the person he is to play” (23).

Von Trier describes the intimate form of filmmaking that is subordinated to the actor's performance in the following way:

This technique is a dream come true for actors. We never had to set up any lights, and there were no lengthy technical preparations. We just set out some basic scenery and let the actors get on with it. We didn't have a big production team either.... It was also a challenge for them to express themselves in a completely different way. They had to live their characters rather than act them. (qtd. in Björkman and Smith 208)

This intimate form of Dogma filmmaking, which highlights a Strindbergian equation between the actor and the character, can also present difficulties for an actor, whose “anxieties and sorrow and internal conflicts” (209) von Trier as a director wants to dig into when making the actor live through the role. Von Trier describes Dogma filmmaking

as a form of filmmaking which enables one to penetrate, in Strindberg's words, "the fertility of the soul-complex" ("Preface" xii). For von Trier Dogma filmmaking is something

[Y]ou dream of doing but never have time for. But here we had time. I could spend a whole day sitting down with a couple of actors, talking to them about their childhood and upbringing and memories and experiences. It was incredibly exciting, but also difficult for the person taking on the role of therapist. (qtd. in Björkman and Smith 209)

One of the most widely commented upon scenes, reflecting von Trier's aim to tap the actor's psyche, is the one in which Karen and Susanne (Ann Louise Hassing) sit by the window and Karen finally opens up to Susanne. Karen doubts her right to be happy which she has began to feel with the idiots, and reveals the foreignness of this unknown feeling of happiness to Susanne. The actors' preparation for the scene is recorded in Jargil's documentary *The Humiliated*, which shows von Trier's frustration with Ann Louise Hassing, who, in his opinion, didn't identify enough with her character to feel sympathy for Karen. Von Trier recalls,

my therapeutic self suggested that if Anne Louise could see her own problems in Karen's then she would be able to express the sympathy that was lacking. You can't show sympathy for something you can't share. Sympathy requires imagination. And you can't take imagination for granted. (qtd. in Björkman and Smith 209)

Certainly this scene which, even von Trier admits, was "on the verge of sadism" (qtd. in Björkman and Smith 210) has promoted the image of him as a director whose penetration into the "fertility of the soul-complex" has pushed his actors to the extreme when stretching their limits of self-expression. Von Trier's direction of actors demands from

them a willingness to be humiliated by the camera's close gaze, a willingness to tap in to their inner most hidden psychic spaces in front of the intimate camera.

Lindsay Crouse's notion of acting as "self-portrait" applies to von Trier's idea of what Dogma acting should be. Interestingly, Crouse's view of acting as "self-portrait" is a part of her comment on Carole Zucker's discussion of Carl Th. Dreyer's direction of actor Renée Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Like von Trier, Dreyer was famous for pushing the actors to the extreme when making them identify with the role completely, which in this case led to lasting damage to Falconetti's psyche. As Zucker writes, Falconetti's identification with the role in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* is "the archetypal story of something disastrous that can happen when an actor embraces a role very completely" (*Figures* 28). Crouse continues her analysis by stating how actors need to have a technique to protect themselves:

taking a role is a very tricky thing. And one of the things that technique is based on is protecting the human mind. There are people we know who are locked up in institutions who declare themselves to be Jesus Christ. The point is, as Sandy Meisner very elegantly puts it, it's not that you are Jesus Christ, it's "as if" you are Jesus Christ. And there is a world of difference. Technique makes that extremely clear – you train your mind to think in those terms so that you yourself remain intact. That's what personalizing a role means, bringing yourself to that situation, not crowding out your own identity with another one. (qtd. in Zucker *Figures*, 29)

It is the protection of the human mind that the Dogma films, where the director "discover[s] what there is at the bottom of each being" (Dreyer qtd. in Sarris 142), need from the actor. Strindberg, who was equally interested in the "fertility of the soul-complex" wisely states that, "Imaginary suffering is just as painful as real, and the tears that are shed on stage are just as bitter and sincere as offstage" (*Open* 49). In the Dogma films, where the focus is on the psychological processes of a character the actors need to

be willing to face unpredictable stages in the construction of their characters, while discovering material in their own psyche for the creation of these representations of female suffering, sacrifice and martyrdom. It is no wonder that von Trier's direction of actors, which demands from the actor a heightened self-exploration into the deepest secrets of her psyche, has changed them as people. Emily Watson (the lead in *Breaking the Waves*) after making of the comedy *Trixie* said it was the first time she came away from a film "not feeling damaged" (qtd. in Kuczynski 2A11). It is likely that, because *Breaking the Waves* was her film debut, her technique (which according to Crouse protects the human mind) hadn't yet been able to develop, as it should have been in order to protect the actor from psychological damage. Likewise Jorgensen, who did her first major film performance in *The Idiots*, confirms that a character like Karen doesn't leave an actor after playing her role; instead one can go on and on exploring who Karen is and still find no final answer (Jorgensen). The quest for unfiltered emotions, for the truth of being that von Trier was after in the empty house where they prepared for the shooting heightened the actors' self-awareness, causing nothing to disturb the concentration on themselves and to become aware of their own limitations. These limitations were freely explored, just as the actors were encouraged to exceed them. This process of introspection changed the actors as people (Jorgensen).

Strindberg expressed his view of the lack of fear that he felt actors need to possess in his letters to the members of the Intimate Theatre. What he says there can also be said to apply to the Dogma actors who need to be willing to suffer and stretch the limits of self-expression under the intimate gaze of the Dogma cameras:

Those who want to become actors because they have a great desire to suffer and enjoy through reincarnating themselves and living the lives of many

human beings on the stage will not let themselves be frightened. They go where their genius calls them, through fire and water, and they do not seek false honor but are sustained by the work itself, rewarded or unrewarded, with joy or without. (*Open* 50)

I will now move on to analyse the use of empty chamber space on a thematic level in *The Idiots*. In this film, the houses are used, to borrow Steene's words to depict the houses in Strindberg's chamber plays, as "physical perimeters and major symbolic references" ("House" 41). The importance of an authentic, condensed, empty space upon the exploration of one's innermost being is what the film explores on a thematic level. The authentic spaces in the film range from the public spaces to the domestic interior settings. More importantly, von Trier dynamically juxtaposes the empty house, where the spassing takes place, with Karen's home filled with all the domestic signifiers. The emptiness of the house becomes an important metaphor. It signifies the release of all pretensions and demands for behavioural norms, unlike Karen's home which is the embodiment of these. Moreover, von Trier represents Karen's actions as a revolt against the social roles and behavioural norms in the domestic space which prevented her from discovering her authentic self, that is, her deepest desires and fears as well as her free spirit. As in Strindberg's *Storm Weather*, Karen's home is a space that is haunted by a past which restricts her free spirit. This we find out at the film's end when Karen returns home where everything is kept untouched after she left it. She walks into the house and finds a portrait of her lost child on the mantle. As in *Storm Weather*, the portrait reflects the way that the "extended now" takes on a "spatial dimension." Stability characterizes Karen's home: time has stopped.

The stability of things in this domestic sphere is also inseparable from von Trier's depiction of Karen's inability to change things there. Like the Gentleman, she is a prisoner of the household. Yet, unlike the Gentleman and more in line with the actions of Gerda, Karen has had the courage to leave this suffocating place. Karen's return to this imprisoning domestic space is only to mark her courage to have once left it. At the film's end she returns there only to leave again. Thus, the film tells the story of Karen who has been able to leave the space, the past that has restricted her free spirit.

Unlike her home, the empty house, where "everything is so good," as Karen finally states, enables her to overcome her inhibitions. The idiots' freedom to spass gives Karen the freedom to experience her previously suppressed emotions. The characters' spassing project will be tested in the end, when it is time to see which of them can spass in the presence of family members or friends. The project will be terminated by virtue of the fact that none of the characters is able to deconstruct prescribed behavioural norms in a more private space. Karen becomes the only one who can do this. Karen's performance of madness at home is indicative of how the fixed behavioural norms dominate not only in public space but also, even more strongly, in domestic space. Thus, the final outburst at home is Karen's explicit statement of her rebellion against any norms that have previously defined her existence in that same domestic space. Von Trier shows how the deviance from behavioural norms leads to marginalization not only in the public space, but also in one's home.

The household, which restrains the characters in *Storm Weather*, where the bodies of Gentleman and Gerda are described as "immobilised" (6) and "petrified" (31), finds a parallel in von Trier's depiction of the immobility of bodies at Karen's home. Von

Trier focuses on the immobility of Karen's family members when they sit quietly on the sofa and gaze at Karen's spassing. The stable camera enhances the stillness of the living room and focuses on Karen, who eats slowly and thoughtfully, constantly gazing down the table. The stillness of the room is shattered when Karen spits the cream from her mouth and starts to spass. Karen fills her open mouth with more cake, looks down, and rolls her eyes to the left while simultaneously spitting out the cake. The camera captures the family members disturbed but quiet gazing. The final outburst at home is Karen's explicit statement of her rebellion against any norms that have previously restricted and defined her existence in that same domestic space. Moreover, von Trier focuses on how her spassing is enough to provoke and destabilise the domestic space (embodied by Anders' slap on her face) where nothing usually moves.

The Idiots updates a Strindbergian chamber play both on a formal as well as a thematic level. Von Trier returns to a chamber setting and studies novel ways to portray filmic representations which explore female identity within the domestic space. The revolt against prescribed social roles and behavioural norms and the subsequent experience of marginality are what von Trier's protagonist shares with her Scandinavian forerunners. It is the formal intimacy of a chamber setting that is linked to the thematic exploration of the protagonist's feelings of claustrophobia that links von Trier with Strindberg (and via Strindberg back to Ibsen). And von Trier is clearly aware of the debt. In *The Humiliated* – Jesper Jargil's 1998 documentary about the making of *The Idiots*, von Trier directs Jorgensen to "Leave as [Ibsen's] Nora did. Leave with dignity," after the spassing scene at Karen's home.

The freedom Karen embraces at the end of the film is similar to the freedom Ibsen depicted in *A Doll's House* and to the freedom Strindberg had difficulties in dealing with but that is strikingly studied in *Storm Weather*. It is about the female protagonist's free spirit and courage to face the unknown, and her need to discover her hidden self. The experience with the idiots strengthens Karen's discovery of herself and helps her to gain freedom, which she uses in the end. Von Trier contrasts the other characters' externalised, bodily freedom, to Karen's internalised freedom, which is more serious. In the end we don't know where and for what reason Karen, like Nora, leaves. Yet we know that we have witnessed an act of inner strength.

The strength that these modern women showed in their actions was Ibsen's great focus in his plays and a trouble Strindberg tried to solve. One could argue that, whereas Ibsen focuses on women leaving the house to discover their true desires, Strindberg prefers to depict male wanderers stuck inside the domestic space or returning there, as in *The Burned House*, which he wrote after *Storm Weather*. In Strindberg's chamber plays, women have already left the domestic chambers; as a result of their departure men have to deal with their loneliness in the empty chambers. Strindberg was arguably responding to Ibsen's rebellious women who leave the chambers, by depicting domestic interiors as places where men either return or stay. *Storm Weather* is thus gender counterpart to and continuation of *A Doll's House*, which ends by the depiction of Nora leaving Helmer desperate at home. It is not difficult to see the Gentleman as the aging Helmer suffering from loneliness, wandering inside the house after her tyrant wife has deserted him.

The Celebration

Like *The Idiots*, Vinterberg's *The Celebration* revolves around a chamber setting: the whole film is shot in a country mansion. The mansion provided an authentic Strindbergian chamber space that is simplified and emptied of all distracting elements, directing the focus onto the actors, who are closely observed by the director and the spectator.

Like *The Idiots*, *The Celebration* shows the ways in which a Strindbergian chamber space together with cinematography fosters the actor's free experimentation with exceeding physical and psychological limitations.

In *The Celebration*, the essence of spatial simplification is supported by cinematography that is consistent with the film's focus on the actor. Vinterberg recalls how he was first dissatisfied with shooting the film on digital video but later realized the benefit of the "hidden cameras" (Vinterberg qtd. in Macnab 18). The unfelt presence of the cameras minimizes the amount of distractions in the environment so that the actor can focus on constructing the right emotional reality of his or her character; the actors are even able to forget the cameras (Vinterberg in Kelly 117). Moreover, the hidden cameras enhance the intensity of performances by observing the actor as closely and as intimately as possible without disturbing his or her concentration. The hidden cameras give the film, to borrow von Trier's terms, the "impression of compression" (Björkman "Naked," 14): "Anthony Dod Mantle [the cameraman] was good at becoming part of the atmosphere. He used to crawl around [as well as] between the guests; when you have a camera in front of you, there are no limits" (Vinterberg qtd. in Macnab 18; see also, Vinterberg in Kelly 117). Thus, *The Celebration* is an ideal embodiment for a Strindbergian

“concentrated form” (“Preface” xvi) a chamber play focuses on. Vinterberg uses space as well as cinematography to focus on the actors who are the center of his film.

To study the reversal of power between actors and camera and to add the intensity to the performances with the help of freely moving, hand-held cameras, Vinterberg let the actors hold the cameras. An example of this in the film is in the scene in which Christian faints and collapses on a floor after the incest has been revealed; here it is the actor Ulrich Thomsen who is holding the camera. Likewise, in a scene in which the siblings are seen dancing together in the middle of a night after the birthday party, all the four actors are holding the cameras together.

Thus, the intimate chamber space of the manor house, which draws the spectator’s focus onto the actor, and the cinematography, which is subordinated to the actor’s performance, create a sense of intimacy between the camera/spectator and the actor. To enhance the audience’s absorption into the images on the screen, Vinterberg aims to “undress” (Vinterberg qtd. in Kelly 114) cinematic expression: “you [...] remove all the layers between what you’re expressing and the audience” (115). To accomplish this “undressing,” Vinterberg returns to the use of intimate, empty chamber space.

What becomes important is the way in which Vinterberg uses intimacy to encourage the actor’s spontaneity and improvisation (which is not surprising considering that his previous filmmaking relies heavily on the improvisational quality of performances). Vinterberg seems to believe that a crucial part of authentic performances is an unrestrained bursting out of inner aggression and suppressed angst. Thus, Vinterberg’s use of the intimate chamber space together with cinematography enables the actor to try to break free of limitations on a psychological as well as on a physical level.

The spontaneity in the actors' performances creates the impression of intimate action taking place here and now. Interestingly, the emphasis on experimenting with exceeding the limitations – what provides an opportunity for improvisation – can also present difficulties for actors who are used to relying on control and preparation in their performance. In *The Celebration*, Vinterberg faced a clash of opposite working methods. Thomas Bo Larsen, who was used to improvisation, benefited from an intimate form of Dogma filmmaking, while the emphasis on letting go, on exceeding physical and psychological limitations, provided a challenge for former Bergman actor, Henning Moritzen, who was used to relying on the script in both film and theatre and whose performances are often rehearsed and controlled. Vinterberg relates that

For me it was a challenge to work with actors who respected the written word, like Henning Moritzen. My system was to follow the actor and find out what they were really good at, and then combine them. Thomas Bo Larsen is a brilliant improviser, as is Paprika [Steen], so that's what they did. The other actors had their lines, so they would just agree: 'I know you're improvising, but where are you landing? What's your last word? And they took their cues from that. (qtd. in Kelly 116)

Vinterberg uses “shock tactics” (Macnab 16) to create the “impression of raw immediacy” (Matthews 39). He relies on the power of the actor's whole body as well as the dynamic use of the camera “catching details of the actor's behaviour with an almost anthropological eye” (16) in the creation of the impression of intimacy.

One example of Vinterberg's shock tactics occurs in the scene that takes place after the guests have arrived at the house. Michael (Thomas Bo Larsen) and his wife, Mette (Helle Dolleris), are in their room unpacking their bags. Michael notices that his black shoes have been left at home and begins to fiercely blame Mette for not taking good care of him. The scene is an example of the way in which, as Peter Schepelern

writes, “the Dogma technique functions primarily as a means of guaranteeing the dynamic of the actors in a flexible cinematic flow” (“Kill” 65). The flexible, freely moving, dynamic camera enhances the impression of chaos prevailing in a rectangular chamber space of the characters’ room. The camera catches glimpses of the actors’ clenched fists, wide-open, yelling mouths and fierce jostling against each other. The hidden cameras, whose presence the actor is able to forget, don’t disturb the actors’ “in the moment” improvisation. The intimate space, emptied of all the distracting elements, heightens the intensity of the characters’ private, humiliating explorations of dissatisfaction, frustration and disillusionment that they feel towards each other at that moment. The scene illustrates Vinterberg’s lack of fear of melodramatic expression, which is also expressed in his characterization of the Danish Dogma films:

They’re all very melodramatic, in a way; the emotional life is very explosive. And I think that’s because you have nothing to tell the story with other than the actors; nothing else to use when you want to express feelings.... The story really has to engage them [the spectators], because if it doesn’t, then nothing else will. And you just have your actors, so you have to make them faint, or puke, or fight – something, to express what it is that you want to get out. (qtd. in Kelly 114)

Interestingly, this effort to give the actor a chance to use the whole body to convey the emotional states of a character contradicts a previously analysed scene of Jorgensen’s subtlety of expressions in *The Idiots*. Both von Trier and Vinterberg experiment with intimacy of filmmaking, yet their eliciting of intimacy in performances is remarkably different. In both films, intimacy is felt and achieved, yet through very different means. What differentiates these moments of intimacy in each film is the variance between the actors’ response to the surrounding space and to the close presence of cameras. Jorgensen’s subtle response to intimacy finds a counterpart in Thomas Bo Larsen’s and

Helle Dolleris' performance and in their characters' unrestrained and fearless exploration of it in *The Celebration*.

One could further argue that both von Trier and Vinterberg juxtapose opposing acting styles within individual films. In *The Idiots* Jorgensen's subtlety of expression is juxtaposed to the idiots' externalised gestures, which bear similarities to the free experimentation with exceeding physical and psychological limitations in *The Celebration*. In *The Celebration*, Christian's (Ulrich Thomsen) subtlety of expression is compared with other characters' excessive bodily movements and gestures. Both films are examples of how spatial simplification aims to exceed limits in two different ways. On the one hand, Jorgensen's and Thomsen's performance involves the actor's psychological introspection and the discovery of a hidden inner reality, brought to the surface by the subtlety of expression. On the other hand, the limits that are exceeded in others' performances are explored in more tactile, physical terms. More importantly, both Vinterberg's and von Trier's juxtaposition of two opposing acting modes are inseparable from their interest in exploring how the façade is gradually removed. Both filmmakers are interested in depicting the process that ends with one's inner aggressions bursting forth. Both Karen and Christian are Strindbergian travellers, figures who reveal the buried secrets of the past. As the Old Man in *The Ghost Sonata* exclaims:

Nature herself has planted in man a blushing sense of a shame, which seeks to hide what should be hidden. But we slip into certain situations without intending to, and chance confronts us with moments of revelation, when the deepest secrets are revealed, the mask is ripped from the imposter and the villain stands exposed. (137)

If the ending of *The Idiots* depicts Karen's final exit from her imprisoning home, that is from her past, Vinterberg studies the protagonist's return to home, his return to the past and its buried secrets.

Strindberg's effort to lay bare the essentials on a formal level was inseparable from his interest in the elimination of props, surfaces, masks and façades on a thematic level. One of the recurrent themes in Strindberg's chamber dramas is the dynamics between mask and face. Von Trier and Vinterberg, like their predecessor, are interested in interrogating what happens when the mask is removed and the face revealed. Moreover, the revelation of the face often means the discovery of the past secrets. Like Strindberg the filmmakers explore the dynamic of surface and depth.

Strindberg's "scenographic intentions" (Hanes Harvey 61) embedded in his drama texts reveal the playwright's great attention to surfaces, luxurious façades of the houses, that conceal the hidden lies and claustrophobic, deadly existence of their inhabitants. Ann-Charlotte Hanes Harvey does a close reading of Strindberg's dramas, particularly his chamber drama *Storm Weather*, to investigate the playwright's visions of a theatrical mise-en-scene, his "stage pictures." Haynes Harvey claims that recurring characteristics in these stage pictures are "horizontal layering," "central perspective," "pictorial/spatial compositional principles of symmetry and balance." She argues that "these principles of composition are augmented by the illusion of inward movement, which can be achieved by central perspective and symmetry alone, by multiple framing devices and/or gradual reveals, or by a spatial/temporal scenic progression" (81). Hanes Harvey's discussion of Strindberg's emphasis on both framing devices and the "illusion of inward movement" helps one understand how Strindberg uses windows, doors, and

walls to frame the characters as well as the actions inside the house. With the help of the framing devices, Strindberg is able to create the impression of plays within the plays. Very often his chamber dramas divide the characters into those who function as performers, or role-players, and into those who become spectators for the formers' domestic dramas. Very often the characters play roles to avoid solving past problems.

Strindberg begins *The Ghost Sonata* by describing carefully the “façade of a new house”(105). What happens inside the house is gradually revealed: curtains are drawn and windows opened. Outside the house, are “the spectators”: The Old Man and the Student are watching, through the open windows, the domestic dramas of the house. Likewise, in *Storm Weather*, Strindberg uses windows and doors to frame and “theatricalize” the action inside the house. As previously pointed out, Strindberg ironically calls the house “The Quiet House” where, nevertheless, there have been “dramas”(5). Like the Student and the Old Man, the Confectioner and the Consul are spectators sitting on a sidewalk and looking at the façade of the house. The way in which they analyse the “dramas” of the house becomes evident when the Consul describes the “four red shades [that] look like theatre curtains with bloody melodramas in rehearsal behind them”(5). As the plays progress more and more frames are removed, curtains drawn and doors opened. Strindberg uses this inward movement to support the gradual revelation of the theatricality of the characters' lives. Characters play the roles and wear masks to hide from the true reality: secrets, deceptions and betrayals are masked. As Hanes Harvey points out, “the movement inwards, moving behind the façade...is a concrete metaphor for demasking and disillusionment” (76).

Strindberg's use of framing devices together with the illusion of inward movement is inseparable from his depiction of his protagonists as traveller/wanderer figures whose journeys the reader/spectator is asked to follow. The journey through frames, through the façade of the house, into narrower and narrower spaces leads into a final revelation of family secrets. The travellers, such as the Stranger in *The Burned House* or the Student in *The Ghost Sonata*, are Strindberg's "Sunday children" (*The Ghost Sonata* 113) who are "capable of perceiving supernatural phenomena, of dividing the truth, and of stripping away the façades of lies and deceits that other characters encase themselves in" (Blackwell 51).

The influence of Strindberg on von Trier and Vinterberg can be detected in the filmmakers' similar concerns for the dynamics between mask and face and their keen interest in examining the past that keeps haunting the characters' present life. Like Strindberg, the filmmakers compare characters who play the roles with characters, the "Sunday children," who refuse to play the roles and who function as spectators for the others' role-playing. Marilyn Johns Blackwell, compares the Old Man in *The Ghost Sonata* and the Mother in *The Pelican* and states how these characters "share a refusal to admit their own fallibility, to recognize the subliminal contents of their lives...[they] cannot come to grips with their very deep-seated emotional needs and reject those who would remind them of their non-intellectual impulses" (51). According to Blackwell, the Stranger in *The Burned House*, the Student in *The Ghost Sonata*, and Frederick in *The Pelican* "excoriate layers of lies and falsehoods and intellectual and social pretensions that surround their fellow man" (50-51).

Vinterberg's use of Strindbergian framing devices and the "illusion of inward movement" is inseparable from his depiction of the protagonist Christian as a Strindbergian traveller who strips away the masks and finally reveals the hidden lie of the incest between the father and both the sister and himself. Christian is one of those "Sunday children" who can see what others can't. He reveals the face behind the mask that the other characters refuse to remove. Vinterberg, like Strindberg, studies the dynamics between mask and face by contrasting his protagonist to other characters. Christian, like the Stranger (*The Burned House*), reveals the "web of lies" to the other family members. Both of these characters make people realize how they live their lives "like directors in the theatre, distributing parts to each other"(95). Christian, like the Stranger, has had "to redesign [the family members'] faces, strip them naked, pull them down, put them out of [his] mind" (*The Burned House* 71).

Vinterberg's portrait of Christian as a traveller (such as the Stranger or the Student) whose journey the spectator is to follow is apparent at the beginning of the film. The film opens with idyllic scenes showing Christian against the vast fields of corn on a countryside lane walking towards his childhood home. We find out that he has just flown from Paris to Denmark. The repeated shots of cars chasing each other on the countryside lane enhance the "illusion of inward movement." Soon we see the luxurious façade of the mansion and follow Christian's moves, through the façade of the house, into narrower and darker interior spaces. The closer we move towards the house, the tighter the framing becomes creating an increasingly claustrophobic environment. Once Christian has entered the house, the camera follows his movement into smaller and smaller rooms. We see him entering a tiny room at the basement that is only half lit; the low roof and the

camera, that focuses on framing tightly the characters' faces, add the feeling of intensity and suppression to the first encounter between Christian and the father (Henning Moritzen). These initial scenes illustrate Vinterberg's emphasis on authentic space as a setting for domestic dramas. Yet, the space takes part in evoking a specific constrained mood. The lack of additional lighting, that Dogma does not allow, creates a gloomy atmosphere and adds to the feeling of suppression – a suppression that is magnified visually by shots of Christian's restless hands during his conversation with his father; these recurring shots depict the way in which, Elsaesser would describe, "an acute sense of claustrophobia in décor and locale translates itself into a restless and yet suppressed energy surfacing sporadically in the actions and the behaviour of the protagonists...with hysteria bubbling all the time just below the surface" (76).

Vinterberg's experimentation with the blurring boundary of the real and unreal is further continued in the scene where the dead sister, Linda (Lene Laub Oksen), appears in the middle of a night dressed in a white gown. Thus, the use of space in this film demonstrates that Vinterberg shares Strindberg's use of "the house as memory and illusion" (Steene "House," 40). Even more importantly, what links *The Celebration* with Strindberg's chamber plays such as *Storm Weather* or von Trier's *The Idiots* is his depiction of the female protagonist Linda. Death has been Linda's only escape from the past that has dominated her life. What Strindberg, Ibsen, von Trier and Vinterberg share is the interest in depicting the women's courageous act in leaving a domestic space that in one way or another doesn't allow them to grow as people and fulfil their true desires. Like von Trier before and after *The Idiots* (in *Breaking the Waves* and *Dancer in the Dark*), Vinterberg gives a tragic portrait of the female protagonist whose only escape

from the imprisoning existence and from the domestic household haunted by the past, has been through death. If Karen in *The Idiots* is ready to leave the domestic space, which is haunted by the past and the fixed quality of things, Linda in *The Celebration* could be viewed as Karen's tragic counterpart in the similar fashion as Hedda was for Nora or the Young Lady in *The Ghost Sonata* to Gerda in *Storm Weather*.

Mifune

Two other Danish Dogma films, *Mifune* and *Italian for Beginners*, update a Strindbergian chamber drama on a formal and thematic level. Kragh-Jacobsen's protagonist in *Mifune* is a Strindbergian wanderer who returns to his childhood home, to his past, after being away for ten years. According to Kragh-Jacobsen, the film is "a story about how you can't run away from your past" (qtd. in Kelly 156). Kresten (Anders W. Berthelsen) has to leave her wife in the morning after their wedding night to take care of his dead father (Anders Hove), insane brother (Jesper Asholt), and his childhood home in the countryside. Like The Stranger in *The Burned House*, Kresten finds his childhood home in ruin; the beginning shots of the deteriorated rooms and the corpse of Kresten's father lying on the table evoke the mood of mortality and give an embodiment for the notion of "extended now" (Steene "House," 40); time has stopped, as in a typical Strindbergian chamber play.

The film emphasizes the dynamics between the urban milieu of Copenhagen and the countryside, which Kragh-Jacobsen depicts by juxtaposing urban domestic chambers and the countryside home and their inhabitants, consequently, giving his film a Strindbergian "concentrated form" (Strindberg "Preface," xvi). The film begins

with shots depicting the wedding of Kresten and his wife (Sofie Gråbol) and their wedding night. The aim of these shots is to reveal the pretentiousness and theatricality of the family rituals at the wedding party as well as Kresten's sense of desperation and agony at the very beginning of his marriage. The mask Kresten is used to wearing in urban domestic chambers to hide the truth, becomes verbally commented on upon with his sudden departure for the countryside: Kresten's wife remarks that she didn't even know Kresten had a father, let alone an insane brother. This mask loosens as he moves from the bleak reality of urban chambers to the country home free of social roles and behavioural norms - a freedom embodied by Kresten's insane brother, whom he finds hiding underneath the table where his father's corpse is lying. Kresten's journey to the countryside - back to his childhood - marks his return to a state of being where behavioural norms and social roles do not dominate.

A Strindbergian view of "the house as memory and illusion" is given a rather comic rendering in *Mifune*, in which Kresten's insane brother is a figure who blends the realms of dream and reality: he hears and sees things such as lights from the outer space or the seventh samurai. Yet, it is the brother as an innocent childlike figure who is a catalyst for Kresten's stripping off the mask he's been used to wearing in urban chambers. The brother forces him to return to a state of innocence, a condition not defined by the pressures of social roles and behavioural norms as in urban Copenhagen. With his brother Kresten begins to relive his childhood: he calls forth an imaginary figure, Mifune, in the cellar, wearing a helmet and shouting aggressively "Mifune."

In *Mifune* the mood of mortality that the house initially evokes with the father's corpse in the living room, is juxtaposed with the garden in full bloom. This same

juxtaposition operates in *The Burned House*, in which the garden embodies the Stranger's vision of "the paradise of childhood" (73). In both film and play the wanderer's journey back home, to the past, is filled with both desperation and nostalgia. In *Mifune* Kresten comes to know how his father suffered before he died and to relive the memory of his mother who escaped the house by committing a suicide. But he also tries to fix up the house, which symbolizes his willingness to return to the space of his childhood, a space that is welcoming because it is without the pressures of social roles and behavioural norms.

Kresten's journey parallels Liva's (Iben Hjejle), the film's other wanderer, journey from Copenhagen to Kresten's childhood home in the countryside where she arrives with only one suitcase. Liva leaves her life in the city as a prostitute and moves to Kresten's childhood home where she begins to work as a housekeeper for Kresten and his brother. If Kresten's return to the countryside marks a return to his past, to his childhood, for Liva the countryside is a place where she can rid herself of her past. Liva leaves the urban chambers without knowing what lies ahead of her. She only knows she wants to become something more than she is now. Her leaving the urban chambers is an act of strength that mirrors Karen's in *The Idiots*: both leave their present life to find out about their true desires. By leaving for the countryside Liva shows her readiness to face the unknown as well as her need to discover her hidden self.

The urban chambers Liva inhabits embody a Strindbergian notion of the "world of illusion" (Strindberg *Burned*, 80). If Kresten wears a city mask to hide the ugly urban reality, Liva shrouds her family relationships and secrets equally strenuously. The haunting voices in her answering machine, that she thinks belong to one of her customers

but finds out belong to her brother, make her urban chambers claustrophobic. In contrast Kresten's country home functions, like the empty house in *The Idiots*, as a space of openness where the previous social roles and behavioural norms do not dominate. When Kresten asks about her past, since "there are no secrets in the countryside," Liva responds by laughing.

