nference break, a French
t we were not, as it were,
each other's work more
nerican friends of his had
which seemed to both of
ion quite kindly, anyway
y, without insult, urge an
escartes and Rousseau and
uropean culture. Besides,
en been fresh from read-
e replied—whether hope-
as wondering what was on
ture, an equally accurate
uired, could be had by a
Brothers films. But that
of Thoreau's and of Walt

ation. In the present edition,
ecord of dialogue and action
nical version of that). This is
choices would have been to
here is apparently no surviv-
erefore wholly reconstituted
d serve quite specialized pur-
eir respective reconstitutions
ng some twenty years ago for
vious ways this is desirable—
or mutual inspiration, of the
d teams of writers, of comic
golden period of interchange
edits included in the present
is mutual inspiration?
Soup *and* A Day at the Races

14

Seasons of Love

Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night* and *The Winter's Tale*

I WAGERED THAT WHEN THE time came to produce a contribution to the *Cahiers* jubilee of film's invention I would find myself happy to remember and to speak personally, as the invitation urged us to do, about Ingmar Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955). The time is here and the wager of sentiment has been magically won. Several weeks ago a conjunction of omen-happy events placed me in Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theater at a performance of Bergman's production of *The Winter's Tale*. Because I found it from beginning to end to take its place with memories of the most inspired times I have experienced in the theater, it was bound to enter into these present thoughts.

Thematically, at least, this late play in the Shakespeare corpus bears intricately on *Smiles of a Summer Night*. But ontologically, its direct value will lie in emphasizing theater's most obvious and absolute difference from film, that each one who comes within range of, for example, the present volume can view the same film, and it may present itself everywhere such a one is to be found; whereas the experience of the event of theater demands one's presenting oneself there and then. So the pleasure I feel in

Originally written for "Jubilee" issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the first film screening, 1994. (The issue never appeared.)

the possibility of saying something useful about an object of which we are quite likely to share the experience exists in a certain tension with the pressure I feel toward the necessity of saying something memorable about a related event of which we are very unlikely, and because we are very unlikely, to share the experience.

Smiles of a Summer Night was not the first film I loved, but it was the first in which I came away from the experience of a film with the sense or revelation that, as in instances of the great arts, everything means something, and took that experience home to spend, it turned out, all night inviting my journal to continue telling what everything came to in this particular case, or whether there is a something that an everything could come to, and whether we should desire such a thing. (I had already had sufficient evidence that the soul is not a unity.) Since *Smiles* declares itself as depicting, hence smiling upon ("hence"?), at least three distinguishable kinds of love, it rather commits me to say something by way of locating the kind of love it has inspired in me, hence the kind that film is apt to inspire. It represented to me, put otherwise, some new standard to which an articulation of the response to film had to rise.

This is attested to by my apparently random impulse to select *Smiles of a Summer Night* as one of the two films—I have forgotten the other—that I took along to screen and lecture about during the civil rights summer of 1964 in Mississippi. I joined for a couple of weeks a small group of Harvard students whose contribution to that summer was to offer a set of courses meant to constitute that year's summer school of Tougaloo College, a small, ambitious black institution outside Jackson, Mississippi. Having the previous year tried my hand at Harvard, more eagerly than successfully, at teaching a graduate seminar in aesthetics concentrated on film, I wanted, in addition to philosophy lectures, to introduce film into our Tougaloo offerings, and my first pedagogical goal was to convey my sense that film proposed a serious project of thinking. I had no idea then how to convey this with a popular American film, without at any rate changing the subject to one of general aesthetics. So although virtually any film in that context would have carried a pedagogically usable transgressiveness, I went to the extreme of choosing one that still seemed to me foreign. While my confusion communicated itself, so did my wish to acknowledge my own sense of film's foreignness as an academic subject, and so, it seems, did my sincere commitment to the film and my sense through it of intellectual liberation. So my naive sophistication was not pedagogically useless after all.

