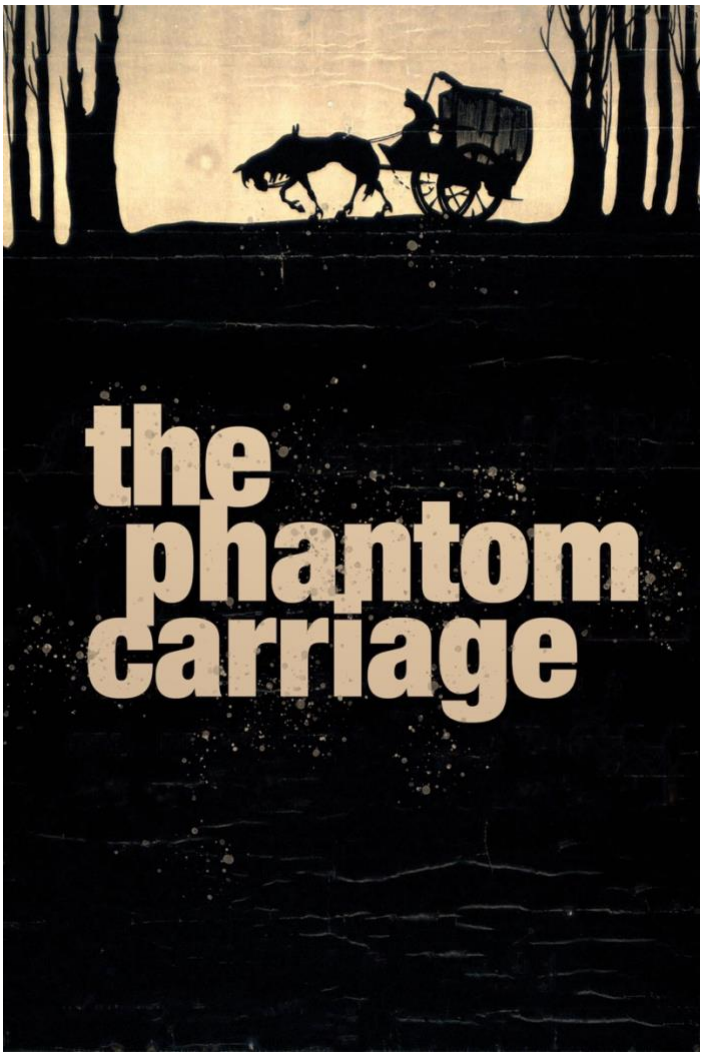
[Vimeo link for this week's film and **ALL** of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the virtual BFS]

[Zoom link for all SPRING 2022 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions]

Directed and written by Victor Sjöström
Based on the novel by Selma Lagerlöf
Produced by Charles Magnusson
Cinematography by Julius Jaenzon

Victor Sjöström...David Holm
Hilda Borgström...Mrs. Holm
Tore Svennberg...Georges
Astrid Holm...Edit
Concordia Selander...Edit's Mother
Lisa Lundholm...Maria
Tor Weijden...Gustafsson
Einar Axelsson...David's Brother
Olof Ås...Driver

VICTOR SJÖSTRÖM (September 20, 1879, Silbodal, Värmlands län, Sweden – Died: January 3, 1960, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden) was a pioneering Swedish film director, screenwriter, and actor. His 1921 film *The Phantom Carriage* is notable for its special effects, its innovative narrative structure with flashbacks within flashbacks, and for having been a major influence on the works of Ingmar Bergman. In fact, Sjöström played the leading role in Bergman's 1957 film *Wild Strawberries*. He directed 55 films, including 1937 *Under the Red Robe*, 1931 *Father and Son*, 1930 *Väter und Söhne*, 1930 *Die Sehnsucht jeder Frau*, 1930 *A Lady to Love*, 1928 *The Wind*, 1928 *The Masks of the Devil*, 1928 *The Divine Woman*, 1926 *The Scarlet Letter*, 1925 *The Tower of Lies*, 1925 *Confessions of a Queen*, 1924 *He Who Gets Slapped*, 1924 *Name the Man*, 1923 *The Hell Ship*, 1922 *The House Surrounded*, 1922 *Vem dömer*, 1921 *The Phantom Carriage*, 1920 *Mästerman*, 1920 *Karin Ingmarsdotter*, 1920 *Klostret i Sendomir*, 1919 *Hans nåds testament*, 1919 *Ingmarssönerna*, 1918 *You and I*, 1917 *Girl from Stormy Croft*, 1917 *A Man There Was*, 1916 *Thérèse*, 1916 *Dödskyssen*, 1916 *Hon segrade*, 1916 *The Sea Vultures*, 1916 *Skepp som mötas*, 1915 *Judaspengar*, 1915 *I prövningens stunt*, 1915 *Skomakare, bliv vid din last*, 1915 *The Governor's Daughters*, 1915 *Det var i maj*, 1915 *Sonad skuld*, 1915 *En av de manga*, 1914 *Hjärtan som mötas*, 1914 *Högfjällets dotter*, 1914 *Gatans barn*, 1914 *Bra flicka reder sig själv*, 1914 *Strejken*, 1914 *Dömen icke*, 1914 *Saints and Sorrows*, 1914 *Kärlek starkare än hat eller skogsdotterns hemlighet*, 1913 *Miraklet*, 1913 *Half Breed*, 1913 *Ingeborg Holm*, 1913 *Livets konflikter*, 1913 *Blodets röst*, 1913 *Lady Marions sommarflirt*, 1913 *Löjen och tårar*, 1913 *Äktenskapsbyrån*, 1912 *Trädgårdsmästaren*, and 1912 *A Ruined Life*. He also acted in 44 films, among them 1957 *Wild Strawberries*, 1955 *Männen i mörker*, 1952 *Kärlek*, 1952 *Hård klang*, 1950 *Kvartetten som sprängdes*, 1950 *To Joy*, 1949 *Farlig vår*, 1948 *I Am with You*, 1947 *Railroad Workers*, 1944 *Kejsarn av Portugallien*, 1943 *Ordet*, 1943 *Det brinner en eld*, 1941 *Striden går vidare*, 1939 *Mot nya tider*, 1939



Gubben kommer, 1937 *The Great John Ericsson*, 1935 *Walpurgis Night*, 1934 *The Girl of Solbakken*, 1931 *Father and Son*, 1931 *Brokiga blad*, 1923 *The Hell Ship*, 1922 *The House Surrounded*, 1921 *The Phantom Carriage*, 1920 *Mästerman*, 1920 *Karin Ingmarsdotter*, 1919 *Ingmarssönerna*, 1918 *Thomas Graals bästa barn*, 1918 *You and I*, 1917 *Thomas Graals bästa film*, 1917 *A Man There Was*, 1916 *Dödskyssen*, 1916 *Hon segrade*, 1915 *I prövningens stund*, 1914 *Högfjällets dotter*, 1914 *Strejken*, 1914 *För sin kärleks skull*, 1913 *Livets konflikter*, 1913 *Blodets röst*, 1913 *När kärleken dödar*, 1913 *Vampyren*, 1913 *Barnet*, 1912 *The Springtime of Life*, 1912 *Saved in Mid-Air*, and 1912 *Trädgårdsmästaren.*