If Kragh-Jacobsen's depiction of Kresten's relationship with his brother reflects his concern for the characters, who act out an illusion of being able to embody the Romantic notions of "the innocent" and "presocialized" (Smith 119), the relationship between Kresten and Liva can be described in the same terms. These scenes in which Kresten takes part in his brother's games of imagination as well as the scenes between Liva and Kresten reflect Kragh-Jacobsen's use of the country home in the similar manner to von Trier's use of the empty house. It is a space where the actor needs to exceed his or her limits on a physical and psychological level. The director asks the actor to relinquish all self-control, to be, react and respond to the other actor in the moment. The ways in which Kresten responds to his insane brother and his behavioural changes, demands from the actor an immediate response to the co-actor. Strindberg's statement to the members of the Intimate Theatre, that employed a small cast, also applies to the ensemble acting in *Mifune*,

No other form of art is less independent than the actor's; he cannot isolate his artistic creation, display it, and say: It is mine. Because if he does not get resonance from the supporting or opposing actor, if he does not get support from his fellow player, then he is pulled down, lured into false notes, and even if he makes the best of his own role, it does not jell. Actors are at each other's mercy... (*Open* 23)

Once Kresten realizes he is in love with Liva, the film begins framing Liva against the pastoral images of vast cornfields. The point of view shots of Kresten looking at Liva are dreamlike; they reflect his longing for the pure, innocent, virginal love that Liva embodies in Kresten's mind. The beautiful scene in which Liva wakes up before the sunrise and goes outside to greet Kresten, who has come from Copenhagen, encapsulates the depiction of countryside as illusory. Liva joins Kresten on the bench in the middle of wildly growing garden, facing the vast fields stretching to the horizon. The morning mist, together with the pastel colours in the sky and haze surrounding the characters, immerse them in the surrounding nature. Neither of them says anything. Liva slowly bends her head down and slightly places it on Kresten's shoulder. Kresten turns to look at Liva, who is still gazing to the distance to the horizon. Kresten's kiss on her cheek makes Liva turn towards him to kiss him on his lips. The fact that the scene takes place early in the morning and begins by Liva waking up make it extremely dream-like. This scene of illusion contains a very different type of acting between Kresten and Liva than other scenes in which they return to the "presocialized," yet equally "innocent," state. For example, the scene in which Liva paints the walls and begins to throw the paint on Kresten's face shows how one reacts to the other's provocation. The scene begins with Liva painting the wall, which takes place after her argument with Kresten. The aggressiveness of her movements, the way she splashes the paint on the wall, suggests that she paints to release her inner aggression. When Kresten asks if he can help her, Liva ignores his question but allows him to join her, brushing off his attempted apology with "just paint" without turning to look at him. The way Kresten splashes the wet brush against the wall expresses his frustration. Simultaneously, the harshness of his

movements makes the paint splash on Liva's face and body. Liva stops, turns her white face to the camera and towards Kresten, takes the brush and waves it so that the paint splashes all over Kresten. Kresten does the same to Liva who then takes the whole bucket of paint and throws it all over Kresten. Kresten now covered with thick white paint turns slowly towards Liva who then escapes the scene by running away to the fields. Kresten runs after her, finally catching her, bending her down, resting on top of her, and wrestling with her on the hay.

Together these storylines, the one depicting the relationship between Kresten and his brother and the other between Kresten and Liva, make a Strindbergian view of "the house as memory and illusion" fascinating. In *Mifune* Kresten's childhood home symbolizes one's return to a childlike state of innocence to remove the mask that the others in the urban Copenhagen wear to keep up the appearance of mature and reasonable individual. Moreover, the house serves as a setting for one's illusion of being able to escape from that world to renew the contact with the irrational, immature and the childish, in a similar manner as the empty house serves in *The Idiots*. The film's ending reflects the filmmaker's concern for the house as illusion and his temptation to see life as a dream, as an illusion. The film ends by depicting Kresten's insane brother recording on video Liva's and Kresten's dance in the living room. To give Rud the camera is the filmmaker's way of identifying himself with Rud, the figure who blends dream and reality. With this ending Kragh-Jacobsen suggests that what we have seen – the return to a state of innocence – is a pure illusion, viewed by a childlike figure like Kresten's brother behind the camera or a filmmaker who blends the dream and reality. Interestingly, by shooting the film in the countryside was initially the filmmaker's wish to

relive his past, to relive the experience of shooting his first feature *Do You Want to See My Beautiful Belly-Button?*

Italian for beginners

In *Italian for Beginners*, Scherfig juxtaposes public spaces, such as a restaurant, the barber's shop, a class room and a church with a domestic chamber space where the locus of drama is to be found. Ib Bondebjerg rightly observes the great number of interior locations in Scherfig's film and states how "the framing of the images thus creates an atmosphere of intense intimacy and psychological depth" ("Dogma95" 76). As in an ideal Strindbergian chamber play, the intimate chamber space allows the focus on the "fertility of the soul-complex" ("Preface" xii) in this as in previously analysed Dogma films. Like Strindberg's *Storm Weather* the film begins with a portrayal of an old, aging man who is waiting for death to release him from his prison-like existence in the domestic household. This domestic chamber setting in the film is dark, according to the Dogma rule precluding additional lighting. The darkness adds to the mood of loneliness, melancholia and depression in the old man's home. It also functions as a form of spatial simplification in the way that only the old man's face is clearly seen. Thus, the darkness creates an intimacy between the actor and the camera. Furthermore, the formal intimacy parallels the thematic exploration of claustrophobia in the domestic chamber space.

If Vinterberg begins *The Celebration* by depicting the encounter between the father and the son in the dark claustrophobic space, the beginning of Scherfig's film introduces the relationship between the father (Jesper Christensen) and the daughter (Anette Stovelbæk) in the domestic sphere. Whereas the old man is focused on waiting

for his death, his daughter, Olympia, is anxious to be released from her prison-like existence in the home. The fact that Olympia works as her father's servant at home prevents her from growing up and fulfilling her own ambitions. Olympia is literally kept in the dark about her past, until she finds out about her mother's death and, consequently, about her own true identity. The father has turned Olympia's mother into an icon, like the Gentleman did with his wife Gerda, by making Olympia believe her mother has been a famous opera singer. The mother's death triggers the revelation of past secrets: Olympia learns, for the first time, about her sister. If Strindberg's chamber dramas depict how death is the only release from life's misery, Scherfig's film depicts how the parents' death sets Olympia free, allowing her to start her own life and abandon her role as her father's caretaker.

Scherfig gives a feminist portrayal to Strindbergian wanderers. Whereas *The Celebration* and *Mifune* focus on representing the male protagonists' return to the childhood home, *The Idiots* and *Italian* give dramatic emphasis on the portrayal of the female protagonists' departure from the domestic setting. Whereas Karen finds a new home in the empty house with the other idiots, Olympia goes to learn Italian in the evening school where she meets other people who also suffer from loneliness and meaninglessness in their lives. The shared experiences strengthen her self-esteem. Like Karen, she is finally able to rid herself of the past and actually embrace adulthood for the first time.

Scherfig gives a physical manifestation to a Strindbergian "extended time line," emphasizing the female inhabitants of the households in which time has stopped. At Olympia's home the fixity of things constitutes Olympia's entrapment in a house

characterized by deadening stability, so deadening that she is a child-woman who hasn't been able to grow up. Thus, like Nora in *A Doll's House*, she symbolises the antiquated girlishness. Or like Gerda in *The Pelican*, Olympia is an adult in child's body, an adult whose free spirit the house has suffocated. The characterization of Olympia as a clumsy, shaky woman who drops things and cannot even write her name properly together with her child-like, innocent-looking outer appearance make her a human incarnation of a Strindbergian vision of the extended time line.

An interesting counterpart to Scherfig's characterization of Olympia is her mother played by Lene Tiemroth. As in *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican* the young child-woman is contrasted to an old woman who is the embodiment of death and decay. Like the Mummy in *The Ghost Sonata*, Olympia's mother represents the grotesque body and the idea of the preserved mother. If the marble statue of the woman juxtaposed with the aging female body in *The Ghost Sonata* gives a spatial dimension to the "extended now" and symbolizes life's vanity, in Scherfig's film the mother's physical presence adds to the feeling of mortality. Tiemroth's presence, her character's body where there is no trace of life, is a living embodiment of death.

5. Hysteria

The development of chamber drama tradition needs to be studied in relation to dramatic tools, such as hysteria, Strindberg as well as Ibsen used to explore women's rebellion against prescribed behavioural norms and social roles and their subsequent experience of marginality. Strindberg's *Miss Julie* demonstrates how Strindberg's notion of his female protagonist as a "half woman and half man" (*Miss* 34) doesn't merely reflect his misogyny. Instead, the play is an example of Strindberg's keen interest in redefining modes of performance and, subsequently, notions of femininity and masculinity. A comparative analysis of *Miss Julie* and *A Doll's House* illuminates how Ibsen's view of hysteria as "a metaphor for female revolt" (Velissariou 89) finds an interesting counterpart in *Miss Julie*. Like Ibsen, Strindberg took part in discussing how women's radical, norm-breaking behaviour is considered hysterical "in the [male] eyes of the world" (Ibsen *Doll's*, 221). I will next situate the plays alongside Jean-Martin Charcot's spectacles of hysteria at a women's mental institution, La Salpêtrière, in Paris at the end of the 19th century and contrast the different ways in which Ibsen, Strindberg and Charcot each turned hysteria into art. This analysis is important when examining Ibsen's and Strindberg's portraiture of hysteria and their studies of femininity as a role to play.

This analysis will segue into my exploration of the Dogma filmmakers' studies of characters who break the behavioural norms and revolt against social roles imposed upon them. Like their theatrical predecessors they call for authenticity in acting; yet, they explore theatrical elements as important parts of authentic performances. I will

focus on von Trier's use of hysteria as a non-verbal dramatic means by which he studies the female protagonists' desire to revolt against the prevailing notions of femininity.

“Abnormal,” Hysterical, Marginal, the Other

Interestingly, when discussing the ways in which criticism has ignored the feminism of *A Doll's House*, Templeton refers to the condemnations of Nora as a hysterical woman on moral grounds. She notes that in “a widely accepted clinical language of disapproval, Nora was called ‘abnormal’” (115). Turn-of-the-century European (male) medical doctors and students of medicine used Nora as their “favourite example” (116) for the analysis of women's hysteria. Templeton refers to clinical neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot's disciple, Dr. Robert Geyer, who was convinced that Nora suffered from hysteria: “[Nora is] definitely the hysterical type, who lies pathologically, suppresses her emotions, and suffers from bad traits inherited from [her] father” (qtd. in Templeton 116). Geyer's statement is an interesting example of the ways in which artistic and medical discourses of hysteria met in the analysis of hysterical women. Not only did art offer examples for and embodiments of hysteria, that medical doctors referred to in their descriptions of hysteria, but medical terminology was also used to legitimise one's depiction of women considered “immoral.” A. Velissariou, writing about *Hedda Gabler* says, “Critical discourse gives way to medical language precisely at those points in which female characters react in unexpected, that is, not stereotypical ways. Critics therefore, momentarily borrow the voice of a psychiatrist and transform dramatic heroines into case studies” (66). Velissariou studies the reception of *Hedda Gabler* in England and refers to an anonymous critic from *The Times* who wrote

in 1891 that Ibsen's "demonstration of the pathology of mind" could have easily been found in *The Journal of Mental Science* (qtd. in Velissariou 66).

If the artistic and medical discourse of hysteria met in the analysis of Ibsen's protagonists, the dialogue between these discourses can equally well be detected in Strindberg's characterization of his female protagonist in *Miss Julie* in which the characters are "conglomerates, made up of past and present stages of civilisation, scraps of humanity, torn-off pieces of Sunday clothing turned into rags" ("Preface" xii). If Dr. Robert Geyer borrowed the artistic discourse of hysteria to study hysteria as an inherited disease, Strindberg "borrowed the voice of a psychiatrist" and used a medical discourse of hysteria to explain Miss Julie's unconventional behaviour. Miss Julie has inherited hysteria from her mother who "fell often into convulsions" and "used to hide herself in the garret or in the garden, and sometimes she stayed out all night" (Strindberg *Miss*, 22). It is not a surprise that, when writing *The Father* the year before *Miss Julie*, Strindberg acknowledged his interest in Charcot and his method of hypnotizing his hysterical patients at the mental institution La Salpêtrière in Paris. Likewise, his essay "The Battle of Brains" which was first published in March *Ny Jord* in 1888, begins with the reference to Charcot's experimentation with hypnosis and hysterical patients. In addition to Charcot, Strindberg also studied the works of Ribot, Maudsley and Bernheim around the time he was writing these naturalistic plays (Törnqvist and Jacobs 17).

Yet, when exploring the dialogue between the artistic and medical discourses of hysteria, one is likely to push the playwrights' feminist aspirations aside by deeming their protagonists pathologically ill. Thus, one needs to analyse in a greater detail the ways in which their treatments of hysteria make their male perspective different

from the views held by these turn-of-the-century male medical doctors and students such as Charcot and Geyer. What makes Ibsen's and Strindberg's depiction of hysteria a site where their feminist aspirations can be detected?

Charcot and Spectacles of Hysteria

To better understand the interaction between artistic and medical discourses of hysteria one needs to turn to the medical discourses of hysteria articulated by Jean-Martin Charcot. This discussion is important not only because Strindberg expressed his interest in this leading figure in the treatment of hysterics but also because it can illuminate Ibsen's and Strindberg's (and later the Dogma filmmakers') keen interest in exploring theatrical spectacles of hysteria and the "self-dramatizing" (Cima 43) female protagonists.

Charcot's studies are best understood in relation to the medical as well as artistic discourse of hysteria dominant at the end of the nineteenth century. Charcot was a true positivist who emphasized the visual, perceptible facts of science. He was less interested in hidden psychological aspects of hysteria than he was in its overt visual manifestations that could be seen and "objectively" represented. In order to contemplate different stages of "grand hysteria" (Wenegrat 55) (*la grande hystérie*), Charcot relied on the use of hypnosis that not only brought the symptoms of hysteria to the surface but also took part in curing them. In 1878, Charcot made his demonstrations of hysterical patients under hypnosis open to the public. Other medical doctors and students as well as artists, writers, scientists and journalists were invited to attend to the demonstrations that turned

women's hysteria into a "spectacle" (Kortelainen 73).¹³ This relationship between Charcot's spectacles of hysteria and his interest in visual culture, between art and science, is something even contemporary scholars continue to examine. Feminist art historian Anna Kortelainen studies Charcot's spectacles and is interested in contemplating the relationship between the rational male gaze and a female hysteric as an object of the gaze. She emphasizes the erotic aspects of Charcot's spectacles where women's hysterical bodies were eroticised and subjected to a controlling male gaze.

To fully understand Charcot's effort to visualize hysteria, Kortelainen studies the links between the visual culture at the end of the nineteenth century and Charcot's spectacles of hysteria at La Salpêtrière. By analysing the works of André Brouillet, Henri Gervex, Georges Moreau de Tours and Richard Bergh, Kortelainen insightfully explores the ways in which scientific knowledge and art met in these depictions of manipulative, unconscious, ill women who became objects of the simultaneously rational and desiring male gaze of medical specialists. According to Kortelainen, the depiction of women in the paintings, such as the portraiture of Charcot's hysterical patient Blanche Wittman in Brouillet's painting *Une leçon de Charcot à la Salpêtrière* (1887), isn't far from a more theatrical and excessive "arc-en-ciel" -posture¹⁴ where woman's arched back, eroticized and naked body depict her total submission to a

¹³ Charcot also did drawings and sketches of hysterical women that further tried to clarify the nature of grand hysteria. "Iconographie de la Salpêtrière," a collection of his and his assistant Paul Richer's drawings and paintings, began to appear since 1888. Furthermore, Musée Charcot at La Salpêtrière, which held collections of lithographs, drawings, paintings, photographs and sculptures, depicted not only Charcot's belief in the universalism of hysteria, in that the idea that hysteria finds its manifestation in all visual cultures and is not restricted to a specific time and place, but also his belief in the power of visual knowledge in the analysis of hysteria (Kortelainen 88-90).

¹⁴ A posture that is very common in the paintings of the decade.

male gaze. Both Charcot and the aforementioned painters made scientific knowledge a spectacle and turned women's illness into artwork (74-83).

If Charcot was interested in the ways in which hysteria finds bodily manifestations that can then be studied, both Ibsen and Strindberg were keen on finding the ways in which hysteria becomes embodied in the actor's performance. Nowhere is Ibsen's interest in theatricalizing women's hysteria more clear than in Nora's hysterical tarantella dance in Act II of *A Doll's House*, which functions as a means by which Nora prevents Torvald from reading a letter revealing her forgery and which Ibsen interestingly calls a "great transformation scene" (Ibsen *Doll's*, 202). We should begin by asking who exactly the audience is for Nora's spectacle of hysteria. Ibsen's stage directions describe how Nora "pulls a tambourine out of the box, then a long parti-coloured shawl which she quickly drapes round herself. Then, with a bound, she takes up her position in the middle of the floor" (204). While Ibsen puts Nora in the middle of the room – on the stage – Helmer and Dr Rank are placed in the audience. Not unlike Charcot's male audience at La Salpêtrière, these two men (one of whom is, not surprisingly, a medical doctor) gaze upon Nora's "violent" and "wild" dance, which to Helmer is "sheer madness" (204).¹⁵

Interestingly, Strindberg, in a similar manner to Ibsen's, begins *Miss Julie* by making Jean report to Christine what he had just seen:

I took the count to the station, and when I came back by the barn, I went in and had a dance, and there I saw the young lady leading the dance with the game keeper. But when she caught sight of me, she rushed right up to me and asked me to dance the ladies' waltz with her. And ever she's been waltzing like – well, I never saw the like of it. She's crazy! (*Miss 2*)

¹⁵ Since women were not welcomed to join the male audience, Mrs. Linde's "stopping spellbound in the doorway" (Ibsen 204) makes her similar to those occasional visitors who rarely attended to Charcot's spectacles of hysteria and in those rare times left the spectacle in horror.

Nora's and Miss Julie's hysteria embodied in their "violent," "wild" and "over-excited" (Ibsen 205) dancing clearly depicts manifestations of what Linda Williams calls "bodily excess." Williams defines the term as a "spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion" (4). Thus, Nora's and Miss Julie's hysterically dancing body, not unlike the hysterical bodies of Charcot's hypnotized patients, is a representative of the body "'beside itself' with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness" (4).

One could argue that Ibsen and Strindberg, like Charcot, subject these out-of-control bodies of hysterical women to a controlling male gaze. One could further claim that Ibsen and Strindberg, like Charcot, analyse the separation between "the stage" and "the auditorium" with binary oppositions: Nora and Miss Julie, who represent unreason, lack of control, the female, are contrasted with Helmer, Dr Rank and Jean, who represent reason, control and the male. This binary schema is also seen in the paintings of André Brouillet, Henri Gervex, Georges Moreau de Tours and Richard Bergh, who turn hysteria into an artwork (Kortelainen 74-83). However, it would be too simplistic to conclude that Charcot's, "the master's, own scopophilia" (Bernheimer and Kahane 7) finds a parallel in Ibsen's and Strindberg's voyeuristic pleasures that would further align them with a tradition of "men writing women, and men writing men *observing* women" (Rokem "Slapping" 236; emphasis in original). So, where does one find Ibsen's and Strindberg's feminist concerns?

First of all, we must ask what it is that the metaphor of tarantella dance, as Ibsen's spectacle of hysteria, refers to? Austin E. Quigley writes that

The tarantella spider is reputedly poisonous, and anyone bitten by it is likely to contract the disease of tarantism. This is "a hysterical malady, characterized by an extreme impulse to dance." And the cure for this malady was held to be - dancing the tarantella.[...] The symptom of the

disease and the cure for the disease are one and the same. (qtd. in Törnqvist *Ibsen*, 35)

Like Charcot's use of hypnosis, the tarantella dance brings the hysterical symptoms to the surface while also aiming to cure them. But Ibsen is more interested in deconstructing the meaning of the tarantella dance in its original context of southern Italy where it functioned as a "form of hysterical catharsis, permitting women to escape temporarily from marriage and motherhood" (Finney 98). Ibsen views the "hysterical catharsis" less as a temporary escape, as a spectacle controlled by male spectators, than as a spectacle performed by a conscious performer, whose performance of hysterical dance paves the way for her permanent escape from marriage and motherhood. Thus, what makes Ibsen's spectacle of women's hysteria different from Charcot's is his different view of "bodily excess" as a "form of ecstasy" (Williams 4).¹⁶ Ibsen suggests that women's conscious revolt is a motive for these spectacles of hysteria. Likewise, one could assume that Miss Julie's wild dance functions as a form of "hysterical catharsis" in *Miss Julie*. Christine responds to Jean's description of Miss Julie's wild dance at the barn by commenting on how Miss Julie has always been crazy, "but never the way it's been this last fortnight, since her engagement was broken" (2). Like Ibsen, Strindberg suggests that Miss Julie's dance is not a temporary escape, a spectacle controlled by male spectators. Miss Julie uses a wild dance to break the behavioural codes imposed upon her as an aristocratic woman. Because Nora and Miss Julie are *conscious* performers of a hysterical dance, their bodies are eroticised as they use their sexuality.

¹⁶ Williams writes that "While the classical meaning of the original Greek word [for ecstasy] is insanity and bewilderment, more contemporary meanings suggest components of direct or indirect sexual excitement and rapture, a rapture which informs even the pathos of melodrama" (4).

The controlling and desiring male gaze becomes evident in Torvald's remark after Nora's hysterical dance at the dress-party. He says

when I'm out with you at a party, do you know why I hardly talk to you – don't come near you – and only steal a glance at you every now and then...do you know why? It's because I pretend that we're secretly in love – engaged in secret – and that no one dreams that there's anything between us. (Ibsen 215)

Torvald continues explaining his voyeuristic pleasures and states, "when I watched you swaying and beckoning in the tarantella, it set my blood on fire till I couldn't bear it any longer. That's why I brought you home so early" (215). In this statement we see Ibsen's juxtaposition of Helmer's condemnation of Nora's hysterical dance as "sheer madness" with his (frustrated) sexual desires.

In *Miss Julie*, Strindberg, like Ibsen, juxtaposes Jean's gaze, which condemns Julie's wild dance as crazy, with his desiring gaze. The moments in which Jean secretly watches Julie are repeated in the play. Strindberg even depicts how Jean has desired Julie since he was a child and watched Julie from afar: "I saw you walking among the roses, and I thought: if it be possible for a robber to get into heaven and dwell with angels, then it is strange that a cotter's child, here on God's earth, cannot get into the park and play with the count's daughter" (12).

Ibsen's and Strindberg's depiction of a constant tension between erotic desire and its denial is what makes a comparison between their and Charcot's spectacles of hysteria interesting. After all, it was Charcot's spectacles that illuminated the ways in which hysterical women's excessive sexuality was something that evoked both fears and desires; it needed to be controlled and subjected to medical knowledge, but, paradoxically, it could also be put on display, and encouraging voyeuristic pleasure.

Yet, to fully understand the differences in the treatments of spectacle of hysterical female body between Ibsen, Strindberg and Charcot, I will next analyse the playwrights' depiction of hysterical dance and the erotic tension it evokes, both of which are suddenly stopped by the women who slap the men on their faces.

When discussing Nora's dance it is important to acknowledge Ibsen's great attention to Nora's preparation for her tarantella-dance, attention which is not without a purpose. The stage directions describe how she puts on a fancy dress and silk stockings and lets her hair down to fall over her shoulders. These preparations together with the descriptions of her excessive, uncontrolled bodily movements clearly depict the female body as erotic spectacle. However, I would like to emphasize that Ibsen's drama begins where Charcot's finishes. Ibsen seems to ask what happens when the hysterical, unconscious, hypnotized women condemned as mentally ill at La Salpêtrière (as well as in the paintings of the era Kortelainen studies) are given consciousness. What would happen if the ill women depicted in the paintings of Brouillet, Gervex and Bergh were not frozen by the male painters but given consciousness to unfreeze the frame and regain their mobility? What would happen when those women were put on stage, in a theatre, where expression is dependent on women's bodily movements? What would happen if Charcot's "stars" (Kortelainen 96), the muses of artists and doctors, became characters of a realist prose drama?

When Helmer tells Nora of his voyeuristic pleasures and his erotic desires for her, she interrupts him abruptly and states, "No, Torvald, go away. Leave me alone – I don't want" (Ibsen 215). This line, in Freddie Rokem's words, functions as a "slap" ("Slapping" 230) in Torvald's face. Rokem writes of "the conditions under which the

heroine will submit her body and/or soul to the male gaze” and closely analyses the scene in which Nora shows Dr Rank her silk stockings – the scene in which Nora’s body is eroticised in a similar way as in the dance scene. Here, Rokem notes that Dr Rank’s “gaze leads to physical attraction, as well as a very clearly expressed erotic tension between them” yet, “the erotic tension ends or nearly ends, abruptly, at the same time that it reaches a climax as...[Nora slaps Dr Rank] across the face” (“Slapping” 224). Rokem is interested in Ibsen’s way of juxtaposing the “gesture[s] of attraction as well as of defiance” (“Slapping” 229) that are found in the tarantella dance scene as well as in the scene with Dr Rank. Whereas Kortelainen leaves the ways in which men dealt with the fears of and desires for hysterical women unexplored, by simply pointing out the fact that excessive female sexuality evoked both desires and fears, Rokem, who is dealing with the fictional text, is interested in examining the way in which Ibsen as a controlling male agent deals with women’s excessive sexuality, aggression and hysteria. According to Rokem, Nora’s slap, her act of disrupting sexual tension, represents a threat that Ibsen as a male playwright has to eliminate. Consequently, Rokem parallels Nora’s slap, “the slap [that] is directed against the face, the scopic center of the respective male observers, the source of their piercing gaze,” with her final departure in the end and questions Ibsen’s honesty in depicting the departure as an act of rebellion (“Slapping” 230). He states that “by ‘departing’ from the text as an action of revolt,” Nora is “at the same time effectively expelled from the text by [her] respective male author/authority.” Rokem argues that,

The issue at stake is why the male authoring process follows a pattern in which female protagonists, as well as their respective mothers, are either absent from, leave, or are, in keeping with a ritualistic approach, on a certain level actually expelled from the text...the women begin to constitute a threat when they raise their hands to slap the men, approaching them erotically through a masculine gesture which at the same time “tells” the

men to go away. This threat has to be manipulated out of the text, or *written out* of it, in the same way as the female figures were initially *inscribed* in the text. Women who raise their hands with the ambivalent gesture of attraction and aggression have in the end no place in texts when *men* have been writing *women*. (“Slapping” 241; emphasis in original)

Although Rokem finds differences in Ibsen and Strindberg’s treatment of “gestures of attraction as well as of deviance” – Julie’s slap on Jean’s face, for example, precedes their sexual intercourse, whereas Nora’s slap only hints at the possibility of it; Julie leaves Jean by committing a suicide whereas Nora leaves Helmer by departing from the house – he highlights the male playwrights’ role in viewing the slap as a threat these women represent. But is Rokem one of those male authors who “write” women “out of the text”? Is the slap simply a threat that both Ibsen and Strindberg as male playwrights eliminate, or is Rokem viewing this slap from the male point of view, that is from the auteurist point of view that emphasizes (male) authors over (female) actors? Is the slap still just a threat if it is viewed from the actor’s, that is, a female’s point of view? Is the view of the slap as a threat Rokem’s way of silencing the actors? I would like to suggest that the slap is not merely a threat to be eliminated, as Rokem proposes, but also an act of liberation that puts an end to a spectacle. The slap is an important dramatic gesture that Ibsen and Strindberg use to show how Nora and Miss Julie are in control of their performance, their own spectacle. The slap that ends the spectacle of their hysterical, eroticized body is Ibsen’s and Strindberg’s way of showing how the hysterical women are not manipulative, passive, irrational or subject to a controlling male gaze.

The slaps that disrupt the erotic tension between both Nora and Dr Rank and Nora and Torvald are as abrupt as the ending of Nora’s erotic tarantella dance and her stepping out from the stage. Thus, the contradiction between Nora’s effort to create

sexual tension and her sudden disruption of it is a crucial part of Ibsen's characterization of Nora as a woman in control of her own body and in control of a spectacle of her hysterical body. In Ibsen's treatment, Nora becomes a woman who refuses to play a role. Thus, her slaps that abruptly end the erotic desires and put an end to the spectacle of her eroticised, hysterical body in which she is a mere object of male gaze, is her means of expressing her unwillingness to continue to play a role prescribed to her by her male audience. Likewise, in *Miss Julie* Strindberg juxtaposes Jean's condemning, yet desiring, gaze at Julie's dance as well as his description of it to Christine with Miss Julie's slap on his face. The slap is an important dramatic gesture which disrupts the erotic tension Jean has created between him and Miss Julie by telling Christine about his secret gazing at Julie's wild dance at the barn. When Julie enters the room where Jean is talking to Christine, she "strikes him in the face with her handkerchief" (4) and tells him, "That's for you, Mr. Pry!" (4). To illuminate Nora's and Miss Julie's refusal to play a role described to her by the male audience I will next examine the link between acting and hysteria. One can detect the playwrights' view of femininity and masculinity as roles to play in the protagonists' revolt against playing prescribed roles.

Hysteric and actor

Elaine Showalter suggests that "the histrionic" characterizes both hysterics and actors' theatrical, excessive poses when she discusses "hystories," that is "cultural narratives of hysteria" (5). "The histrionic poses of femininity" (Aston *Feminist*, 64) that both hysterics and actors relied on as a non-verbal means of expression made it difficult to separate the poses in acting manuals depicting the conventions of French classical

acting styles and the poses of hysterics, such as those of Blanche Wittman, in Charcot's spectacles. Charcot was a "director of a great hysterical theatre" (Showalter 100) and his hysteric a "star" (Kortelainen 96) who found "legitimate channels" (281) to express the inner emotional life and "to corporeally represent her 'condition'" (Aston *Feminist*, 69).

Not only did both hysterics and actors "take advantage of myths and ideas of culture" (Kortelainen 281) in finding proper non-verbal means of expression but they also initiated a discussion of woman as, what Lucy Fischer would call, an "archetypal actress" (74), the idea that circulated at the time when Charcot was making spectacles of his hysterical "stars." Both hysterics and actors were considered to be demonstrating women's innate craving for sensation and desire to attract attention (Kortelainen 281). Furthermore, theatricality came to be viewed as "a part and parcel of all women's lives" (Georgetta Déga, a disciple of Charcot, qtd. in Showalter 100). Gender played a role both on and off stage. The notion of woman as an "archetypal actress" inspired Ibsen to examine theatricality in women's lives. He made the link between a hysteric and an actor explicit in his characterization of Nora as a self-conscious histrionic actor who abandons the theatricality of her life in the end and, in Finney words, "move[s] from hysteria to feminism" (100). Likewise, Strindberg was interested in exploring life's theatricality. In the previous section I pointed out how in his chamber plays Strindberg divides the characters into those who play roles and those who remind the role-players of the face behind the mask. What makes *Miss Julie* particularly interesting is Strindberg's view of life's theatricality, which becomes inseparable from his concern with the link between hysteric and actor. Like Ibsen, Strindberg was interested in examining femininity and masculinity as roles to play.