The opening encounter with this film that I refer to occurred on the night of April 27, 1960, a piece of knowledge earned from having just now uncovered the journal of mine containing that night's reflections. I was thirty-four years old, precisely half my lifetime ago, evidently lost in the middle of life's journey within the bright parks of Berkeley, where I was completing my fourth year as an assistant professor in the philosophy department—separated from a marriage with a friend, jointly responsible for a three-year-old daughter, unable or unwilling to complete my belated Ph. D. thesis, under notice from my department that unless it was submitted within the coming academic year my promotion to tenure would not be recommended and my position would terminate, and pretty securely wrapped in general sentiments of guilt and failure. In short, I shared elements of an economy of discredit with various of the characters in *Smiles of a Summer Night*—with the isolated father (Fredrik, played by Gunnar Björnstrand), with his unoriented, unclaimed wife (Anne, played by Ulla Jacobsson), with his turbulent, seminarian son (Henrik, played by Bjorn Bjelfvenstam), with his former and future love (the aging, skeptical actress Desiree, tending to a child alone, played by Eva Dahlbeck).

Reading through the pertinent twenty or so pages of that journal, I seem to recall pretty well the treasures of romantic excess with which I wished to greet each discriminable motion, each change of light, each posture and juxtaposition taken by my old, or rather new, love—with each pool or lake of water lights; with each word of Desiree's bracing, deflationary humor in response to Fredrik's insufficiently serious seriousness; thrilled to remember the titles, and noting their pertinence, of each romantic piece Henrik melodramatically flings himself at the piano to invoke; taking to heart the casual richness of symbolism at a European artist's disposal, as in the gargoyle figures of a public clock, whose procession at one hour shows a hunchback followed by a bride and the next hour shows the bride followed by death; awed by such narrative finesse as presenting two women (Anne and her "friend" Charlotte) gossiping about Desiree's power over and independence of men, with particular reference to each of their husbands, and thus imitating, by similarity hence by difference, the French comedy in which we had seen Desiree perform, exploring both the content of such comedy and the mechanism of it in relation to the comedy and mechanism of the film now before us; and moved to the depths at the civilized violence of one soul's intelligence of another, desperate to ponder the roll of dice between a liberating and a stifling understanding, or between sincerity and cynicism.

These excesses—I assume they are pieces of the normal overevaluation conferred by infatuation—are reflected in the film's depicted excesses, for example, of the forest-framed racing carriage carrying off the young lovers; of the repeated crash of music, as of a broken fanfare, that both marks the young man's shadowed face as he shelters the young woman in one arm and with the other gives rein to the horses, and that then marks

his father's face as he witnesses this scene; of the flowing, sheer scarf the young woman flings free as they gallop away, which wafts onto the roadbed for the crumpled father-husband to pick up, the veil he could never lift from his virgin bride. And then we might adduce the excess of meaning in the film's handling of the scarf-veil-shroud itself, picking up the tainted purities of Pyramus's Thisby's bloodied mantle and of Desdemona's handkerchief, so invoking for its summer night both Shakespeare's midsummer dream and the Shakespearean romance of jealousy in *The Winter's Tale* that, as it were, reroutes Othello's occupation. We had seen that sheer fabric in two earlier versions, at length when, after Anne closely questions her experienced soubrette Petra about the demands of men and confesses that she remains inexperienced, and Petra replies that she can tell that from her skin, the two young women tumble down cascades of laughter into one another's arms and onto a bed, covered and caught together by folds of this sheer cloth; and briefly when, in the sequence immediately preceding that of the elopement, Henrik buries his face into a window curtain made of such a fabric and utters a prayer that accepts and transcends the prohibitions of the passages from Luther on virtue that he had read aloud as some simulacrum of sexual advance—using, as inexperience well may, the censoring of love as love talk—to uncomprehending, all-too-comprehending Petra. Then he had fervently read out Luther's words against temptation and unsteady claims to virtue; but now, within the feel and the imagination of sheer fabric, he prays further: "O Lord, if your world is sinful, then I want to sin. Take my miserable virtue away from me." The prayer is answered when, as if to tempt heaven, Henrik tries suicide, and his bungling of it produces Anne on a magic bed, an undisguised realization of the romantic replacement of religion by the excess of love (essentially Kant's definition of fanaticism).