Selma Lagerlöf
(November 20, 1858 – Mårbacka, Värmlands län, Sweden – March 16, 1940, Mårbacka, Värmlands län, Sweden) had received 35 screen credits for work based on her fiction or plays: 2011 “Nils Holgerssons wunderbare Reise”, 2008 *Matskhovris Saplavze Antebuli Santeli* (novel), 1996 *Jerusalem* (novel), 1994 “Kejsarn av Portugallien” (novel), 1989 “En herrgårdssägen” (novel), 1986 “Gösta Berlings saga” (novel), 1980 “The Wonderful Adventures of Nils” (8 episodes), 1979 *Charlotte Löwensköld* (novel), 1963 “Untuvainen” (play "Dunungen"), 1962 *Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (novel), 1958 *Phantom Carriage* (book), 1958 *Das Mädchen vom Moorhof* (novel "Tösen från Stormyrtorpet"), 1955 “Schlitz Playhouse,”1954 Herr Arnes penningar (novel), 1952 *Husmandstøsen* (novel), 1952 “The Unexpected”, 1947 *Tösen från Stormyrtorpet* (novel), 1944 *Kejsarn av Portugallien* (novel), 1941 *Dunungen* (short story and play "Dunungen"), 1940 *Suotorpan tyttö* (novel "Tösen från Stormyrtorpet"), 1939 *The Phantom Wagon* (novel "Körkarlen"), 1935 *The Girl from the Marsh Croft* (novel "Toesen fran Stormyrtorpet"), 1934 *Batakli damin kizi, Aysel* (story "Tösen Fran Stormyrtorpet"), 1930 *Charlotte Löwensköld* (novel), 1926 *Till österland* (novel "Jerusalem"), 1925 *Ingmarsarvet* (novel "Jerusalem"), 1925 *The Tower of Lies* (novel "Kejsarn av Portugallien en Värmlandsberättelse/The Emperor of Portugallia"), 1924 *Gösta Berlings saga* (novel), 1923 *The Blizzard* (novel "En herrgardssaegen"), 1921 *The Phantom Carriage* (novel), 1920 *Karin Ingmarsdotter* (novel "Jerusalem"), 1919 *In Quest of Happiness* (short story and play "Dunungen"), 1919 *Herr Arnes pengar* (novel), 1919 *Ingmarssönerna* (novel "Jerusalem"), BS 1917 *Girl from Stormy Croft* (novel).
CHARLES MAGNUSSON (January 26, 1878, Gothenburg, Västra Götalands län, Sweden – January 18, 1948, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden) produced 13 films: 1923 *The Blizzard*, 1921 *The Phantom Carriage*, 1920 *Erotikon*, 1919 *Hans nåds testament*, 1919 *Herr Arnes pengar*, 1919 *Ingmarssönerna*, 1918 *You and I*, 1917 *Girl from Stormy Croft*, 1917 *A Man There Was*, 1908 *Resa Stockholm-Göteborg genom Göta och Trollhätte kanaler*, 1908 *Göta elf-katastrofen*, 1907 *Bilder från Fryksdalen*, and 1907 *Krigsbilder från Bohuslän.*

JULIUS JAENZON (July 8, 1885, Gothenburg, Västra Götalands län, Sweden – February 17, 1961, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden) shot 118 films, among them: 1948 *Life at Forsbyholm Manor*, 1946 *Evening at the Djurgarden*, 1946 *Private Number 91-Karlsson*, 1945 *Jolanta - den gäckande suggan*, 1944 *Hans officiella fästmö*, 1943 *Queen for a Night*, 1943 *Katrina*, 1942 *Man glömmer ingenting*, 1942 *Löjtnantshjärtan*, 1942 *Livet på en pinne*, 1941 *Dunungen*, 1941 *Goransson's Boy*, 1941 *Landstormens lilla argbigga*, 1941 *Den ljusnande framtid*, 1940 *One, But a Lion!*, 1940 *Stora famnen*, 1939 *Emelie Högqvist*, 1939 *Valfångare*, 1937 *Vi går landsvägen*, 1937 *Sara Learns Manners*, 1937 *Klart till drabbning*, 1937 *Pappas pojke*, 1936 *Adventure*, 1936 *Johan Ulfstjerna*, 1936 *Bröllopsresan*, 1936 *Conscientious Objector Adolf*, 1935 *The Marriage Game*, 1935 *Smålänningar*, 1935 *The Surf*, 1935 *One Night*, 1934 *Man's Way with Women*, 1934 *Kungliga Johansson*, 1933 *Två man om en änka*, 1933 *Vad veta väl männen?*, 1933 *En natt på Smygeholm*, 1933 *Giftasvuxna döttrar*, 1933 *En melodi om våren*, 1932 *Sten Stensson Stéen från Eslöv på nya äventyr*, 1932 *Kärlek och kassabrist*, 1932 *Svärmor kommer*, 1932/I *Service de nuit*, 1931 *Serments*, 1931 *Father and Son*, 1931 *Brokiga blad*, 1930 *Charlotte Löwensköld*, 1930 *Kronans kavaljerer*, 1930 *Väter und Söhne*, 1930 *Ulla, My Ulla*, 1930 *Fridas visor*, 1930 *For Her Sake*, 1929 *Säg det i toner*, 1929 *Hjärtats triumph*, 1928 *Synd*, 1928 *Doctors' Women*, 1927 *Förseglade läppar*, 1927 *Hon, den enda*, 1927 *Don Quixote*, 1927 *Hans engelska fru*, 1926 *Till österland*, 1925 *Ingmarsarvet*, 1925 *Två konungar*, 1924 *Life in the Country*, 1924 *Gösta Berlings saga*, 1923 *Karusellen*, 1923 *The Hell Ship*, 1923 *The Blizzard*, 1922 *Vem dömer*, 1921 *The Phantom Carriage*, 1920 *Mästerman*, 1919 *In Quest of Happiness*, 1919 *Herr Arnes pengar*, 1919 *Ingmarssönerna*, 1918 *You and I*, 1917 *Alexander den Store*, 1917 *A Man There Was*, 1916 *Wolo czawienko*, 1916 *Vingarne*, 1916 *Dödskyssen*, 1916 *Dolken*, 1916 *Hans hustrus förflutna*, 1915 *Judaspengar*, 1915 *Mästertjuven*, 1915 *Madame de Thèbes*, 1915 *Det var i maj*, 1915 *Högsta vinsten*, 1915 *När konstnärer älska*, 1914 *Bra flicka reder sig själv*, 1914 *Strejken*, 1914

Stormfågeln, 1914 *Gentleman of the Room,* 1914 *För sin kärleks skull,* 1914 *Bröderna,* 1914 *Saints and Sorrows,* 1914 *Det röda tornet,* 1914 *Skottet,* 1913 *Den moderna suffragetten,* 1913 *Brother Against Brother,* 1913 *Half Breed,* 1913 *Livets konflikter,* 1913 *På livets ödesvägar,* 1913 *Mannekängen,* 1913 *Lady Marions sommarflirt,* 1913 *När larmklockan ljude,* 1913 *När kärleken dödar,* 1913 *Löjen och tårar,* 1913 *Vampyren,* 1913 *Äktenskapsbyrån,* 1913 *Barnet,* 1913 *Den okända,* 1912 *The Springtime of Life,* 1912 *Saved in Mid-Air,* 1912 *Trädgårdsmästaren,* 1912 *Mor och dotter,* 1912 *Agaton och Fina,* 1912 *Laban Petterqvist tränar för olympiska spelen,* 1912 *Samhällets dom,* 1910 *Regina von Emmeritz och konung Gustaf II Adolf,* and 1907 *Fiskerlivets farer.*

HILDA BORGSTRÖM (October 13, 1871, Stockholm, Sweden – January 2, 1953, Stockholm, Sweden) appeared in 80 films, some of which are 1951 *Dårskapens hus,* 1949 *The Girl from the Third Row,* 1949 *The Key and the Ring,* 1948 *Eva,* 1948 *Sin,* 1948 *Each to His Own Way,* 1948 *Music in Darkness,* 1947 *Song of Stockholm,* 1947 *Dynamite,* 1946 *Sunshine Follows Rain,* 1946 *Desire,* 1944 *The Girl and the Devil,* 1944 *Torment,* 1944 *The Old Clock at Ronneberga,* 1942 *Ride Tonight!,* 1940 *Her Melody,* 1940 *Ett brott,* 1940 *Bastard,* 1937 *The Great John Ericsson,* 1935 *The Girls' Alfred,* 1925 *Damen med kameliorna,* 1924 *Anna-Clara och hennes bröder,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage* 1920 *Carolina Rediviva,* 1916/I *Brandsoldaten,* 1914 *Dömen icke,* 1913 *Lady Marions sommarflirt,* and 1912 *A Ruined Life.*