When interrogating Ibsen's depiction of the hysteric as a histrionic actor it is important to remember that *A Doll's House* represents a shift away from the histrionic acting style. Ibsen redefined the actor's craft, in the context of his realist social dramas and the theatre, juxtaposing the "histrionic" with the "verisimilar codes of acting" (Pearson 10). Hence, one needs to ask which moments are the ones in which when we move from the "histrionic" to the "verisimilar codes of acting." And, in the same vein, one needs to ask of Strindberg's naturalistic *Miss Julie* how he integrates authentic acting and potentially histrionic pantomime and dance. For both Ibsen and Strindberg life's theatricality was inseparable from the performance of gender roles.

A Doll's House

Throughout *A Doll's House* Ibsen studies "theatricality as a part and parcel of all women's life" by constantly referring to disguises, deceptions, "atmosphere of lies" and to one's need to "wear a mask"(179). Ibsen's depiction of Nora as an actor/hysteric with a "craving for sensation" begins with the descriptions of her rehearsing for her, in Mrs. Linde's words, "real performance" (183) as a histrionic actor, her hysteric tarantella-dance. As I pointed out earlier, Ibsen's stage directions focus closely on Nora putting on a costume, that is her shawl, dress and silk stockings, and preparing for her role as a "Neopolitan fisher girl" (183). Ibsen gives his implicit reference to woman as an archetypal actor when Dr Rank and Helmer discuss the dress-parties. Dr. Rank says that he likes "fancy dress parties" where there are "pretty costumes," which makes Nora think already about her next possible costume at the next party. Dr Rank's statement to Helmer, "your wife could go in what she wears every day" (217) obviously reflects Ibsen's ironic

nod to the male perspective, from which a woman is always, on and off-stage, an actor; she doesn't need to wear a costume to make herself an actor. Woman, unlike man, as the archetypal actor, becomes further evident when Helmer is next heard to ask Dr Rank, "but don't you know what you'll wear?" Dr Rank continues, "oh, yes, my dear fellow, I'm quite certain about that... at the next fancy-dress party, I shall be invisible... You've heard of the Invisible Hat – you put it on, and then no one can see you" (217), which further characterizes him the ultimate voyeur of the passive feminine object of his desiring gaze.

Alisa Solomon discusses the concept of woman as the archetypal actor in her feminist reading of Ibsen's use of the "histrionic" and "verisimilar codes of acting." She notes that Nora's behaviour changes when she is alone and when she is with Torvald or when Torvald might be watching her; this analysis leads to her exploration of "the performance-like nature of femininity" (61). Solomon focuses her analysis on Nora's hysterical tarantella-dance and points out how the Ibsen-actors, such as Elizabeth Robins, considered the dance "too theatrical" and "stagey" and "demanded a more subdued form of expression"(55). She argues that the

frenetic dance is not merely an outward manifestation of inner desperation – stagey effect-hunting, indeed. Rather, it announces itself as a remnant of that old staginess, and then goes it one better. Not a concession to the old-effect hunting, Nora's tarantella is an *appropriation* of it. (55; emphasis in original)

Thus, Solomon emphasizes how the "poetry of feminism" is to be found in Ibsen's juxtaposition of "histrionic" and "verisimilar" acting styles. She states that Ibsen's "innovative dramaturgy reveals the artificiality of the well-made play and the artificiality of the era's well-made woman" (53). Thus, his plays, such as *A Doll's House*, "made

social conventions seem as hoary and artificial as theatre conventions”; “pointing to the limits of theatrical form, he commented on the limits of middle-class, patriarchal values” (54).

Ibsen emphasizes those limits when, after the dress party, Nora casts off her role and its attendant clothing at the same time. After her secret has been revealed, the forged note returned and Torvald is ready to forgive her, Nora dramatically takes off her costume, acting out her “emancipatory conviction” (Törnqvist *Between*, 69), and her decision to leave Torvald and her children. Solomon points out that “the dress, having gathered so much meaning as an image of liberation, impending disaster, and the theatrical gear-grinding, acquires most significance in its removal” (56); the tarantella dance “exemplifies how profoundly her life –like the well-made play- has been a series of histrionic effects” (57). Nora’s taking off the costume is accompanied by her words, “I’ve lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald... Our home has been nothing but a play room. I’ve been your doll-wife here, just as at home I was papa’s doll-child” (Ibsen 226). If Charcot’s La Salpêtrière was a hysterical theatre, Ibsen’s doll’s house was a “play house” (226) from which Nora had the courage to leave to “move from hysteria to feminism” (Finney 100). Torvald expresses his desire to continue playing a role when he says to Nora, “We must seem to go on just as before...but only in the eyes of the world of course” (Ibsen 221). Yet, Nora has the courage to leave her present life, the theatricality of her present life, and abandon her roles as a mother and a wife, hoping to find out about her true desires. Paradoxically, for Torvald, who “looks at the affair with male eyes” (Ibsen qtd. in Mc Farlane 437), Nora’s “move from hysteria to feminism,” once again,

makes her appear to be “out of [her] senses” (Ibsen 229). From this male point of view, feminists are hysterics.

Miss Julie

In *Miss Julie* Strindberg shows a similar concern for examining the notion of femininity and masculinity as roles to play. If Ibsen was primarily concerned with de- and reconstructing notions of femininity, Strindberg was concerned with studying the shifting categories of gender, class and sexuality. Strindberg’s naturalistic dramas were not, as traditional critics have maintained, backlashes against Ibsen’s. Like Ibsen, Strindberg redefined forms of characterization and demanded authenticity in performance, requiring that actors embody the consciousness of the new Woman. Strindberg comes close to Ibsen and his feminist concerns in his interest in examining femininity and masculinity as roles to play and thus in his effort to exceed the boundaries of naturalism. And both Ibsen and Strindberg’s excessive impulses – their shifts away from the concern with the real – offer, I want to argue, the potential for a subversive feminist reading.

Interestingly, contemporary feminists have criticized naturalistic dramas for entrenching patriarchal values and ideologies. Elaine Aston, for example, finds naturalism a “conservative dramatic form” that “reflects,” “reproduces” and “reinforces dominant ideology” (*Feminist* 104), prompting her to find the “feminist possibilities of dramatic realism” and a “feminist performance register to activate the ‘lost’ woman-authored realist script” (106). Thus, only recently have feminist Ibsen scholars (such as Solomon and Cima among others) highlighted the importance of contemplating Ibsen’s

effort to exceed the bounds of the real. These scholars criticize the traditional view of Ibsen's modernist dramas that focuses on the scripts' "closed quality, the patriarchal imperative embedded in the retrospective narrative and its negative effect on the representation of woman" as well as on "the patriarchal assumptions about the dangers of female sexual desire, compulsory heterosexuality and maternity" (Cima 37). The scholars now argue that Ibsen's way of juxtaposing opposing modes of performance - melodrama and psychological realism - granted women actors, what Aston would call, a "feminist performance register," and which for Cima is "the ability to demonstrate, and to critique, the performative nature of the role of woman" (30). By juxtaposing two modes of performance "women could make visible the roles granted to 'woman'" (38).

A similar recognition of Strindberg's effort to exceed the bounds of the real is yet to be done. I would argue that Strindberg's naturalistic dramas such as *Miss Julie* reflect his interest in the examination of "the simultaneity of the melodramatic and the 'real'" (45) that Cima finds in Ibsen. Like Ibsen, by de- and reconstructing modes of performance, Strindberg de- and reconstructed notions of woman. Cima's characterization of Ibsenian actor applies equally well to Strindberg's actor who "made the audience conscious of both the old style and the new, and in that gap – in that consciousness of performance – lies the essence of theatre but also a potential site of power for real women both onstage and in the auditorium" (49).

This power, which in Strindberg's dramas is linked to role-playing as masquerade and the theatrical performance of hysteria is also connected to Strindberg's effort to exceed the bounds of the real. Strindberg uses these non-verbal dramatic tools to interrogate the possibility of de- and reconstructing cultural constructions of social and

gender roles. I have previously pointed out how *Miss Julie* has been viewed as an example of Strindberg's emphasis on naturalism in performance where "the subtlest movements of the soul are to be reflected on the face rather than by gestures and noise" (Strindberg "Preface," xix), aided by the side lighting and the lack of make-up. I also pointed out how Strindberg's call for naturalism is inseparable from his belief in biological and historical determinism. A Strindbergian "half-woman" is an unnatural woman, who doesn't conform to the social roles and behavioural norms imposed upon her. Miss Julie is born an aristocrat, a role from which there is no escape. Instead of taking the view that *Miss Julie* is a typical naturalistic play that, for Aston, "attempts to fix 'normal' or 'familiar' in the interest of social stability and the status quo" (104), I want to emphasize Strindberg's use of excessive and, indeed, transgressive theatricality. Such theatricality appears most obviously in the moments when social status is put aside and "all rank should be forgotten" (Strindberg *Miss*, 5), the moments when the bounds of the real are exceeded. These scenes depict what Carlson calls "the unreality of carnival theatricalization" (94), the midsummer's eve that creates the mood of a Bakhtinian carnival where the dominant ideology, its norms and hierarchies are temporarily subverted. The elimination of class barriers between Miss Julie and Jean is inseparable from Strindberg's depiction of their sexual behaviour towards each other. The lovemaking of Jean and Miss Julie is the culmination of their defiance of the social order.

More importantly, this carnivalesque subversion of hierarchies and criticism of the norms of dominant ideology is inseparable from Strindberg's use of masquerade as a dramatic tool to explore social and gender identities in flux. Jean's effort to exceed the constraints of his social status is dramatized by his change in costume: his "black frock-

coat” and “black derby” (6) embody his transformation from a servant, via “a real gentleman,” (5) to a “count” (16). Strindberg’s analysis of Jean’s role-playing and the theatricality in life becomes evident in Miss Julie’s ironic questions about whether he has spent a lot of time in theatre since he even knows to talk like a count. “Where did you learn to use words like that? You must have been to the theatre a great deal?” (5). Later on when Jean “takes hold of her [Miss Julie’s] foot and touches it slightly with his lips” (8), she comments on these theatrical gestures by stating, “you should have been on the stage” (8). Here Strindberg’s depiction of Jean’s deviations from prescribed social roles, his role-playing, runs parallel to his illustrations of Miss Julie’s effort to de- and reconstruct cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. Strindberg’s examination of masquerade through the characterization of Jean is coupled with a theatrical performance of hysteria. Both non-verbal dramatic means of expression take part in de- and reconstructing social and gender roles.

I previously pointed out that Strindberg contrasts the erotic desire Julie’s dance evokes in Jean with Julie’s slap on his face that ends it. Like Ibsen, Strindberg uses this gesture to depict Miss Julie as a conscious performer who steps out from the stage and is unwilling to play the role described to her by male audience. Furthermore, by relating Miss Julie’s dance, which Jean views as a sign of her madness, to her mother’s theatrical gestures of hysteria, her convulsions, and her feminist aspirations, Strindberg expresses his interest in exploring hysteria as a metaphor for female revolt. Not only can Strindberg’s view of femininity and masculinity as masquerade be detected in his characterization of Jean, but it can also be seen in his depiction of Miss Julie herself. It is Miss Julie’s hysterical mother who taught her “the ideas of her time about equality, and

woman's independence" (21). More importantly, the mother made her "learn everything that a boy is taught..." (21). "*I was dressed as a boy, was taught how to handle a horse...*" (21).

If Nora's theatrical dance was considered "too theatrical," "a remnant of that old staginess" (Solomon 55), it is no surprise that Miss Julie's dance is pushed off stage. Nor is it a surprise that the time when she wore boy's clothes is only remembered as an occurrence that took place in her childhood. Likewise, her mother's convulsions (theatrical gestures of hysteria) are only remembered. Nevertheless, these off-stage occurrences (like Jean's and Julie's lovemaking) are significant as moments when Strindberg's effort to destabilize fixed categories of class, gender and sexuality is clear. All these moments reflect Strindberg's interest in theatrical non-verbal performance within a performance. As in Ibsen, these theatrical spectacles are sites where Strindberg de- and reconstructs modes of performance and notions of femininity and masculinity."¹⁷

¹⁷ It is important to point out that the notion of femininity and masculinity as masquerade has been played an important role in the most recent queer-theoretical examination of Strindberg's oeuvre. Some of the most important queer-theoretical examinations of Strindberg's work have been done by Matthew Roy and Ann-Sofie Lönngren (2002) who both focus on exploring Strindberg's literary oeuvre leaving the examination of his dramas and the use of performance aside. Both Lönngren and Roy try to redefine the traditional auteuristic approaches to Strindberg's literary works and discuss the ways in which works such as *A Madman's Defense*, *Crimes and Crimes*, *Married I* and *II* study the moral and social discourses of homosexuality. This effort to contextualize Strindberg's literary works socially and historically is inseparable from the scholars' interest in the textual strategies he uses to explore femininity and masculinity as roles to play. Lönngren pays attention to Strindberg's use of masquerade and argues that in *A Madman's Defense* Maria's homosexuality and her effort to de- and reconstruct traditional notions of femininity and masculinity finds its culmination in a masquerade scene when she dresses as a man. Interestingly, *A Madman's Defense* was written in 1884-1885, that is before previously analysed naturalistic plays where masquerade is recurrently used to examine blurring discourses of femininity and masculinity. Although Lönngren only studies Strindberg's literary works, her queer-theoretical examination supports the exploration of masquerade as a dramatic tool as well as an integral part of performances that try to "activate the 'lost' woman-authored realist script" (Aston 106). Her analysis invites one to ask what happens when Strindberg shifts from novel to drama. What happens to these dramatic tools when women actors use them to show "feminist possibilities of dramatic realism" (Aston 106) on stage? These theatrical performances of masquerade, that is the "performance within a performance" –scenes, are moments when the actor is able to "demonstrate" the character as a "function of particular socio-historical relations" and invite the spectator to contemplate her own "historical and sexual specificity" (Diamond 81).

The portrait of “self-dramatizing” figures in Dogma films

Like Ibsen and Strindberg before them, the Dogma filmmakers call for authenticity in acting, distaining theatricality in acting and “superficial action (von Trier and Vinterberg qtd. in Kelly 227). Yet, the Dogma filmmakers’ quest for authenticity doesn’t prevent them from examining theatrical elements of performance. The filmmakers’ critical view of theatrical acting and their simultaneous interrogation of theatrical elements of performance align them with their theatrical predecessors, and like them the Dogma filmmakers present spectacles of hysteria, of “self-dramatizing” female protagonists who must play “a double line of action” (Cima 43) and of role-playing. Nowhere are such spectacles more clear than in von Trier’s *The Idiots*. Von Trier shares his predecessors’ keen interest in juxtaposing opposing forms of expression rather than being afraid of breaking the Dogma rules that highlight authenticity in acting. By de- and reconstructing acting styles, he takes part in de- and reconstructing notions of Woman.

One could argue that von Trier’s exploration of the tendency to medicalize rebellious female behaviour already began before *The Idiots*. *Breaking the Waves*, which was released the year after von Trier wrote the Dogma manifesto, offers a portrait of how a woman who rebels against the behavioural norms and social roles is viewed as mad. Thus, one could argue that like Ibsen and Strindberg von Trier turns women’s illness into art, exposing hysterical women to the intimacy of camera. Furthermore, before *Breaking the Waves*, in *Epidemic*, von Trier had relied on the use of hypnosis to make the woman actor perform a hysteric at the end of the film. Hypnosis brought the symptoms of hysteria to the surface and subjected the unconscious woman to a controlling male gaze, in this case the gaze of a director.

Interestingly, *The Idiots* marks a profound change in von Trier's depiction of hysterical women. In this film a hysterical woman is not portrayed as unconscious and subjected to a controlling gaze of a male director. *The Idiots* shows von Trier's interest in depicting the female protagonist's move "from hysteria to feminism." Like Ibsen and Strindberg he takes part in the discussion of a hysteric as an actor and, subsequently, in the de- and reconstruction of gender roles granted to women. The link von Trier makes between the hysteric and actor is what makes his portrait of a hysteric different from the other Dogma filmmakers' depiction of characters whose revolt against behavioural norms makes them mad.

In order to understand how von Trier explores the view of a woman who defies the behavioural norms and social roles imposed upon her as mad in *The Idiots*, we need to first examine von Trier's protagonist and her tragic end in *Breaking the Waves*. In that film, the protagonist's, Bess's (Emily Watson), madness becomes a metaphor for her view of spirituality, a view that makes sexuality a tool by which she shows the sincerity of her spiritual beliefs. By breaking down the "rules regarding sexual propriety" and "respect for sacred places" that Erving Goffman defines as "requirements of decorum" (107), Bess aligns herself with Dreyer's "transgressors":

In Dreyer's fictive world the women are rebels and dreamers; they do not comply with the social norms. They are transgressors: falling in love outside of marriage, becoming pregnant out of wedlock, practicing 'witchcraft.' Their actions are generally the catalysts for the narrative: outsiders disturbing the equilibrium of the social order, women trigger the reactions, so that on the narrative level the male social order must attempt to recover, the status quo. (Jensen 50)

Bess's madness is indicative of her portrayal as a dreamer who believes in her magical powers to heal her husband Jan (Stellan Skarsgård) and as a rebel who uses her sexuality

to give body to her spiritual beliefs. She disregards the strict behavioural norms imposed by the religious community in which she lives.

Bess uses her sexuality to grant Jan's spiritual wish of saving him. The idea of Bess's making love to strangers keeps Jan alive. This unguarded sexuality leads to her blurring the line between private and public behaviour, as is evident in the scene in which Bess runs to doctor Richardson's (Adrian Rawlins) apartment with a wine bottle and hands it to him, saying "I've come to dance." Bess's conviction that she has the ability to save Jan from dying by making love to strangers contradicts the strictness of moral standards of the religious community that she and doctor Richardson inhabit. This will lead to her exclusion first from her home, then from the church, and in the end from the community.

Interestingly, Bess's dance at doctor Richardson reprises the spectacle of the hysterical woman in *A Doll's House* or *Miss Julie*. This scene featuring Bess's wild dance subjects her hysterical body to rational male gaze, which, not surprisingly, is also the gaze of a medical doctor. Although von Trier shares his predecessors concern for viewing hysteria as a metaphor for the female protagonist's conscious revolt against the behavioural norms which dominate in the religious community, he highlights her tragic end. Bess's effort to challenge notions of spiritual/sexual woman leads to her exclusion from the community. Her "wandering existence" (Foucault 8) that is a result of the closing doors at her home and church takes her to the sea, which is von Trier's redefinition of the "spatial marginalization" (Carney 89) that characterizes the experiences of Dreyer's transgressors. Finally, her "exaggerated perverse form of sexuality," as one of the judges states, leads to a final spatial marginalization. Bess's

funeral service will be cancelled; only the burial can take place. Yet, the coffins are exchanged and Bess won't be confined to hell, instead, she will be buried in the sea. Bess remains an autonomous figure, be it a rebel or a dreamer – “on water, each of us is in the hands of his own destiny” (Foucault 11).

It is important to acknowledge that *The Idiots* begins where *Breaking the Waves* leaves off. In *The Idiots*, von Trier continues to examine how the behaviour that breaks behavioural norms and defies social roles is condemned as being mad. Von Trier states, “the film is dangerous because it plays with the concept of normalcy – with the way we ought to and ought not to behave” (qtd. in Knudsen 118). Furthermore, a crucial part of this examination of normalcy is his analysis of performative aspects of hysteria. In this film, von Trier's major concern is to use the performance of hysteria as a non-verbal dramatic means by which the female protagonist expresses her revolt against the notion of femininity imposed upon her. The depiction of the female protagonist reflects the fact that von Trier is more interested in the performative aspects of hysteria than turning hysteria into an artwork, which one could claim by citing the filmmaker's inclusion of mentally ill in the film, the morality of which was widely debated.

As the film's title reveals, the film's initial premise is to examine theatrical elements in performance. “The Idiots” refers to a group of people getting together to perform madness to find their inner idiocy, that is, their true identity. Thus, the characters search for the face behind the mask through the performance of madness. The behavioural norms are destroyed by the idiots' performance of madness in such public spaces as offices, factories, swimming pools, restaurants, and classrooms. The public spaces serve as an arena where the characters do their “spassing,” that is, their

performance of madness. What is relevant for us here is the way in which theatrical performance in the form of madness is used as a means to critique the organisation of social life. Von Trier uses the performance of madness as a self-reflexive device to explore the existence of social behavioural norms and the extent to which these norms are relied upon in our social interactions. The characters study how madness can be externalised through uncontrolled bodily movements and through speech, which goes beyond the demands of communication. Madness, which is externalised and embodied in the physicality of the performance, makes von Trier's critique of existing behavioural norms and social roles explicit. Furthermore, the actors' focus on their externalised performances reflects von Trier's interest in visual manifestations of madness. Von Trier asks how madness can be embodied in the actor's performance. The film follows the process of characters searching and finding ways in which madness can be embodied in the actor's performance.

Interestingly, *Truly Human* conveys a similar process of behavioural norms being broken down by the behaviour that resists being controlled. The behaviour of Sandgren's protagonist, the Brother (Nikolaj Lie Kaas), finds similarities with idiots' "spassing" in public spaces. Sandgren's protagonist who wants to become "truly human" is a figure whose unawareness of existing behavioural norms in public spaces (such as swimming pools, asylums, shops, children's playgrounds) makes us acknowledge the extent to which these norms are relied upon in our social interactions. Yet, *Truly Human* also differs from *The Idiots* a great deal. Unlike von Trier, Sandgren is not interested in the performative aspects of madness. Thus, Sandgren's depiction of his protagonist's desire to become "truly human" comes closer to Kragh-Jacobsen's portrait of a mad

figure, Knud, whose innocence is based on his unawareness of behavioural codes or social norms in *Mifune*.

Although one could argue that all three filmmakers are interested in finding “the inner idiocy,” the condition not defined by behavioural norms or social roles, von Trier’s interest in the performative aspects of madness makes him different from Sandgren and Kragh-Jacobsen. Sandgren and Kragh-Jacobsen are not interested in juxtaposing “histrionic” and “verisimilar codes of acting,” whereas von Trier explores the link between the histrionic actor and the hysteric, blurring the lines between naturalism and excessive theatricality. The three filmmakers’ different dramatic treatments of mad figures have important consequences for their portraits of female protagonists. Von Trier’s feminist aspirations can be detected in the theatrical spectacle of hysteria which is a site where the female protagonist’s revolt against the prevailing notions of femininity is most apparent. Von Trier’s protagonist revolts against the behavioural norms and social roles in the domestic sphere; her revolt is a part of her effort to discover her true self.

The Idiots begins with a scene introducing the female protagonist, Karen, at the restaurant where Stoffer (Jens Albinus), one of the “idiots,” performs madness. Unlike the other diners, Karen looks at him with an open smile. The smile we see on her face tells us that Stoffer’s behaviour has triggered feelings of warm sympathy from Karen. The scene ends with Karen holding Stoffer’s hand and leaving the restaurant with him. This scene demonstrates Karen’s courage and willingness to face the unknown as well as her questioning of authentic behaviour and where it is to be found. With Stoffer, Karen arrives at the empty house where the idiots’ spassing project takes place. In the empty house Karen comes to terms with her suppressed inner emotions.

The beginning of *The Idiots* resembles Sandgren's *Truly Human* which portrays its female protagonist, Charlotte (Susan Olsen), as a woman who finds the Brother's mad behaviour fascinating. Like Karen, Charlotte is the only one who doesn't condemn his behaviour; on the contrary, his behaviour triggers feelings of sympathy and understanding from her. Like *The Idiots*, the film follows the relationship between the brother and Charlotte, first at the laundromat where Charlotte meets him and finally at the brother's flat. Like the empty house in *The Idiots*, where the idiots release the tension in Karen who finally releases her inner angst, the brother's empty flat (symbolising a freedom from pretensions and behavioural norms) is place where Charlotte is ready to release her suppressed emotions. If Karen's inner angst is a result of her not having been able to fulfil the role of a mother and a wife, Charlotte's traumas have to do with her abortion she has kept a secret as well as with her daughter's death in a car accident. In both films, the figures who defy the behavioural codes, the idiots and the Brother, come in to Karen and Charlotte's lives to remind them of the true desires they have suppressed. However, whereas the time with the idiots strengthens Karen's autonomous existence, the time with the Brother only strengthens Charlotte enough to return to the family life where she once again assumes the role of wife and mother. The temporary quality of Charlotte's escape from her suffocating domestic life, from her maternal and spousal roles is enhanced by making the episode with the brother a fantasy. The film ends by returning to the point where it began – to the accident that led to the death of Charlotte's daughter. By ending the film this way, Sandgren makes the spectator aware that everything after Lisa's (Clara Nepper Winther) death has been merely a fantasy experienced by Charlotte.

Unlike Sandgren, von Trier focuses on Karen's permanent escape from the social roles that have restricted her existence. In *The Idiots* the characters' spassing project will be tested in the end, when it is time to see which of them can spass in the presence of family members or friends. The project will be terminated by virtue of the fact that none of the idiots proper is able to deconstruct prescribed behavioural norms in a more private space, suggesting the extent to which "rules of decorum" (Goffman 109) dominate both public and domestic space. But Karen is the exception. In the final scene she spasses at home, performing the spectacle of hysteria. Karen, family members and Susanne sit around the table and have coffee in the living room. Karen looks down and rolls her eyes around the room to avoid eye contact with her own family members, her intended audience. The camera starts to circle around and finds Susanne, who is patiently looking at Karen, waiting for her to spass. Karen holds a plate close to her mouth, spits cream from her mouth and starts to spass. Karen is concentrated on her eating, on her performance. The camera captures the family members' reactions to Karen's provocation. The camera then pans swiftly back to Karen, who abruptly swings her head back. She opens her mouth, leans her head back towards the right shoulder, then rolls her head down and swings it to the left. Her closed eyes register a trance-like stage.

The final outburst at home is Karen's explicit statement of her rebellion against any norms that have previously defined her existence in that same domestic space. Karen's refusal to accept behavioural norms is a catalyst for her to face the unknown. Her spassing frees her from the roles, which have previously bound her to her home and restricted her existence. Karen is a "self-dramatizing"(Cima 43) protagonist like Nora and Julie, relying, like them, on non-verbal means of expression to express her

refusal to play the role others have imposed upon her. Following his predecessors, von Trier doesn't depict physical excess featuring unconscious women submitting their bodies to the male gaze; instead his spectacle of hysteria features a woman who is a conscious performer, the author of her own spectacle, and in control of her own body and performance. The spectacle ends when Karen suddenly leaves the stage, signalling her refusal to play a role in that domestic sphere. Karen leaves the "stage" when Susanne stands up and says: "That's enough now, Karen." Karen's mouth is dirty and closed, she is looking down. She cries while the spittle is dripping from her mouth. We see Karen's face in extreme close-up. The camera gets close to her eyes, which are now full of hope when she looks at Susanne. Susanne responds back to Karen with a glance of promise and asks: "Shall we go?" Karen nods and says "yes." We see her from aside, still looking at Susanne. She puts her head down. She moves her whole body towards the family members, but remains distant and still refuses to look at them. While feigning her indifference, her head is confidently raised, while she looks towards her family. She stands and clasps Susanne's hands. They then leave.

Von Trier's view of a "performance within a performance" becomes evident in the following statement:

The moral is that you can practice the technique – the Dogma technique or the idiot technique – from now until kingdom come without anything coming of it unless you have a profound, passionate desire and the need to do so. Karen discovers that she needs the technique, and therefore it changes her life. (qtd. in Knudsen 123-124)

Von Trier's view of "the idiot technique" reveals two important things. First, von Trier certainly refers to himself as someone who also relied on a technique, the codified Dogma rules, in order to find his true identity as a filmmaker. The limitations of that code

gave him freedom. The Dogma rules helped him to lose control that had restricted his free spirit in his previous filmmaking. Secondly, the statement reflects von Trier's interest in the performative aspects of his female protagonist's hysteria. It is her move from hysteria to feminism, a move from playing a role to discovering her authentic existence, which makes her different from the film's other characters. It is Karen's "profound passionate desire," a motive behind her action, that makes her different from the rest of the group.

The scene in which Karen does her spassing at home becomes an interesting counterpart to a scene in which the idiots' celebration at the empty house turns into an orgy. This scene echoes a Strindbergian "unreality of carnival theatricalization" (Carlson 94) on a midsummer night in *Miss Julie*. In *The Idiots*, the so called "gang-bang" scene is the culmination of the idiots' project of subverting hierarchies, abandoning the social roles dominating their lives, and using sexuality, in this case group sex, to revolt against behavioural norms. Von Trier contrasts the large-scale provocation that the characters' excessive behaviour aims to create with the small-scale provocation of Karen's spassing. This carnivalesque scene is clearly provocative: the film was censored in the UK, South Korea, Japan, and America (Stevenson *Lars*, 131-132); and when it was shown in Cannes, "for some reason the forces of propriety there were shocked that von Trier had his troupe engage in actual group sex, filmed the scene and included it in all its grungy hard-core glory" (Griffin C2). More importantly, it caused a discussion about the extent to which it provoked its audience by "pushing the boundaries of notional good taste, liberating sexual representation," adhering to a part of a new European "transgressive cinema" that deals with an "aggressive desire to confront their audiences, to render the

spectator's experience problematic" (Falcon 12). What is important for us here is not so much the success the film achieved in provoking the spectators all over the world, but instead von Trier's view of provocation which has been pushed aside when discussing this scene. It is important to highlight that von Trier leaves the characters' spassing lacking a deeper significance.

Karen is the only one for whom the whole idiot-project has a meaning. For the others, the project is a game that permits them to feel free. Karen's belief in the meaning behind the actions makes it difficult for her to let go; she never takes part in performing madness; yet, in the end it is only Karen who will find true freedom. For Karen freedom is internal, for the others external. Karen liberates herself whereas, for the others, freedom doesn't extend beyond the performance frame and remains a temporary experience. The idiot project didn't encourage them to abandon the limiting norms of everyday life, which had restricted their free spirits.

Interestingly, the film portrays two different attitudes to the possibility of discovering a face behind mask. Karen's move from hysteria to feminism, which the film's ending highlights, reflects von Trier's optimistic belief that there is a true self one is able to discover. Yet, the idiots' failure to do like Karen reflects a very different view of one's possibility of finding the face behind the mask. The idiots' failure to stop playing a role in a more private place, in front of the people they know, reflects von Trier's questioning belief in the existence of faces behind masks.

The difference between these two views of self within *The Idiots* echoes Ibsen and Strindberg's different views of the "concept of selfhood" (Törnqvist and Jacobs 85). Ibsen showed that he believed in the possibility of finding a true identity by making

Nora abandon the roles that had so far restricted her free spirit and thereby allowed her to move from hysteria to feminism. “Nora does not leave the doll house to find some other role in society, but, on the contrary to try to discover the self she refused in living a role” (Templeton 325). Unlike Ibsen, Strindberg ends his play by making Miss Julie commit suicide. As Törnqvist and Jacobs state, for Strindberg “the self... is not any one of its avatars, but the sum of all of them” (85). Strindberg’s depiction of the tragic end is a continuation of the portrayal of Miss Julie as a figure whose identity shifts between the different categories of class and gender, never finding an existence outside them. It is these two views of one’s possibility of finding a face behind the mask that von Trier’s film illuminates.

