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Postprint

This is the accepted version of a chapter published in *Women Filmmakers and the Welfare State: Transnational Film Cultures During the Long 1970s in Canada and Sweden*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Larsson, M. (2026)

Love, Mai Zetterling: A Woman Auteur in a Canadian Context

In: Anna Stenport; Maria Jansson; Mariah Larsson; Scott MacKenzie (ed.), *Women Filmmakers and the Welfare State: Transnational Film Cultures During the Long 1970s in Canada and Sweden* (pp. 61-72). Abingdon; New York: Routledge

Film Culture in Transition

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003709664-5>

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-146617>

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A Woman *Auteur* in a Canadian Context

Mariah Larsson

The Canadian omnibus film *Love* (1982), produced by Renee Perlmutter, was an ambitious all-women project designed to showcase women screenwriters and directors. It attracted a number of famous names: Australian feminist and writer Germaine Greer, British historian and novelist Antonia Fraser, Canadian singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell, and Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann. According to Perlmutter, financing came from selling investors thirty “90,000 dollars units” (Flahive 1981). Described in the *New York Times* as “the biggest thing to come along for women in the movie industry since 1933, when Dorothy Arzner directed Katharine Hepburn in ‘Christopher Strong’” (Ogle 1981), the film ultimately went on to a limited release in Canada in the summer of 1982 and has since virtually disappeared from the horizon of film history.

During the long 1970s, the women’s movement in film was gaining momentum, and women filmmakers, although still a rarity, began to emerge within feature filmmaking. Pioneers of 1960s such as Věra Chytilová, Agnès Varda, and Mai Zetterling were now joined by Margarethe von Trotta, Claudia Weill, Elaine May, Chantal Ackerman, Marianne Ahrne, Gunnel Lindblom, and several others. Perlmutter’s *Love* seems like a promise within the Canadian welfare state cinema, where Studio D of the National Film Board/Office national du film (NFB/ONF) provided opportunities for women in documentary filmmaking, while access to resources to produce high-status fiction film remained limited. *Love*’s international creative team, although primarily composed of culturally linked nations, further marked the film as ambitious, while simultaneously uniquely Canadian.

As a work consisting of thematically connected episodes by different directors and often meant to be prestigious, the omnibus film is rarely appreciated. Often disparaged by audiences and critics alike, omnibus films are notorious for being “composed of sketches”, “bastard and phony”, or “ramshackle features” (Diffrient 2014, 32, quoting André Bazin and Michael Atkinson). This may contribute to *Love*’s absence from Canadian film history and the dearth of information available on websites such as IMDb (Monk 2001; Gittings 2002; Melnyk 2004; Armatage et al. 1999). Furthermore, apart from Zetterling’s three segments, which can be found on the Swedish DVD box of Mai Zetterling’s collected works, *Love* was never released on VHS or DVD and is unavailable for streaming.

Love is notable as the only theatrically distributed fiction film among Zetterling's Canadian ventures. Although *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* (Canada, 1978), which she wrote, directed, and performed in as Swedish writer August Strindberg (in a wonderfully ironic cross-dressing performance) and as haughty and powerful Queen Christina, gave her rich opportunities for self-expression, it was made for television. Additionally, Zetterling in 1985 directed three episodes of an international co-production television series for HBO called *The Hitchhiker* (Canada/France/United States; the series ran from 1983 to 1999). These episodes were, moreover, quite restricted to a template by the series' format. As a "lesser" medium, television, however, provided an opportunity for women directors, where thresholds regarding prestige, budget, and general male gatekeeping were lower. Thus, *Love* is an important chapter in Zetterling's career and also in the general history of Canadian film.

This chapter focuses on Zetterling's three segments in *Love*, framing them as an isolated triptych. She wrote and directed one; the others she directed but were written by Edna O'Brien and Mitchell (who also stars in her segment). These three shorts, although different, share similarities in terms of cinematic style and themes, and could be understood as a triptych. Along with fellow Scandinavian Ullmann, Zetterling was one of only two of *Love's* directors to continue directing following the project. Zetterling had a long and varied directing career before making *Love*. Her contributions to *Love* stand out, not solely for making half of the segments, but also due to the extensive experience she brought to the production.