TORE SVENNBERG (February 28, 1858, Stockholm, Sweden – May 8, 1941, Stockholm, Sweden) appeared in 11 films: 1940 *Stål,* 1938 *A Woman's Face,* 1935 *The Surf,* 1933 *Vad veta väl männen?,* 1930 *Fridas visor,* 1929 *Säg det i toner,* 1922 *Vem dömer,* 1921 *Give Me My Son,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage,* 1920 *Klostret i Sendomir,* and 1919 *Ingmarssönerna.*

ASTRID HOLM (March 9, 1893 – October 29, 1961) appeared in 10 films: 1947 *Mani,* 1946 *I Love Another,* 1946 *Discretion Wanted,* 1946 *Hans store aften,* 1942 *Ta' briller på,* 1925 *Master of the House,* 1922 *Häxan: Witchcraft Through the Ages,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage,* 1920 *Lavinen,* and 1919 *Towards the Light.*

CONCORDIA SELANDER (June 2, 1861, Arboga, Västmanlands län, Sweden – March 31, 1935, Täby, Stockholms län, Sweden) appeared in 10 films: 1932 *Landskamp,* 1931 *Brokiga blad,* 1925 *Charles XII,* 1923 *The Blizzard,* 1921 *Vallfarten till Kevlaar,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage,* 1920 *Mästerman,* 1919 *Herr Arnes pengar,* 1917 *Girl from Stormy Croft,* and 1917 *Förstadsprästen.*

LISA LUNDHOLM (b. 1895) appeared in only two films: Ingmar Bergman's 1955 film *Smiles of a Summer Night* and 1921 *The Phantom Carriage.*

TOR WEIJDEN (January 6, 1890, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden – 1931) was in 10 films: 1929 *Hjärtats triumph,* 1925 *Halta Lena och Vindögda Per,* 1925 *Charles XII,* 1924 *Grevarna på Svansta,* 1923 *Andersson, Pettersson och Lundström,* 1923 *Värmlänningarna,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage,* 1920 *Mästerman,* 1920 *Karin Ingmarsdotter,* and 1918 *Thomas Graals bästa barn.*

EINAR AXELSSON (February 25, 1895, Lund, Skåne län, Sweden – October 30, 1971, Stocksund, Stockholms län, Sweden) was in 59 films, some of which were 1963 *Adam och Eva,* 1963 "A Dream Play," 1958 *Vi på Väddö,* 1958 *Flottans överman,* 1956 *Girl in Tails,* 1946 *Iris and the Lieutenant,* 1935 *The Marriage Game,* 1935 *Perhaps a Gentleman,* 1927 *Girl in Tails,* 1923 *Thomas Graals myndling,* and 1921 *The Phantom Carriage.*

OLOF ÅS (September 21, 1892 – September 4, 1949) was in 15 films: 1946 *Harald Handfaste,* 1929 *Konstgjorda Svensson,* 1928 *A.-B. gifta bort baron Olson,* 1927 *Hin och smålänningen,* 1922 *Vem dömer,* 1921 *The Phantom Carriage,* 1920 *Mästerman,* 1920 *Karin Ingmarsdotter,* 1919 *Hans nåds testament,* 1919 *Sången om den eldröda blomman,* 1919 *Ingmarssönerna,* 1918 *Thomas Graals bästa barn,* 1917 *Alexander den Store,* 1917 *Thomas Graals bästa film,* and 1912 *Agaton och Fina.*

"Victor Sjôström" (Ingmarbergman.se)

Born Viktor David Sjöström on 20 September 1879 in Värmland in the west of Sweden, Sjöström emigrated with his family to America (Brooklyn, New York) in 1880 where his father, Olof, who had struggled in Sweden, built up a successful shipping agency in New York. His mother, Elisabeth, a former regional theatre actress and sister of Victor Hartman of Royal Dramatic Theatre fame, died of puerperal fever in 1886, and his father subsequently married a younger woman who had previously been the family nanny. Victor had a strained relationship with his stepmother and this, alongside his father's growing

religious austerity, caused the somewhat unruly Victor to be sent home alone to Sweden in 1893 to live with his aunt in Uppsala.

During his school holidays he visited his uncle, who would take him to the Royal Dramatic Theatre. As a teenager Victor developed a passionate interest in theatre, becoming the director of the Uppsala Sports Club drama section, and also its leading actor. In 1895 his father returned to Sweden and Stockholm, and Victor moved back in with his immediate family. This meant he had to break off his studies and take a job to help his father, who was once again in difficult financial straits. One of his first jobs was selling doughnuts (recently invented and highly fashionable) on the streets of Stockholm.

In 1896 Olof Sjöström died, and Victor decided to become an actor full time. Lacking the necessary funds to study at the Royal Dramatic Theatre drama school, he managed to get a job with a touring theatre company. Up until 1912 he travelled around Sweden and Finland as an itinerant actor and an increasingly successful director.

In February 1912 Sjöström was contacted by the first Swedish film producer of any significance, Charles Magnusson (1878-1948), who gave him the job of senior director at his production company Svenska Bio. There, Victor got to know Mauritz Stiller, who was also to achieve great fame as a silent film director. He also met the cameramen Henrik and Julius Jaenzon, who later worked both for Sjöström and for Stiller. To learn this new craft, Sjöström first acted in a Stiller film, yet soon made his directing debut with The Gardener in 1912. In this film, banned by the censors in its native Sweden, Sjöström played the title role alongside his second wife, Lili Beck, and Gösta Ekman (the father of Hasse Ekman).

Sjöström gained recognition as a filmmaker the following year with the social realism of Ingeborg Holm. The film created quite a stir in Sweden, both as a work of art but also as a comment on poverty. Ingeborg Holm was also a major international success. However, many of Victor Sjöström's early films were run-of-the-mill melodramas which have not survived.

Sjöström rose to prominence in the years from 1916 to 1918, which marked the start of the Golden Age of Swedish cinema, which stretches from Sjöström's A Man There Was to Stiller's Gösta Bergling's Saga. A Man There Was, starring Sjöström's third wife Edith Erastoff, and The Outlaw and His Wife, firmly established Sjöström's reputation with their 'depictions of nature, the interplay between man and nature, its lighting, photography and the sensitivity and sincerity of their character portrayals'. The latter is often regarded as a cinematic milestone. Both films were partly shot under difficult conditions in Stockholm's outer archipelago and the Abisko national park.

A Man There Was won the acclaim of Selma Lagerlöf, who gave her permission for Sjöström to make a film version of The Girl from the Marsh Croft, the first of his five adaptations of her works.

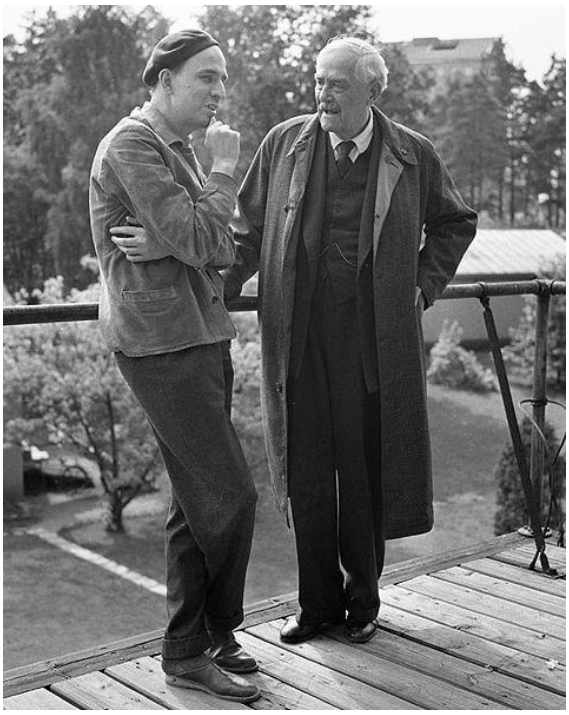
In 1919 Svenska Bio, where Sjöström had been employed since 1912, merged with Filmindustri AB Skandia to form a new company, Svensk Filmindustri. A year later the new studios at Råsunda, just outside Stockholm, were completed. The first project for the new company was Victor Sjöström's magnum opus The Phantom Carriage, based on Selma Lagerlöf's 1912 novel. Although not regarded as one of Lagerlöf's best works, the novel's theme of conversion and moral struggle fascinated Sjöström. and the supernatural elements had a special appeal to the cinematographer Julius Jaenzon, who relished the chance to experiment with special effects. In technical terms the film set new standards and was an all-round success. Ingmar Bergman regularly watched *The Phantom Carriage* every summer at his private cinema on Fårö:

My relationship with The Phantom Carriage is very special. I was 15 years old when I saw it for the first time. [...] I remember it as one of the major emotional and artistic experiences of my life.