However, despite the difference between Ibsen’s and Strindberg’s views on the possibility of finding an authentic existence, they both use hysteria as a dramatic means by which to de- and reconstruct prevailing notions of femininity. Although they differ in their view of the self, they share the view of hysteric as an actor. It is the view of hysteric as an histrionic actor that von Trier shares with his predecessors. Von Trier’s feminist aspirations come in to even sharper relief if we look at another Dogma film, *Kira’s Reason* by Ole Christian Madsen, which seems at first glance to have similar aspirations, but on further examination has a less clear agenda.¹⁸ Ib Bondebjerg argues that *Kira’s Reason* is “her film” because of “the film’s visual set-up” (“Dogma95” 83) which creates the intimacy between the camera and Kira’s (Stine Stengade) face. But Madsen’s depiction of Kira as a woman who returns home from the psychiatric ward has rather problematic feminist aspirations.

¹⁸ Dusan Makavejev’s *Montenegro* (1981) can be seen as a precursor to *Kira’s Reason*. The film is shot in Sweden, it uses Bergman actors (such as Erland Josephson) and explores hysterical bodies.

The film begins with a flashback to Kira telling her psychiatrist why she was sent to the psychiatric ward in the first place. We see her face in a close up when she begins, “Mads [her husband] was away on a business trip and I was at home with the boys. And... they were in the garden.” The next shot depicts the garden that is seen through the closed windows while Kira’s voice, heard in the voice-over, continues, “They were always in the garden and I was in here.” The stable camera shoots the rectangular space of the living room while she continues, “And I had a few drinks.” A shot of the garden seen through the closed windows is repeated. “Then I left... and I forgot them in the garden. That’s when Mads found out, I think. And I was sent away.”

The beginning of the film highlights the claustrophobia of the domestic interior setting from which Kira once escaped, which led to her confinement to the psychiatric ward. Unlike von Trier, Madsen doesn’t view hysteria as a dramatic means by which the female protagonist expresses her feelings of anxiety in the domestic household. Madsen doesn’t follow the process that leads to the protagonist’s move from hysteria to feminism. Instead, Madsen’s feminism explains hysteria. The film focuses on Kira’s recurrent returns to the domestic space, which keeps restricting her free spirit.

Kira’s “boredom” in the domestic setting and her revolt against the roles of mother and wife contradicts the desire of Kira’s husband, Mads (Lars Mikkelsen), who wants Kira to be “a proper wife” and have “an ordinary life.” For Mads, ordinary life includes Kira’s playing a prescribed role. Kira’s openness towards her sexual relationship with other men makes Mads describe how a proper wife should act, “if she has an affair, nobody notices. She doesn’t call home, ‘I’ve been fucking around, please fetch me’ She comes home with a plausible explanation.” Kira’s unwillingness to play a role and her

unawareness of the need to play a role is first depicted in the scene portraying the home-coming party Mads has organised for her. Mads' speech to Kira, in which he confesses his love for her, is filled with irony, because the previous scenes have depicted Mads' relationship with Kira's sister. Kira can't stand the role-playing at the dinner table; the rituals of speeches accompanied by toasts make her withdraw to her room upstairs. The film follows how Kira's revolt against the behavioural norms that dominate at home runs in parallel with her open revolt against those norms in a more public place. Kira takes her children to the swimming pool. First we see Kira sitting on the bench watching the children swim. Soon after, she jumps into the water and begins to splash the water all over the other children. Kira's splashing and jumping in the water make the parents ask their children to leave the pool. As soon as the guards begin to "rescue" Kira's children, she begins to scream hysterically, telling the guards not to take her boys. Kira's sudden outburst makes the guards grab her arms from behind, which makes Kira try to disengage herself from the guards' firm hold. The more desperately Kira tries to disengage herself, the more firmly the guards try to keep her still by grabbing her arms and legs. Kira's hysterical screams of "let go" are accompanied by her bodily movements, as she arches her back and abruptly swings her head back. The convulsions her body makes create a spectacle of her hysterical body. But unlike Karen's hysterical body, Kira's is subjected both to the rational male gaze and to the control of male bodies that tame Kira's hysterical outburst. The guards drag Kira to the side of the pool. The lines "Crazy bitch. You're sick!" express the other guard's anger at Kira who kicked him in the head.

Interestingly, unlike von Trier, Madsen is not interested in portraying how Kira's spectacle of hysteria leads to her final escape from marriage and motherhood. On

the contrary, he focuses on Kira's return home – the home to which she keeps coming back. Mads takes Kira home from the pool and tells her to rest. He leaves her alone in the house and takes the children with him, which makes Kira understand that he doesn't trust her ability to be a "good mother," which he later confirms verbally. When Mads and the boys leave, Kira is seen looking at them through a little window on the front door. The point of view shot of Kira looking outside through the window and the bar that divides the window into frames is symbolic of Kira's prison-like existence in the domestic household from which she has no escape. The following shot depicts Kira collapsing in front of the door and crying. To get rid of the inner anguish she opens a bottle, which precedes her wild hysterical dance. She moves her body hysterically, raising her arms and arching her back just as she did at the pool. Next we see Kira in a bar where she meets a man with whom she ends up leaving the place and spending the night. Once again Kira's escape from the domestic household is represented as a failure, as a sad escape. Madsen emphasizes ironically Kira's move from feminist emancipation to hysterical helplessness when in the morning she calls her husband and asks him to come to fetch her, even though she doesn't even know where she is. She asks Mads to hold on and wraps a blanket around her naked body and runs outside to find out the name of the street. What follows is Kira telling Mads she is not "sick" but "bored." The conversation between the two, which turns into a fierce argument, ends when Mads grabs her arm and takes her to a hotel where he rapes her, then confesses that he has had an affair with Kira's sister and that he "just wants a life. An ordinary life." Once again the hysterical body is not only subjected to rational male gaze but also to the control of a male body.

The ordinary life, which includes role-playing, is what awaits Kira. This becomes apparent when Kira is in charge of organising a dinner party for Mads' colleagues. It is the same type of dinner party that we saw at the beginning of the film, a party that made Kira withdraw to her room. Kira's playing of the role of a good wife who is interested in her husband's business is over the top. The fact that Kira can't even play a role is depicted when she dances with one of Mads' colleagues who tells her to go upstairs before she spoils everything. Kira stops dancing and leaves the stage. Once again she withdraws upstairs to her room. And once again, the exit from the stage doesn't precede her final departure from home and, consequently, the end of role-playing. Instead it prepares her for the final return home. Upstairs Kira writes a letter to Mads and reads it to him when he comes to fetch her. In the letter she writes how she "misses the girl she used to be." What the letter also reveals is why Kira has "just become this way," a line she has repeated during the film. Kira reads, "she only lived for three days. When we buried her, I took your hand, but you pulled away from her. You wouldn't hold my hand. Why not? She was so tiny.. I'm leaving you now... Love, your mad wife, Kira." As with *The Idiots*, *Kira's Reason* ends by insisting that Kira's madness is a result of her not having been able to fulfil her role as a mother in the first place. However, her hysteria is not viewed as her conscious revolt. Instead, even she is made to wonder why she has become this way. Thus, what follows is neither Kira's departure nor her courage to face the unknown as Karen exhibits in *The Idiots*. Kira goes downstairs followed by Mads. Not surprisingly, Mads asks her to dance and they return to the stage Kira had left before. Their wild dance is symbolic of Kira's return to the stage, her willingness to continue the theatricality of her life, to act as a proper wife and a mother as Mads wishes her to do.

This becomes strengthened by the film's end which shows Mads and Kira returning home with the children.

The different treatments of hysteria as a non-verbal dramatic means between von Trier and other Dogma filmmakers has important consequences for the portrait of the female protagonist as well as for the feminist message of the films. While studying the juxtaposition of opposing modes of performance in Ibsen, Cima argues that the theatrical "performance within a performance" -scenes portray "the actor's process of treble consciousness – that is, of playing a double line of action while also being aware of herself as an actor" (47). Consequently, the actor's process of treble consciousness is what makes the audience aware of the ways in which the construction of Woman is rooted in specific historical, social and cultural contexts. This awareness creates for the audience "a new subversive level in the theatre" (48). What Cima suggests runs a parallel with Elin Diamond's notion of an actor who doesn't "lose herself in the character but rather demonstrates the character as a function of particular socio-historical relations, a conduit of particular choices" (81). It is the actor's de- and reconstruction of modes of performance and subsequently, notions of femininity which enables one to do a "historicist, gestic feminist criticism" (83) of the above-analysed plays by Ibsen and Strindberg as well as of the films by von Trier. According to Diamond, "the explosive and elusive synthesis of alienation, historization and the 'not, but' is the Brechtian *gestus*: a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau by which, separately or in series, the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator" (82). Thus, it is the self-consciousness of performance that establishes the actor's authority and, in Diamond's terms, her resistance to fetishization. Furthermore, this self-consciousness of performance

begs the female spectator to be a co-author in the process of de- and reconstructing the notions of femininity and masculinity. It is this role that von Trier's *The Idiots* grants the spectator. Furthermore, von Trier's fearless juxtaposition of opposing modes of performance that embed his feminist aspirations doesn't find a parallel in other Dogma films. One could argue that the other filmmakers didn't, or refused, to see the dramatic possibilities in Dogma's aim to reconstruct acting modes. The juxtaposition of opposing modes of acting, the "performance within a performance" scenes, are important dramatic moments in which the woman actor has a chance to take part in de- and reconstructing cinematic embodiments of Woman.

6. Speech versus Silence

Strindberg's naturalistic plays, such as *Miss Julie*, reflect his interest in exploring theatrical elements as important parts of naturalistic performances. I previously argued that despite his call for authenticity in acting, he used theatrical means of expression to examine femininity and masculinity as roles to play. My discussion of the theatrical spectacle of hysteria in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* segued into the discussion of non-verbal means of expression in the Dogma actors' performances. This analysis occasioned the question of the Dogma filmmakers' interest in exploring the "text of muteness" (Brooks), which I will continue to examine in this section. Theatricality on and off stage was a growing concern for Strindberg. In his chamber plays, Strindberg studies life as theatre through the examination of words as masks that his characters use to hide ugly realities. The Dogma filmmakers' examination of the silence and speech dichotomy needs to be compared with Strindberg's exploration of it in his theoretical writings as well as in his plays.

Strindberg's theoretical writings about the use of words in the actor's performance

In his preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg contemplates the ways in which the actor should use words in a naturalistic drama. Strindberg states,

In regard to the dialogue, I want to point out that I have departed somewhat from prevailing traditions by not turning my figures into catechist who make stupid questions in order to call forth witty answers. I have avoided the symmetrical and mathematical construction of the French dialogue, and have instead permitted the minds to work irregularly as they do in reality, where during conversation, the cogs of one mind seem more or less haphazardly to engage those of another one, and where no topic is fully exhausted. (xv-xvi)

Strindberg's statement highlights the extent to which he saw the illusion of spontaneity in the use of words as a crucial part of authentic acting. By redefining the ways the actors should verbally engage with each other, Strindberg aimed to redefine styles of acting. Although Strindberg detests theatricality in the use of words, as the previous statement shows, he nevertheless views theatrical elements as important parts of naturalistic performances. Thus, even in a naturalistic play, such as *Miss Julie*, he uses monologue among other theatrical means of expression, such as pantomime. In his preface to the play, Strindberg writes that,

Our realists have excommunicated the monologue as improbable, but if I can lay proper basis for it, I can also make it seem probable, and then I can use it to good advantage.... And in order that the actor for once may have a chance to work independently, and to be free for a moment from the author's pointer, it is better that the monologues be not written out, but just indicated. (xvii)

Strindberg's statement reveals how he is concerned with re-appropriating theatrical elements in performance in such a way so that their inherent theatricality would be forgotten. He believes that the theatrical elements in performance restrict the actor's freedom, because they don't allow for spontaneity and improvisation. According to Strindberg, one shouldn't restrict the actor's freedom; on the contrary, the use of theatrical elements in performance, such as monologue, should create a demand for "creative actors" who would mark "the beginning of a new art form that might well be called *productive*" (Strindberg "Preface," xvii; emphasis in original). Strindberg's idea of a "productive" art form implies the actor's enhanced role in constructing his or her character. If the playwright doesn't write a monologue, then it becomes the actor's task to create the lines "in the moment." Strindberg writes that, "a gifted actor, carried away by

the situation and the mood of the occasion, may improvise such matters better than they could be written by the author” (“Preface” xvii).

It is important to point out that Strindberg’s thoughts about the use of words in his drama pave the way for the essay “The New Arts! Or The Role of Chance in Artistic Creation” which was first published in *Revue des Revues* in 1894. Although the essay deals with painting for the most part, it reflects Strindberg’s concern for the role that chance, spontaneity and improvisation plays in an artistic creation, whether in painting or in the art of acting. Strindberg coins the term “natural art” to describe an art form “where the artist works in the same capricious way as nature, without a specific aim” (103). Hence, if his preface has depicted his concern for the creation of “a new art form” this essay is a continuation of his vision of “the art of the future.” Strindberg asks the artist to “imitate nature closely; above all, imitate nature’s way of creating!” (107). Thus, the essay, with its emphasis on freedom in the artistic creation, supports Strindberg’s view of acting, which should likewise be spontaneous and allow room for chance.

When Strindberg wrote *Open Letters To The Intimate Theatre* he continued to discuss the use of words in the actor’s performance. Moreover, he expressed an equal interest in the use of words as in the actor’s silence. Strindberg considers “the spoken word” “most important” and “the major fact” in the actor’s performance (24). Thus, he gives a detailed description of the ways in which the actor should talk on the stage. He writes about the pronunciation of consonants, tempo, volume, the function of the larynx and the use of the whole body that has to reflect what words express. Strindberg believes that the actor’s virtuosity can be detected in the use of words: the masterful use of words

can be a key to the actor's success and the play rescued if the actor speaks well. At the same time, Strindberg fears "a speaking head on a lifeless body" (24). Theatricality, which he detests, can make its appearance in the actor's performance if the actor is "infatuated" with his/her own voice, if he talks too loud or too fast and "slur[s] away the consonants" (25). "Speaking so that it 'sounds like theatre' is something special that ought to be watched" (26).

Strindberg's enthusiasm for detailing the use of words in the actor's performance is matched by his enthusiasm for the role that silence plays in acting. One of the greatest emphases outlined in his instructions to the actors of his Intimate Theatre was on "the art of listening and silent acting" (29). According to Strindberg, "the one who is not speaking but who is listening to what someone else is saying must really listen" (29). "The one who listens is to remain what his role calls for, but his face must reflect what the other actor is saying, and the audience must be able to see what impression that is making" (30). Strindberg's statement describes the importance for actors of responding to each other's acting and of being "in the moment." As he states, "actors are at each other's mercy" (23), and no one actor is allowed to steal the show. "Solo numbers" and "star roles" (19) belong to theatrical performances that Strindberg repeatedly criticizes. Interestingly, Strindberg's statement also describes how the actor should respond to the co-actor's performance through facial expressions. The importance of facial expressions was already something that he highlighted in his preface to *Miss Julie*, "The subtlest movements of the soul are to be reflected on the face rather than by gesture and noise" (xix). Thus, Strindberg expresses his interest in the equation of the silence and the actor's subtle facial expressions as a conduit to the soul, which later modernist filmmakers

expanded upon with the close-up, which I will later analyse.

Although Strindberg's detailed description of speech and silence in *Open Letters* seems to leave no room for spontaneity, he nonetheless continues to highlight spontaneity, improvisation and chance as important elements in the actor's performance. He states, "A little carelessness doesn't matter, for that provides room for improvisation" (28). Acting for Strindberg

is not the art of pretence, for the great artist does not pretend but is honest, true and natural, while the low comedian does everything to dissimulate through mask and costume. It is not imitation, because poor actors most frequently have a fiendish ability to imitate well-known people, while the genuine artists lack that gift. (21)

It is "the art of pretence," the view of a poor theatrical actor who uses a mask to hide the truth, that Strindberg takes up on a thematic level in his chamber plays.

"Speaking heads" and "lifeless bodies"

The year after *Miss Julie* Strindberg wrote *The Stronger*, a play that shows his growing interest in exploring the use of words and silence on both a formal and thematic level. The play is about two women, one of whom stays silent while the other delivers an over-flowing monologue. If in *Miss Julie* Strindberg re-appropriated the use of monologue to function in a naturalistic drama by making Jean listen to Miss Julie's monologue "as if he were hearing it for the first time" (*Open* 30), in *The Stronger* Strindberg exaggerates the dynamic of monologist and listener. More importantly, he explores a silent being – the internal mode of acting – and its expressive counterpart on a thematic level. Dealing with the allocation of strength between the women, *The Stronger* is a predecessor to Strindberg's actual chamber plays of 1907: *Storm Weather*, *The*

Burned House, *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican*. Thus, the attention Strindberg paid to silence and speech in his instructions to the members of the Intimate Theatre was indicative of his growing concern over the thematic examination of the silence/ speech dichotomy that he made central to his chamber plays *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican* perhaps best reflect his doubt of words as an authentic means of self-expression and his use of words as masks, and thus they function as illustrations of his theories on the art of acting.

The chamber plays have been traditionally interpreted as dramatic pieces that reflect Strindberg's concern for life's mystical qualities and "correspondences" (Sprinchorn "Introduction," x). In these plays, Strindberg creates, according to Evert Sprinchorn, "a language in which metaphors assume life" (xix). To create this metaphoric universe, Strindberg is less interested in causes and effects than in creating a mood through the use of rich visual imagery, sounds, voices and silence. Furthermore, Strindberg creates his universe by finding opposites which create the dramatic conflict, which is well illustrated in *The Ghost Sonata*, wherein life meets death. "A white marble statue of a young woman" (Strindberg *Ghost*, 105) is juxtaposed with the aging body of the Mummy. The Old Man's crippled body contrasts with the Student's strength and his cold hand freezes the Student's warm blood. The realm of dreams meets the realm of reality; the hellish interior of the house contradicts its luxurious exterior. Most importantly, Strindberg juxtaposes words with silence and masks with faces. "Speaking heads" and "lifeless bodies" inhabit the universe where only illusion, pain and suffering exist, where, as Strindberg suggests, "One enters a world of intimations where one

expresses oneself in halftones and with a soft pedal, since one is ashamed to be a human being” (qtd. in Sprinchorn “Introduction,” xix).

Strindberg’s enigmatic statement reveals his interest in modes of expression that hide one’s true identity. One expresses oneself in halftones using masks, because one is ashamed to reveal one’s true identity. *The Ghost Sonata* gives a dramatic treatment of Strindberg’s theoretical view of “a speaking head on a lifeless body,” which he expressed in *Open Letters* (24). Words are masks a Strindbergian role-player uses to hide his or her face. The modern house of *The Ghost Sonata* is inhabited by the theatrical role-players Strindberg abhors on and off stage.

The Ghost Sonata begins with an introduction to the play’s major characters The Old Man and The Student (of languages). These characters function as surrogates for the audience, ready to begin to watch the drama unfolding in a new modern house inhabited by The Colonel, The Mummy, and The Young Lady among others. Like *The Storm Weather*, the play begins “when the curtains are drawn and the windows opened in the round room” (Strindberg *Ghost*, 105), that is, when the stage is beginning to be seen. By dividing the theatrical space into the auditorium and the stage, Strindberg grants the inhabitants of the house the roles of actors. The Student watching the role-players of the house is “a Sunday child” (113) who “can see... what others can’t see” (114); he sees the Milkmaid, who the Old Man can’t see, and later the Dead Man coming out on the doorway. Moreover, The Student is the one who witnesses the others’ role-playing and discovers the faces behind the masks. In the end it is the Student who stays alive while others are deemed guilty of playing a role. The play follows The Student’s journey through the façade of the house to the round room where the “ghost supper” (125) takes

place. The ghost supper is the moment when the Student comes to realize he didn't enter "a paradise" (127) which he dreamt of at the very beginning. The luxurious façade of the house has hidden the dirt inside in the same way as its inhabitants have hidden their buried secrets. The student's journey parallels the Old Man's journey into the house. As the play gradually reveals, the Old Man is the one who "breaks into houses, sneaks in through the windows, ravages human lives, kills his enemies, and forgives nothing and nobody" (121); he is "a vampire" (139) who draws the strength from the Student in a similar fashion as he had done to the inhabitants of the house.

Strindberg's studies in life where the characters play roles to hide secrets culminate in Scene II when "the ghost supper" takes place in the round room. Bengtsson, The Colonel's servant, describes the ghost supper in the following way, "they drink tea, without saying a word, or else the Colonel talks all by himself. And they chomp their biscuits and crackers all at once and all in unison. They sound like a pack of rats in an attic" (125). In answer to Johansson's (the Old Man's servant) question as to why it is called the ghost supper, Bengtsson responds, "They all look like ghosts... this has been going on for twenty years – always the same people, always saying the same things. Or else keeping silent to avoid being embarrassed" (125).

What Bengtsson's description of the ghost supper reveals is Strindberg's dramatic treatment of silence in the play – a silence full of meaning, used to create the mood of tension within and between the characters. Furthermore, another important non-verbal means of expression together with silence in the creation of a mood is sounds (like the sound which is like a pack of rats when biscuits and crackers are chomped in unison). More importantly, the description of the ghost supper reveals how the Colonel among

others embodies Strindberg's ironic view of an actor, a theatrical role-player or "a speaking head on the lifeless body."

It is at the ghost supper where the characters' role-playing is revealed and their masks are stripped off, although The Old Man has reminded the Colonel of the need to wear the mask before the ghost supper, "Now let us be calm and go on playing our old roles for a while longer" (134). The Old Man is keen on revealing the Colonel's deceptions and his face behind the mask, to "strip" him "naked" (134). He tells him to "Take off that wig of yours and have a look at yourself in the mirror. And while you're at it, take out those false teeth and shave off that moustache and let Bengtsson unlace your metal corset, and then we shall see if a certain valet, Mr. X, won't recognize himself" (134). Moreover, as he did in *Miss Julie* when characterizing Jean, Strindberg uses masquerade to study how the Colonel only plays the role of a colonel. He is a theatrical actor who hides his true identity as a valet by dressing in the suit of a Colonel.

When the guests have arrived the Colonel proposes a conversation – a proposal to which the Old Man responds: "I prefer silence... in which one can hear thoughts and see the past. Silence cannot hide anything – which is more than you can say of words" (136). The Old Man's statement is a continuation of Strindberg's description of the Colonel as a role-player who has previously been described by Bengtsson as the one who gives an overflowing monologue to keep his secrets hidden. The Old Man's response to the Colonel's proposal for a conversation reveals how he views the Colonel as a role-player who uses words to hide the truth, which he has come to reveal. Paradoxically, it turns out that the Old Man, although an expositor of deceptive performances, is as much a role-player as the Colonel; he is "a stealer of souls" (138)

who has turned all into “skeletons” (139). Only the Student, the Sunday child is the unequivocal witness to life’s theatricality. As he tells the Hyacinth Girl: “I saw a colonel who wasn’t a colonel. I had a magnanimous benefactor who turned out to be a bandit and had to hang himself. I saw a mummy who wasn’t one” (150).

What is important for us to notice is the ways in which Strindberg describes the characters of the house as the living dead. The play is filled with references to corpses and skeletons, whose cracker crunching is the monotonous sound accompaniment to their endlessly repeated words or silence. “The white marble statue” (105) is a visual reminder of the Mummy’s dying, aging body that once was beautiful and young. The young lady is a living corpse, waiting for her death; her body is too weak to hold a bracelet. If Strindberg expressed his fear of “a speaking head on lifeless body” in *Open Letters*, *The Ghost Sonata* gives this notion a dramatic embodiment. It is the characters’ lifeless bodies and their use of words as masks that characterize their life as illusion which is filled with masks, deceit and lies. If in Strindberg’s view, the theatrical actor is a reason for turning theatre into a “dying art form” (Strindberg “Modern,” 73), *The Ghost Sonata* shows his belief that theatricality off stage, in life, turns the characters into the living dead.

A cast of living dead also populate *The Pelican*. As in *The Ghost Sonata*, Strindberg presents a dramatic vision of lifeless bodies by referring to the funeral of the Father that had taken place at home of the Mother, the Son and the Daughter. The house is as “cold as a tomb” (180), where the Mother sits “like a prisoner” (155), and where the Son, the Daughter and Margaret, the servant, are freezing and starving because of the Mother’s consumption of the family’s money. This is the secret that will be uncovered while the Mother’s true nature is revealed. As the Son states, “The dear mother who gave

us life was nothing but a thief (182). The Mother is a pelican who doesn't give blood to its children.

The Daughter's husband, the Son-in-Law, is also depicted as a role-player who, together with the Mother, has made the children's life a hell and "teased and tormented" the dead Father and finally "drove him to despair" (172). As in *The Ghost Sonata*, when characterizing The Colonel Strindberg uses masquerade to depict the Son-in-Law's role-playing. The Mother comments on his costume which turns him into a "reserve officer": "I hardly recognize you as a civilian. You're a completely different person" (166). It is his personality that shifts from being the Daughter's husband to the Mother's lover, a reserve officer and civilian. If Strindberg presents the Son-in-Law's role-playing through the device of masquerade he consolidates the Mother's role-playing through representing her use of words as masks.

The Mother grows more desperate at the end of Scene I when "The masks are coming off" (174), and the children are gradually beginning to see how their life has been a sham, how their Mother has lied to them and in turn taught them to lie. The Daughter contemplates her life as illusion and states, "I learned to say things I didn't mean at all" (177), which parallels the Son's condemnation of his Mother as a role-player: "I remember when you first taught me how to lie. I was hardly old enough to talk" (190). It is the Mother's use of words as masks that keep haunting the Son, which is revealed in his comment, "father once said in anger that you were the greatest fraud ever perpetuated by nature. He said that you didn't learn to talk like other children; you learned to lie from the first word" (191-2). Both the Son's and the Daughter's contemplation of words reflects Strindberg's interest in portraying words as an

inauthentic means of expression. For the Daughter, words occlude rather than reveal meaning – “When people get together they talk, talk, talk, all the time, just to hide their thoughts” (178) – and thus she prefers silence. She is a Strindbergian “Sunday child” who can see the face behind the mask and “hear” her brother’s “thoughts in the silence” (178). Finally, for the Daughter there are “gestures that say more than looks. And words that conceal what gestures and expressions couldn’t reveal” (185), reflecting Strindberg’s endorsement of gestures as often more meaningful than words for expressing what is verbally inexpressible. Strindberg is interested in the ways that words, as Peter Brooks formulates, are inadequate means to locate the drama in the imaginary realm where our dreams and fears lie. *The Pelican* characterizes Strindberg as a melodramatist, as defined by Brooks, who wants to push through the surface to evoke a “drama in the realm of emotional and spiritual reality” (4). Strindberg’s search for the theatrical means through which to elucidate the “dimension of the soul” is one that modernist filmmakers took up when they focussed on the actor’s silent face in the close-up.

The “Microphysiognomy” of the Actor’s Silent Face and the Erasure of the Female Body

A discussion of modernist Scandinavian filmmakers’ combining of the actor’s silence with the close-up is important for any examination of the ways in which Dogma filmmakers redefine the theatrical and cinematic traditions. Here I am interested in exploring how the modernist Scandinavian filmmakers’ keen interest in finding filmic embodiments for a Strindbergian intimate chamber space was realised through the use of the actor’s silence captured by close-up. Close-ups were used as means by which

intimacy and concentration in the chamber space were created. More importantly, through the use of close-up, the modernist filmmakers expanded on Strindberg's emphasis on the inadequacy of the word alone as an authentic means of self-expression.

Ingmar Bergman and Carl Th. Dreyer became famous for studying film's unique ability to penetrate the "microphysiognomy" (Báñez 65) of the actor's face, which, for them, could express something deeper and more truthful than language or externalised bodily actions could. Through the close-up the filmmakers isolated their protagonists as autonomous, spiritual beings and evoked the realm beneath the mere facial surface. The modernist filmmakers' focus on the actor's silent face became tied in with their depiction of the human body, particularly the female body. I would like to highlight the impact the close-up, as a means by which Strindbergian detheatricalization was continued in film, had on redefining the female actor's craft. It was most often the female protagonist's "speaking head" that the close-up silenced, pushing the body aside, literally outside the frame.

Dreyer's and Bergman's use of the close-up is the culmination of Strindberg's process of detheatricalization in film. In Bergman and Dreyer's films neither language nor body offer an authentic means of expression. Thus, their actors had to transcend both the larger body and speech. The facial expressions alone, which being "more subjective even than speech" and the "most individual of human manifestation" (Báñez 60), were the filmmakers' primary means of building autonomous characters. Facial expressions, as implicitly more honest, thus replaced the spoken word. Dreyer's following statement reveals that he shared Strindberg's growing concern with the inexpressible emotional states that could not be captured by words:

what interests me – and this comes before technique – is reproducing the feelings of the characters in my films. That is, to reproduce, as sincerely as possible, the most sincere feelings possible. The important thing, for me, is not only to catch hold of the words they say, but also the thoughts behind the words. What I seek in my films, what I want to obtain, is a penetration to my actor's profound thoughts by means of their most subtle expressions. For these are the expressions that reveal the character of the person, his unconscious feelings, the secrets that live in the depths of his soul. (qtd. in Sarris 142)

Dreyer's use of close-up reflects his interest in "the spirit in and behind the things" (Dreyer "Imagination," 184), as well as his belief that the truth lies in quietness, in suggestive expressions. Close-ups capturing the subtleties of expression in the actor's performance were Dreyer's means of emphasizing "the immersion" into the image (Dreyer "Little," 123). Simultaneously, Dreyer's emphasis on the subtlety of expression captured by the close-up came to restrict rather than enhance the expressivity of the body.

David Bordwell analyses this emphasis as related to Dreyer's cinematic use of one chamber-art-tradition – the "tableau," giving examples of Dreyer's usage from *Michael* (1924), *The Parson's Widow* (1920), *The President* (1919), *Leaves from Satan's Book* (1920), *Gertrud* (1964), and *The Bride of Glomdal* (1926). Interestingly, his analysis makes one notice that when Dreyer adapted the principles of chamber drama to his films, he also questioned movement as something essential to film. What is important to note is the ways in which Dreyer also questioned the movement of the female actor's body. The stillness derived from the chamber drama led not only to the stability of frame space, but also to the lack of physical action in Dreyer's tableaux. Bordwell points out that "often character forces women's bodies into poses no less rigid than those of the tableau itself" (*The Films* 195). Bordwell's close textual analysis enables us to understand how spatial patterns restricted physical action, while the cinematography

helped to subordinate figures against the tableau setting. To create intimacy, Dreyer relied on the power of the face.

Dreyer's confined space, a cinematic version of the chamber drama, led to a restriction of the actor's body. Bordwell states that the "tableau seldom permits the dynamic representation of emotional qualities; its abstraction creates an ascetic geometry. As a result, Dreyer's actors restrict their bodily movements" (*The Films* 51). The methods Dreyer used to explore the possibilities of chamber drama and their subsequent manifestations in performance link Dreyer to Bergman. Dreyer's reliance on the actor's face in the projection of "the most intimate human qualities," the "soul" (Bordwell *The Films*, 51), find a parallel in Bergman's growing concern for the actor's silence captured by the close-up.

