

*A man who resembled a scissors:*

The face as intimacy and violence in Ingmar Bergman.

*Our work begins with the human face...  
The possibility of drawing near the human face  
is the primary originality and the distinctive  
quality of the cinema.*

Bergman, *Cahiers du Cinema*

*A man who resembled a scissors*: a passage taken from the autobiography of Ingmar Bergman, *Magic Lantern*, whose relevance serves not only the main purpose of this communication, which is to emphasize the unique quality of the Swedish filmmaker's director work but, above all, to analyze the idiosyncratic and optical way of how Bergman works the face, both technically and conceptually.

In the light of this double guideline, which combines the art of film directing and the singular atmosphere of artistic creation, it is intended, firstly, to reflect on the audacious psychological depth of Bergman's film directing work. In an interview given to the BBC (1978), the filmmaker underlines his obsession with cinema by reinforcing that the universe in which we live is a sabotage. However, it is precisely this sabotage that allows the film director to dream, to create, to give life and to control the movement itself: a kind of divine act inherent in film direction.

In this same interview, Bergman adds that cinematography is the closest art to dreams, and it is up to the director to rigorously, thoroughly and accurately control this same handcrafted, dangerous and obsessive process. It is thus that the use of the image of a scissors as a *simile* of the director's work not only favours a conceptual approach to the figure of the filmmaker, but also gives substance to Walter Benjamin's analogy about the bold gestures of cinematic representation (*plongés* and *contreplongés*, interruptions and immobilizations, extensions and reductions), as being comparable to those of a surgeon.

In this sense, the intimacy with which Bergman works with the actors and their movements – whose erotic quality with the camera is mediated by the director – allows to work the “face” as the most cinematic thing in the world, as

signed by the epigraph. Hence, the *close-up* is the technique *par excellence* that allows to follow the uninterrupted metamorphosis of the “face”, a topic explored by Deleuze in Cinema-1, crucial for an appreciation, for example, of *Persona* (1966), *The Hour of the Wolf* (1968), *Ritual* (1969) and *The Passion of Ana* (1969), all with Sven Nykvist’s photographic signature.

In a second moment, starting from Walter Benjamin's presupposition of the "aesthetic existence of the work of art", understood as the “unique appearance of something distant, however close it may be”, we propose a hermeneutic comparison between the technique of the close-up and the concept of face, here regarded as the point of intersection between shock and blast: this is the domain in which intimacy (technical and psychological) may become synonymous of violence, since the power of physiognomy violently exposes the real. Actually, being the shock understood as the effect of cinema on the spectator by the projected images and the blast precisely as the change of planes, one can say that the principle of interruption, inherent in both, requires an "intensified attention effort" on the part of the spectator.

In short, the central place of the “face” in Bergman's cinematography, whose art becomes inseparable from Sven Nykvist's photography, reinforces, simultaneously, the aesthetic strength of his films and the greatness of the arguments and scenarios he created and planned. In this last moment, it will be crucial to address references as: *Cries & Whispers* (1972), *Face to Face* (1976), *Autumn Sonata* (1978) and *From the Life of the Marionettes* (1980).