In 1923 Sjöström was invited to Hollywood, where he worked with Louis B Mayer and Irving Thalberg. The first major director to be employed by

the newly-formed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio, Sjöström, unlike many some other Swedes who tried their luck in Hollywood, including Mauritz Stiller and Hjalmar Bergman, enjoyed both major commercial and artistic success. In 1928 Mauritz Stiller died in Stockholm, and Victor Sjöström visited him on his death bed. This was one of the events that prompted Sjöström and his family, which now comprised his wife Edith and two daughters, to move back to Sweden in 1930. Following his return, he only directed two more films, neither of which was a particular success. He did, however, make a number of films in front of the camera, and he also returned to the stage.

Between 1939 and 1943 Sjöström worked almost exclusively in the theatre, but in 1942–43 he was called back to Svensk Filmindustri by the new head of the company Carl Anders Dymling, as artistic director responsible for all film production. In this role he was inspired by Irving Thalberg, becoming heavily involved in screen writing ('If you've got a good screenplay you can assume that any film is 75 per cent home and dry') and to a certain extent in editing, but he stayed away from the actual film shoots. During this period he first came into contact with Ingmar Bergman, who was working in the company's script department. He steered Bergman's first screenplay Torment through to production, and when Bergman himself got to direct Crisis, Sjöström was the young director's only ally in a company in which Bergman made himself so unpopular that he ended up getting the sack.



In 1945 his wife Edith died, and four years later Sjöström left Svensk Filmindustri. He played only a handful of film roles during this period, the most notable of which was as the ageing orchestra leader in Bergman's To Joy.
In the 1950s Victor Sjöström went back to his life in travelling theatre. His roles included Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the title role in Swedenhielms (Max von Sydow played one of the sons when Sjöström made a guest appearance at the Helsingborg City Theatre), his last part being the title role in Johan Ulfstjerna (1957–1958).

In 1957 Ingmar Bergman repaid his indebtedness to Sjöström by giving him the main part in Wild Strawberries, which alongside The Phantom Carriage is the for film which Sjöström is best remembered. Bergman adapted the role specially for the great man, whose first inclination was to decline a part he thought too difficult to play. Yet Bergman prevailed:

Victor was in a bad mood, saying, 'I don't want to do this, I don't think you're right'. We clashed because I wanted Victor to do certain things that he didn't want to do, or rather he was tense and wanting to do too much and I didn't want him to do anything at all. But then he was amazing to work with as long as he was home by quarter past five sharp in time for his daily whisky.

During the filming Ingmar Bergman gave an 18-year old director's assistant the sole task of looking after Victor. This 18-year old was Hasse Ekman's son Gösta Ekman, grandson of the very Gösta Ekman who played Sjöström's son on his debut in *The Gardener* in 1912.
Just one day after the premiere of *Wild Strawberries*, Victor Sjöström was taken ill and rushed to hospital in Stockholm with heart trouble. During the course of 1959 his general condition declined and by December he was once again in hospital. Three weeks later he suffered from a blood clot and died on the evening of 3 January 1960.
Following Sjöström's death, Ingmar Bergman read out the following extract from the diary he kept during the filming of Wild Strawberries at a memorial ceremony organised by the Swedish Film Academy on 20 February 1960:

We had just shot the final scenes to round off Wild Strawberries [Smultronstället] the final close-ups of Isak Borg when he feels the sense of clarity and reconciliation. His face became illuminated with an enigmatic light, reflected from another reality. His facial expressions suddenly became mild, almost serene. His expression was open, smiling, full of love...

It was a miracle...

Such total tranquillity; a soul that had found peace and lucidity. Never before or since have I experienced a face so noble and enlightened. And yet this was nothing more than a piece of acting in a dirty studio. And it had to be acting. This exceedingly shy human creature would never have shown us bystanders this deeply buried treasure of compassion and purity had it not involved of a piece of acting, a

performance.

Darragh O'Donoghue: "*The Phantom Carriage*" (*Senses of Cinema CTEQ Annotations on Film*, 2010)

Lawyer: *"Those are life's little difficulties, you see!"*

– August Strindberg, *A Dream Play*(1901)

When Ingmar Bergman wanted to recreate the late 19th century youth of Isaac Borg in *Smultronstället* (*Wild Strawberries*, 1957), he turned for inspiration to Sweden's most famous artist, Carl Larsson (1). In a series of picture books with titles such as *Ett hem* (*Our Home*, 1899), *Spadarfvet, mitt lilla landtbruk*(*Spadarfvet, Our Place in the Country*, 1906) and *Åt solsidan* (*On the Sunny Side*, 1910), Larsson portrayed family life in cosy farmhouse interiors and brightly lit rural idylls. This idealism was hard won, and Larsson's youth, like that of Victor Sjöström, who plays Borg, was marked by rupture and poverty, and dominated by an abusive father (2). This was a background to some extent shared by Selma Lagerlöf, author of the novel *Körkarlen* (3) – the source of Sjöström's adaptation – and Larsson sketched at least two portraits of the writer, in 1902 and 1908 (4). But the most striking of Larsson's works, and one uncannily predicting the special effects for which *Körkarlen* (*The Phantom Carriage*) is famous, is "The Home's Good Fairy" (1909), in which a benevolent ghost hovers in a bedroom like a double exposure (5). Sjöström and his legendary cameraman Julius Jaenzon (credited here under his pseudonym "J. Julius") used double exposures in *The Phantom Carriage* to create the illusion of two worlds – one natural, the other supernatural – in the same space (6).

Sjöström was not the first major Swedish artist to evoke the spirit world through photography. August Strindberg, as well as creating modern drama (7) and pioneering many of the concerns and methods of 20th century avant-garde painting, experimented with photography throughout his life, even inventing the "Celestograph", an image taken without a lens (which Strindberg thought distorted and subverted reality), with sensitised photographic plates turned to the sky and left to expose; and the lensless *Wunderkamera*, a camera that enabled him to take "psychological portraits" endowed with "mystic meaning" or "visionary suggestion" (8).

Of course, Sjöström and Jaenzon's experiments were primarily a response to Lagerlöf's 1912 novel. *The Phantom Carriage* is remarkably faithful to its source, and the double exposures and other effects can be seen as at once:

1. A visual correlative to the literary narrative's interpenetration of physical and supernatural worlds or states, where material actions, settings and objects are spiritually freighted (9);

2. An equivalent of the narrative's recessive structure of stories and flashbacks, all controlled by Georges (Tore Svennberg), Death's driver (10); tellingly, the carriage itself is introduced in a story within a flashback. In other Lagerlöf books, storytelling seems to be linked to the resurrection of the dead and moral regeneration (11); and

3. Marking the film world's threshold points: the narrative begins with the Salvation Army's Sister Edith [Astrid Holm] at "death's door", the first of many doors that physically, psychologically and spiritually block characters; while most of the first hour is set in a graveyard, that liminal space where the living bury their dead.

Although the novel, like much of Lagerlöf's work, takes its cue from Swedish folklore and superstition (12), its theme is festively Christian. It is the tale of a misanthrope who appears to die on New Year's Eve and is shown the lives he has ruined by an emissary of Death, before being given a chance to redeem himself, and is essentially a variation on Charles Dickens' novella *A Christmas Carol* (1843). The film seems to endorse such sentiments by ending with David Holm (Sjöström) repeating Georges'

prayer for mankind: "Lord, please let my soul come to maturity before it is reaped"; the title of the book's 1921 tie-in English translation, *Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness!*, further emphasises this exhortatory didacticism (13).