It is well known that Strindberg's "close-up drama[s] of subtle reactions" (Marker and Marker *History*, 201) inspired Bergman to try to find cinematic equivalents for his principles. Yet, less is known about the ways in which Bergman's experimentation with the close-up and silence together in his version of an intimate chamber space influenced the female actor's craft. Although a "Strindbergian manner of expression and perception" (Marker and Marker *Ingmar*, 59) marks Bergman's trilogy *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), *Winter Light* (1962) and *The Silence* (1963) (which forms a cinematic counterpart to Strindberg's chamber plays on a formal and thematic level), the filmmaker's studies in the silence and speech dichotomy culminate in *Persona*. In this film, the close-ups capture what Bálázs would call "the most delicate nuances" (77) of the actor's (Liv Ullman) facial expressions and juxtapose them with the theatricality of the other actor's "speaking head," that is Bibi Andersson's monologues. This film

demonstrates a filmic counterpart to a Strindbergian dramaturgical device – the conflict of silence and speech. No wonder *Persona* has been often viewed as a cinematic realization of Strindberg's *The Stronger*.

Bergman emphasizes the theatricality of the monologue by making the actor repeat and deliver her monologues for the camera and for the other actor. The overt theatricality of the monologue works on a thematic level, particularly when juxtaposed with the authenticity of silence. Bergman concludes that the silence Elisabeth (Ullman) imposes on herself is unneurotic. It's a strong person's form of protest" (qtd. in Björkman, et al. 211). Critics have remarked on this dichotomy of speech and silence in *Persona*. According to Susan Sontag, "the one who talks, who spills her soul, turns out to be weaker than the one who keeps 'aggressively silent'" (268). Likewise, Philip Mosley claims that the film demonstrates that "language offers no solution," but rather "potential traps" (127). Bruce Kavin argues that "Elisabeth chooses silence as a way of avoiding all role-playing, including that of personality" (120). Yet, Kavin claims that her silence is merely another type of acting: "she has adopted the role of Silent Being, and will in time abandon this one as she has all the others" (120).

If Bergman only succeeded in creating a true cinematic equivalent for a Strindbergian chamber play in *Persona*, as Marilyn Johns Blackwell claims, he is nevertheless important for our purposes because he gave a cinematic embodiment to an intimate form of acting. Blackwell claims that only in this film does Bergman succeed in creating intimacy in a chamber space because he takes advantage of the freely moving camera that creates the unrivalled intimacy between the spectator and the screen and gives a cinematic equivalent for a Strindbergian notion of concentration in a chamber

space. If *Persona* reflects Bergman's most Strindbergian creation of filmic intimacy, then it also demonstrates his view of the acting mode which best lends itself to a heightened intimacy. In Bergman's treatment, it is the silent face of the female protagonist which best lends itself to intimate, authentic filmmaking.

Blackwell's discussion of cinematic counterparts to the Strindbergian intimacy ignores the issue of acting. And the difference between theatrical and filmic intimacy in terms of acting thus remains critically unexplored. I would like to highlight that the use of the close-up as a means by which intimacy is created in a cinematic chamber space laid the groundwork for a particular style of acting that has since become associated with a brand of Strindbergian theatrical tradition. The fear Strindberg felt for "a speaking head on a lifeless body" was something the modernist filmmakers shared and something they studied through the female actor. The modernist filmmakers' use of the close-up not only silenced the actor but also pushed the danger of the lifeless body aside. But to what extent was the erasure of the body by the close-up the filmmakers' tool to tame and control the movement of the female body, particularly the rebelling half-woman? More importantly, to what extent did the modernist filmmakers' focus on the actor's silent face in the creation of Strindbergian intimacy promote the image of Strindberg as a tamer of a half-woman by showing that the creation of intimacy demands the sacrifice of the female body?

Interestingly, it was not only filmmakers but also film theorists who were inspired by Strindberg's theatre and who promoted a brand of Strindbergian theatrical legacy that erases the female body in the creation of truth and authenticity. Hungarian film theorist Bela Balázs was one of the early film theorists who studied film as a new art

form distinct from theatre. For Bálàzs, the fingerprint of film's theatrical roots, apparent in the theatrical style of acting, needed to be erased so that film could be granted a status as an independent art form. Yet, he forgets such an erasure when describing the minimalism of the film actor's performance, particularly the actor's silent face, which he understands as part of Strindberg's theatrical legacy. For Bálàzs, this legacy becomes embodied in the close-ups that capture the "Strindbergian moods in the savagely antagonistic silences of human beings confined together in narrow spaces" (85). Furthermore, in developing theories of the close-up as a site in which Strindberg's dramatic principles can be detected, Bálàzs focuses on Asta Nielsen's acting style, her "greatest economy of expression" (66) and the "silent soliloquy[s]" (62) she performs facially. Furthermore, it is Nielsen's face, captured by close-ups, that helps Bálàzs develop his theory of "microphysiognomy" (65). According to Bálàzs, "In the silent film facial expression, isolated from its surroundings, seemed to penetrate to a strange new dimension of the soul. It revealed to us a new world – the world of microphysiognomy which could not otherwise be seen with the naked eye or in everyday life" (65).

Interestingly, Bálàzs' interest in the microphysiognomy of the actor's face is inseparable from his notion of the (female) body. When Bálàzs writes about Nielsen's acting, he focuses on the spiritual qualities of her silent face, which enables the penetration to the "soul" and which is "isolated from its surroundings." Consequently, one could argue that in Bálàzs' treatment, Nielsen becomes genderless. Interestingly, it is Nielsen's masculine body and voice, which initially presented a difficulty to the theatre directors refusing to cast Nielsen in major roles, that were erased in the microphysiognomy of close-ups. Nielsen's "speech of the eyes" (Bálàzs 225) captured by

close-ups silence the masculine voice which pushed her to the margins of the theatrical world. Most importantly, Bálázs views the close-up as a means by which the expression of a “half-Woman,” such as androgynous Nielsen, can be controlled. Bálázs is a theorist whose formulation of the “microphysiognomy” of the actor’s face takes part in promoting the image of Strindberg as a tamer of half-woman.

Dogma’s representation of silent faces and expressive bodies

There is a personality hidden beneath our permitted personalities which is just as unique and nuanced (von Trier qtd. in Björkman and Smith 206).

I will now explore how the influence of Strindbergian theatrical tradition can be detected in the Dogma filmmakers’ interest in exploring the silence/speech dichotomy. In search of authenticity in acting, the filmmakers question the role of words as an authentic means of expression. The Dogma filmmakers’ fear of speech that “sounds like theatre” is inseparable from the examination of words as masks that hide the truth.

Before analysing the filmmakers’ depiction of the silence speech dichotomy on a thematic level, it is worth pointing out that the Dogma filmmakers’ share Strindberg’s attitude to the written script – that it shouldn’t restrict the actor’s freedom. The filmmakers’ relaxed attitude to the written script is inseparable from their call for authenticity in acting. In Strindberg’s words, they call for “creative actors” who take part in the writing process and write their own lines on the spot. Like Strindberg, who wrote pared down scripts impulsively, von Trier wrote the script for *The Idiots* in four days.¹⁹

¹⁹ [Writing] begins with a fermentation or some sort of agreeable fever, which passes into ecstasy or intoxication. Sometimes it is like a seed, which grows, attracting all interest to itself, consuming all experiences, but still choosing and discarding. Sometimes I think I am some sort of medium, for it comes so easily, half unconsciously, hardly calculated at all! But it lasts at most 3 hours... and when it is over,

According to von Trier, it was “Dogma-like to give up control” (qtd. in Knudsen 119) and to write the script in such a short time. Consequently, this gave freedom to both the director and the actors. Von Trier admits that he “encourage[d] the cast to make up their own lines” (119), as did such other Dogma filmmakers as Olesen, Kragh-Jacobsen and Scherfig. An actor in both Olesen and Scherfig’s films, Ann Eleonora Jorgensen, describes, for example, her role preparations:

Besides researching and talking to and observing people, my preparations are based on finding the plot’s emotional undercurrent. I’m not the kind of actress who learns her lines by heart and can recite them backwards and forwards, if need be, when I arrive on the set in the morning. Of course, it’s important to know your lines when you’re standing in front of the camera – but not too well, in my opinion, not automatically. It’s fine if you have to grope for them a little. I prefer not to be get too far ahead of my character so my lines would snap to it on cue. (qtd. in Piil)

The filmmaker’s relaxed attitude towards the written word already reflects the way they question words as a conduit to authentic performances. Their implicit criticism of words as an authentic means of expression is one of the major thematic themes in the Dogma films.

The theatricality of “speaking heads” in *The Celebration*

Vinterberg depicts his protagonist Christian as a Strindbergian traveller who strips away the masks and finally reveals the hidden lie of the incest between the father and both the sister and himself. Christian is one of those “Sunday children” who can see what others can’t. He reveals the face behind the mask that the other characters refuse to remove. Vinterberg, like Strindberg, studies the dynamics between mask and face by contrasting his protagonist to other characters. Christian, like the Stranger in Strindberg’s

‘everything is as boring as ever!’, until the next time. But it doesn’t come to order, nor when I please. It comes when *it* pleases” (Strindberg in “August Strindberg on Himself,” 227).

The Burned House, reveals the hidden secrets to the other family members. Both of these characters make people realize how they live their lives “like directors in the theatre, distributing parts to each other”(95). Christian, like the Stranger, has had “to redesign [the family members’] faces, strip them naked, pull them down, put them out of [his] mind” (*The Burned House* 71).

Furthermore, as in *The Ghost Sonata*, in which the audience participates in the Student’s journey through the façade into the house, in *The Celebration* the viewer follows Christian’s journey from the vast fields of corn on a countryside lane to his childhood home where masks will be removed. We follow Christian’s movement through the façade of the luxurious house into narrower and darker interior spaces. The closer we move towards the house, the tighter the framing becomes, creating the feeling of claustrophobia in the environment.

In a tiny room in the basement, the father asks Christian to sit down, because he has something important to tell him, something he’s been “thinking about for days.” The father’s line is suddenly interrupted by a close-up shot of Christian’s hands; he rubs his fingers against each other and moves them restlessly. The father doesn’t continue from where he had stopped; instead he says, “Listen ...two hookers are sitting in a railway carriage.” Christian laughs, confused at his father’s sudden jokes, which makes his father furious, “Don’t laugh at your old dad on his birthday!” We see a shot of Christian’s hands again that is repeated throughout the scene. Through the recurring shots of Christian’s restless hands Vinterberg disrupts the linearity of the father’s speech, undermining and questioning the truthfulness of the father’s “gentle” words. Those words are, as Vinterberg suggests, masks for an ugly reality that Christian can strip away. The

father's repeated questions regarding Christian's girlfriends, the sentences he doesn't finish and the abruptness of his absurd jokes that interrupt the linearity of his monologue are his tools to avoid discussing the family secret with Christian. The words enable him to play the role of a "loving father"; Christian's anxious hands point to what those words suppress. Vinterberg, in a similar manner as Strindberg, seems to suggest that "words cover up our fear and hide reality – they are a smokescreen that the intellectual throws up to prevent the world from knowing him, a bulwark against reality" (Blackwell 51). And, in casting as the Father Henning Moritzen, a well-known theatre actor who was used to relying on a written script in his performance, Vinterberg creates another level of irony in the film by destabilizing the authenticity of the word.

Vinterberg's depiction of Christian as a spectator/witness of his father's role-playing is continued in a scene in which his father gives his first speech to the birthday guests. The scene illustrates the way in which Vinterberg views the repeated, "rule-governed" speeches as performances within the performance which are "designed to keep in place the appearance of a happy, extended family" (Gaut 95). Those who give speeches step to "the stage" in front of the guests who form an audience. When the father gives his first speech, Christian is among the guests, a spectator for his father's performance as he was for their first meeting. As in the previous scene, the father's speech of his "little family" is punctuated by the close-up shots of Christian's face, flushed with an inner angst that distances us from the nostalgic tone and half-crying voice of the father. These shots of Christian's face make one, once again, perceive the father's speech as potentially artificial. When the father finishes his speech a close-up shows Christian's expressionless face, a shot which is accompanied by the sound of others'

enthusiastic applause. The shot enhances the contradiction between what we hear and what we see. The camera slowly reveals Christian clapping his hands; yet, the aggressive clapping is more to show his inner rage than to applaud his father. The close-ups of Christian's face depict the microphysiognomy of the actor's face, the subtle facial expression that are "more subjective even than speech."

The next speech is given by a toastmaster (Klaus Bondam), the father's German friend, who gives thanks for the great honour of being toastmaster for the Klengenfeldt family. The fact that his speech is given partly in German, in words that nobody (the spectator included) understands, enhances the impression of words as masks. Likewise, the speeches given by Helge's father (John Boas) interrogate the authenticity of words. He begins, "Elsie, it's your birthday." The others interrupt him correcting, "It's Helge's birthday, grand-dad." Furthermore, every speech given by Helge's father is a repetition of the previous one. Thus, the words "you are a big boy now. Your ears can take a story from the seven seas" are heard several times throughout the film, every time increasing the spectator's confusion and lack of understanding.

The way in which Vinterberg depicts the speeches as performances within the performance and emphasizes their theatricality becomes important when examining the speech in which Christian reveals the family secret, the incest. Before Christian's revelatory speech, we have heard all the other guests, using words to conceal things. When Christian speaks, the guests seem to regard him as giving a performance like those of the other speakers. Someone in the audience even applauds. The guests' lack of authentic response to Christian's revelation makes them seem like ghostlike figures, living dead, unable to express the suppressed anger and frustration hidden behind their

masks. Thus, the gathering around the table (where the guests listen to the speeches) functions as a Strindbergian “ghost supper” that offers a public space for the sudden revelation of the buried family secrets. Yet, the public space of the dining room demands that the mask is worn and the face not revealed. The need to wear a mask at the “ghost supper” is expressed when the father tells Michael “to behave like a normal human being when the guests arrive.” Interestingly, the words echo the statement given by the Old Man in *The Ghost Sonata* who states just before the ghost supper begins, “Now let us be calm, and go on playing our old roles for a while longer” (134). Vinterberg suggests that the audience for Christian’s speech continues to play its old role, which is itself a form of truth:

It was interesting, because nothing really happened! Quite a ‘true’ moment, actually. People couldn’t really deal with it – so they just kept...talking. We had three cameras in the room for the scene, and at that moment all three of them started to rush around like hell, to capture everything – all the reactions, right? And of course none of it was usable. (qtd. in Kelly 117)²⁰

Vinterberg’s exploration of the need to continue wearing a mask after the revelation and the use of words as masks is given an explicit depiction in the scene following Christian’s speech. The father asks his mother to sing a song after Christian has been kicked out from the dining room and beaten up outside the front doors. The grandmother (Erna Boas) sings, “There is such idyll - peace and calm. In the sylvan solitude - that sorrows are stilled - where peace and rest do reign.” The scene suggests that Vinterberg’s characters are Strindbergian role-players who “use words to insulate themselves against an unpleasant reality” (Blackwell 51). It also reminds us that “words (intentionally) hide

²⁰ The need to wear a mask in the public space was an authentic reaction on the part of the extras who were told neither about the child abuse nor Christian’s speech beforehand.

more than they reveal” (Steene *Ingmar*, 99).

Finally, when it is Helene’s (Paprika Steen) turn to give a speech, she reads the sister’s letter (revealing the incest), which make the guests finally realize that Christian’s words were true. The guests respond to the dead sister’s letter with silence, because Vinterberg suggests, there are no words that would give an *authentic* expression to the emotions the guests and family members feel at that moment. After Helene has read the letter, for the first time, the camera stops moving restlessly around as if in reflection of the swirling, occlusory words. Vinterberg, following Strindberg, suggests that in silence “one can hear thoughts and see the past. Silence cannot hide anything – which is more than you can say for words” (*The Ghost Sonata* 136). Vinterberg depicts the characters’ emotional states such as extreme sorrow and hopelessness non-verbally.

Thus, Vinterberg juxtaposes the guests’ silence to Michael’s physical aggression after the secret has been revealed. Vinterberg portrays Michael as a “multifaceted character” (Vinterberg qtd. in Porton 19) and studies the gradual removal of mask. Michael’s unwillingness to face the truth (which is Christian’s main interest) is depicted at the very beginning of the film when Helene accuses him of not having attended their sister’s funeral. Throughout the film, we don’t really get a sense of Michael’s feelings towards his sister’s death; consequently, we don’t understand his relationship to the incest. The fact that Michael is the one who attacks Christian and drags him forcefully away from the dining room after the revelatory speech clearly demonstrates the way in which he wants to keep trauma repressed, keep it literally out of his sight and comfortably behind concealing words. Yet, Christian provokes Michael more than anyone else by stripping away the mask Michael is so used to wearing. The

depiction of Michael's violence and aggressiveness towards Christian reflects Vinterberg's keen interest in studying the "duality" of a character: he wants to explore what happens when the mask is removed. The filmmaker states:

Opting to work with a figure who is intent on being in control, but suddenly is deprived of all control, is *a way of gaining access to the real being who's been hiding all along behind a façade*. This generates a kind of duality that brings the figures to life as real beings... I'm naturally tempted to let the characters in my films be directly, irrationally, in touch with their feelings. (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 280; emphasis mine)

What is important to point out is how both reactions to the revelation, Michael's physical aggression and the guests' silence express Vinterberg's idea that words are not conduits to authentic feelings.

It is also important to point out that Vinterberg's depiction of the hidden secret, incest, includes two victims, Christian and his dead sister Linda, both of whom are silent beings. Christian's calm façade captured by close-ups hides his inner angst, whereas Linda's death marks her silence. Yet, Vinterberg has Christian return to his childhood home to take revenge and to release his hidden frustration, whereas he portrays Linda a martyr who has silently escaped from her imprisoning existence by committing suicide. She is a martyr like the Young Lady in *The Ghost Sonata*, an innocent victim "who suffer[s] for no fault of [her] own" (151). Unlike Vinterberg, who is content to allow one silent victim to remain silent, von Trier is interested in exploring how the silent victim comes to act out her suppressed angst not by dying but by expressing herself non-verbally. I will next study how von Trier continues his theatrical and cinematic predecessors' studies in silence on a formal and a thematic level. But he also breaks from that tradition by depicting how the quest for authenticity becomes embodied in the actor's

silence as well as in an unrestrained bursting forth of inner aggression via non-verbal theatrical means of expression.

From “microphysiognomy” to excessive facial expressions

Jorgensen’s minimalist performance in *The Idiots* shows how von Trier explores Strindberg’s fascination with silent acting and “the art of listening.” Jorgensen highlights the importance of “the idea of making the absent present and felt” (Jorgensen) in her silent acting. In Strindberg’s words, “the one who listens is to remain what his role calls for, but his face must reflect what the other actor is saying, and the audience must be able to see what impression that is making” (*Open* 30). The first depiction of Jorgensen’s “art of listening” is at the beginning of the film, in the scene that I previously analysed when discussing the influence of Jorgensen’s theatrical background on Dogma filmmaking. According to Jorgensen, the scene shot in an empty white room is an example of how the actor creates a scenario of two human souls reacting to each other. With the use of the close-up on the actor’s subtle facial expressions, it shows the possibilities film has in making a spectator feel the connection between the two people. That scene is a culmination of what Karen’s “silent soliloqu[ies]” continue to depict throughout the film: making “the invisible face visible” (Báñez 76) by the use of close-up capturing the actor’s silent face (not unlike in the films of Bergman and Dreyer). The scene’s virtual phone conversation is an extension of that principle.

In order to make the absent felt Jorgensen searches for a method other than the use of words to capture truth, because words cannot be trusted as a means for honest expression. Her minimalist performance depends on the idea that Karen’s few words

have to be filled with meaning. According to Jorgensen, Karen's existence is speechless, like a child who is crying, laughing, and is feeling things. "The truth cannot be told in words. That is also why she [Karen] has fallen in love with her lost child [whose pure emotional states and the transition from one to the other is not to be expressed in words]. Karen has strong feelings she cannot describe" (Jorgensen). Jorgensen recalls how there was a great physical struggle to deliver words when Karen finally says something (Jorgensen). These moments capture a lot of hesitation in performance, inherent in improvisational performances. What these moments depict is Karen's constant doubt over the validity of every word uttered. When talking about the opportunity to describe feelings that have no words Jorgensen obviously refers to the performance of a "dramatic state" and the creation of a "dramatic tension to a mere state or condition, without any external event at all" (Bálázs 84). This makes *The Idiots* a film that Bálázs would probably consider "unsurpassed in showing the Strindbergian moods in the savagely antagonistic silences of human beings confined together in narrow spaces" (85).

The scenes in which the close-ups record Jorgensen's silent presence demand from the actor a true mastery of her craft, because von Trier focuses on Jorgensen's face at "moments of decision that the camera has a privilege to witness" (Jorgensen). Jorgensen, the actress, is willing to remain under the close scrutiny of the camera in order to give the camera a chance to record raw emotional states. The director gives her a universe, which the actress fills with her "inner pictures" (Jorgensen). For Jorgensen, these are the moments when pure fantasy and memory dominate, which she uses without limitations. "Lars knew what he wanted; I knew what the feeling inside her [Karen] was" (Jorgensen).

One could argue that like his predecessors von Trier uses film's unique ability to penetrate the "microphysiognomy" (Bálázs 65) of the actor's face, which alone can express something deeper and more truthful than language or externalised bodily actions can. Furthermore, von Trier links silence and the internal mode of acting with the quest for authenticity. By contrasting two extreme acting modes in *The Idiots* – Jorgensen's silence versus the other actors' bodily movements and speech – von Trier insists that both function in the conveyance of truth. Karen's suppression of speech, coupled with extreme control over her body, is juxtaposed with the other characters whose behaviour is defined in terms of a free, playful experimentation of body and voice, which they call "spassing" – a *performance* of madness. The close-ups that capture Jorgensen's "silent soliloqu[ies]" (Bálázs 62) and focus on "the most delicate nuances" (77) of the actor's facial expressions are juxtaposed with other shots that, because filled with constant motion, eschew concentration on any one face. The other shots of the idiots, recorded by free-flowing digital cameras, continually find and capture externalised bodily movements, which do not conceal the fact that they, to use Bálázs' words, are "looking [at] a lie"(77).

Thus, the inadequacy of the word and of externalised body language as a means of authentic self-expression become some of the major concerns von Trier explores in this film: Karen's autonomy and inner strength are built on her silence. Her silence embodies her quest for honesty and her refusal to accept role-playing. For Karen, behind every gesture, expression, and word there has to be a meaning. The film seems to suggest that the truth lies in silence; the truth lies in the acting mode that suppresses the use of verbal language, which simultaneously restricts the actor's bodily movements.

After all, Karen is the only one for whom the whole idiot project has a meaning. For the others, the project is a game that permits them to feel free. Karen's belief in the meaning behind the actions makes it difficult for her to let go; she never takes part in performing madness with the others. Yet, in the end it is only Karen who will find the true meaning of freedom. It is the suppressed angst, which the close-ups have captured by focusing on Karen's silent face during the first part of the film, that the film continues to examine through representing its release through non-verbal means of expression.

Von Trier's close-up of Karen's silent, yet expressive face, spitting the cake out of her mouth is a provoking redefinition of the "microphysiognomy" of the actor's face as portrayed in the films of the modernist predecessors. The face is not used as a conduit to the dimension of soul anymore; the face has become a site for the theatrical spectacle of the hysterical body. The spiritual realm that the silent face evoked in the films of Bergman and Dreyer is replaced by the grotesque physicality of a human face. Silence is finally broken and replaced by other non-verbal means of expression which pave the way for the protagonist's courageous act to fight for her true desires. If the face was used to avoid all theatricality in the actor's performance, that is to silence a "talking head" and push a "lifeless body" outside the frame in the films of modernist filmmakers, von Trier endows the silent face with theatricality. Jorgensen's silent face becomes the site where the performance within the performance takes place.

It is important to point out how both Vinterberg and von Trier are interested in emotional states of the characters that cannot find an outlet in characters' verbal expressions. The filmmakers challenge the actor to find the means by which to express a character's sorrow, hopelessness and deep-seated emotional traumas. Whereas their

modernist predecessors link the internal mode of acting and silence with the quest for authenticity, Vinterberg and von Trier seem to believe that a crucial part of authentic performances is also an unrestrained release of inner aggression and suppressed angst. Both directors encourage the actors to break free of limitations on a psychological as well as on a physical level, questioning whether only the internal mode of acting is a conduit to the authenticity of emotional states. They break free from the tradition of their cinematic predecessors by emphasizing the authenticity of excessive external modes of acting in the construction of authentic, truthful characters.

Battling with God's authoritative Word

The studies in von Trier's female protagonists' battle with the Word make a comparison between von Trier and two female Dogma filmmakers Annette K. Olesen and Lone Scherfig interesting. If on a formal level Olesen and Scherfig share von Trier's Strindbergian attitude towards the written script – that it shouldn't restrict the actor's freedom – they also share his enthusiasm for examining the word as a conduit to truth on a thematic level. The female protagonists' search for non-verbal means of expression to depict their revolting spirit certainly links not only Olesen, Scherfig and von Trier but also these Dogma filmmakers and their predecessors such as Dreyer, whom Olesen and Scherfig acknowledge as a source of inspiration:

When I saw [Dreyer's] *The Word* a second time, I was caught up in its unremitting insistence that there are more things in heaven and earth. The film is permeated with a very inspiring purity and naivety, but I have deliberately let the issue of miracles and faith remain more open than in Dreyer's film, which has a heavy-handed ending. (Olesen qtd. in Christensen)²¹

James Schamus relates Dreyer's filmmaking to the theatrical tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg when studying his protagonists' battle against "the authority who controls the words" (61). Schamus states,

The theme of the emancipated woman in Scandinavian realist theatre... is thus not just a theme, but a textual matrix through which is figured a whole complex of formal and ideological concerns. Realism creates the desire for real characters – characters like those of the "weaker sex" who struggle to produce language of their own – and so creates an internal tension about the adequacy of its own textual authority. (61)

One could argue that the Dogma rules create a narrative style that highlights a self-reflexive search for authenticity. The fight against the "textual authority," that is the struggle to produce a cinematic language of one's own in Dogma filmmaking, is also reflected and studied in performance as well.

In *In Your Hands* Olesen explores the two female protagonists' troubled relationship with the language. The "emotional undercurrent" in Jorgensen's performance has to do with her character's gradual distrust of God's Word as a site of truth, comfort and security, whereas Trine Dyrholm focuses on depicting her protagonist, Kate, as a silent, spiritual being. Dyrholm analyses her difficult role in the film and describes how she "felt very ungenerous as an actress. Kate didn't want to be in the film. She didn't like the idea that her story will be told" (qtd. in Thorsen). Interestingly, Dyrholm's description

²¹ See also Berthelius and Narbonne 55; Ciment and Rouyer 62; Björkman and Nyman 101; Braad Thomsen 110; Björkman and Smith 203; Christensen).

of portraying her silent being differs greatly from Bodil Jorgensen who saw silence more as a challenge than as a hindrance in *The Idiots*. Yet, their characters are similar to one another. Like Karen's, Kate's sorrow does not find an outlet in words. Like Karen, Kate withdraws from her surroundings and wants to be alone with her sorrow. The close-ups of Kate's facial expressions, which Bálázs would describe as "more subjective even than speech" and the "most individual of human manifestation" (Bálázs 60) portray her as an autonomous character. Kate's silence is symbolic of her autonomy and her pride.

Dyrholm describes her method of working in the following way, "I wrote down a sort of inner monologue for her. I invented her entire life story to serve as a reservoir of inner life for my character" (qtd. in Piil). It is the inner monologues, captured by close-ups, that marginalize her from the rest of the prisoners. In *In Your Hands* and *The Idiots*, the women's silence is linked with internal modes of acting as well as with the quest for authenticity of being. Moreover, throughout the film Kate's presence is strongly felt, but her being is silent. Like Karen's, Kate's passive silence is dominating and provocative. It evokes reactions from others. Kate's silence, instead of the priest's consoling words, is what gives peace to the prisoners' restless minds. This is witnessed in the scene in which Marion (Sonja Richter), a drug addict, comes to beg Kate's help to cure her. Kate's silence feeds Marion's trust in her, and she lets Kate cure her with her healing hands. Even more importantly, Olesen focuses on depicting how Kate's silence finds a parallel in the female priest's gradual questioning and distrust of God's authoritative Words. The film studies how Kate uses her hands, instead of God's Words, to cure the prisoners and, finally, the possible chromosome defect of the priest's baby. These encounters between Kate and the priest are examples of "mute dialogues... the

conversations between the facial expressions of two human beings who understood the movements of each others' faces better than each others' words and could perceive shades of meaning too subtle to be conveyed in words" (Bálázs 73). The encounters between these characters show Dyrholm's mastering the "art of listening" that, according to Strindberg, demand from the actor the ability to respond to the co-actor by the subtlety of facial expressions.

The relationship between Kate and the priest (Ann Eleonora Jorgensen) echoes the relationship between Bess and God in *Breaking the Waves*, which marked the beginning of von Trier's examination of the inauthenticity of the word generally and the word of God specifically. One could argue that *Breaking the Waves* already displayed a narrative style and the use of cinematography that highlighted the filmmaker's search for authenticity. Von Trier's description of the relationship between the style and the story reflects his view of the inescapability from textual constraints:

One normally chooses a style for a film in order to highlight a story. We've done exactly the opposite. We've chosen a style that works against the story, which gives it the least opportunity to highlight itself... what we've done is to take a style and put it over the story like a filter... the raw, documentary style which I've laid over the film and which actually annuls and contests it, means that we accept the story as it is. (qtd. in Björkman "Naked," 12)

Breaking the Waves depicts how the filmmaker's own battle with the textual is reflected in his characters' search for authenticity, in what Schamus would call the "fight between the letter and the spirit" (64). As we recognize the fictional nature of the story, we come to accept the fictional quality of the words. The actor is asked to perform the fight against the text by questioning the truthfulness of words. The film relies on the self-reflexivity of

Watson's monologues, in which the utterance of the words is mere performance, an important indicator for understanding the film's interpretation of textual authorities.

Like Bess in *Breaking the Waves*, Kate in *In Your Hands* is a spiritual being who has possibly supernatural abilities. Like Bess, Kate, from the community's perspective, hovers between being Satan's creature, the child of the Devil, and God's daughter. Kate has killed her child; yet, she can perform miracles and cure the sick. As Marion tells the priest, Kate "has received a visit from God; God talked to her." In both films, the interventions of God in the protagonist's existence as well as her idiosyncratic view of spirituality make her stand out in the community.

Whereas with Bess's monologues von Trier points to the presence of the imaginary, with Kate's silence Olesen strips away the surface to evoke a "drama in the realm of emotional and spiritual reality" (Brooks 4). Kate's expressive silences gesture to her hidden inner reality. In *Breaking the Waves*, Bess's imagined monologue impersonating God's voice is a parody of God speaking through a saint. Von Trier highlights the performative aspects of these monologues; the words become symbolic material for parody, irony and self-reflection. Words are played with throughout the film, to the extent that they seem inauthentic; and that holds true even for the authoritative word of God. Whereas Bess creates her individual view of spirituality by fighting against the authority of the Word, Kate's silence and the language of her hands, through which God speaks, run parallel to the priest's questioning of God's authoritative Words. When the priest discovers the child's having a chromosomal defect, her trust in God as a figure of authority begins to waver, and she turns to Kate, whose idiosyncratic view of spirituality becomes more persuasive.

