***Persona***

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Ingmar Bergman’s Persona(Sweden 1966) is often described as an intense drama about the relationship between a famous actress and the inexperienced nurse assigned to care for her after she suffers an emotional collapse and falls mute. As the film advances, the lines between reality and fantasy blur greatly. Concurrently, a palpable sense of sexual desire on the part of the women arises. Persona stands as its writer/director’s most formally radical feature, complete with recurring references to its status as a film via the sound of a rattling projector, shots that go in and out of focus, a celebrated moment when the film seems to actually break, and a narrative that inevitably raises questions about the connection between communication and consciousness; acting and agency. Almost immediately, Personawaslauded as a profound reflection on the vexed nature of being. Juxtaposing dramatic interactions between the two central characters, expertly portrayed by Liv Ullmann (the actress) and Bibi Andersson (the nurse), with what seems an unstable sense of consciousness on the part of the film itself, it stands as a rare modernist meta-film that rewards exhaustive analysis while pleasing a comparatively broad art-film audience.

References and further reading:

Michaels, L. (ed.) (2000) Ingmar Bergman’s Persona, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (An anthology of essays on *Persona* examines the film from a variety of perspectives. Also includes four reviews contemporaneous with the film’s release.)

Ohlin, P. (2011) Wordless Secrets: Ingmar Bergman’s Persona: Modernist Crisis & Canonical Status, Cardiff, UK: Welsh Academic Press. (A comprehensive examination of the film’s themes, reception, and status with a particular emphasis on its relationship to the Swedish context and European modernism.)

Simon, J. (1972) ‘Persona,’ Ingmar Bergman Directs, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanvich, 208-310. (One of the most exhaustive and rigorous early scene-by-scene analyses of the film.)

Paratexual Material

<http://ingmarbergman.se/en/production/persona-9123> This web page, maintained by the Bergman Foundation, contains numerous fine images and factual information on the film.

Two clips and both stills are the property of: [Svensk Filmindustri (SF)](http://www.imdb.com/company/co0050989?ref_=ttco_co_1)