The film's Christianity, however, is more Hitchcock than Dickens. Four decades before Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol identified "exchange", in particular the "transfer of guilt", as the English master's preeminent theme (14), Sjöström was elaborating on its possibilities (15). Although David Holm is clearly conceived as the narrative's sinner, his actions and fate are part of a roundelay of guilt, blame and punishment. His destiny is intimately bound up with that of saintly Edith – their narratives are intercut in the first "chapter"; each can see Death; they are defined throughout by being prone (Edith is on her deathbed; Holm is repeatedly tempted, for good and ill, when lying down, an image of his death-in-life, his lost humanity); and both destroy Mrs Holm's well-being. The consequences of Holm's moral failures physically manifest as consumption and are transmitted to Edith when she repairs his germ-ridden coat. But Edith is not as innocent as she seems; she subsumes her physical attraction to Holm into an obsession with saving his soul, with disastrous results for everyone.

Another system of transference originates with Georges, the smooth-talking, pointy-bearded Mephistopheles who tempts Holm from his contented family life (16) – one significantly rooted in work and nature – to a dissolute urban existence which, paradoxically for a fantasy film, returns Sjöström, after the romantic pantheism (17) of the films that brought him global fame (*Terje Vigen* [*A Man There Was*, 1917] and *Berg-Ejvind och hans hustru* [*The Outlaw and His Wife*, 1918]), to the unblinking social-realism of *Ingeborg Holm* (1913). That film's title character was performed by Hilda Borgström, who here plays Holm's wife – on one level, *The Phantom Carriage* imagines what might have changed for the luckless Ingeborg if her husband had lived; Sjöström bleakly suggests: not much. For all its brilliant and evocative use of double exposure, the most moving piece of technical "trickery" in *The Phantom Carriage* is a dissolve that turns a family picnic in a lakeside glade into a drunken orgy. This triad of inebriates will be repeated in a tavern, with Holm taking over Georges' role as tempter, just as he must replace him as Death's driver.

From *Blodets Röst* (*The Voice of Passion*, 1913) (18) to his last, underrated film, *Under the Red Robe* (1937), Sjöström's work has frequently dramatised themes of declining fortune and the redemption of "bad" or hardened men, and *The Phantom Carriage* fits neatly into this pattern. But another reading is possible: the film's systems of transference, repetition, parallelism and circularity; its course of moral and physical infection that spreads to every character; its world where the family is a site of violence, disease and threat, are most chillingly emblematised when Holm hatchets down the kitchen door to stop his brutalised wife from fleeing him. The power of this inexorable scene overshadows the narrative's final reconciliation and redemption, and Holm's second resurrection in the world we've been shown is serial, without end.

Geoffrey O'Brien: "The Rapture of the Silents" (*New York Review*, May 24, 2012)

By last year it became fully apparent that the long-heralded death of film as we have known it was definitively at hand. The age of celluloid was rapidly giving way—had essentially already given way—to an unpredictable digital future. Projectors and thirty-five-millimeter film prints were being replaced in American theaters by hard drives known as DCPs (Digital Cinema Packages). The manufacturing of movie cameras and movie film was slowing to a halt. (Eastman Kodak filed for bankruptcy in January.) Movie studios showed increasing reluctance to strike new prints of old films.

These were clearly only minor portents of much larger changes to come, but it was foreseeable that the whole heritage of films made up until now would soon need to pass through a further technological conversion to be accessible at all, a conversion both very expensive and with little long-term reliability. Economics and past history suggested that a great deal would eventually be lost in the

process. You had only to look at the fate of the majority of silent films, lost for many reasons but above all because there was no commercial incentive to preserve them.

Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo in The Artist

As if to acknowledge this most significant sea change in filmmaking, exhibition, and preservation since the end of the silent era—to mark the closure of one era with a toast to the closure of another—the ghost of silent film was summoned up in two of the year's most widely noted films. Michel Hazanavicius's *The Artist* pulled off the stunt of making an almost entirely silent black-and-white film that took the Oscar for best picture. Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*—Scorsese's first 3-D feature—embedded a retrospective of images created near the dawn of cinema by one of its first great formal inventors.

I approached the Hazanavicius film with a certain dread, half-expecting a confection that would wrap silent movies in an aura of adorable quaintness. But if *The Artist* was pure pastiche, and undeniably cute right down to an audience-charming Jack Russell terrier (who even got to vigorously reenact the ancient *Rescued by Rover* trick of saving his master from imminent disaster), it was made with a care so loving as to be almost didactic in spirit. It might have been conceived as a primer in the appreciation of silent movies—not singular classics like Alexander Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) or Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*(1928) but the run-of-the-mill movie palace fodder of the mid- to late 1920s. Hazanavicius was determined to make the old devices work again, and he succeeded. Audience reaction to *The Artist* tended to mirror a phenomenon I have observed many times at revivals of silent movies: the initial uncertainty, punctuated by nervous laughter, giving way to emotional engagement and finally to a kind of rapture.

The Artist translates its meticulous interest in modes of silent storytelling into a source of wonder, wonder perhaps above all that so rudimentary a story line—a fallen screen idol saved by love—should hold the attention. It does after all seem that the mind behaves differently when watching a silent film. With sound, the viewer gets his bearings from what the characters say and what tone they say it in; watching the movie is a kind of eavesdropping.

The silent films foster a different, prelinguistic mode of apprehension. A peculiar kind of attentiveness results that has something of the intensity of meditation, a wordless and intimate absorption in which the flow goes both ways: the spectator completes the people on the screen, inwardly speaks their words for them rather than listening in. It is always surprising to experience, yet again, the sense of loss when a silent picture ends, the sudden awareness of how intently one has been staring at the people who have now vanished into air. In that same instant there may also be the awareness of how slender was the story on which that intentness was strung. A movie like *The Kiss* (1929)—Greta Garbo's last silent vehicle, directed by Jacques Feyder—stirs up deep feeling with a plot line of such nullity that it is almost embarrassing to recall. Yet the feeling is real enough, and lingers naggingly.

If Hazanavicius does not rise to the level of Garbo and Feyder, he persuasively demonstrates the possibility of such responses. But *The Artist* is finally a movie about the irreversibility of the past. However wonderful the cinematic form it evokes may have been, however wonderful the 1920s may even have been, there is no going back; and so in this film the Douglas Fairbanks–like silent movie idol and his Clara Bow–like jazz baby rival will have to reinvent themselves as all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing stars of the early 1930s. We are invited to admire the irreplaceable beauties of the old movies one more time (or more likely, for many viewers, for the first time) before closing the door forever. The movie has the effect of a perfected and unrepeatable gesture. One wonders whether *The Artist* will provide an opening into further explorations for the audiences so taken with it, or whether this will be a case where for many a single film will come to stand for a whole era: a silent movie for people who will never see another one as long as they live.

Hugo, as might be expected, turned out to be something very different. For Scorsese the door to the

past is never closed. *Hugo*does not so much revisit the past as reveal that it is still alive, elaborately disguised as the present. Brian Selznick's marvelous children's book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret (2007)* provided an intrigue centering around a lost key with the power to animate a mysterious automaton; but the heart of the mystery turned out to be the invention of cinema, or at least the part played in that origin by Georges Méliès with his films of magical trickery. The perennial pursuit, in fantasy tales, of the all-powerful secret becomes in *Hugo* identical with the project of a film archive, and the mystical revelation at the center nothing more or less than the screening of a restored print of Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)—and, in the film's most ecstatic indulgence, a recreation of Méliès and his crew in his glass-walled studio, industriously at work making the impossible visible.

By filming the filming of Méliès's films, with the fullest resources of sound and color and wide screen and 3-D, Scorsese instills the illusion that Méliès is still at work, merely availing himself of new tools, as if the whole of cinema continued to exist in one never-ending present. The true magic turns out to be not the illusion conjured up by this metaproduction but the work (carried on over generations) of creating it. The Jules Vernian capsule in which *A Trip to the Moon*'s explorers achieve their voyage would be merely a metaphor for the cinematic capsule that contains all of us and inside which we head toward an unknown destination.