The turning point in *In Your Hands* takes place in the scene in which the priest gives a sermon at the prison's church. She begins by stating, "the fact that God created us – does not absolve us of responsibility. We are responsible for what we do." She stops suddenly and glances restlessly out from the windows, as if contemplating the words she has just delivered. She continues nervously, with a half-laughing tone: "I suppose..." She stops again but continues soon after, "I don't know if anyone had expected a drop to drink? We could do that instead, or we could just call it a day." When the other prisoners leave the church, Marion remains, telling the priest "I'll say it again: if you are feeling bad go and see Kate. Everyone who's been to Kate has received help." Whereas von Trier explores the strictness of a Protestant community that condemns the woman who speaks in the church, Olesen updates the protagonist's battle with God's Word. In the prison's Lutheran church the priest is a woman who questions her own belief in God and rebels against her self-proclaimed "duty to dispense the Word of God and to minister the holy sacraments in the Congregation."

Whereas in *In Your Hands* the protagonist's silence is best understood in relation to the film's thematic treatment of an individual's view of spirituality and obedience to God's authoritative Words, *Italian for Beginners* begins with a depiction of the loss of belief in God's Word, with an empty church accompanied by the verger's line, "we haven't felt the presence of God." Even the new stand-in-priest seems to question validity of God's Words, for he is presented in several scenes as frustrated with the need to write sermons. The silent church becomes a metaphor for the absence of God in the characters' lives – an absence that mirrors the missing male figures in Scherfig's film. Women are divorced or unmarried, and the only father in the film is Olympia's father

whose death marks a turning point in her life. Once Olympia realizes that she cannot view either God or her own father as a source of love and support, she is forced to look for something else that would give meaning to her life. This search for meaning in life leads Olympia and other characters to take evening classes in Italian at an Open University where they begin to experience a new feeling of belongingness that is missing at the local church.

The film depicts how a community at the Evening School replaces the religious community. God's Words are replaced by new Italian words that even the Priest begins to memorize, as well as Olympia, who can't even write her name properly. As at church, at evening school the attendances rehearse, repeat and memorise words under the guidance of a teacher. Like von Trier, Scherfig explores the performative aspects of her female protagonist's monologues that set the tone for our interpretation of God's Words. Scherfig focuses on Giulia's (Sara Indrio Jensen) monologues, her prayers to God. Giulia is an Italian waitress who has fallen in love with Jorgen Mortensen (Peter Gantzler). Her desperate yearning for his love makes her run to the restaurant's kitchen in the middle of her duties. She clasps her hands, raises her head up and with her gentle voice prays the Virgin Mary to make Jorgen Mortensen fall in love with her. Scherfig juxtaposes these theatrical scenes of Giulia's prayers, reminiscent of Bess's monologues in *Breaking the Waves*, with other characters' lost belief in the God's authoritative Word.

Furthermore, in *Italian for Beginners* Scherfig, like von Trier, juxtaposes human love with religion. In *Breaking the Waves* Bess states, "You cannot love Words. You cannot be in love with a Word. You can love another human being. That's perfection." In *Italian for Beginners* this idea is shown in the scene when Jorgen

Mortensen finally asks Giulia to marry him in Venice. The scene begins with a close-up of Jorgen's hand, which poignantly refers to his and Giulia's relationship where words play no role. Neither of them knows the other's language. In Scherfig's film the language between bodies replaces verbal language, whose truthfulness is undermined. The scene depicting Jorgen's proposal is another example of "mute dialogues" between the characters whose reactions to each other are registered through facial expressions as well as bodily movements rather than through words. The close-ups of Giulia and Jorgen's hands are coupled with close-ups of their faces. As the two stand under the roof of an old building, Jorgen begins by telling Giulia that he knows she doesn't understand Danish, but that he has to propose now, otherwise he will never do it. Giulia's inability to understand his words gives him courage at that moment. He tells her that he is not good at anything, doesn't have hobbies and doesn't even know what to say to Giulia. He admits he is not even sure about sex anymore. Giulia grasps Jorgen's hand, shown in close-up. He continues telling her how he loves her, wants to marry her and spend the rest of his life with her. After hearing his proposal, Giulia tells him shyly she knows a little bit of Danish. She further tells him she has to go to the church to think about the proposal. She runs around the corner, and raises her head and looks up at the sky in a similar fashion as she had done in the previous scenes taking place in the restaurant's kitchen. She runs back right away and says, "si."

Giulia's prayers are manifestations of a questioning of the power of the Word and re-defining its usage. In her prayers she fights for her own spiritual beliefs and for the righteousness of those beliefs. Giulia's prayers are moments when she builds and regains her belief in the truthfulness of her own view of spirituality. Scherfig juxtaposes

Giulia's prayers with other characters' fight against God's authoritative Word and, what Schamus would call their "struggle to produce language of their own " (61). Giulia's inability to speak the language of the others is a larger metaphor for her own spiritual beliefs that others (who have lost their belief in God) can't share and understand.

The portrayal of these figures who turn the focus to the imaginary realm and the inclusion of excessive instances show that the filmmakers share Dreyer's interest in the examination of what Carney argues is "the potential plasticity of our imaginative identities, the energetic mobility of our desires, the fluxes and refluxes of our feelings" (92). It is no wonder that the "expressively divided" (86) characters in Dreyer's films have served as an inspiration for the Dogma filmmakers. According to Carney, "Dreyer's characters may be visionaries or dreamers in many respects, but the ultimate test he exacts of them is that they express themselves and their visions in words and actions in the world" (87). I would argue that the keen examination of the relationship between the imagination and "the forms of worldly (and artistic) expression available to it" (88) is what the Dogma filmmakers share not only with Dreyer but also with Strindberg, whose work is characterized by an interrogation of magic realism and of the blurring boundary between the real and unreal. For Strindberg and the Dogma filmmakers the battle between the imaginary and the real takes place in conjunction with the battle between theatricality and authenticity in performances. The demand for authenticity in acting does not overshadow the elements of excess. On the contrary, the dialogue between these modes of expression is deemed important as an outlet for experiences that do not find a verbal embodiment in the actor's performance. It is the filmmakers' interest in the dialogue between the inner and outer reality, the realm of dreams and the realm of reality,

the invisible and the visible, the mind and the body that beg to be next analysed in relation to the Strindbergian theatrical legacy.

7. Transcendence

The collision between true and untrue

Traditional Strindberg scholarship has periodized Strindberg's *oeuvre* in terms of a sudden shift that separated his pre-Inferno from the post-Inferno works, (1892-1909), the latter of which demonstrate his willingness to disregard theatre's potential to rely on illusions of the real (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 217). Lately, such scholars as the Markers, Rokem, Bennett, Carlson and Østerud have focused more on how the artistic concerns of Strindberg's post-Inferno period were already prominent in his pre-Inferno work – concerns, for example, with the conflict between the real and unreal, between subjectivity and objectivity, and between realism and theatricality. Moreover, Strindberg's notion of "the greater naturalism" ("Modern" 78) and the shift away from the concern with the real can be detected in his pre-Inferno approach to performance specifically. Even then he questioned the naturalistic style of performance and the excessive impulses within its constraints, exploring the limits of naturalistic acting styles, as I have suggested in my analysis of theatricality in performance.

I will now move on to examine Strindberg's studies in "half-reality" (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 217) in his post-Inferno work, studies that reflect the effects of his spiritual crisis. In this post-Inferno period "the mystical and visionary qualities of life" were for Strindberg "the true fabric of reality" (Marker and Marker *History*, 194). Consequently, he came to view realistic staging techniques as a "wasted effort" (qtd. in Marker and Marker *History*, 197), as is best exemplified in his chamber dramas as well as in *A Dream Play* (1901), which utilized a dream-like quality of reality and the reality of

dream. As Törnqvist states, “Illusionism has given way to ‘half-reality’” and the conflicts are not viewed as “interhuman” (as in his pre-Inferno works) but as “extrahuman, dramatizing a struggle between the protagonist and what Strindberg called the powers” (*Strindbergian* 217). More importantly, Strindberg’s examination of the metaphysical aspects of life is tied, as Blackwell argues, to his belief in a “divine figure that is an answer to the questions of man’s existence on earth” (50). Thus, the Stranger in *The Burned House* is a stand-in for Strindberg, who, having finally reached old age, recognizes that “the world weaver” is in the charge of human destinies. The Stranger states, “In old age, when the eye can finally see, we discover that all the little curlicues form a design, a monogram, an ornament, hieroglyphics which only now we can read: this is life. The world weaver wove it” (68). Moreover, Strindberg views the divine figure, “the world weaver,” as an answer to humankind’s pain and suffering, as an answer to the experience of a hell on earth. Interestingly, when depicting a hell on earth Strindberg focuses on the human body as a site of decay; his hell on earth is populated with corpses and skeletons, preoccupied with death, funerals and decay. His characters long for death which releases them from their prison-like existence on earth where their aging, starving and freezing bodies restrict their free spirit.

Strindberg’s gradual move away from concerns for the real, the shift from “letter to spirit, from outward to inward reality” is also seen in the individual chamber dramas. Strindberg wants the reader to experience and share his view of life, his idea that “what we call reality is actually at best a half-reality, often a lie and most likely a phantom, a mirage” (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 219). Törnqvist writes that “The true reality is behind the letter and presumably beyond life. When we arrive at the end of

these plays, we discover that our view of reality has changed. In this lies the true structural power of Strindbergian drama” (219). Thus, Strindberg, his characters and the reader (who identifies with the playwright’s view of life as a hell on earth) believe that death liberates us from earthly hell where life is mere illusion, pain and suffering. Death marks one’s “returning from this pseudo-existence to the original one”(Törnqvist *Between*, 30).

Strindberg examines man’s pseudo-existence on earth by interrogating the dreamlike nature of life on earth. He claims that since life on earth is a dream (or a nightmare), living people are dreamlike figures, ghosts or shadows of their true existence in the transcendental realm. In *The Ghost Sonata*, for example, the characters are ghosts and their petrified bodies mingle with the dead ones whom only the Sunday children can see. In *The Pelican*, the Daughter is a ghost, a member of the living dead: “I know I’m walking in my sleep, I know I am. But I don’t want anyone to wake me up. I couldn’t live if they did” (177). The Daughter’s journey from the hellish earth, where she doesn’t want to wake up, continues to the realm of the dead where she is finally freed from her suffering. The burning of the house signifies her journey from hell to paradise. When “everything old is burning, everything old and mean and evil and ugly” (201) the Daughter “sink[s] to the floor” and finds herself waking up in a heavenly paradise where it is “summer again,” “warm” and “wonderful”(200-201).

Strindberg’s spiritual views of living people as ghosts as well as of humankind’s aspirations for “the life hereafter” have important consequences for his depiction of human physicality, particularly for his depiction of the female body. If spiritual aspirations are in conflict with physical being in Strindberg’s chamber plays,

sexuality is, in turn, something incestuous, filthy and degrading. And death as the “liberator” from earthly hell is frequently a female figure. In *A Dream Play*, Indra’s Daughter descends from heaven to earth to witness how humankind is “pitiful” (214), a sentiment she repeats throughout the play. Her recognition of a hell on earth is experienced physically through her body. Once on earth, she feels she is “suffocating” and complains about her inability to breathe (218). Indra’s daughter is a prisoner of the earth; her physical existence restricts her spirituality: “my thoughts can no longer fly. Clay is on their wings and soil about their feet... Help me, Father, God of Heaven! No longer can I hear His answer. The ether no longer carries the sound of His lips to the shell of my ear... Alas, I am earthbound!” (245). Indra’s daughter returns to the heavenly Paradise, to her true existence, after having experienced the imprisoning existence of humankind on earth and after burning “this earthly matter, for the waters of the ocean cannot cleanse me” (245). She returns to her spiritual existence after realizing “it is not easy to be human” (238).

To emphasize the split between physicality and spirituality, body and mind, Strindberg gives Indra’s daughter the name of Agnes as soon as she descends to the earth. Indra’s daughter is an example of Strindbergian characters who “split, double and multiply,” which he expresses in the preface to *A Dream Play*. Likewise, in *The Ghost Sonata* he depicts the journey from hellish earth to heavenly paradise through the Young Lady, whose death marks her release from her illness, from the physical, painful existence of humankind.²² Furthermore, the Young Lady’s weak body, which doesn’t even have the strength to hold a bracelet, is juxtaposed with the Mummy’s aging body.

²² The translators point out how Strindberg’s notes to the play suggest that he “thought of the Young Lady as having cancer of the uterus” (Sprinchorn “Introduction,” 228)

Strindberg emphasizes The Mummy's vanishing beauty, her body in decay, by comparing it with the white marble statue that reminds her of her body in youth. The white marble statue represents time that has stopped whereas the mummy's living aging body represents decay and time in transition.

The play ends when The Young Lady sinks into the floor; her death is accompanied by the Student's lines:

Your liberator is coming! Welcome, pale and gentle one... and you, you beautiful, innocent, lost soul, who suffer for no fault of your own, sleep, sleep a dreamless sleep. And when you wake again... may you be greeted by a sun that doesn't scorch, in a home without dust, by friends without faults, and by a love without flaw. (151)

Böcklin's *The Island of the Dead*, which replaces the hyacinth room and silences the Students' lines, ends the play: "You poor little child! Child of this world of illusion and guilt and suffering and death – this world of eternal change and disappointment and never-ending pain!" (152). The Young Lady leaves for the heavenly paradise from where the Milkmaid has come at the beginning of the play. The Milkmaid is an "apparition," a spiritual figure whom only the Student, the Sunday child, can see. "The Woman in Black," the daughter of the Dead Man, who "stands motionless in the doorway" is juxtaposed with the Milkmaid, who descends to earth "wearing a summer dress." The Milkmaid is an innocent victim like the Young Lady who has suffered for no fault of her own. The Milkmaid's appearance signifies the Old man's pangs of conscience: "he turns his head away wherever he sees a milk wagon" (122). The Milkmaid is the "young girl" whom the Old Man "lured...out onto the ice in order to drown her, for she was the only witness to a crime which he was afraid would come to light" (139). The purity of The Milkmaid is contrasted with the dirt on earth as witnessed when she washes her hands

which is “an act of purification” (Törnqvist *Between*, 34) at the beginning of the play and the Student asks her to help him to get rid of the dirt he has in his body after having his “hands on wounds and corpses” when rescuing the victims of a “terrible accident” (108). Törnqvist rightly points out the “the biblical allusions” of the scene and compares the figures of the Student and the Milkmaid to the story of “Jesus” and “the good Samaritan” in John 4.7 – 14 (*Between* 39).

Strindberg’s depiction of the split between physicality and spirituality makes The Daughter in *The Pelican* bear similarities with the Young Lady and The Milkmaid who have to carry the burden of humankind’s sinful nature and whose death liberates them from humankind’s sinful, physical and earthly existence. Both *The Ghost Sonata* and *The Pelican* illustrate the ways in which Strindberg represents hell on earth as embodied in the female body in particular. The Daughter in the latter play is a woman in a child’s body, as Margaret’s statement reveals: “Look at miss Gerda – twenty years old and she hasn’t filled out yet” (156). The Daughter is a living ghost whom the mother has “murdered” (191) by starving and freezing her body.

Bergman’s examination of spiritual minds, sexual bodies

With his interrogation of the border between the real and unreal, between physical bodies and spiritual minds, Strindberg is, I want to argue, an important precursor for modernist filmmakers. The filmmakers’ studies of this border affected their approach the female actor’s craft and their cinematography, especially in their representation of the conflict between spirituality and physicality. Like Strindberg, Bergman explored how the realm of dream fuses with the realm of reality, working out a way to “reproduce the

disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream” (Strindberg in his preface to *A Dream Play*). As Bergman states,

[My films] are like dreams in my mind before I write them down; they are made from the same material, from everything I have ever seen or heard or felt. I use reality the same way dreams do. Dreams seem very realistic – and my films, all my films, are dreams. (“On Dreams” 52)

Whereas Strindberg’s dreamlike perception of reality represented a technical difficulty for theatre directors who tried to transpose his visions to the stage, modernist filmmakers could exploit and create cinematic techniques to present that same perception. Such filmmakers as Victor Sjöström, Olof Molander and Alf Sjöberg translated Strindberg’s dramatic principles into the medium of film. Steene compares, for example, Molander’s use of “part realistic/part phantasmagoric mise-en-scène” (“Bergman’s” 36) with Sjöström’s talent at combining “realistic details and sublime elements” (37) and Sjöberg’s examination of “fantastic realism” (39). These filmmakers experimented with Strindbergian theatrical legacy by studying his blurring of the boundary between unreal and real. However, it is no exaggeration to argue that Bergman’s examination of Strindberg’s dreamlike perception of reality is most persistent. Törnqvist rightly states that Strindberg’s modernist dramaturgy, present in *A Dream Play*, which is “more cinematic” than “theatrical,” was a “problem for stage directors and “it took an outstanding film director like Bergman to overcome this problem” (*Between* 24).

In his autobiography *The Magic Lantern* Bergman writes about the strong impact Strindberg had on him, influencing his philosophy of life and art. It is no wonder that Bergman produced Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* three times on stage and once for television. More importantly, *A Dream Play* has been a source of inspiration for

individual films such as *Persona*, which bears similarities with the play's formal and thematic concerns.

Blackwell, among others scholars (such as Steene, Mosley, Ketcham, Blake, the Markers and Törnqvist), is interested in analysing the connection between these two artists. Blackwell points out how prior to 1961 Bergman saw the "Lutheran God as both one of mercy and one wrath" (50). Unlike Strindberg, Bergman lost his belief in God and turned towards human beings as an answer to the riddle of human existence on earth. For Steene, Strindberg's "new metaphysical conception of reality" in his post-Inferno period finds a counterpart in Bergman's "metaphysically 'reductive' films" ("Bergman's" 26) at the beginning of the 1960s. Although Bergman lost faith in the spiritual figure as an answer to human existence on earth, he nevertheless kept exploring spirituality as an important part of human experience on earth. As Blackwell points out, for both Strindberg and Bergman "the path to increased understanding of the human dilemma lies not in intellectual analysis but rather in an almost Kierkegaardian leap of faith in which man surrenders himself to the absurd and offers up his life to a nonepistemological existence" (50). Furthermore, Bergman examined spirituality as an important facet of human life by studying spirituality in relation to physical existence. Spiritual minds and physical bodies represented a conflict for Bergman. This is shown in *Persona*, in which the opposing entities of mind and body are embodied in the characters of Alma (Bibi Andersson) (the personification of body) and Elisabeth (Liv Ullman) (personification of soul). Bergman examines how the union between these entities is desirable, yet impossible and something that leads only to frustration. John Simon writes that, "As complementary opposites, they need to seek each other out following the

principle of polarity; but as conflicting, antithetical forces, they end up by clashing” (224). The compelling urge to fuse mind and body gives Alma a desire for “wishful identification” (Steene *Ingmar*, 119) with Elisabeth who is the symbol of what she lacks. Thus, in the examination of the split between mind and body Bergman comes close to the thematic concerns of *A Dream Play*. One must thus ask how Bergman uses cinematography together with the actor’s craft to explore this split.

Interestingly, Bergman’s interrogation of the split between body and mind, that refuse to be combined, becomes inseparable from the film’s tendency to transfer sexuality to the spiritual rather than physical realm. Sexuality is dealt with in the characters’ past remembrances, dreams and fantasy-like speeches, such as in the climactic scene where Alma’s monologue of a beach orgy aims to inspire the eroticism between her and Elisabeth. Another example is the scene where Elisabeth’s husband (Gunnar Björnstrand) makes his appearance in the film’s dream scene depicting lovemaking between Alma and the husband and characterizing Elisabeth as a “voyeur” and Alma as her “stand-in” (Steene “Bergman’s,” 33). Moreover, the sexuality, which is only remembered or fantasized, inevitably leads to suffering and guilt. Sexuality exists only in the spiritual realm, in the intangible realm of dream, fantasy, or memory, detached from earthbound physicality.

The depiction of women as “fantasy or dream figures” makes the film bear similarities to *A Dream Play* (Steene “Bergman’s,” 41). Steene compares the Boy (Jörgen Lindström) in *Persona* with Indra’s father as “a consciousness who sets a product from the ‘dream factory’ in motion” (41) and grants the two women of the film the roles of dream figures whose names Alma and Elisabeth refer to “soul” and “stern god,”

“suggest[ing] links to a transcendental world (42). It is no wonder that when Bergman staged the play at Dramaten, The Royal Dramatic Theatre, in Stockholm on March 14 in 1970, he used two actors to emphasize the split between “the divine Daughter” and “the earthly Agnes” (Törnqvist *Between*, 25).

When studying the dynamics between “classical (mainstream)” (27) and “modernist” narrative devices in *Persona* Steene focuses on “the modernist takeover” (“Bergman’s” 34), that is the shift from naturalism to modernism. Steene refers to the world of dreams that become more prominent in the course of the film, to the cinematic sequences whose status as dream or fantasy remains ambiguous, claiming that Bergman aligns himself with Strindberg, who detaches himself from a “tightly structured and logically conceived dramaturgy, to a modernist – that is, subjective, associative, and fluid dramaturgy” (“Bergman’s” 26). Thus, according to Steene, *Persona* functions as an “uncanny parallel to Strindberg’s dramaturgical course” (“Bergman’s” 34). Bergman searches for “somnambulist dramaturgy, that is, a form of dramatic vision where waking reality and dreamlike experiences were presumed to coexist” (34). Bergman’s growing temptation “to transcend the world of outer action and penetrate into ‘the twilight land of suprareality’” (28) best exemplifies the degree to which he embodies excess in his characters. In order for the manifestations of excess to be pronounced, one has to move beyond the tangible world. This leads to the examination of sexuality in the context of characters’ dreams. The characters’ spirits exceed the realistic boundaries that metaphorically and literally confine their bodies, creating transcendence – a required element for their spiritual existences.

Dreyer's "spiritual realism"

What links Strindberg, Bergman and Dreyer (and ultimately the Dogma filmmakers) is the belief that "there is a world outside the grayness and tedium of naturalism, namely: the world of imagination" (Dreyer "Imagination," 186). Dreyer has repeatedly expressed his interest in exceeding the boundaries of naturalism and stated,

Reportorial photography has compelled cinema to keep down to earth, so that it has become addicted to naturalism. Only after it cuts these moorings will cinema have the possibility of rising to the heights of imagination. Therefore, we must wrest cinema away from the embrace of naturalism. ("Imagination" 176-177)

Dreyer's statement has fascinating similarities to Strindberg's objections to "misconceived Naturalism" which views art as

simply consisted in copying a piece of nature in a natural way, but not the greater naturalism which seeks out those points where the greater battles take place, which loves to see what one does not see every day, which delights in the struggle between natural forces. ("Modern" 78)

Dreyer's battle with opposing styles of expression, the struggle between real and unreal, has modified the discussion of spirituality in his films. Paul Schrader argues that Strindberg's chamber drama aesthetics, as well as the German expressionism sweeping Scandinavia from 1910 to 1920, modified Dreyer's examination of spirituality. Schrader argues that Dreyer's "transcendental style" interacts with expressionism and chamber drama and "brings them a certain spiritual weight which they do not innately possess" (113). He writes that

Like expressionism, transcendental style in Dreyer's films stems from the Kammerspiel and opposes it. But it also opposes expressionism and its right to control the Kammerspiel... Transcendental style prefers to undermine the kammerspiel rather than attack it. It doesn't transform the external world; in stasis the mountain looks pretty much like it did in everyday. It transforms

the rationale of the world without changing its exterior. It does not rely on objective “proof” – whether that be the slight gesture of an actor (Kammerspiel) or a transfigured universe (expressionism) – but on a carefully constructed phenomenology of faith. (118-119)

Schrader’s study is important in questioning how spirituality can be manifested in film. However, it ignores the question of spiritual qualities in character by claiming that transcendental style doesn’t manifest itself in characters as such. I would argue that the spirituality demonstrated in Dreyer’s films takes part in depicting the protagonists’ bodies as symbolic of something that restricts the freedom of spirit.

Unlike Schrader, Raymond Carney importantly pays attention to the ways in which Dreyer’s studies in spirituality need to be analysed as inseparable from characterization in his films. The split between one’s spiritual and physical existence was a concern Dreyer tried to solve in his films by showing how one’s spiritual and physical existence are both viewed as equally important parts of a human being.

Carney writes that,

[Dreyer’s] figures exist somewhere beyond realistic appreciations, yet without having entirely left realism behind. They hover uncertainly between two realms: one in which to imagine something is the same as doing it, and another in which meanings and relationships are enacted practically, in the repressive structures of actual space and time. Their physical bodies (which they can never quite leave behind, without dying out of them) anchor them in the practical realm of human interactions, while their spirits and Dreyer’s stylistic transformations, distortions, and intensifications work to make them fluid and fluxional. (96)

The excessive experiences and lack of means for their expressions are what Carney implicitly refers to in his discussion of Dreyer’s protagonists and their spiritual experiences. What becomes important in Carney’s analysis of transcendence in Dreyer and what makes his approach different from Schrader’s is the way in which he examines

spirituality as inseparable from the representation of female sexual body and subsequently, from the actor's craft.

I want to continue Carney's analysis of Dreyer's struggle between bodies and spirits by discussing the filmmaker's emphasis on naturalism in acting which is crucial when considering how the naturalist acting style has been used to manifest the characters' spiritual aspirations. Dreyer was obviously interested in performative aspects of excess which Carney also suggests when analysing Dreyer's films' focus on the physicality of the female body "beside itself," in Williams terms, on "bodily excess," which is seen in both *Word* and *Day of Wrath*. Yet, I would highlight that Dreyer never abandoned the quest for naturalism in performance. Dreyer's struggle between spirits and bodies was inseparable from his examination of true and untrue, theatricality and non-theatricality, in performance. For Dreyer, excessive impulses were to be studied within naturalistic constraints. Furthermore, Dreyer's discussion of performance is linked to the question of cinema as an art form. "Realism in itself is not art; it is only psychological or spiritual realism that is so" (Dreyer "Little," 134). To achieve spiritual realism, Dreyer taught his actors to stay away from "falseness and pure exteriority" (135). For Dreyer, externalisation leads to something "untrue" and "unreal" and to a form of "mimicry" – while internalisation leads to something "true," "real" and "art" ("Dreyer's Reply" 70). Dreyer states,

one would search long for material more tempting for presentation as exterior drama. I – and, I dare to say, also my actors along with me – have chosen not to fall for the temptation. We have been just as eager in searching out the false exaggerations and the establishing clichés. We forced ourselves to search for truthfulness. ("Little" 134)

Dreyer achieved spiritual realism via detheatricalization, which demanded taming the body. Thus, the manifestations of bodily excess in *Word* and *Day of Wrath* are perhaps best viewed as parts of his temptation to create “exterior drama.” I argue that they are excessive impulses within the naturalistic constraints which modified Dreyer’s creation of “spiritual realism.”

This desire to explore the conflict between true and untrue is something that Strindberg, Bergman and Dreyer shared, although the filmmakers’ work in a different medium made it more possible to realise Strindberg’s dreamlike fusion of the realm of the imaginary and the realm of reality. Moreover, in the search for spirituality each of the artists was concerned with the conflict between spiritual and physical existence. What differentiates these artists is the ways in which they studied physicality in relation to spirituality. I would argue that Strindberg’s keen interest in illuminating bodies in all their physicality, bodies in decay, deteriorating on the hellish earth, is what makes him a different portraitist of humanity than the modernist filmmakers, for whom physicality was not only something that stood in opposition to the protagonists’ spiritual aspirations but also a source of conflict for the filmmakers themselves who searched for cinematic means by which to make the body intangible. To represent the body in all its physicality, to show the excess in physical body, which was Strindberg’s interest, was something the modernist filmmakers avoided out of fear of excess and theatricality. The search for “spiritual realism” demanded from the filmmakers the transformation of the body from the visible to the invisible, from the tangible to the intangible, from the physical to the spiritual.

Dogma filmmakers' examination of the collision between "human and abstract"

If the modernist filmmakers struggled with the cinematic implications of the Strindbergian theatrical legacy, so too did the Dogma filmmakers. For all that their rules about the use of location, sound, props, camerawork, editing, lighting and filters reflect their concern for authentic expression, their films demonstrate their willingness to sacrifice the letter for the spirit of the law. The filmmakers want to locate transcendental experience within the realistic framework as well as to convey this experience to the spectator. The spectator together with the characters come to realize that "what we call reality is actually at best a half-reality, often a lie and most likely a phantom, a mirage" (Törnqvist *Strindbergian*, 219). Thus, I would argue that the Dogma filmmakers' examination of the collision between the human and the abstract as well as their dreamlike perception of reality align them with Strindberg.

After the publication of the Dogma Manifesto, von Trier started shooting his film *Breaking the Waves*, which explored the conflict between the real and unreal, "the collision between human and abstract" (von Trier qtd. in Björkman "Juggling," 10). In *Breaking the Waves*, von Trier confronts humanity by questioning the existence of spiritual beliefs in the modern world. One could argue that the film's miraculous events in the midst of banal reality have inspired other Dogma filmmakers' examination of the collision between the real and unreal. More importantly, von Trier's examination of the clash between the human and the abstract, which culminates in his depiction of the female protagonist Bess's spirituality and sexuality, has had obvious influences on other Dogma filmmakers' characterization of the female protagonist and her spiritual and sexual aspirations. Like Strindberg, the Dogma filmmakers represent the trope of hell on

earth as filtered through the physicality of the female body, through the female actors' performance of sexual and spiritual hysteria. The Dogma filmmakers' interrogation of a hell on earth is, I want to argue here, inseparable from their examination of the imaginary realm, their contemplation of transcendental experience within a realistic framework which shows their constant effort to exceed the limits of realistic representation. The effort to exceed the limits of realistic representation is not only depicted in the films of von Trier and Vinterberg but also in the films of other Danish Dogma filmmakers, such as Åke Sandgren and Annette K. Olesen.

The Celebration

I will begin my analysis by studying how Strindberg's view of a Hell on earth finds a parallel in Vinterberg's studies in incestuous sexuality, the troubled relationship with the father figure, the lost innocence of childhood and resurrection that reflect the filmmaker's interest in exploring themes that recur in the chamber dramas of Strindberg. Like his predecessors, Vinterberg works to exceed the boundaries of the real, thereby opening up a glimpse into the realm of the imaginery. Nowhere is this combination of excess and imagination more clear than in *The Celebration*, particularly in the resurrection of Christian's dead sister, Linda.

The very beginning of *The Celebration* introduces the spectator to the theme of death, time in transition and decay: one of the arriving guests to the father's sixtieth birthday thanks Helene for the "lovely" funeral. Soon after, we find out that Michael didn't attend the funeral, which makes Helene accuse him of a lack of respect for his dead sister. After these initial verbal introductions to the theme of death, we enter

(with Helene) the room where the sister committed suicide. White sheets cover the furniture and white transparent curtains shroud the windows, signifying, as Strindberg outlines in *The Ghost Sonata* a death in the house (Strindberg 105). The sheets that cover the furniture reflect Vinterberg's concern for the elimination of props, for the simplification of space, in order to evoke a certain Strindbergian moribund mood. Vinterberg's effort to study the experience of the transcendental realm within the realistic framework is present in the moment when the camera films the room from behind the transparent white curtain in slow motion. The sequence lasts only for a few seconds, but it has a disturbing effect. Soon after the sequence Helene states that the room feels very "ghost-like." Helene's bodily gestures, her frightened reactions to individual noises, reflect her sensing the close presence of death in the room: she can hear and almost see the "living ghost," her dead sister. The way in which Vinterberg disrupts the linearity of the scene by inserting sounds and images from other rooms is an example of his "shock tactics": the abruptness of sounds (sounds of collapsing, slapping etc.) makes their source deliberately unclear.