But am I really remembering the excesses of my experience that first night, I mean participating again in their illuminations or illusions, or am I simply remembering that one night a long time ago I participated in what *I* now knowingly or historically read as excesses? Since I grant film the power of art to keep such experiences in store, retaining them with treadable traces of feeling, not toward the past but into the present, the question of memory is at once eased and increased. I must persist beyond those early journal notations, whose very formulations of consciousness will have dissipated experience and its traces (those notations are rarely art, they rarely conserve the locus of experience). Put otherwise, I must find a fresh moment, one remaining outside the "everything" that I have said means something in the film. It is essential to what I take the work of art to be that there are always such fresh moments of entry, even fresh everythings. Hence I know that I must have already encountered what I seek to reencounter, so it must occur in the form of remembering. But since I cannot systematically search for the significant memory trace—even if I review the film's events on a video, as of course I did the last thing before beginning this writing—what I seek evidently falls under Proust's notion of involuntary memory. (I am responding here to Walter Benjamin's study of Baudelaire in which he goes over some familiar ground in Freud and in Bergson, but freshly contextualizes it against his interest in Baudelaire's perception of the modern as the period in which human experience becomes lost to itself, or exhausted, we might say stolen. Emerson anticipates the question of the experience of the loss of experience, or say explores the loss of experience in terms of the experience of loss, or rather of the failure of that express experience, ten years before, as it were, the Second Empire, in his essay "Experience.")

Mightn't I, however, find some promising field on which to await this (re)encounter with *Smiles of a Summer Night*? I might think about Bergman's other films; or track the connection of *Smiles* with Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* and with *The Marriage of Figaro*, narratives of other distressed marriages, in settings of entertainment and accident, where married love is tested by romantic love; or figure further the allusions to theater, fairly explicitly to Marivaux; or to photography, in the contrast proposed between Fredrik's early visit to a photographer's studio to collect portraits of his wife, portraits he revisits at the middle and toward the end of the film, where the photographer modestly protests, to balance his praise of his own work, "It's the subject that's important of course," a remark which, taken as an observation about these fixated, fetishistic images, is a banality, but taken as about motion pictures is illuminating, implying that the subject of the camera is primarily the actor and not primarily the character, as if the actor may learn from the camera of his or her freedom to find his character.

It is here, in staking a field on which to await fresh impressions, inner or outer, that my memory of Bergman's production of *The Winter's Tale* comes a bit systematically into play. To begin with, it matches *Smiles of a Summer Night*'s study of or competition with theater by taking up a comparable study of film by theater (or what I think may be understood as such a study).

While I felt that Bergman's production was quoting images from his films, I am too out of touch at the moment with these films to be able to prove this one way or the other, and it is in any case not what I mean in speaking of this production's study of film. I mean something more elusive,

as in the way Leontes and Hermione are given to caress and kiss on momentarily parting in their opening scene with Polixenes, a quickness of erotic shock you expect rather from cinematic closeness. Or more massive, as in the full promenade of the cast that Bergman imports to open the play, an event which both unifies as it were the frame and depth of the stage and takes its course as if for all the world made in slow motion. The effect of this painstakingly and gorgeously articulated gesture is manifold, and I want to take bearings from it, however brief, meant to lead back to *Smiles of a Summer Night*.

The promenade serves, hence joins, various strata of interests, from the history of Shakespearean reception and specifically of Swedish national inheritance, to the ontology of theater and ritual, to the acceptance of this particular play's presentation of famous dramaturgical cruxes. The literary or historical trace for its nineteenth-century setting is a printed nineteenth-century program (photographed for inclusion in the present production's program) announcing a production of *The Winter's Tale* in a country chateau staged soon after the belated translation of Shakespeare into Swedish, in Sweden, as elsewhere, an event within Romanticism. The promenade unites the population of the cast with that of the chateau, actors with audience, and began somewhere from within the space of the contemporary audience of which I was for an evening a member, as gradually made itself felt some seven or eight minutes before the scheduled time of the performance. (My friend Marian Keane, with whom I attended the performance, had seen the production also several nights earlier and made sure, without hinting why, that we were in our seats a good twenty minutes early. It is from her report of conversations with Swedish students and friends of hers that I have the tip about the provenance of the photographed program and the pertinent Swedish translation.) I began noticing that some people, at a glance dressed more formally than others in our audience, continued their entrance into the theater down the side aisles and then up several stage-wide risers into the set of a chateau's ballroom; while other people, similarly dressed, took their places along the front row of the auditorium, which I then recognized, from half-a-dozen rows back, was replaced by or supplemented with chairs of the same painted wood as that of the sparse furniture on the stage.