Thus Scorsese averts, just barely, the antiquarian melancholy that otherwise tends to cling to the contemplation of silent movies. From the moment they disappeared they have been a metaphor for grandeur turned abruptly obsolete, a metaphor burned into cinematic tradition by Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. Gloria Swanson's "we had faces" became a Gothic epitaph rather than a justified celebration. To linger over the glossies of forgotten silent idols might almost be the definition of obsessive estrangement from the present, the faithful-unto-death adoration of what will never again be marketable. Nita Naldi? Betty Bronson? Lou Tellegen? The sudden and irrevocable outmodedness of the silents, those hypnotic gazes thrown over for the brash noisiness of the living, seem to bring us close to the domain of Edgar Allan Poe or Miss Havisham.

That Gothic edge finds an outlet in the work of Guy Maddin, the Canadian filmmaker who in such movies as *The Heart of the World* (2000) and *Brand Upon the Brain!* (2006) has been using the methods and historical associations of silent film as materials for an intimate autobiography, by turns hilarious and scary and emotionally raw. Maddin proceeds as if his unconscious consisted precisely of an archive of obsolete and sometimes damaged footage where alternately mesmeric and hysterical acting styles become the most appropriate possible expression for buried psychic archetypes. If *The Artist* evokes the formal elegance of silent film and *Hugo* its heritage of dreamy enchantment, Maddin's films derive an almost shamanistic power from their grasp of what is most eerie about those old images: their power to bring what is demonstrably dead and gone into flickering and still-potent life.

Most people, it is fair to guess, do not find it difficult to ignore silent movies altogether. Beyond the circle of specialized film viewers I rarely encounter an extensive familiarity with silents or much regret at that fact. Outside of film schools there has never been a particularly wide standard repertoire of silent films, because most people don't watch them. A sampling, however brief, of Griffith's huge body of work; Chaplin and Keaton, and Harold Lloyd clinging to the hands of the clock; *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *Metropolis*; and a smattering of Douglas Fairbanks, Greta Garbo, Lon Chaney, and Louise Brooks would pretty much cover the field. There is after all so much else, far too much of it, to look at. A friend once confided that she "didn't get" how to look at silent films, and before I could offer glib assurance of how easy it is to just sit back and let the images have their way, I remembered how many times I too had been stymied or irked when starting down that road.

First of all there was, in those days before digital restoration, the frequent necessity of contending with inadequate prints whose washed-out, broken, splotched, or shaky images gave the impression not of a film but of the grossly damaged remnant of a film. But beyond such barriers there

were filmic practices that took getting used to: mimed interchanges hard or at least tedious to interpret, plot developments unperceived for want of verbal cues, tableau-like presentations in which shots were held long after the point seemed to have been made, not to mention (especially in American films) wordy intertitles that brought the film to a dead halt while the slowest readers in the audience were given time to absorb them—and, famously, there was the acting, built on a vocabulary of gestures and postures and gazes that had bit by bit become as remote as the Rosetta Stone.

There were of course aspects of silent movies that had become archaic even before sound came in. No sooner was an effect achieved than some comic set about burlesquing it. The three and a half decades of silent cinema are a history of mercurially swift absorptions and readjustments.

Anyone who does set out now to explore the silents finds that we are living in a golden age, or at least golden moment, of film restoration and, through DVD and Blu-Ray disks, a golden age of accessibility. (It remains to be seen whether such accessibility will continue to be the case in the wake of the total digital conversion now underway.) An immersion that once required travel to distant archives can now be accomplished on one's couch.

It is a very different sort of viewing experience. These restored and digitized editions are often a transformation of the originals they undertake to reproduce, collating disparate elements and restoring a look of wholeness to torn or decayed images. They are in some instances cleaner than any print ever was. The film speed has been calibrated and adjusted with a precision that would have been unlikely when they were first shown. (At times the images unfold with a voluptuous smoothness and slowness so beautiful and revealing that I cannot help wondering if this is as much a product of the restorer's art as of the filmmaker's.) They are accompanied by modern soundtracks that—sometimes more intrusively and anachronistically than one might wish—tease out new implications of feeling and cadence. We watch them in carefully controlled settings of our own choosing, with no hint of the raucous world of vulgar entertainment or mass propaganda into which they were originally beamed.

More significant than these seductive accoutrements is the dramatically expanded repertoire we are now privileged to experience. Newly discovered and restored films rarely or barely discussed in general film histories have been emerging at such a pace that it is hard to keep up. In recent years there has been a stunning procession of rescued films that turn out to be of far more than historic interest: Lé- once Perret's *L'Enfant de Paris*(1913), George Loane Tucker's *Traffic in Souls* (1913), Gustavo Serena's *Assunta Spina* (1915), Evgeni Bauer's *The Dying Swan*(1917), Mauritz Stiller's *Sir Arne's Treasure* (1919), Ernst Lubitsch's *Die Bergkatze* (1921), F.W. Murnau's *Phantom* (1922), John Ford's *Hangman's House* (1928), Frank Borzage's *Street Angel* (1928), Franz Osten's *A Throw of Dice* (1929), George Schnéevoigt's *Laila*(1929), Mikhail Kalatozov's *Salt for Svanetia* (1930), Hiroshi Shimizu's *Japanese Girls at the Harbor* (1933).

How could we not have heard about *Laila*, with its extraordinary scenes of wolves chasing a reindeer-driven sled across a sub-arctic landscape, or *Salt for Svanetia* with its sublime contemplation of Central Asian isolation and unforgiving folkways? The list may seem long, but it only scratches the surface. There is much more still to come, films already restored and films just recovered in archives from Russia to New Zealand. The inevitable decay of nitrate film has apparently not in every case been as swift as feared, and so there are still opportunities to uncover, here and there, what was thought lost forever.

The seduction of silent cinema is the seduction of a form as unique as opera or kabuki, a peculiar way of organizing one's attention. It is a perpetual learning how to see, and a way of coming to the truth of one of Emerson's observations: "The eye is final."

But there is the further peculiarity that what you see takes place in a world no longer there. Here are cities since reduced to rubble and rebuilt, stretches of countryside by now turned into interstates and strip

malls, glaciated wilderness that has probably succumbed to climate change—and of course the faces of those now long dead, something too easily taken for granted but that haunts movies from the start. The inventors of the medium were already thinking about recording the living as a future consolation for their survivors.

It is a property that will only get stranger. People have had millennia to get used to the idea of the ancientness of written texts; we have not yet seen truly ancient films, having got just a little beyond the century mark. A passenger—a babe in arms—who got off the train at La Ciotat station as the Lumières were filming it in 1895 may well have lived on into the age of television and 3-D. In time everything prior to that may come to seem prehistoric, dating from the era before people could see the vanished generations moving in something like real time through a world also in movement.

The reality of their world included of course the desire to escape from that reality by means of the very movies we are watching. Two goals are at work from the beginning of film: to move in as close to the world as possible, and to move as far away from it as possible. They are not always contradictory goals. Even the most banal of natural settings became exotic when filmed; wind-blown trees and eddying waves were primordial special effects. A city street photographed at random, if it was someone else's city, might be as unreal as any studio concoction.

Audiences came not necessarily to relish the fact of existing in 1912 or 1927 but to explore precisely the possibilities denied by that present moment, to look at something else, a distant steppe or the palace of a rajah, the deck of a millionaire's yacht or the interior of a midtown brothel in the midst of a police raid, a world seen from above the clouds or a world entirely taken over by comical acrobats. The abstraction and stylization fostered by silent film were uniquely suited for establishing an obverse zone lying just within the well-named dream palaces, liberated from history and even from logic.

Every film becomes a documentary, even if it is a documentary on the making of illusions. To become aware of the exceptional artistry of the greatest silent filmmakers—of D.W. Griffith or Victor Sjöström or Ernst Lubitsch—is in the same instant to become sensitive to the living material, that is to say people and their habitat, that they are working with. The sense of how the filmmaker is operating in the world cannot be separated from the film. You can read *King Lear* without having to give a thought to Richard Burbage; you cannot watch *The Birth of a Nation* without registering the presence of every member of its large cast and by extension the precise time and place in which they go through their paces.