Here Vinterberg echoes the ending of *Breaking the Waves*. The night after Bess is buried at sea Jan's co-workers wake him up, encouraging him to go to the deck to listen to some miraculous sounds. Von Trier ends the film with an image of Jan and the others listening to bells in the middle of the sea's expanse – bells that, throughout the film, have been associated with Bess's desire to out bells back in the church. The last shot is a bird's-eye view of bells far up in the sky. In the film, von Trier sets up a parallel between Bess's healing and Jan's recovery from paralysis: Bess's growing faith in her

spiritual powers coincides with Jan's increased mobility. In the end, we witness what Bess had prayed for before her own death - Jan's rising from the bed and walking.

Vinterberg's examination of transcendental experience, of the visionary qualities of life in *The Celebration*, culminates in a scene that depicts the resurrection of the dead sister. The scene begins with a shot of Christian collapsing onto the floor after the incest between the father and both the sister and Christian has been revealed to the birthday guests. We next see Christian's dead sister coming into his room with a candle that lights up her face against the darkness of the room. We hear Christian saying, "Pia (Trine Dyrholm) [the name of the chambermaid who is in love with Christian], my sister is here." The constant ring of the phone, which is heard throughout the scene, punctuates Christian's words, "I love you. I miss you." What we see next is Christian going towards the sister and saying, "I miss you. Shall I come with you?" to which the sister responds by shaking her head, smiling and stating, "I shall go now." They are then seen hugging each other. The scene ends with Christian finally reacting to the ring and picking up the phone. At the moment when Christian picks up the phone the room is properly lit and we see Pia sleeping on the bed. The scene illustrates how Vinterberg blurs the boundary between the realm of the imaginary and the realm of reality by accompanying dreamlike images with realistic sounds.

One could also interpret Christian's dream-like images as reflections of his longing for the "paradisaic existence in *this* life" (Törnqvist *Between*, 152; emphasis in original), the lost innocence of childhood, that Törnqvist analyses when comparing Bergman and Strindberg. Christian's physical embracing of his sister in these dream

images depicts his desire to relive and re-experience the unity of his family members and the “communion of childhood” (152).

Furthermore, the effort to recover the lost paradise on earth, the innocence of childhood, is inseparable from Vinterberg’s romantic ideas of “growing up” as meaning “growing sinful” (Törnqvist *Between*, 113) which he shares with his predecessors. Vinterberg depicts the sinful state of humankind through the representation of a sexuality that is degrading, filthy and incestuous. Christian’s image of his sister dressed in a white, angel-like gown embodies Christian’s dream of lost innocence and purity. Moreover, one cannot help but noticing the difference between Christian’s dream-like vision of her sister as a virginal figure and the representation of earth-bound sexuality in other scenes. At the beginning of the film Vinterberg juxtaposes two contrasting views of sexuality: he cuts back and forth between the scenes depicting the aggressive lovemaking of Christian’s brother and his wife and the scenes portraying the physical distance between Christian and Pia emphasized by the camera recording the scene from high above. Thus, the fact that Christian’s repetitions of the name “Pia,” which accompany his dream-like visions of this angel-like, spiritual figure of his sister, reflects Vinterberg’s effort to conflate Christian’s view of innocence and purity of childhood with his experience of sexuality. Since we haven’t been given any cue that Pia is in Christian’s room when he sees the sister, we don’t know how to interpret the relation between Christian’s vision and his voice repeating the name “Pia”. Thus, Christian repetitions of Pia’s name could be viewed as his wishful thinking to see Pia in his sister. Christian’s wishful conflation of his sister and lover reflects his wish that Pia, his lover, would have the qualities his sister (in his mind) represents: innocence and purity.

Interestingly, Pia plays a crucial role in Vinterberg's depiction of Christian as someone who is able to rediscover some of the lost innocence of his childhood. By the end of the film, we come to know that Pia never left Christian's childhood home while others moved away. In Christian's view, Pia is still what she used to be, the innocent childlike, virginal, figure whom he will introduce to the outside world and take to Paris where their life together is meant to begin. Likewise, the other concluding scenes of the film suggest that Christian is, after all, able to re-experience the unity of his family. Christian, Pia and Helene dance together in the middle of the night after the chaotic birthday party. Their physical closeness, the way that they hold each other tightly, reflects a reunion between the family members. The film ends with a scene in which the family has gathered around the breakfast table; here for the first time in the film, one can feel genuine warmth between the family members. By ending his film with these scenes, Vinterberg seems to suggest that one is, after all, able to relive and re-experience some semblance of "paradisiac existence" on earth. Thus, the ending of the film marks a contrast with the film's beginning which depicts the filmmaker's interest in exploring the idea of hell on earth.

Although Vinterberg's examination of miraculous events in the midst of banal reality make him share von Trier's concern for the collision between the human and the abstract, their respective portraiture of a spiritual being is what makes their films very different. Whereas Vinterberg emphasizes the split between spirituality and physicality by juxtaposing Linda's purity, innocence and spirituality with earthbound sexuality, von Trier depicts his protagonist's sexuality as a conduit to spirituality. The externalised mode of acting in Watson's performance emphasizes the physicality of being, which is

inseparable from the film's analysis of sexuality. Bess constantly ponders the disparity between her feelings, what Carney would probably call "imaginative energy" (103) and her physical, sexual behaviour. Watson rightly observes how her character is "a person without a skin in that she doesn't know when to stop with any emotion" (qtd. in McKenna 5).

Bess' conversations with God and her impersonation of God's punishing voice, demonstrate her wonder and awe about the way in which her body and spirit are torn apart. She questions whether her actions match the feelings of love she confesses to have. When Bess confesses to God – that is to herself – that she loves Jan, she impersonates God's voice and says, "so you keep saying but I don't see it. Prove to me that you love him and then I will let him live." The parallels between Bess' prayers for Jan's return and his homecoming, lead Bess to believe that she possesses magical powers. Jan's request for Bess to make love to strangers which would heal him initiates Bess's unwavering belief in her God-given ability to heal Jan through using her sexuality as a tool and in turn heightening her spiritual beliefs. What follows are a series of scenes, which best exemplify how von Trier transforms what Carney would call "private, inward drama of imagination and desire" (80) into public, externalised expressions of imagination and desire.

Unlike Vinterberg, who studies physicality as a conflict with one's spiritual aspiration and as inseparable from a sexuality that inspires guilt, von Trier represents Bess's sexuality as a distinct form of what Linda Williams describes as "bodily excess" (4). Williams's discussion of "a spectacle of body caught in the grip of intense sensation and emotion" is important when thinking about the ways in which von Trier examines

spirituality and physicality, both of which exceed the bounds of the real. One could argue that his film, like horror, melodrama and pornographic films, functions as a body genre belonging to “the extended rubric of melodrama, considered as a filmic mode of stylistic and/or emotional excesses that stands in contrast to more ‘dominant modes of realistic, goal oriented narrative’” (3). Bess’s use of her sexual body fulfils the demands of excessive film acting that Carole Zucker defines as “eccentric, theatrical, exaggerated, stylised, or over-acted” (“Concept” 54). Von Trier’s interrogation of a character’s spiritual aspirations and his interest in examining the representation of “different kinds of sexual perversion” (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 213) leads to a “re-examination of performance aesthetics” (Zucker “Concept,” 55) in relation to the filmmakers’ predecessors. Watson’s performance in *Breaking the Waves* is an example of the way in which one’s physicality doesn’t stand in opposition to spiritual aspirations unlike the case in Bergman’s and Dreyer’s films, with which Vinterberg’s film aligns itself.

The Idiots

In *The Idiots*, von Trier further studies a Strindbergian dialectic of the spiritual and the physical. If excess is understood as something that is “on the edge of the respectable” (Williams 2), then von Trier consolidates those connections by exploring excessive manifestations of sexuality. The radicalism of sexual representation is achieved through the way in which the privacy of a chamber space, denoted by an empty house, is used as an arena for private reflections of one’s sexuality. The privacy of a chamber space is pushed to the extreme, leading to the freedom of the externalised sexuality that turns an individual experience into a collective experience. Sexuality is *embodied* in the

physicality of performance. *The Idiots* studies the split between spiritual mind and sexual body by comparing Karen's lack of freedom in her body – the stillness of it – to the other characters' liberal experimentation with their bodies. Karen is the opposite of “extrovert” (Jorgensen) Bess, which is evident in the characters' respective depictions of sexuality.

In a scene which takes place in a swimming pool, a public place, the characters engage in studying their bodies as well as those of others. They gaze, touch and wash each other's naked bodies. Karen is a spectator, timidly gazing from a distance at the others' exploration of their body. Whereas others exhibit their bodies to each other as well as to the camera, Karen constantly turns away from both of them. In this scene, Karen's evasion and fear of physical intimacy is established. “In her body Karen is not free, while she is freest of all in other things” (Jorgensen).

Karen's timidity is symptomatic of her physical self-denial and suppression of her sexuality. This is compared to the way in which for others physical freedom leads to sexuality in the form of playful experimentation. The most explicit demonstration of this is witnessed in the scene in which the characters give a party for Stoffer, eventually engaging in group sex in the living room of the empty house. Here the practice of exceeding physical limits, which is the undercurrent in the characters' performances, is pushed to its extreme in the depiction of sexuality as publicly shared and not privately hidden. But Karen withdraws from the community that is about to engage in the sexual orgy, silently tiptoeing from the room with hunched shoulders. Embarrassed and disapproving, she is an outsider who stays away from the group, for her sexuality is private, hidden issue.

The message von Trier is conveying to us in *The Idiots* through the explicit representation of the bodily excess is tied up with the issue of provocation and how it does not actually lead to anything. What Jorgensen finds provocative is the way in which the film and its performance styles reflect the workings of today's society. According to Jorgensen, the freedom of sexuality in *The Idiots* captures the essence of a society in which freedom of expression is liberal and unconfined. Although nothing seems to be hidden, there is an underlying shadow of fear and sorrow which cannot be expressed. The film is a hymn to what we can never say. Jorgensen views this inexpressiveness in people – the sorrow in Karen – as a sign of spirituality. According to her, the film reminds us how the spiritual quality in human beings is never diminished (Jorgensen), although it might go unrecognised. Von Trier's films forces its recognition. Karen's extreme control over her body suppresses her sexuality. Karen's fears, desires, and dreams lie beyond the tangible world, and it is that world that she aims to reach. The film introduces Karen as a spiritual being like Indra's Daughter, the Young Lady or the Daughter whose spiritual aspirations conflict with their physical being.

Yet, as the film progresses Karen comes to discover the freedom of her body. Von Trier's intimate filmmaking creates an atmosphere of trust in which the actors are encouraged to find new dimensions within themselves and to exceed physical and psychological limitations. For this, von Trier asks the actors to go through a process that leads to a fresh approach to the art of acting – to return to an infantile state by examining bodily movements and vocal capacities. Von Trier examines childlikeness in performance on a formal and a thematic level. For him, childlikeness in performance connotes a lack of control, in which unguarded responses to imaginary situations and the

emotions they evoke prevail, producing a state of being in which the actor lets herself be invaded by her emotions.

On a thematic level, childlikeness is a crucial part of Karen's resistance to adulthood. Furthermore, von Trier's examination of childlikeness reflects his shared belief with Dreyer that "our sexual and physical selves are as much at war with the repressions of society as our spirits are"(Carney 148). I would like to apply Carney's idea to von Trier who like Dreyer is fascinated with the "aspects of our being that stand 'transcendence' in this way – not as a state of pure spirituality, but rather as a capacity to escape from systems of normalization and control" (Carney 148). Childlikeness in performance is von Trier's tool with which he examines how "our bodies and senses potentially 'transcend' limiting representations as much as our souls and ideals do" (Carney 148). Thus, it is not surprising that von Trier uses Karen as a figure whose spiritual aspirations are inseparable from her childlikeness.

Furthermore, it is the protagonist's yearning for lost freedom that von Trier implies by bringing childlike qualities to the foreground in the character of Karen; more specifically, the freedom that domestic roles restrict. The search for freedom is concealed beneath the character's performance of child-woman. The roles of mother and wife are viewed as standing in opposition to her childlike freedom and the authentic, non-theatricality of childlike being. It is Karen's regression into an infantile state that for her stands as an authentic way of being.

Von Trier portrays Karen against the backdrop of a crowd of characters who exhibit a desperate need to renew contact with their suppressed childlike qualities and to find unbridled channels of expression. He isolates Karen as the one for whom this

return to an infantile state becomes real; the film follows this process. The community that Karen joins offers a secure, homey atmosphere in which she begins to feel safe. Analysing the changes in Jorgensen's use of her body to depict her character's transitions demonstrates that Karen's timid bodily actions, the awkwardness she feels within the others' close presence, slowly reveal her increased feelings of trust. In one scene the characters are gathered in a deserted living room in an empty house. While the others sit talking on a floor in a big circle, Karen falls asleep behind the others' backs. Like a child she is curled up on the floor holding her hands under her cheek. Von Trier's framing and shot composition in this scene focuses our attention on Karen's sleep and on her tranquil breathing, suggesting her sense of safety within the warmth of the community, a safety that prompts her relaxation of her rigid bodily control. Jorgensen's immobility captures the beauty of her peaceful sleep. For Jorgensen, Karen's childlike being is presented in her speechless existence, which reminds Jorgensen of how a child expresses his/her feelings of things in cries and laughs (Jorgensen).

An important scene in the film's examination of childlikeness also takes place in a swimming pool. This scene follows the one in which Karen is seen sitting on a windowsill, where she briefly spasses for the first time. We see Susanne trying to coax Karen into a pool. Karen's back is towards the pool and she tightly holds Jeppe's (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) arms to stay away from the water. After that Karen is seen floating in the water closely surrounded by Jeppe and Susanne who tells her: "Look, you're floating all by yourself." The camera gradually moves to a close-up of Karen's face, revealing her pleasure at trusting the water to support her. Suddenly Karen's face reflects the transition from pleasure to anguish, and she bursts into tears. Karen squeezes her eyes shut and

gives a thin, whining cry. We see the faces of Susanne and Karen touching each other and Susanne gently stroking Karen's cheekbones and kissing her. Karen and Susanne's faces are contemplated in extreme close-up while Susanne consoles Karen by saying "It's okay." The pain manifested in Karen's face and in her cry depicts her desperate efforts to exclaim her hidden anguish. The water, which functions as a symbol of birth and femininity, marks this scene as Karen's rebirth, the beginning of her passage into self-discovery.

This scene anticipates her spassing in the final scene. According to Jorgensen, the gesture of spitting the cake and letting the juice fall from her mouth is like a child's (Jorgensen). The final scene at Karen's home depicts how the desperate effort to find the child within oneself leads to its discovery only in Karen. As the final scene shows, it is only Karen who finds the child within herself and is ready to transcend her present being. Jorgensen describes existence of childlikeness in every human being, saying that there is a constant effort to be more what you are and to try to exceed your limitations in order to know where they exist. In the end all this makes you small and human (Jorgensen).

Truly Human

This interest in studying spiritual minds and physical bodies and the effort to blur the boundary between the realms of dreams and reality further aligns Vinterberg and von Trier with Åke Sandgren. The latter's *Truly Human* is a story about the fantasy world of six-year-old Lisa and her upper-middle-class family. Ib Bondebjerg describes the very beginning of the film and refers to the blurring boundary between the realms of

dreams and reality, “On the one hand, we have a perfectly realistic and believable universe while on the other, we have a completely unrealistic and imaginative world seen as an infra-red p.o.v. -shot looking at Lisa, who is talking to her dead older brother” (“Dogma95” 79). As the story progresses, we find out that the brother never existed, since Lisa’s mother had an abortion. The brother is a product of Lisa’s imagination; he is her only companion in a family that has no time for her. Lisa even hears her parents saying that their lives would be better without her. Sandgren analyses his effort to exceed the boundaries of the real and states,

[*Truly Human*] was originally intended as a documentary about a mythological creature, the Vitra, that lives in Norrland, Sweden, but really resides in people’s imaginations. Later on it occurred to me to make a feature film about a creature that travels around and experiences the evils of the world. But it got too pretentious, too grandiose, and I had trouble making the story credible. Something was missing, then I was asked to make a Dogma film and I knew at once that I’d found my form, a form that would never allow me to make the plot pretentious. The Dogma rules generate a reportage-like atmosphere that is a productive counterpart to my fable-imbued story (qtd. in Stevenson *Dogme*, 127-128)

Interestingly, *Truly Human* begins with the demolition of Lisa’s house (due to urban renewal) which coincides with Lisa’s death in a car accident. As in Strindberg’s chamber dramas, the houses that are destroyed, burned or collapsed point out the characters’ passage from earthly Hell to “the life hereafter”(Törnqvist *Between*, 30). Furthermore, Lisa’s death causes her imaginary brother, who lives inside the walls of the family’s apartment, to be set free; he “walks into society as speechless and blank as Kasper Hauser. He greets the world for the first time with open innocence and without prejudice or an understanding of social norms. It is through his story that we see the modern Danish welfare state as if through new eyes and from the outside”(Bondebjerg

“Dogma95,” 80). Sandgren juxtaposes documentary-like views of the city of Copenhagen with the portrayal of this spiritual figure in the midst of the city, thus completely blurring the boundary between the realm of dreams and the realm of reality. Sandgren depicts how this spiritual figure comes into contact not only with his family but also with social institutions that function as surrogate families. The film illustrates how he is at first taken care of but as the story progresses it is he who takes care of other people by showing them love and care, by being truly human. No matter how hard he tries to prove his genuineness, goodness and innocence he is made to feel like an outsider; “His simplicity is like an X-ray of the stony walls of an inhuman society caught in the vicious circle of modernity” (Bondebjerg “Dogma95,” 81). Thus, he becomes a “victim” as well as a “saviour”; “The lost son is a Christ figure who carries all the sins of mankind on his shoulders and lives with the lonely and with the outcasts of society”(Bondebjerg “Dogma 95,” 80). Sandgren ends the film by showing how the brother disappears into the wall of the family’s new flat after making the family more human and preparing them for Lisa’s return; his disappearance coincides with Lisa’s resurrection.

Interestingly, Sandgren’s depiction of Lisa’s resurrection bears striking similarities to Vinterberg’s depiction of Linda’s resurrection in *The Celebration*. One way to look at the scenes of resurrection is to compare the characters of Lisa and Linda with Strindbergian martyrs, the spiritual figures, who must carry the burden of the sinful states of humankind and “who suffer for no fault of [their] own” (Strindberg *The Ghost Sonata*, 151). Thus, the death of Linda and Lisa could be viewed as their liberation from a Hell on earth. Death releases both Linda and Lisa from a life that is torturous and humiliating.

Sandgren's film, which deals with "the presence of a symbolic son trying to become human" (Bondebjerg "Dogma 95," 81), clearly presents Copenhagen as a Hell on earth. Like Indra's daughter or the Milkmaid, Lisa's brother descends to earth to witness human suffering and the inhumanity of modern Danish welfare society. Like Indra's daughter, he returns to the spiritual realm after having made people realize how painful the reality in which they live really is. Moreover, like Strindberg, Sandgren studies the ways in which characters "split, double and multiply" (Strindberg in his preface to *A Dream Play*). As soon as Indra's daughter descends to the earth she is given a new identity and a new name, Agnes; likewise, Lisa's brother is given a name, Ahmed, once he descends to the earth. Furthermore, one could argue that the brother and Lisa are one and the same character: when Lisa dies in the car accident the imaginary brother replaces her. Furthermore, Lisa's resurrection marks the brother's return to the spiritual realm. Through the characters' journeys between these two realms of existence, Sandgren explores the blurring boundary between dream and reality.

Within that blurred boundary Sandgren, like Vinterberg in *The Celebration* and von Trier in *The Idiots*, interrogates the longing for the lost innocence of childhood. In *Truly Human* the brother's descent to earth to greet his family reflects his desire to live and experience the intimacy and unity of his family, which never actually existed. If Vinterberg portrays Christian as a traveller who returns to his childhood home with hopes of reliving his happy childhood days, Sandgren depicts the brother as a Strindbergian traveller/wanderer who searches for the family (either a real one or an institution as a surrogate family) he never had. If Vinterberg depicts Christian's struggles to rediscover the lost paradise on earth, the innocence of childhood, Sandgren contemplates a situation

in which the innocence of childhood is a pure illusion. This is clearly illustrated in Sandgren's portrayal of Lisa's childhood; even in her childhood Lisa needs to act like an adult and take care of herself because her parents are too busy to acknowledge their child.

Vinterberg's analysis of the lost innocence of childhood, his Romantic ideas of "growing up" as meaning "growing sinful" influence his depiction of sexuality. Likewise, Sandgren's depiction of a Hell on earth, a Hell in modern Danish welfare society, influences his portrayal of sexuality. The sinful state of humankind is depicted through the representation of sexuality as only perverse. If *The Celebration* implies that one is able to find innocence and purity of childhood by showing how Christian is able to re-experience the unity of his family and begin a life with the innocent child-like, virginal figure, Pia, *Truly Human* suggests that no healthy view of sexuality exists. The physical proximity between the brother and children of the neighbourhood is interpreted as paedophilia, despite his attempts to prove his innocence. As Jack Stevenson argues, "he has become tainted and infected by all the hate and suspicion of the adult world. He has lost his innocence and retreats into the cloistered security of an existence inside walls" (*Dogme* 131). Unlike Vinterberg, Sandgren seems to suggest that the very notion of innocent childhood needs revision.

Afterword

This dissertation shed new light on August Strindberg's theatrical legacy by detecting its impact on the Danish Dogma filmmakers' approach to women actors' craft. The dissertation highlighted the importance of rereading theatrical and cinematic traditions from the woman actor's point of view. Furthermore, the dialogue between the disciplines of film, theatre and women's studies has been shown to open up new unexplored avenues for the study of both film and theatrical actors and acting.

The theatrical background of Scandinavian film actors still seems to be a problem for scholars of Scandinavian cinema. One could argue that a view held by such early film theorists as Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Bálázs and Arnheim regarding the theatrical roots of film acting, roots which needed to be erased when granting film an autonomous position as art, still influences contemporary scholarship, evidenced in the way in which the actor's theatrical background is constantly being dismissed. A more specific reason for the neglect of actors not only in studies of the Dogma films but also in Scandinavian film studies in general is the unacknowledged dynamics between experimental theatres, the Royal Theatre and cinema. This dissertation has opened up a critical discussion of the impact of the Royal Theatre on theatre and film actors. Furthermore, it exemplifies how film acting studies should distinguish different kinds of theatrical institutions and their impact on film acting in specific historical, cultural and national contexts. One important subject of further research is certainly the Betty Nansen Theatre (the former Alexandrian Theatre), which Betty Nansen reopened in Copenhagen in 1917. Its relationship to the Royal Theatre as well as to the Danish cinema in different historical periods begs further

analysis. It is a theatrical institution on the margins of the theatrical world where the actors have been, and still are, able to experiment with innovative styles of performance.

To contextualize film performances historically, culturally and nationally means that the role of the past is used in making sense of the present. However, there is still a lot to discover in the Scandinavian theatre and film actors of the past in order to broaden and deepen the research on not only Danish actors but also other contemporary Scandinavian film actors. The examination of Strindberg's "theatre of revolt," which became embodied in the women actors' performances calls for a discussion of other Scandinavian theatre and film actors such as Clara Pontoppidan, Betty Nansen, Betty Hennings, Harriet Bosse, Tora Teje, Karin Molander, Hilda Borgström and Karin Swanström who revolted against the previous theatrical constructions of Woman.

Yet, one of the great problems in making Scandinavian actors better known outside Scandinavia is the lack of research material available to audiences unfamiliar with Scandinavian languages. This dissertation made extensive use of oral histories (actor interviews) which needed to be juxtaposed with (male, official) reading of past and present stages of Scandinavian arts and culture. Scandinavian women actors play an important role in rewriting Scandinavian women's histories, which can only happen if the actors' view of their role in reconstructing the portrait of Scandinavian women is well documented.

The analysis of the female tradition of acting certainly needs to be counterposed with a male tradition of acting. Particularly the impact of the Royal Theatre on film and theatre acting needs to be studied in relation to such Scandinavian male actors as Lars Hanson, Torsten Hammarén, Oscar Stribolt, Poul Reumert, Svend

Methling and August Falck. Likewise, the dissertation's focus on the contemporary Danish woman actors encourages further research on their male colleagues. Since the experimental theatres have been theatrical venues for both female and male Dogma actors, the latter's relationship with the mainstream theatrical institutions, such as the Royal Theatre, and the impact of experimental theatres on their Dogma performances demand further analysis.

Furthermore, the exploration of the Danish Dogma films as cinematic chamber pieces evokes questions regarding the development of chamber drama tradition in the early Scandinavian cinema, which witnessed the continuation of the tradition of male directors exploring gender roles in the domestic space as depicted in the films of Victor Sjöström (*Ingeborg Holm*, 1913; *Berg-Ejvind och Hans Hustru*, 1918; *Karin Ingmarsdotter*, 1920) and Mauritz Stiller (*Den Moderna Suffragetten*, 1913; *Barnet*, 1913; *Erotikon*, 1920; *Kärlek and Journalistik* 1916; *När Konstnären Älska*, 1915). Scholars of early Scandinavian cinema have emphasized Sjöström's talent at depicting the Scandinavian landscape, using its metaphoric dimensions in developing story lines, while at the same time forgetting his fascinating use of domestic interior spaces. The domestic interior spaces are often juxtaposed with exterior shots of vast landscapes, which are used metaphorically to depict the female protagonist's yearning for freedom. The representation of women's revolt against the prevailing roles of mother and wife in a domestic sphere through the performance of hysteria culminate in Sjöström's *Ingeborg Holm*. Strindberg's influence on Stiller is evident in his construction of cinematic chamber space and in his interest in de- and reconstructing prevailing notions of femininity and masculinity. The reconstruction of gender roles in domestic spheres is

inseparable from his examination of homoerotic relationships as revealingly depicted in one of the first homoerotic films *Vingarne* (1916).

If Dogma films as cinematic chamber pieces inspire one to contemplate the development of chamber drama tradition in the early Scandinavian cinema, it also evokes a question of the tradition's presence in the contemporary Scandinavian cinema. Certainly, von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), *Dogville* (2003) and *Manderlay* (2005) or Vinterberg's *Dear Wendy* (2005) illustrate that the Dogma rebels have moved far away from the principles of Dogma filmmaking. Although *Dogville* stretches the use of the Strindbergian empty space to its extreme in its use of empty theatrical stage, together with films set in imaginary American past, *Dancer in the Dark* and *Manderlay*, it demonstrates that von Trier has abandoned the principles of Dogma filmmaking. Likewise, for *Dear Wendy* Vinterberg constructed an imaginary American mining town which was the largest outdoor film set ever built in Denmark. Temporal and spatial distancing through constructed sets, voice-overs and soundtracks, the emphasis on props such as weapons and guns and the examination of their symbolic dimensions make it difficult to explore the filmmakers' recent work in relation to their Dogma filmmaking influenced by the Strindbergian theatrical tradition.

Yet, interestingly other Scandinavian filmmakers have been creating new cinematic chamber pieces at the same time. *101 Reykjavik* (Baltasar Kormákur, 2000), *Together* (Lukas Moodysson, 2000), *Open Hearts* (Susanne Bier, 2002), *After the Wedding* (2006) are films where authentic chamber space is used to create authentic performances. These films create the impression of action taking place here and now, and emphasise the unity of time and space. These films focus on the psychology of the

character and deliver the story through the actor's performance thus continuing Strindbergian chamber drama aesthetics and principles of dramaturgy. Moreover, the films' focuses on performances of excess and theatricality in a domestic chamber space, which mark a shift in the Scandinavian cinematic chamber drama and performance tradition, align them with Dogma films' effort to reconstruct these traditions. Dogma reawakened the chamber drama tradition and inspired other Scandinavian filmmakers to return to a Strindbergian chamber setting as a locus for domestic dramas and to find novel portrayal of domestic gender roles through excessive performance styles.

Interestingly, David Bordwell writes about the impact of Dogma on the recent Danish cinema in February 2007. He considers the contemporary Danish cinema the "Cinema of Quality" ("Risk") in which the genre of melodrama dominates and which is characterized by "Excellent performers, sophisticated directors, and well-carpentered scripts" ("Risk"). Bordwell views the dominance of melodrama in the recent Danish films as an ironic consequence of Dogma 95, which forbade genre films. Yet, he also emphasizes how the Danish filmmakers reconstruct the genre of melodrama:

One option is to "theatricalize" melodrama quite overtly. This is most apparent in von Trier's stagebound *Dogville* and *Manderlay*. In a dark vacuum with only the sketchiest indications of place, these films evoke not only Brecht but (another irony) the Thornton Wilder play *Our Town*, a classic of American middlebrow theatre. A milder form of theatricality is found in *A Soap*, which by confining its action to a few apartments recalls the *kammerspiel* aesthetic of silent cinema and, further back, of Scandinavian drama. ("Risk")

Bordwell's notion of the impact of Scandinavian chamber drama tradition on the recent Danish cinema supports the argument that Dogma reawakened this theatrical tradition. By focusing on the presence of genre films as an ironic consequence of Dogma, what

Bordwell, however, doesn't acknowledge is the legacy of Dogma 95, that is the auteurs of the "excellent performers" that make the "Cinema of Quality" possible. Trine Dyrholm's experience in cinematic chamber pieces *The Celebration* and *In Your Hands* is certainly a reason for her excellent performance in *A Soap* for which she won a Bodil Award and which Bordwell considers a cinematic chamber piece. Dogma taught the actors the construction of authentic performances in an intimate authentic chamber space where the actor was able to peacefully create the right emotional states for his or her character and become the auteur of his or her performance. Furthermore, this renewed approach to the actor's craft that Dogma initiated has certainly inspired other Scandinavian actors to reconsider their approach to acting and forced them to keep up with the professionalism of the Dogma actors.

By writing the Dogma manifesto together with Vinterberg, von Trier accomplished a renewed (national and international) interest in the Danish actors, which is evident not only in other Danish filmmakers' interest in casting them but also in the Dogma actors' international careers (Trine Dyrholm, Iben Hjejle, Ander W. Bethelsen, Nikolaj Lie Kaas). Dogma has raised the status of Danish actors to a level where it has only been in the days of Asta Nielsen, the first European cinema star. As Ibsen and Strindberg did in theatre, von Trier changed something in the whole cinematic landscape, the whole approach to the actor's craft (Tiemroth). The actors gained recognition as auteurs of their own performances.

