

THE PASSIONS OF ANNA

En Passion
(The Passion of Anna) 1970

Script & direction: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography (Eastmancolour): Sven Mykvist
Editing: Siv Kanalv. Players: Max von Sydow,
Liv Ullman, Bibi Anderssen, Erland Josephsson.
For Svensk Film industri / Cinematography

by Diane Haines

The "passions of Anna" is a difficult film. Unlike the traditional American cinema, Swedish director Ingmar Bergman does away with the novelistic temporality of beginning, middle and end, as well as the classic plot. 'Passions of Anna' never really begins, as it never really ends. If one is forced to find a temporality to indicate the flow of the film, it must be seen as arising during the dream sequence in which Anna relates her subconscious confusion to Andreas. This, as pivotal point of film is done in black and white totally devoid of the rich colours and hues which Bergman works so well into the moods of his other scenes. Working forward and back from this colourless dream, we are introduced to the anti-hero in the opening scene - "This is Andreas Winklemann", to the closing scene - "And this time he was born as Andreas Winklemann." Once deciding the sequence of events, the movement enhances the confusion of truths and fantasies; for we are lead to believe that Andreas is separated from his former wife; just as Anna had a former husband Andreas. We might believe these are two people we never meet, people prior to the opening scene. But if we understand the film to begin in the middle with the dream sequence, the previous husband and wife are actually Andreas and Anna. And if this is the case, the physical and psychical violent acts which we are lead to believe existed between Anna and her previous husband actually exists between Anna and Andreas.

It is this violence, both physical and psychical which represents the theme of the film, a theme which introduces Bergman's new mania - psychology - rather than the metaphysical problems with

which he toys in previous films like "Personna" and "Seventh Seal". It is the psychology of fantasy, violence and humility, and the confusion these express in the lives of both Andreas and Anna, as she searches for truth and he for escape from his solidarity and self-erected shell. He wants to reach out, but finds it pointless, life for him is the hell of living from day to day. It is too late for he and Anna to go away. When she asks him what he is doing for the day, he can no longer face himself and takes it out physically on her. There has been no call for this violence on Andrea's part up to this point, for running parallel to their personal, psychical suffering there has been a mad man about the island slaughtering sheep and burning horses, meaningless acts of violence.

The execution of a Saigon prisoner is shown on the tube just before Andreas kills a wounded bird.

The "Passion of Anna" is colour. It is the red of slaughtered sheep's blood in the snow, the blood of a bird on the hand that crushed it, it is the red of fire scorching live animals locked in blazing barns. It is the colour that surrounds Anna the day she is beaten, and it is her large hat as Liv Ullman, the actress, interviews by Bergman as he questions each actor for their response to the roles they play.

This film technique of interview is very unique in the "Passion", for we never really know the characters. This may be Bergman's failure, or his intention, but where as he interviews each, and their interpretation of their roles, he indicates even further to us that the basis of his film is confusion.

It is the confusion of truth or lies, decision and indecision, and it is the

confusion of Andreas, with whom we are forced some how to identify, as he is the strong, perhaps Christ-like image, the one who really suffers the actual pain of Anna's suffering. At first he is calm and together, then with the introduction of the conflicts of other characters, he is left pacing backward and forward trapped in total indecision. The only things he is able to discern is humility and its consequences his humiliation is a disease. He does not see how much he has really suffered, for both Anna and Eva (Bibi Anderssen) have used him for sexual and psychic security, his sexual apathy becomes a poison. Ann has transferred her passions to him and now he must be the sufferer, the one diseased and poisoned.

There is very little action in 'Passions of Anna', and what replaces it are the brilliant photographic techniques for which Bergman has been acclaimed, the colour and tint of his scenes, to long over-indulged speeches (soliloquies) in which clocks tick in background, and naturally his cast of actors, especially Max Von Sydow, Ullman and Anderseen, all obsessed people, all capable of expression without words, without movement, capable of repetitious moods. Actors with passion and suffering haunting their minds and souls, and those with their passion filed away in boxes under the guise of photographs.

As a extraordinary piece of Art, Bergman 'Passion of Anna', lives completely on its own strength contains a life of its own, a life one must see for themselves, not have some critic relate it to them. If you have not seen it, do so. If you have, ignore the above. If on the other hand Bergman appeals or could appeal, there is a Bergman Film Festival going on here this year - get on to it.