We feel for them because we see them and in the same moment measure their distance from us. I have not read Selma Lagerlöf's novel *The Phantom Carriage* (1912), a tale of an alcoholic reprobate redeemed in the manner of Ebenezer Scrooge by ghostly visions, and so cannot judge whether it exerts as powerful an effect as Sjöström's 1921 film version, which the Criterion Collection has just issued in a Blu-Ray edition. But whatever the suggestiveness of the fable, the film works on us with the bare palpability of its elements—even of its visual tricks.

The carriage of the title, sent to collect the souls of the dead and driven by the last soul to die on New Year's Eve, is a superimposed image gliding over natural scenes. The dead souls, once extracted from their corpses, are likewise superimpositions wandering through otherwise solid settings. The transparent carriage pauses to collect a vagrant dead of exposure in a marsh. It moves over a rocky coastline to retrieve drowned bodies from a boat half sunk beneath the waves. A simpler trick is unimaginable.

Yet these forlorn images are made even more so by the very impossibility of those transparent forms, as if we were being given a demonstration of what is humanly unattainable. In counterpoint to these supernatural scenes there is the film's other kind of special effect: the human face exposed by lighting designed to bring out expressions of fear, anguish, malicious anger, resigned devotion. Faces look at faces, or toward the empty space that is the audience. Sjöström, playing the abusive protagonist in what may, according to an accompanying essay by Paul Mayersberg, be an imitation of his own brutal father,

turns himself into the most indelible of visual devices by capturing the demonic glint in his own eyes.

That glint carries across time in the most unnerving way. But it had to be captured in the first place. The authentic artists of silent cinema—and the list gets longer as more films are retrieved—touch us by the deliberateness with which they directed our eyes toward what was there, or rather to what still is there in their work. Such viewing can easily create odd moments of temporal displacement. If 1912 can become the present, 2012 can just as easily become the remote past. Watching the recent and disastrously received Disney release *John Carter*, with its digitized frames densely packed with thousands of battling Martians and swirling airships, I found myself looking at it as if it were the artifact of a long-vanished era that devoted itself to such curious spectacles. The people of that time, it seemed, had sought to make images that mutated so rapidly that no single image could be looked at long enough to become fixed in the mind. If they had been looked at that long, it would have become too obvious that there was nothing there to see.

A movie like *The Phantom Carriage*, by contrast, was made to be peered into with unwavering attention. Shots were prolonged so that nothing of importance would be lost. Dying faces were photographed as if to bridge the gap between life and death. Silent cinema had perhaps the advantage that the spectator cannot look away. The rapt gaze is the only suitable mode for watching it at all.

Paul Mayersberg: "Phantom Forms: *The Phantom Carriage*" (*Criterion Essays*, 2011)

Internationally, Victor Sjöström is best known for his performance as Professor Isak Borg in Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957). But behind that unforgettable face of old age is a younger man, a leading actor who was also the greatest Swedish film director before Bergman. *The Phantom Carriage* (1921), based on *Körkarlen,* a novel by the 1909 Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf, is Sjöström's most famous film. *Körkarlen* means "the driver" or "the coachman." The film was also known as*The Stroke of Midnight* in the U.S., and *Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness* in the UK. The different titles reflect the uncertainty of distributors at the time in identifying its genre: ghost story, horror, thriller, religious fable?

While American silent cinema was defined by its various genres—comedy, melodrama, adventure—Swedish cinema was almost entirely devoted to national folktales and sagas, which gave it a unique identity, a landscape never seen before. With films like *A Man There Was* (1917), *The Outlaw and His Wife* (1918), and *The Sons of Ingmar* (1919), Sjöström was established as a master, with a reputation as grand, if not as international, as D. W. Griffith's. Then came *The Phantom Carriage*, a major departure from his outdoor dramas.

The film begins on New Year's Eve. Edit (Astrid Holm), a Salvation Army sister, is dying of tuberculosis. She sits up in her bed to call for a man named David Holm before she dies. The clock ticks toward midnight. David (Sjöström), a violent alcoholic, is located drinking with down-and-out friends in a cemetery. He refuses to visit Edit, gets into a brawl, and is accidentally struck dead at the midnight hour. A carriage arrives in a ghostly double exposure, with a phantom hooded coachman, Georges (Tore Svennberg), to take away David's soul. The legend is that any person who dies at midnight himself becomes the new coachman employed by Death to pick up souls and wait for next year's midnight death, when he will hand over the reins of the carriage to the new incumbent.

At death, David is forced to recall his life, and his mind becomes the narrative itself. Through an intricate series of flashbacks, we discover a reprobate who has abused his wife (Hilda Borgström) and children, his younger brother (Einar Axelsson), and Edit, whose mission has been to personally save him from his addiction. Lagerlöf, whose book owes much to Dickens's *A Christmas Carol,* was the star of Swedish fiction, and Sjöström himself filmed four of her novels. Together with their friend the director Mauritz Stiller—who discovered Greta Gustafsson and turned her into Garbo in *The Saga of Gösta Berling* (1924)—they created the golden age of

Swedish cinema, which declined abruptly when they all left for Hollywood.

Sjöström quarreled with Lagerlöf about the style of the adaptation of *The Phantom Carriage.* She wanted it shot on location in the southern town of Landskrona. He opted for a studio production at Filmstaden in Råsunda, built for the new company Svensk Filmindustri. The film was a bold experiment in controlled conditions, carried out with his cinematographer, Julius Jaenzon, who had already used double exposure in Stiller's *Sir Arne's Treasure* (1919), and the laboratory work of Éugen Hellman. This time, the superimpositions were layered up to four times. The ghosts appeared to move within the sets, disappearing from time to time behind the other characters and the solid foreground objects. A hand-moved camera followed each of them. And they were lit differently, using filters, to give them a special reality. The final effect was to create a seemingly three-dimensional image. Sjöström's studio work did not undermine his realism but enhanced it. The sets, interior and exterior, were shot in exceptionally deep focus for the time. Busy background action was as clear as the foreground, impossible without artificial studio lighting.

Before 1920, the cinema has no history of its own. In Germany, Fritz Lang, F. W. Murnau, and G. W. Pabst, the fathers of film noir, continued the theatrical and painterly tradition of expressionism. In France, Louis Feuillade, the father of comic-book cinema, made serials in which fantastic, costumed characters roamed the real streets of Paris. In Italy, Giovanni Pastrone, father of the epic, went straight back to the Roman Empire. But like Griffith, Sjöström explored what Bergman called the ultimate truth of cinema, the human face, to which Sjöström constantly guides us even without close-ups.

Coming from the theater, Sjöström nonetheless rejected traditional stage acting as detrimental to films. He wanted another style of performance since the dialogue could not be heard, concentrating on face, movements, and gestures. His own performance in *The Phantom Carriage* avoids melodrama by admitting David's inner confusion, which simultaneously erupts into violence. His outward realism explores inner states. Some of the intertitles are actually voice-over, as he talks to himself.

The scene where David takes an ax and splinters a locked door to get to his terrified wife and children is an exact forerunner of the crazed attack by Jack Nicholson's character in *The Shining* (1980). There is a similar scene in Griffith's *Broken Blossoms,* made a year before *The Phantom Carriage,* which Sjöström may or may not have seen. Interestingly, Kubrick played down Jack's progressive alcoholism from Stephen King's original and went for out-and-out schizophrenia, the origins of which he scrupulously avoided. Sjöström hints at social causes, poverty and unemployment, but the truth about David may lie elsewhere.

In 1881, as a small child, Sjöström went to America with his father, Olaf, and mother, Maria Elizabeth, to whom he was devoted. Tragically, she died when he was seven, and soon afterward his father married the family nursemaid, twenty years his junior, whom Victor did not like. Olaf was a womanizer, twice bankrupt, and a born-again Christian. In 1893, Victor was returned to Sweden to live with his aunt. (By then, he was fluent in English, which was extremely valuable when, in the twenties, he returned to America.) All his life, Sjöström feared becoming like his father, whom he closely resembled physically. He lived frugally and was terrified, even when successful, of being without money. Perhaps his rendering of David's alcoholism derived from the tensions in Sjöström's relationship with his father. His performance is so realistically and subtly detailed that it may have come from precise memories, a ghostly reincarnation of his father, in other hands a model for a horror film.