Whatever context this setting prepares for the sound of romantic poetry (I suppose continued in the Swedish folk tunes used in the play's places for songs); and beyond the running proof this establishes that in theater, unlike film, the space of actors and of audience is empirically continuous, and that in religion or ritual, where empirically continuous space is metaphysically divided, what divides it must be established by references essentially outside those boundaries; the gathering, enveloping, circling

promenade invokes *The Winter's Tale*'s subject of the expanse of time (in creation and in destruction) by sending the sense of the play's time reeling backward to well before Polixenes's words that open Act I identify the present moment of representation as some "Nine changes of the wat'ry star" since his arrival in Sicilia. Bergman's treatment reveals Shakespeare's Prologue (characteristically a conceptually dense and fateful exchange between courtiers) to have been indefinitely placed in time, so we are free to imagine that it epitomizes the first days of Polixenes's visit, indeed we are asked to imagine it so, since Hermione in the opening scene appears here, shockingly, unpregnant (raising the question from whose perspective this fact would be denied). And when the lines justify having Leontes silently called away, Bergman finds a further moment in which to allow Hermione and Polixenes to be caught in a charge of mutual desire which works, in a production so clearly layering the history of Shakespeare production, both to recognize a basis for Leontes's mad suspicions (he correctly associates the satisfaction of Hermione's desire for another child with the beginning of Polixenes's visit), and at the same time, magnifying a common desire for the same woman, to heighten the homosexual plane between the two men.

The expansion of time before the emergence of the events which we know from Shakespeare's text about these characters provides, further, an inspired preparation for Bergman's meeting of a famous crux in the play's dramaturgy—the suddenness of Leontes's outburst of jealousy. In the present context it occurs after a measure of time that is neither short nor long. The expansion of time, and the unpredictable leaps of the erotic, are both functions of the texture of the promenade, which, mostly proceeding two by two, establishes in pantomime countless points of shared consciousness, new conversations, excited hopes, as may be expected at a sumptuous gathering of friends and strangers, establishing a field, while it maintains decorum, of erotic electricity. (I report another happy omen in preparing this text. A day or two after giving this description, I spent an evening reading, for not unrelated purposes, Baudelaire's impassioned account in 1861 of the uncomprehending reception, or rejection, of *Tannhäuser* and of *Lohengrin* in Paris. The electricity and propriety of Wagner's choruses is specifically noted and elaborated by Baudelaire as a point widely misperceived. I mention this also, knowing that Bergman also stages opera, to leave open, something beyond my knowledge, how far Bergman, in his production of *The Winter's Tale*, may be arriving at summations of his extraordinary range of work.)

The other comparably notorious dramaturgical crux, at the far end of the play, is the stone likeness of Hermione coming to life. Bergman treats this also with frightening lucidity and originality and it also profits

from the energies of the promenade, especially from its ritualistic binding of this social concentration. Hermione again appears, shockingly, in the wrong shape, or rather in the wrong inflection—not vertical but horizontal (I assume this is unprecedented)—not as a freestanding statue but perhaps as the figure carved on the length of a sarcophagus. This maintains the level of magic explicitly in the scene but takes its place in greatly amplifying the scene's dimension of religion. I don't know who first remarked that Paulina—particularly, I imagine, in view of her declaration, "It is required / You do awake your faith"—figures St. Paul; I add the feature of her undertaking the role of ratifier of marriage. Luther is equally to be characterized as a theorist of faith and of marriage, but where St. Paul had said, "It is better to marry than to burn," Luther is open to its possible counter, "And what if you marry and freeze?" The religious amplification I had in mind is installed in Bergman's placing of the opening of Act V (in which Leontes, his counsellors, and Paulina discuss his remarrying and the issue of succession) in a chapel dominated by a painted, startlingly lifelike statue of a virgin figure, which one vaguely and wildly imagines to be the one destined to come to life. And in this chapel Leontes's confession of his continued sense of the wrong he has done is manifested by his appearance in the robes and stains of a flagellant. This vision of Bergman's raises the question of what Paulina will call "unlawful business" as strongly as does the possibility of her assistance through "wicked powers," an irresolution concerning the heretical that befits a region in which, as in Uppsala, an intact and striking Gothic cathedral houses Lutheran services.