This chapter addresses how Zetterling, who felt unappreciated and unwanted by the late 1960s Swedish art cinema institution, found a welcome of sorts in another welfare state, whose small nation cinema industry was similarly predicated on policies, subsidies or tax incentives, and institutions. From the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, she navigated Canada's opportunities creating work that ranges from the ironically biting observations on Sweden in *Mai Zetterling's Stockholm* to ghost stories in *The Hitchhiker*. These Canadian productions, as different as they are, testify to the precarity of women filmmakers who needed to negotiate, improvise, and seize any opportunity, as well as to Zetterling's creative vitality.

Zetterling's Previous Experience and Connections to Canada

Zetterling was a seasoned warrior, in comparison with the other segment directors. As a director, she is probably most well-known for her 1960s Swedish art film productions, *Loving Couples* (*Älskande par*, Sweden 1964), *Night Games* (*Nattlek*, Sweden, 1966), and *The Girls* (*Flickorna*, Sweden, 1968). She had risen to fame as an actor in 1940s Sweden, immigrated to England in 1947 on a contract with the J. Arthur Rank organization, and turned to film directing in the late 1950s. After having learned the craft by making documentaries for the BBC, she debuted her first feature film in 1964.

By the time of *Love*'s production, Zetterling had experienced many successes and failures as a pioneering woman filmmaker. She had directed four feature films and approximately a dozen documentaries, shorts, and television films. Her 1968 film *The Girls* received scathing reviews from the Swedish establishment and was disdained by audiences, only to be reinvigorated by the women's movement with the 1972 New York Women's Film Festival and screened at feminist film festivals around the world for the next two decades (see Larsson 2006; Ryberg 2020; Larsson 2020; Larsson and Stenport, Forthcoming).

The Girls' initially hostile reception prompted Zetterling to leave the Swedish film industry. Funding in Swedish film policy was contingent on the artistic value of films, signaled mainly by the winning of "quality awards." *The Girls*' initial poor reception led the production company Sandrews to decrease its funding, and Zetterling felt forced to look elsewhere for opportunities (Larsson 2006, 2020). By the time of *Love*, she had worked in Sweden, Denmark, the UK, Canada, France, and Germany.

Zetterling's 1985 autobiography, *All Those Tomorrows*, does not even mention *Love*. However, toward the end of the book, she alludes to her time working on the film:

I began to jump continents, to accept job offers all over the world. I took them because I could not afford, either financially or emotionally, to say no: I had to get back to work. Montréal, Toronto, Stockholm, Manchester, Vienna; documentaries, a play, a children's film.

(1985, 218–219)

Although the quote likely references the mid-1970s and early 1980s, Zetterling's transcontinental and transnational filmmaking began in the 1960s, with a US–Danish production based on a Swedish novel released as *Doctor Glas* (*Doktor Glas*, Denmark, 1968). During the 1970s, Zetterling worked across national borders, often in commissioned projects. From her segment "The Strongest" in the omnibus documentary about the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, *Visions of Eight* (USA, 1973) to television production *Sunday Pursuit* (UK, 1991) via *Lady Policeman* (UK, 1979) and *Concrete Grandma* (*Betongmormor*, Sweden, 1986), many of Zetterling's audiovisual works were commissioned by television companies (Larsson 2020). Even without direct commentary, the autobiography quote's inclusion of Montréal and Toronto indexes her time working on *Love*.

Zetterling's works are always very clearly and distinctly hers. She has an easily recognizable *auteurial* style, with recurring thematic concerns (such as reproduction and motherhood, expressions of sexuality, and alienation in modern society), and a prominently featured sharp humor. Take, for example, her three episodes of the mystery series *The Hitchhiker*, produced by a Canadian/American/French television production company with Renee Perlmutter's husband, David Perlmutter, as one of the producers (Larsson 2020, 130–132), a connection Zetterling likely made during the work on *Love*.

Here, the supernatural element of the series gave Zetterling reason to explore mental states just as she had done in several previous productions, such as *Vincent the Dutchman* (UK, 1972) and *Scrubbers* (UK, 1982).

Visions of Eight was likely the starting point for Zetterling's connections in Canada. Through her work on the Munich games, she became interested in the mechanisms behind the Olympics, visiting the 1976 Montréal games with ambitious plans to make a documentary about behind-the-scenes corruption. Although this film never came to fruition, it eventually led to the production of a children's film, *The Moon is a Green Cheese* (*Månen är en grön ost*, Sweden, 1977), funded by the Swedish Film Institute, as well as the three Canadian projects.