The father and God. The film is surprisingly disconnected from Swedish Lutheranism. It is closer to Bergman's demonic *Hour of the Wolf* (1968) than to the religious crisis of *Winter Light* (1962). David's sudden conversion at the end is not altogether convincing. He is given a last chance by coming back from the dead to save his wife from poisoning herself and their children out of hopeless desperation. But it isn't God the Father who intervenes. It is his dead

predecessor, coachman Georges, who is touched by David's loving wife and the devoted Edit, who have fought so hard and long to save the man.

Sjöström's women are independently minded rather than compliant, resolutely loving rather than sadly helpless when beset by monstrous male authority. The success of *The Phantom Carriage* brought the director an invitation to America, where as a revenant from his own childhood, he made two films with Lillian Gish, *The Scarlet Letter* (1926) and the masterpiece *The Wind* (1928). Her face was unnervingly similar to that of *The Phantom Carriage*'s Hilda Borgström. As Norma Desmond, ghost of silent cinema in*Sunset Boulevard* (1950), proclaims, "We didn't need voices. We had faces then."

In America, where Sjöström's name had been changed to Seastrom, he made an extraordinary film, *He Who Gets Slapped* (1924), adapted from Leonid Andreyev's play, in which Lon Chaney's scientist, having lost his wife and his original research to another man, becomes in his humiliation a circus clown. Chaney, the Man of a Thousand Faces, who defined horror as "a clown at midnight," was an expressionist metamorphosis of David Holm. Despite the success of Sjöström's American films, however, he returned to Sweden in 1930, at the dawn of the sound era, to work in the theater, feeling perhaps that this was where speech belonged.

His influence remained. David Holm is possessed by drink as a vampire is by blood. Murnau's spectral *Nosferatu* (1922) owed something to this film. David renouncing his alcoholism at the stroke of midnight is surely as impossible as Dracula swearing off blood. But Sjöström, the humanist, could not resist.

The Phantom Carriage is at root a Faustian tale, with drink as the devil. If the film were the work of a Jansenist Catholic like Robert Bresson, David's suffering would be a struggle with God's design for him, alcohol being the mysterious presence of the divine in his bloodstream, and would probably end in suicide. But for Sjöström, God helps those who help themselves. There is an extraordinary moment when David's wife faints out of fear at his ax attack and he fetches her a cup of water, only to berate her violently when she recovers consciousness. Here is a glimpse not of God but of a good man within a bad man. Sjöström the actor marvelously conveys the brutish, the melancholy, the sarcastic, and the reflective aspects of his character. *The Shining* treats Jack as a man with the aggressive need to humiliate others. He is all demon, and the film is essentially a spectacle. Sjöström's David is a study of tortured self-humiliation, like Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov. The original draft of *Crime and Punishment* was entitled "The Drunkards."

When *The Phantom Carriage* opened at the Criterion Theater in New York, it was lauded for being precisely what it was not: a cautionary tale of the evils of drink. The distributor had completely reedited it as *The Stroke of Midnight.* The legend of the Phantom Carriage didn't come in until almost halfway. Sjöström's structure had been dismantled, and the film became a straightforward narrative. As such, it works well—as a Hollywood film with a quasi-religious score performed on a cinema Wurlitzer.

Julien Duvivier remade *The Phantom Carriage* in 1939 as *La charrette fantôme,* with Pierre Fresnay as David and Louis Jouvet as Georges, an interesting expansion of their relationship. It was reborn again as Arne Mattsson's *Körkarlen* in 1958, and in Bergman's TV film on the making of the original, *The Image Makers* (2000), based on the Per Olov Enquist play. The subject came back unheralded in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), a gloomy film noir subversively reimagined as a feel-good Christmas story.

The special handmade visual beauty of *The Phantom Carriage* has never been equaled. When Georges drives to a rocky seashore to pick up a woman who has drowned after a wreck, the coach glides through the crashing waves. When he goes down into the sea to get her, the effect of the ghostly figure under the swirling water is delirious, a hallucination of drunkenness. The film itself is drunk. The carriage is an emblem for cinema as a phantom form capable of the documentary (Lumière) and the imaginary (Méliès) at the same time. Jean Cocteau's film *Orpheus* (1950) was probably influenced by

Sjöström and Murnau in its use of negative printing to evoke the spectral in the real—or vice versa. Cocteau had a word for it: *l'irréel.*

The influence of Sjöström on his friend Carl Dreyer in the spectral *Vampyr* (1932) is often cited. But Dreyer's film is about *unseen* fear. It is not dark but powdery white. He does not rely on double exposure for the supernatural but, subverting Soviet montage, implies missing pieces to evoke the absent menace.

The Phantom Carriage, the most experimental of Swedish films, reaches for inward realism. *In Search of Lost Time* was concurrent with the early development of film. Proust's creation of memory as a literary form is parallel with the experiments in film as a dream form. Proust's "printing" of recovered memory is a photographic process. Film is in fact a sequence of still photographs, frozen images, "dead" pictures brought back to life on the screen. With *The Phantom Carriage*, we may properly ask, are the dead more alive than the living?

The Salvation Army (Wikipedia) is a Protestant Christian church and an international charitable organisation. The organisation reports a worldwide membership of over 1.7 million,[3] consisting of soldiers, officers and adherents collectively known as Salvationists. Its founders sought to bring salvation to the poor, destitute, and hungry by meeting both their "physical and spiritual needs". It is present in 132 countries,[4] running charity shops, operating shelters for the homeless and disaster relief, and humanitarian aid to developing countries.

COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2022 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS #44:

All films in the series but two (*Notorious* and *The Power of the* Dog) are available from Criterion or Netflix: **c** after a title indicates it is available on Criterion, **p**=Amazon Prime, **p$**=Amazon Prime with an extra $4 fee. *The Power of the Dog* is available, for now, only on Netflix. *Notorious* is available on FlixFilm (low-resolution versions are free on YouTube and Tubi.). All four subscription services let you cancel at any time, so you should have access to all 24 films for well under $100. *The Gunfighter* is on Amazon Prime and, in low rez, free on Tubi. Nine of the films—all with "UB" after the title—are available free to anyone with a UB email account via the UB Library's Swank and Kanopy portals. Five films are available only on non-UB streaming services: *Le Corbeau, The Gunfighter, Naked, Salesman* and *The Power of the Dog*.(The Swank titles will be available at UB's Library for a year; the Kanopy titles for 3 years.)

Feb 1: 1921 Victor Sjostrom,, ***The Phantom Carriage*** c UB-Kanopy
Feb 8: 1934 Frank Capra ***It Happened One Night*** c p$ UB-Swank
Feb 15: 1941 John Huston ***The Maltese Falcon*** p$ UB-Swank
Feb 22: 1943 Henri-Georges Clouzot ***Le Corbeau*** c
Mar 1: 1946 Alfred Hitchcock ***Notorious*** FlixFling, YouTube, UB-Swank, Tubi (free)
Mar 8: 1950 Henry King, ***The Gunfighter*** *p$*, Tubi (free)
Mar 15: 1958 Orson Welles ***Touch of Evil*** p$ UB-Swank
Mar 29: 1962 Yasujiro Ozu ***An Autumn Afternoon*** *c p$b* UB Kanopy
Apr 5: 1973 Federico Fellini ***Amarcord*** *c p$* UB Kanopy
Apr 12: 1993 Mike Leigh ***Naked*** c
Apr 19: 2002 Phillip Noyce ***Rabbit-Proof Fence*** p$ UB-Kanopy
Apr 26: 2016 Asghar Farhadi ***Salesman*** *p*
May 3: 2021: Jane Campion ***The Power of the Dog*** *NETFLIX*
May 10: 2011 Martin Scorsese ***Hugo*** *p$* UB-Kanopy

CONTACTS:

...email Diane Christian: **engdc@buffalo.edu**
…email Bruce Jackson **bjackson@buffalo.edu**
....for cast and crew info on any film: **http://imdb.com/**

The Buffalo Film Seminars are presented by the State University of New York at Buffalo