We are here barely a step away from returning to *Smiles of a Summer Night*, where irresolutions of the struggle between sincerity and ceremony (power and form, Emerson says; but every romantic or preromantic will have some such say) are portrayed as matters both causing the sound of its depicted Marivaux-like declamations about love, as well as inspiring Henrik's Luther text about refusing to invite the birds of temptation to nest in your hair. As transition to the step to summer, I take into consideration another of Bergman's strokes of theater, this time from his *Winter's Tale*'s portrayal of spring.

Autolycus bursts into the business of the sheep-shearing festival riding, complete with helmet and goggles, a raucously motorized three-wheeled, double head-lighted cart. From the cart he produces his lovingly itemized wares to peddle ("Gloves as sweet as damask roses, / Masks for faces and for noses; / Bugle-bracelet, necklace amber, / . . . Pins and poking-sticks of steel; / What maids lack from head to heel"). For a while this seemed to me a brilliant but false distraction, designed to cover an inability or unwillingness to orchestrate each measure of pastoral mood and method, as had been achieved throughout the winter plunge into madness, and will prove to be achieved for the enigmatic redemption to come. Instead of the ballroom finding an opening onto a country scene, or being flown to reveal one, dark screens faintly painted with tree shapes were brought on to wall off the back half of the stage, leaving a shallow front field in which costumes supplemented with occasional garlands are what signs there are to back the words of nature's rebirth.

But then a reading occurred to me of Autolycus's anachronistic motor cart that unfolded the scene to further thought, or to faith. Since out of the cart Autolycus plucks his stuffs and gifts and jewelry and new ballads and, in brief, his endless improvisation of fantasms, and since this vehicle carries its lights and has an autonomy through its participation in a realm elsewhere (Autolycus claiming as his own the figure of the messenger—Hermes was his ancestor), I find in it a reasonable representative, or presentiment, of a motion picture projector—as if what historically called for the completion of the invention of the moving picture, with its quite unprecedented knack for transformations of the world, was the cultural conjunction of the dominance of the machine together with the problematizing of the imagination of nature. Film thus takes on, in its way, a defining task of romantic poetry. (There is also in *Smiles* a unique appearance of a machine, also bursting threateningly into a pastoral setting, Count Malcolm's raucous automobile, perhaps the first horseless carriage in his town.) Bibi Andersson, from *The Seventh Seal* (1957), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), and *The Magician* (1958)—the period of *Smiles of a Summer Night*—is cast as Paulina. She has an opposite number in Petra from *Smiles*, who is forced to listen to the Luther that Paulina virtually quotes. Petra also takes on, with another servant, the arranging and ratifying of a marriage, and also in a context of magic and unlawfulness, transgressions that in the film take the form of more or less familiar and interlocking oedipal triangles (but with two ancient woman unaccounted for, both associated with Desiree, her maid and her mother). This marriage, or elopement of young lovers, shows true marriage to require the destruction of false marriage—a reckless dash into the unknown. And the consequent transfigurations in both works are marked by the special attention given to the bride's skin, in Paulina's case to a public testing, almost taunting her onlookers, of Hermione's stone-still body, noting, for example, its still-wet lips, to determine whether it has awakened from death; in Petra's case to a private brush of Anne's cheek, to determine whether it has bequeathed its virginity.

