

written gets axed out. So if I've written 10 or 12 pages in six hours, it'll end up as three or four if I'm lucky.

But writing really is my life. Thinking about it when I'm not doing it is terribly painful but when I'm doing it . . . it's a lot like if I was a long-distance swimmer and had to jump into a pool covered with ice: it sounds terrible, but once in it and two or three laps done, I'm home and free.

22.

THE MAGIC LANTERN

INGMAR BERGMAN

In this extract, director Ingmar Bergman writes about the process of moviemaking and the complex interactions of the participants. Bergman's essay is particularly important because it deals with a topic that has not received much scholarly or public attention, creativity as a group process. Social creativity is an integral part of many of the most highly visible art forms of the twentieth century, such as cinema and popular music.

I have chosen a day's filming in 1982. According to my notes, it was cold—twenty degrees Celsius below zero. I woke up as usual at five o'clock, which means I was woken, drawn as if in a spiral by some evil spirit out of my deepest sleep, and I was wide awake. To combat hysteria and the sabotage of my bowels, I got out of bed immediately and for a few moments stood quite still on the floor with my eyes closed. I went over my actual situation. How was my body, how was my soul and, most of all, what had got to be done today? I established that my nose was blocked (the dry air), my left testicle hurt (probably cancer), my hip ached (the same old pain), and there was a ringing in my bad ear (unpleasant but not worth bothering about). I also registered that my hysteria was under control, my fear of stomach cramp not too intensive. The day's work consisted of the scene between Ismael and Alexander, in *Fanny and Alexander*, and I was worried because the scene in question might be beyond the capacity of my brave young actor in the title role, Bertil Guve. But the coming collaboration with Stina Ekblad as Ismael gave me a jolt of happy expectation. The first inspection of the day was thus completed and had produced a small but nevertheless positive profit: if Stina is as good as I think, I can manage Bertil-Alexander. I had already thought out two strategies: one with equally good actors, the other with a principal actor and a secondary actor.

Now it was a question of taking things calmly, of being calm.

At seven o'clock, my wife Ingrid and I had breakfast together in friendly silence. My stomach was acquiescent and had forty-five minutes in which to create hell. While I was waiting for it to decide on its attitude, I read the morning papers. At a quarter to eight, I was fetched and driven to the studio, which at that particular time was in Sundbyberg and was owned by Europafilm Ltd.

Those once so reputable studios were decaying. They produced mainly videos, and any staff left from the days of film were disoriented and downhearted. The actual film studio was dirty, not sound-proof, and badly maintained. The editing room, at first sight comically luxurious, turned out to be useless. The projectors were wretched, incapable of keeping either definition or stills. The sound was bad, the ventilation did not function and the carpet was filthy.

At exactly nine o'clock, the day's filming started. It was important that our collective start was punctual. Discussions and uncertainties had to take place *outside* this innermost circle of concentration. From this moment on, we were a complicated but uniformly functioning machine, the aim of which was to produce living pictures.

The work quickly settled into a calm rhythm, and intimacy was uncomplicated. The only thing to disturb this day was the lack of sound-proofing and the lack of respect for the red lamps outside in the corridor and elsewhere. Otherwise it was a day of modest delight. From the very first moment, we all felt Stina Ekblad's remarkable empathy with the ill-fated Ismael and, best of all, Bertil-Alexander had at once accepted the situation. In that strange way children have, he gave expression to a complicated mixture of curiosity and fear with touching genuineness.

The rehearsals moved on smoothly and a quiet cheerfulness reigned, our creativity dancing along. Anna Asp had created a stimulating set for us. Sven Nykvist had done the lighting with that intuition which is difficult to describe, but which is his hallmark and makes him one of the leading lighting camera men in the world, perhaps the best. If you asked him how he did it, he would point out some simple ground rules (which have been of great use to me in my work in the theatre). He could not—or had no wish to—describe the actual secret. If for some reason he was disturbed, pressurized or ill at ease, everything went wrong and he would have to start all over again from the beginning. Confidence and total security prevailed in our collaboration. Occasionally I grieve over the fact that we shall never work together again. I grieve when I think back to a day such as the one I have depicted. There's a sensual satisfaction in working in close union with strong, independent and

creative people: actors, assistants, electricians, production staff, props people, makeup staff, costume designers, all those personalities who populate the day and make it possible to get through.

Sometimes I really feel the loss of everything and everyone concerned. I understand what Fellini means when he says filming to him is a way of life and I also understand his little story about Anita Ekberg. Her last scene in *La Dolce Vita* took place in a car erected in the studio. When the scene had been taken and filming was over as far as she was concerned, she started crying and refused to leave the car, gripping firmly onto the wheel. She had to be carried out of the studio with gentle force.

Sometimes there is a special happiness in being a film director. An unrehearsed expression is born just like that, and the camera registers that expression. That was exactly what happened that day. Unprepared and unrehearsed, Alexander turned very pale, a look of sheer agony appearing on his face. The camera registered the moment. The agony, the intangible, was there for a few seconds and never returned. Neither was it there earlier, but the strip of film caught the moment. That is when I think days and months of predictable routine have paid off. It is possible I live for those brief moments.

Like a pearl fisher.