

# The Cinephile

Shirley Hamburg

In adapting a bulky, densely detailed novel of seven volumes, Mai Zetterling has extricated the following schema in her movie, "Loving Couples:" her three women have in common a place and a time of arrival, the hospital, set immediately at the beginning of the film; a starting time, childhood; a central time and place, the chateau and the longest night, Midsummer. This schema orders and disorders brilliantly the destiny of the three lives in which childhoods, love affairs, childbearings correspond to one another.

But Miss Zetterling has a problem. It seems that she can't tell a story or develop a dramatic conflict to the point of making us care about the individuals involved. More importantly, she can't activate a scene which is what cinematography and hence film-making is all about.

But she can tell us the Truth About Ourselves or so she suggests with her portentously Freudian flashbacks into childhood which seem to control the entire existence of the three women, and give at the very outset the tonality of their destinies.

For the expression of her Freudian fantasy, Miss Zetterling relies more on visualization than verbalization, but her imagery is too unimaginative to carry the extra load. In viewing the past clinically as the source of psychic disease, "Loving Couples" only encourages skepticism about some of the premises of facile Freudianism, most notably the rabid recollection of parental wrongdoing as the cause of all adult problems.

By playing with the past like this, Miss Zetterling only ties herself up in Freudian knots that she can't unravel.

Nonetheless, we must credit her with a wonderful gift for photography; that is if we can disengage ourselves from the flatness of the characters, there are some awfully pretty things to see.

Also, I believe this movie introduces Detroit audiences to a strikingly gifted actress: Harriet Andersson, who plays Agda, the model. Though her talent has been somewhat betrayed in this role, I think you should take advantage of every chance you can get to see her act, particularly in the movies of the Swedish director Jorn Donner ("To Love," "A Sunday in September," "Adventure Starts Here").

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