No wonder, I say to myself again, that I found both *Smiles of a Summer Night* and *The Winter's Tale* to bear upon the Hollywood comedy of remarriage (as defined in my *Pursuits of Happiness*). Both feature an estranged pair finding one another again, and both undertake disquisitions on faithfulness; *Smiles* marks the alternation of day and fateful night, and

it opens in a town and moves to a country site in which perspective is found (the pastoral of *The Winter's Tale* is a version of this place of perspective). All this is definitive of remarriage comedy. As is the question of how (mythically, or psychically) you get from town to country. Malcolm's vehicle, in its opposition to Charlotte's galloping horse, worthily contributes to this problematic.

But unlike remarriage comedy, both show the principal woman as a mother and as having a mother, or attended by a mother figure (I assume Paulina counts this way too). This difference puts a particular pressure, as it were, on the principal man of remarriage comedy: he may never quite recover from the stupefaction to which the narrative commits him, but he must express a present, responsive desire for the woman, not alone a need of her and gratitude for her. I earlier expressed my relatively early provincial thrill that the intelligence going into such a work as *Smiles of a Summer Night* can permit its manifestation in terms of high culture—beyond the references to Marivaux and Luther, there is Henrik's pertinently playing Liszt and Schumann; Malcolm's whistling Mozart's, or rather Don Giovanni's, "*La ci darem la mano*"; Malcolm's kneeling before his wife beside a chateau's pavilion, mocking the promise of faithfulness, as if challenging Mozart's authorization of the sincerity of Count Almavira's contrition at the end of *The Marriage of Figaro.* And in permitting genuine exchanges of feeling in, for example, such words as Fredrik's question, as he stares at his ludicrous image in Desiree's mirror, dressed in another man's robe and slippers, "How can a woman ever love a man?" answered by Desiree's matter-of-fact response, "A woman's point of view is seldom aesthetic," I found passages that by themselves seemed, to that persistently culturally starved teacher of philosophy that I had become, in one stroke to redeem academic discourse for human sociability.

Such things encouraged me to imagine, in response to the evident domination in the film of the field of love by women (Desiree's plan for the dinner, her mother's entrancing tale of her wine as a love potion, Charlotte's and Petra's conspiratorial presences), that Bergman was referring to Rilke's Portuguese Nun, who reveals an economy of love between men and women in lines, as I recalled them, such as "My love for you no longer depends upon your recognition of it," and of whom Rilke says that she outwore her love like a glove. I did not need such expressions or thoughts to come to my appreciation of the smartness of Hollywood remarriage comedies, but I know that I banked on them for, let's say, moral support in expressing my conviction in the depth of the American films' own, differently manifested, intelligence.

Reciprocally, the economy of love in those American comedies, measured in a pair's discovery of a mutual language and in their claiming

one way or another to have known one another forever, or to have grown up together, raises the question of how strictly, or in what way, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, in participating, at some unknown distance, in the remarriage genre, authorizes the separation of different kinds of love: the American pair are not young, yet the feature of knowing one another forever is essential, if variously interpretable, to the imagination of these films, and it is shown to be all that the young lovers of *Smiles* take time to say to each other before escaping: "I loved you all the time."

The linking of the love of young lovers and the love of clowns—the first and second smiles in *Smiles*—seems to be remarriage comedy's way of heading off the third smile, the love of the depressed, the confused, the lonely, the sleepless, represented by Count Malcolm and Charlotte in *Smiles* and represented in remarriage comedy by conventional marriage, precisely the state that the women of these textures are seeking an alternative to.

In denying the status of the sacramental to the institution of marriage, Luther, and after him Kierkegaard, seem only to have increased its psychic significance, or say mystery, for modern times, attested in film's acknowledgment, hence bearability, of the privacy of the human face. It is a power that, in turn, some theory or practice of filmmaking may seek to deny. But is its attestation a genuine articulation of a trace in my encounter with film, or is it a fond memory (as Katharine Hepburn says of herself in a bleak moment before the denouement of *The Philadelphia Story*) of some prior formulation? That will depend on whether the tracks were fresh which took me from Bergman's presentation of summer and Shakespeare's of winter and spring to my reencounter with the tumbling falls of acknowledgment ("You've had a great fall, Lawyer Egerman," Desiree says to him, "but you're landing softly") in remarriage comedy.