Interestingly, for von Trier, whose filmmaking before the Dogma reflected a disinterest in the actor's craft or even a fear of getting himself too much involved in the construction of the psychology of the character, Dogma seems to have marked a

permanent change in his approach to the actor's performance. Certainly, his reliance on Automavision, where the computer decides the nature of the camerawork in his latest film *The Boss of It All* (2006), shows that he continues to reinvent himself as a filmmaker, shifting from one extreme to another in creating artistic goals, setting up challenges to himself as well as to his actors. Interestingly, in this artistic renewal he relies on the use of such previous Dogma actors as Jens Albinus, Peter Gantzler, Iben Hjejle, Sofie Gråbol and Anders Hove. Also, his statement of the actor's performance shows that what has remained from Dogma is his treatment of actors who need to be approached as actor-auteurs. He states,

I have nothing against an actor 'asking his character.' All actors bring in their own technique and you have to be open to that. My way of working is to ask the actors for as many different variations on a scene as possible. The more experience you have as a director, the more you have seen and the more open you are to all sorts of different actors. (qtd. in Wendt Jensen)

It is now a challenge for the actors to maintain their role as actor-auteurs in the midst of technological developments and keep alive Dogma's premise that the story is to be told through the actor. It is the actors' role to show that film acting is all about the portrayal of human emotions, those invisible entities which only film can make visible. The actors' challenge is to keep alive the Strindbergian theatrical tradition, its emphasis on the strength of human mind - female or male - and the power of performance alone. It is this tradition which has made Scandinavian film and theatre arenas for human, yet magically luminous, actors.

Filmography

Persona (Bergman 1966)

Breaking the Waves (von Trier 1996)

Idioterne (*The Idiots*, von Trier 1998)

Festen (*The Celebration*, Vinterberg 1998)

De Ydmygede (*The Humiliated*, Jargil 1998)

Mifunes sidste sang (*Mifune*, Kragh-Jacobsen 1999)

Italiensk for begyndere (*Italian for Beginners*, Scherfig 2000)

Et Rigtigt menneske (*Truly Human*, Sandgren 2001)

En Kærlighedshistorie (*Kira's Reason: A Love Story*, Madsen 2001)

Forbrydelser (*In Your Hands*, Olesen 2004)

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Appendix

Danish Dogma filmmakers and dogma films

Thomas Vinterberg

Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration* (1998) was the first film made according to the Dogma rules that he and Lars von Trier wrote in 1995. Only two years before, Vinterberg had graduated from the National Film School of Denmark; his graduation film *Last Round* is one of his three short films, along with *What's Your Guess?* (1993) and *The Boy Who Walked Backwards* (1993), which were recognized in Denmark as well as abroad. Vinterberg achieved success with his first feature, *The Greatest Heroes* (1996), that "established him as the most talented of the young male directors associated with the Danish new wave of the 1990s" (Hjort and Bondebjerg 267) in his own country. However, only *The Celebration*, which won the Jury's Special Prize at Cannes, established the filmmaker's international reputation.

For Vinterberg the idea behind Dogma95 was to "create a polemical atmosphere and provoke people": "the point is to get angry and do something different. The point is to reflect the movie business as it is – not just to give it another colour". (qtd. in Kelly 112). With *The Celebration* he achieved this initial goal of the Dogma95. Vinterberg describes his film in the following manner, "it's a film that transcends the ordinary, commercial ways of making films, and it has helped me to transcend the conventions of my own filmmaking. Making it was very liberating and opened my eyes to what it means to make films" (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 279)

This effort to provoke people is something that his Dogma colleague, Lone Scherfig, thinks Vinterberg also explores on the thematic level of his Dogma film. Scherfig suggests that the film's protagonist could be viewed as Vinterberg's alter ego. She describes how "There was so much focus on him [Vinterberg] when he got out of film school and started out in the direction of accessible, well-behaved films. He then directed *Festen* and did almost what his main character did... He tells this horrible story without knowing the consequences, which is what Vinterberg did when he got up with all this focus on him." (Scherfig "SOURCES," 7) Vinterberg seems to share Scherfig's idea of the "parallels between the director's situation and the subject matter of the film" (Scherfig "SOURCES," 7). Vinterberg considers the Dogma films "very personal films" despite the fact that he together with von Trier came up with the rule stating that the director is not credited in the Dogma films. Vinterberg states, "these films, ironically, have been the most personal films I've seen from each one of us for a while – which was not the idea... but you do remove all the layers between what you're expressing and the audience. We were 'undressed'. That, combined with our concern for the purity of the whole Dogma project, encouraged all of us to dig more into ourselves for these films" (qtd. in Kelly 115).

The process of Dogma filmmaking, which was a challenge for the filmmaker, was also a challenge for his actors. By choosing to cast actors with different backgrounds, Vinterberg's film offered an arena of experimentation where different working methods had to coalesce. In Vinterberg's Dogma film, actors with backgrounds in theatre (such as Henning Moritzen) had to be able to work closely with actors with experience in improvisational film acting (such as Thomas Bo Larsen). Vinterberg's

success at finding a balance between improvisation and control, spontaneity and prior rehearsal is reflected in the film's masterfully depicted "group portraits" (Vinterberg qtd. in Kelly 114).

The Celebration (Dogma I)

The Celebration is a family drama depicting the sudden revelation of a family secret at a gathering to celebrate the birthday of the patriarch. Helge Klingenfeldt (Henning Moritzen) and his wife Elsie (Birthe Neumann) throw the party at a countryside manor house to celebrate Helge's 60th birthday. The children, Christian (Ulrich Thomsen), Helene (Paprika Steen) and Michael (Thomas Bo Larsen) with his wife, Mette (Helle Dolleris), and his three children attend the celebration along with other guests and family relatives. The festive mood of the birthday party is soon killed when Helene finds a letter written by his dead sister, Linda (Lene Laub Oksen), before her suicide and Christian gives a speech at the party in which he reveals the family secret: the incest between the father and both the dead sister and Christian. The guests don't take Christian seriously and he is kicked out of the house. Finally, it is Helene's turn to give a speech; she reads Linda's letter that details the incest between her and her father. The revelation leads to the public humiliation of the father. The film ends with a depiction of how the family members are able to repair their broken lives after releasing this inner aggression. For Vinterberg, *The Celebration* is about "the oppression of truth" (qtd. in Kelly 118), which he sees linked to the idea of "being afraid of anything foreign" (118). Consequently, Vinterberg considered the Klingenfeldt family as a "portrait of Denmark": "It's quite clear that the family in *The Celebration* somehow becomes a metaphor for

aspects of Denmark, for that insistence on the need to be calm and reasonable, for the deft repression of many things, including, for example aggression” (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 280).

Lars von Trier

Before Lars von Trier began his career in filmmaking, he studied at the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of Copenhagen from 1976 to 1979. During this time he also joined the experimental Film Group 16 in 1977 where he was a member until 1979. In 1979, von Trier got accepted to the National Film School of Denmark where he studied until 1982. At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s von Trier made short films such as *The Orchid Gardener* (1977), *Joyful Menthe* (1979), *Nocturne* (1980), *The Last Detail* (1981). These films together with his graduation film *Images of a Relief* (1982) have been considered “stylistically inventive explorations of themes and symbols which would later play a central role in his feature films” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 208). The filmmaker’s early productions have been largely ignored, despite the fact that the films *Nocturne* and *Images of a Relief* won the Best Film Awards at the 1981 and 1982 Munich Film Festivals. His first trilogy *The Element of Crime* (1984), *Epidemic* (1987) and *Europa* (1991), established his reputation as a filmmaker whose bold experimentations with cinematic styles, genres and thematic issues initiated what was to come later in the decade. *Element of Crime* was the winner of the Grand Prix Technique at Cannes in 1984, and *Europa* won Special Jury Prize for Artistic Contribution and shared the Grand Prix du Jury at Cannes in 1991. The filmmaker’s television productions included *Medea* (1988), based on Carl Th. Dreyer’s “Euripides-

inspired script” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 209), and the television series *The Kingdom* (1994) and *The Kingdom 2* (1997), which, according to Mette Hjort and Ib Bondebjerg, “masterfully combines elements of horror, playful humour and biting satire” and was the filmmaker’s “big popular breakthrough” (209). Elsewhere Bondebjerg also points out how, “The avant-garde movement in film received international its breakthrough with Lars von Trier’s film *The Element of Crime*, *Europa*, *The Kingdom* and *The Kingdom II*” (Bondebjerg “Contemporary”).

The production of Dogma films forced von Trier to question his previous filmmaking practices and, particularly, his view of performance. Dogma filmmaking, which demands a filmmaker’s total focus on the actor’s performance and thus “gives cinema back to its actors” (Jorgensen), redefined von Trier’s view of performance. Von Trier acknowledges this shift in his relationship to the actors, yet denies that there was a total lack of attention to performance in his earlier work. To answer Mette Hjort and Ib Bondebjerg’s question about his neglect of the actor’s craft and storytelling in favour of being a “masterful manipulator of images” (217) in his early work, von Trier recalls how he previously didn’t want “to engage in a dialogue with the actor about their views on the psychology of a given character.” He states, “I had my own, very precise interpretation of what I wanted, but that doesn’t mean that I considered the acting negligible. The actors’ presence was just as important as in other films, but the psychological dimension was of no interest to me” (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 217). Stellan Skarsgård, who plays Jan in *Breaking the Waves*, stated “When I saw the *Elements of Crime* I said to myself I wanna work with this director when he gets interested in people. It took him a few films. I think *The Kingdom* was the first big step, but it’s very courageous of him. He’s a very

successful, skilled director who's totally changing his way of working" (qtd. in Floyd 28). Elsewhere, von Trier admitted that it was his "conscious decision not to be too close to the actors" (qtd. in Björkman "Naked," 14). The proximity to the actors in Dogma filmmaking reflects the filmmaker's discovery of "an emotional vulnerability and grasps of human feeling that were barely hinted at his earlier work" (Floyd 28).

***The Idiots* (Dogma II)**

The Idiots pushed von Trier's exploration of the ways in which Dogma filmmaking can be "liberating for the actors" (von Trier qtd. in Kelly 139) to the extreme. Dogma filmmaking created a peaceful atmosphere, where the actor was able to retreat into her own mind, use her inner resources and imagination and believe in the truth of the moment. *The Idiots* tells the story of Karen (Bodil Jorgensen). She joins a group of people who have reunited to discover what they call "inner idiocy," that is inner authenticity – a condition not defined by the behavioural norms or social roles society has imposed upon them. Karen is the outsider in the group. She doesn't believe that the authenticity of being lies in externalised behaviour. For her, silence is a guarantee of her non-theatricality and authentic existence. The characters live in a deserted house, where they practice exceeding physical and psychological limitations through the performance of madness. The public spaces function as arenas where the behavioural codes are disrupted. Yet, the strength of the characters' beliefs in their project will be tested in the end, when they try to perform madness in more private spaces. The project is cancelled when nobody's actions can live up to this challenge. The film ends with Karen returning home, being the only one of the group who can perform madness in a private space.

Søren Kragh-Jacobsen

Kragh-Jacobsen is the only one of the Dogma filmmakers who is not a graduate from the Danish Film School. He studied documentary filmmaking at FAMU, the Czech Film School in Prague between 1969 and 1970. After his studies, he began to work at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation where he directed children's short fiction films in the Children and Youth Department and later worked as a programme director. This experience he gained at the Broadcasting Corporation made him "one of the leading Danish film-makers within the nationally and internationally recognised, social and psychological tradition of film-making for and about children and adolescent." (Hjort and Bondebjerg 165). Other filmmakers belonging to this tradition could be Danish filmmakers Bille August and Nils Malmros. In his own fiction films Kragh-Jacobsen has made use of his knowledge of how to direct child actors and make films for and about children and adolescents. Kragh-Jacobsen's first feature *Wanna See My Beautiful Navel?* (1978) "established a new tone in Danish film" (Hjort and Bondebjerg 165). Kragh-Jacobsen explains what this new tone meant for him as a filmmaker and states, "in the mid-1970s, there was another wave in Danish film, which we tend to forget about. Young directors protested against the older generation by making youth films, with young actors, aimed at the biggest section of the paying audience... I came in at the end of that wave myself. I was hooked straight away by the family atmosphere of film-making" (qtd. in Kelly 154). In the following decade he made *Rubber Tarzan* which won a Bodil Award in 1981 as the year's best Danish film, *Thunderbirds* (1988), "a dramatic socio-psychological portrait of two young men" and *Emma's Shadow*, a story of "imaginative

upper-class girl and her encounter with the Copenhagen working class in the 1930s” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 165), which won a Bodil Award in 1988 as the year’s best Danish film. The films of the 1990s such as *The Boys from St. Petri* (1991) and the international co-production *The Island on Bird Street* (1997) whose story deals with World War II and is delivered “through the eyes of children and adolescents” (Hjort and Bondebjerg 165), showed Kragh-Jacobsen continuing his interest in making films for and about children and adolescents. Moreover, the “socially aware portraits of young people and historical realism in *Emma’s Shadow* and *The Boys from St. Petri*” characterized “the realistic film tradition” in Danish cinema as Bondebjerg points out (“Contemporary”). Yet, it was his Dogma film that lent him his international reputation and was a fresh start for the filmmaker who after *The Island on Bird Street* was tired of the constraints of big budget filmmaking. *Mifune* won the Silver Bear at Berlin Film Festival in 1999 and “confirmed the emerging view that the Dogma rules amounted to more than a cynical publicity stunt and instead reflected important insights into the very conditions that make creativity and innovation possible” (Hjort and MacKenzie 3-4).

More importantly, for Kragh-Jacobsen, who was used to working with children and adolescents, Dogma offered a new filmmaking experience with its reliance on the use of professional actors. “It’s very liberating to have joined the ranks of the adults, because it’s so much easier to make films for adults than it is to make children’s films. It’s wonderful to work with professional actors. Suddenly you’re not holding your life in your hands any more, because they really know their stuff.” (Kragh-Jacobsen qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 178). As was the case for von Trier, Dogma marked a profound change in Kragh-Jacobsen’s approach to acting. He admits that his background in

documentaries made him “actually rather scared of working with actors” (154). Thus, the Dogma filmmaking, which gives cinema back to its actors, was a novel and challenging experience for the filmmaker. At the same time the high-footage ratio in Dogma filmmaking, which allows freedom in the actual filmmaking process, was obviously something that Kragh-Jacobsen had always looked for in the ideal filmmaking; he describes his view of what filmmaking should be and highlights the “playful” aspects of filmmaking. “I don’t think that the final goal is all-important. I’d also like to have some fun along the way. We laugh a lot when we’re shooting my films.... I’m much less fond of the subsequent process, which involves sitting at the editing table and studying all the mistakes that were made earlier” (qtd. in Hjort and Bondebjerg 171). When making his Dogma film, Kragh-Jacobsen focused on the actual shooting of the film. “I wanted the Mifune company to live in camping wagons in the countryside, because that’s what I’d done on my very first feature, *Do You Want to See My Beautiful Belly-Button?*... my first feature was a fantastic time for me, and I wanted to make a replay, right?” (qtd. in Kelly 155). The relaxed atmosphere that the ensemble of actors had when making *Mifune* made it possible for them to be more involved in the actual filmmaking process. In Kragh-Jacobsen’s Dogma film, the actor was free to give suggestions to the filmmaker and shape her/his character. The actor’s freedom in Kragh-Jacobsen’s production process is also an example of Dogma filmmaking which gives cinema back to its actors.

Since Kragh-Jacobsen is not only a filmmaker but also a musician who released his first record in 1973 it is not a surprise that he compares Dogma95 with “the ‘Unplugged’ wave” of the early 1990s and calls *Mifune* his “unplugged film” (qtd. in Kelly 153-4). Kragh-Jacobsen asks why,

Eric Clapton suddenly decided to play unplugged? Because he was surrounded by new techniques in the studios. And so much is done to the voice now, it can be pitched up or broadened out or sampled or whatever. And suddenly these guys wanted to hear how good they really are, which is why they made these acoustic records, some of which are lovely, I think. That's very much akin to what we're trying to do with film here. (qtd. in Kelly 154)

This search for authenticity in filmmaking was inseparable from the filmmaker's emphasis on the actor's role in Dogma films. Kragh-Jacobsen admits that his film has often been criticized for being "more conventional looking as a film" (qtd. in Kelly 159). The filmmaker analyses the absence of freely-moving digital cameras in his film and refers to the important role the actors play in the authentic Dogma filmmaking. He states, "Dogma is not a style, it's a set of rules. I asked Tony [cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle] many times to stop moving, because I don't believe intensity and energy are in the restless camera. I think they are between actors" (qtd. in Kelly 159).

Mifune (Dogme III)

Mifune tells a story of Kresten (Anders W. Berthelsen) who has to leave his wife on the morning after their wedding night to take care of his dead father (Anders Hove), insane brother (Jesper Asholt) and his childhood home that is in ruin in the countryside. The film depicts Kresten's journey from urban Copenhagen to the countryside, where he finds his father's corpse lying on a table in his childhood home where the furniture is covered by white sheets. The dynamic between the urban milieu of Copenhagen and the countryside is emphasized. The bleak reality of Copenhagen is juxtaposed with the countryside which is a place where Kresten is freed from the demands he has in the city as a well-to-do, newly married man. Furthermore, this spatial

dynamic reflects Kresten's reversion from married man back to father's son. Kresten's journey to the countryside - back to his childhood - parallels Liva's (Iben Hjejle) (the film's other protagonist) journey from Copenhagen to Kresten's childhood home. Liva leaves her life in the city as a call girl and moves to Kresten's childhood home where she begins to work as a servant for Kresten and his brother. Soon after, Kresten and Liva realize they are in love. However, the brothers of both Liva and Kresten complicate and add comic dimensions to the romantic love story of the protagonists.

Lone Scherfig

Lone Scherfig is the "first Dogma sister" (Kelly 125) who joined the Dogma brotherhood in 2000 with her film *Italian for Beginners*. Her Dogma film won the Silver Bear in Berlin in 2000 and was "the biggest box office success in Denmark since 1975" (Bondebjerg "Dogma95," 76). Before her venture into Dogma filmmaking Scherfig gained experience in teaching at the Film School (where she graduated from in 1984) and directing the Morten Korch television series, many episodes of a Danish TV-series *Taxa*, and various television commercials. In 1990 Scherfig directed her first feature *The Birthday Trip* which has been viewed as a predecessor for her Dogma film. Bondebjerg writes that "from her first film onwards, Lone Scherfig was a director with a sharp sense of the comic, romantic and tragic sides of everyday reality; the Dogma rules allowed to refine this gift" ("Dogma95" 84). In 1998 Scherfig made *On Our Own* where "a new magic realism about children's everyday life mixing social realism and an imaginary universe can be found" (Bondebjerg "Contemporary").

Scherfig is more willing to analyse the relationship between Dogma95 and the Film School than to speak of her own filmmaking before and after Dogma 95. As a graduate from the Danish Film School, she confidently states, “Dogma could be understood as a reaction against a kind of schooling that is very classical, very equipment-focused” (qtd. in Kelly 125). Dogma filmmaking gave her a chance to experiment with new forms of filmmaking which are liberating for the filmmaker: “The Dogma idea is to let the hindrances work for the script and the film. And once you accept this, you are blessed with so many gifts. Control, taste, and perfectionism are left outside the door. Inspiration just comes from whatever you see” (Scherfig “SOURCES,” 7). Scherfig also points out that a part of the freedom comes from the fact that the director is not credited, which she considers “an offer to work as freely as I ought to, which is why I consider Dogma a gift, rather than a set of commandments” (qtd. in Kelly 126). Thus, it is no wonder that Scherfig’s take on the Dogma rules has often been described as “relaxed” (Bondebjerg “Dogma95,” 71).

This relaxed attitude to Dogma filmmaking is also a part of Scherfig’s effort to create an atmosphere where the actors feel free to improvise and shape their characters. Scherfig is open to the actors’ own suggestions, which explains why a “team spirit” (Bondebjerg “Dogma95,” 72) prevailed in the shooting of her Dogma film. Furthermore, the team spirit is also made possible by the fact that in her Dogma film Scherfig used the actors she had already worked with and in fact wrote parts in the film with particular actors in mind.

Scherfig discusses her own Dogma film and views it as being “lighter” than her previous films and lighter than previous Dogma films.

I like films to be light. I should not try to do a film that is as aggressive and dynamic as the first Dogma films. It's like the films are almost shot with a gun. In each scene, they are, as I think Lars von Trier said, 'pointing' at what they want to see. Whereas *Italian for Beginners* is rather about framing and collecting moments that are put together in this film. (Scherfig "SOURCES," 8)

Elsewhere, Scherfig explains the lightness on a more thematic level:

Festen and *The Idiots* and *Mifune* are all about people learning to live with their 'shadow' sides: with a childhood trauma, or the inner idiots, or a crazy brother. My film is about people deciding that they have the possibility of becoming very happy, and taking that chance. So, it's the anatomy of happy ending... at the start these five people are very sad and insecure people. (qtd. in Kelly 126-7)

***Italian for beginners* (Dogma XII)**

Italian for Beginners is a story of people living in a working-class suburb of Copenhagen, suffering from loneliness and perceiving a meaninglessness in life. The film begins with shots depicting the silence at an empty church. Scherfig emphasizes that the absence of God in these people's lives is connected to the absence of a father figure. The women are unmarried or divorced: Karen (Ann Eleonora Jorgensen) is a hairdresser who takes care of her sick mother; Olympia (Anette Stovelbæk) works in a bakery and takes care of her dying father (Jesper Christensen). Their search for meaning in life leads them to take evening classes in Italian at an Open University where they begin to experience a new feeling of belonging. Moreover, the community that is established at the Open University acts as a surrogate family for Karen and Olympia who don't have friends or a family to support them. This search for the unity of family becomes concrete when, through the death of Karen's mother (Lene Tiemroth) and Olympia's father, the women find out that they are sisters. The reunion between the sisters coincides with the forming of other couples, Giulia (Sara Indrio Jensen) falls in love with Jorgen (Peter Gantzler),

Karen with Half-Finn (Lars Kaalund), and Olympia with the pastor (Anders W. Berthelsen). The film ends by depicting how the entire Italian class begins to function as one big family. With the help of the money Olympia has inherited from her mother, the class decide to travel together to Venice.

Åke Sandgren

Åke Sandgren is probably the least known of the Dogma filmmakers and scholars do not always regard him as a member of the Danish Dogma brotherhood, since he was born in Umeå, Sweden. The analysis of Sandgren's filmmaking in my dissertation is also an attempt to bring his filmmaking under critical academic scrutiny. The studies in Danish Dogma films as well as contemporary Danish cinema have ignored Sandgren's Dogma filmmaking, although Sandgren (like von Trier, Vinterberg, Scherfig, Olesen) was a graduate from the National Film School of Denmark in 1979 and collaborated with other Dogma filmmakers before his own venture into Dogma filmmaking. Likewise, his Dogma film *Truly Human* (2001) has not been sufficiently analysed, although it bears interesting formal and thematic similarities to other films in the movement. *Truly Human* has been awarded at Art Film Festival, Lübeck Nordic Film Days, Robert Festival, Rouen Film Festival, San Sebastian International Film Festival, Torino International Festival of Young Cinema and Uruguay International Film Festival.

Before Dogma filmmaking, Sandgren directed two films for television and worked as an assistant director on eight feature films. Before his venture into feature filmmaking, with *Miracle in Valby* (1989), Sandgren did short films. In 1984 he directed the short films *Bicycle Symphony* which won the Gold Bear in Berlin for Best Short Film

and *The Secret of Johannes* (1985). In the 1990s Sandgren made *The Sling Shot* (1993) and *Big Men, Little Men* (1995), and in 2000 *Beyond. Miracle of Valby* has been viewed as a predecessor for his Dogma film, although it was made over a decade before *Truly Human*. “Magic realism” and “heavy symbolism” describe his films *The Secret of Johannes* and *Miracle in Valby* as well as his Dogma film (Bondebjerg “Dogma95,” 72). Furthermore, Bondebjerg argues that Sandgren’s use of magic realism makes his films “clearly part of a larger trend in New Danish Cinema” (“Dogma95” 72) that shows a keen interest in exceeding the bounds of naturalism.

Like most of the Dogma filmmakers, Sandgren found Dogma filmmaking a liberating experience, contending that it was “an enormous relief to get away from the cumbersome, expensive production apparatus in which there is seldom any leeway for improvisation or new ideas during shooting. On a Dogma film shoot the director enjoys more freedom to work with his cast” (qtd. in Bondebjerg “Dogma95,” 72). Like most Dogma filmmakers, Sandgren found that his newfound freedom led to his redefining of his approach to acting. Dogma enabled still another kind of freedom for Sandgren, who, according to Bondebjerg, “felt purified from his tendency to use too heavy symbolism and a grandiose narrative style” (“Dogma95” 73). The filmmaker didn’t completely abandon the symbolism in his Dogma film, but masterfully combined it with the use of “ascetic” Dogma techniques. Bondebjerg has studied the formal dimensions of Sandgren’s Dogma film and situates the filmmaker’s visual idiosyncrasy somewhere between Scherfig and von Trier/Vinterberg:

Åke Sandgren’s film style is much more reportage like than Lone Scherfig’s, a fact already made clear by the very lively hand-held camera style in Sandgren’s film. In this sense it has the same raw authenticity in its visual expression as the Dogma films of Vinterberg and von Trier, but it

also has the magical, poetic and romantic touch of Scherfig's films. ("Dogma95" 81)

***Truly Human* (Dogma XVIII)**

Truly Human (2001) is a story about the fantasy world of the six-year-old girl Lisa (Clara Nepper Winther) and her upper-middle-class family. Lisa has created an imaginary figure "P" of a dead brother who lives behind the wallpaper. As the story progresses, we find out that the brother (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) never existed, because Lisa's mother had an abortion. The brother is a product of Lisa's imagination, a companion in a family that doesn't have time for her. Lisa even hears her parents confessing how their life would be better without her. *Truly Human* begins with the demolition of Lisa's house, which coincides with her death in a car accident. Furthermore, Lisa's death causes her imaginary brother, who lives inside the walls of the family's apartment, to be set free; he "walks into society as speechless and blank as Kasper Hauser. He greets the world for the first time with open innocence and without prejudice or an understanding of social norms. It is through his story that we see the modern Danish welfare state as if through new eyes and from the outside" (Bondebjerg "Dogma95," 80). Sandgren depicts how this spiritual figure comes into contact not only with his family but also with social institutions which function as surrogate families. Yet, no matter how hard he tries to prove his genuineness, goodness, and innocence, he is made to feel like an outsider. Sandgren ends the film with the brother disappearing into the wall of the family's new flat after making the family more human and preparing them for Lisa's return; his disappearance then coincides with Lisa's resurrection.

Annette K. Olesen

Annette K. Olesen graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1991. Her graduation film *10:32 a.m. Tuesday – A Love Story* has been screened at the film school festivals around the world, and has won many awards. After her graduation Olesen made commercials, directed short films and documentaries, and lectured at The National Film School of Denmark. Her first feature film *Minor Mishaps* (2002) won the Blue Angel award in Berlin and is the “example of a new strong comedy tradition in Danish film” (Bondebjerg “Contemporary”). Her second feature, and Dogma film, *In Your Hands*, was selected for the official competition at Berlin International Film Festival in 2004 and could not be further away from “a new strong comedy tradition.”

Like her husband, Åke Sandgren, Olesen has a keen interest in exceeding the bounds of naturalism in her filmmaking. Obviously, the filmmakers have influenced each other in their explorations of how to use the Dogma rules together with stories that examine life’s mystical qualities. Whereas *Truly Human* explores the blurring of the boundaries between the realms of dream and reality, *In Your Hands* tells a story of a prisoner with supernatural powers. If Dogma rules liberated Sandgren from his propensity to overload on symbolism, they forced Olesen to find realistic ways of telling a story of miracles. Olesen states,

With a story like this about cellblock miracles, I was tempted to add a whole lot of music and fill the film with visual effects... But this was forbidden by the Dogma rules and I’m glad. We had to remain true to an objectivity of sorts, which in my opinion makes the story more credible. (qtd. in Christensen)

The release of Olesen’s *In Your Hands* initiated a discussion about the great number of women filmmakers in Denmark. Eva Novrup Redvall wrote an article “In

Gender Still an Issue?” in which she contemplated the reasons for the success of such women filmmakers. Olesen, Scherfig, Susanne Bier, Charlotte Sachs Bostrup, Hella Joof, Jytte Rex, Helle Ryslinge, Lotte Svendsen, Charlotte Sieling, Linda Krogsoe-Holmberg and Paprika Steen, whose films have won awards and gained a wide audience in Denmark. She states, “all talk of positive discrimination or gender quotas for public funds is met with scepticism in Denmark. In the general opinion, Danish film has no problems of gender politics in terms of output.” Although Novrup Redvall writes about Olesen and Scherfig, she doesn’t address the gender question in relation to Dogma95. However, the Dogma rules, that highlight that the films must take place here and now, often results in films that deal with realistically told domestic stories. Dogma’s return to “the everyday” is something Olesen obviously refers to when contemplating the gender question in Danish cinema and stating that,

Many people ask me why there are so many women directors in Danish film right now. It’s a matter of conjecture, of course, but it may have something to do with the wave of films of the last eight to ten years finding large audience. These films told stories at eye level and about their audience’s everyday and the connection may simply be that such stories traditionally have been told by women. Women may still have a more impassioned relationship to the everyday than men do, plus the public has wanted to see these stories. Perhaps the tide will turn in a few years, once the public grows tired of realism. (qtd. in Novrup Redvall)

Whereas Olesen approaches the gender question in terms of film aesthetics, Scherfig admits she doesn’t know how to do a feminist analysis of her Dogma film (Scherfig). She finds socio-historical reasons for why women filmmakers are great in numbers in today’s Denmark, arguing that,

The Film School has been important, because it has been a place to get training and schooling and be helped along, instead of the law of the jungle reigning supreme. The school has helped ease the way for people with

talent. Still you can point to no single reason for the Danish development. It's not any single effort where presto! Everything is different. It takes long-term policies to determine what society will be like, and here such factors as kindergartens and equal distribution of childcare responsibilities between men and women count. Otherwise, it would be impossible for women to have a career. Film-wise, it also counts that we have had a good film school for 30 years. (qtd. in Novrup Redvall)

Scherfig's approach to the gender question in contemporary Danish cinema points out the way in which the Dogma movement needs to be placed in its socio-historical context. The female Dogma filmmakers such as Olesen and Scherfig emerge out of a country where social policies together with high-quality education have enabled women to educate themselves and develop artistic careers. What is also important to point out about Dogma filmmaking (and this is something that neither of the filmmakers mention) is the way in which it emphasizes a low-budget filmmaking, a method that widens the general access to filmmaking. And films that take place here and now and use the material that is found on the spot are often films that tell domestic stories about "the everyday" "at eye level." This emphasis on the everyday on a formal and thematic level is probably one of the reasons why Dogma filmmaking has attracted filmmakers like Olesen and Scherfig.

In Your Hands (Dogma XXXIV)

The film tells the story of Anna (Ann Eleonora Jorgensen) who gets hired as a chaplain in a woman's prison. Anna is married to Frank (Lars Ranthe) with whom she has tried to have a baby for years. In the prison she meets a prisoner, Kate (Trine Dyrholm), who apparently has supernatural powers. When Anna finds out that she is finally pregnant but the baby might have a chromosome defect she turns to Kate for help. However, while getting to know her better, Anna also confronts Kate's hidden secret.

Kate has killed her own child when she was a drug addict. The murder is the reason for her being in the prison. When the other prisoners find out about Kate's secret, the revelation leads to her tragic death.