Zetterling's career, like that of other women directors, is marked by a number of such unusual turns and negotiations. The struggle to find financial support for her various projects placed her in positions where she had to be creative and flexible, take opportunities when they appeared, and revise plans and projects when necessary (see Larsson and Stenport 2015). Considering her experience and versatility, as well as the implications of the quote from her autobiography, it is unsurprising that Zetterling came to direct three of the segments of *Love*. These three segments, although they clearly have different screenwriters, also seem to belong together through their visual style and related themes.

Love as an Omnibus Film

Conceptualizing Zetterling's three segments of *Love* as a triptych and analyzing them as distinct from the rest of the film may go against the notion of an omnibus film. Diffrient defines the omnibus film as "any multidirector feature in which several self-contained episodes are presented to the viewer one after the other" and describes it as a "transauthorial cinema" with an "inter-episodic flow" (2014, 3), uniting "multiple voices and visions" (2014, 23). Consequently, the omnibus film should be read intra-textually, rather than intertextually (Diffrient 2014, 32). The different segments or episodes of the film should thus be read in relation to one another rather than in relation to other films by the individual directors. Nevertheless, as the purpose of this essay is to investigate a Swedish woman filmmaker whose authorial presence and distinctiveness marked her audiovisual contribution to this Canadian venture, I will limit myself to her three segments, rather than considering the film as a whole. This does not mean that I entirely forgo the transauthorial features of the omnibus film—two of these three segments were written by O'Brien and Mitchell, whose voices join that of Zetterling in these pieces.

One affordance of the omnibus format is that it allows a group of directors to work on and interpret a theme. These interpretations can then be placed in juxtaposition. In the case of *Love*, the theme's gendered implications unify the episodes through different interpretations of the concept. Furthermore, the omnibus format can form a "collective" out of the directors (Diffrient 2014, 14). *Love* featured a collective of women directors and writers, making it a



Figure 4.1 Antonia Fraser, Joni Mitchell, Mai Zetterling, and Liv Ullmann. Publicity still from the production of *Love* (1982). Photographer unknown, Swedish Film Institute Collection.

somewhat unique project. In pictures of the collective, the directorial team is portrayed as a group, wearing sweaters with the word “LOVE” printed on the fabric (Figure 4.1). According to producer Renee Perlmutter, there was more room for women in film in Canada because “Our country is too young to have an old-boy network that disdains women. We have a whole different sensibility to our sex” (Ogle 1981). She goes on to comment that “even in Canada, it is significant that the French-speaking section of the country has many more women film directors than the English section” (Ogle 1981). The significance of this was not expanded upon, but *Love* may have attempted to make a difference in the lack of women directors in English-speaking Canada.

Love, Love, Love

Love initially had nine segments in its screenplay, which is held in the Mai Zetterling Collection at the Swedish Film Institute (Zetterling n.d.). Only six of these made it into the finished film. These were written by Annette Cohen, Nancy Dowd, Mitchell, O’Brien, Ullman, and Zetterling. The three segments directed by Zetterling explore the themes of identity, duplicity, and hidden identities. This is perhaps most apparent in the two segments written by O’Brien and Mitchell. O’Brien’s piece, “Julia,” about an affair, concludes with the simple statement of identity, “I am Julia.” Mitchell’s episode, “The Black Cat in the Black Mouse Socks,” concerns a white woman attending a masquerade in blackface. This problematic use of blackface draws on Mitchell’s

previous use of a parallel male black persona, Art Nouveau. Zetterling's segment, "Love in the Marketplace," begins with what seems like the preparations for a romantic weekend but soon proves to be a young man and his mother erotically indulging in exquisite gluttony.

Zetterling was deeply attuned to the function of color in the aesthetics of her directorial productions. She first worked with color in the short film "Mini-movie," featured in the British television program *One Pair of Eyes* ("You Must Make People Angry," David Cantor, UK, 1971). In this brief film, a couple goes about their daily routines over the course of a marriage in rhythmically repetitive shots accompanied by a voice-over in the form of a BBC News Bulletin that reports increasingly bad news. Shot mainly in a dreary blue tone, interspersions of vivid oranges and yellows have a jarring effect (Larsson 2020). Made the year after, *Vincent the Dutchman* uses vibrant colors while capturing the sunlight of the southern French summer to signal increasing psychological distress. (Larsson 2020). So fascinated by the visual possibilities of color, Zetterling made the strangely hallucinatory and nonsensical children's film *The Moon is a Green Cheese* a few years later based on Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's early nineteenth-century theory of colors (Larsson 2020).

The three short films in *Love* all feature weirdly twisted dark interiors, possibly echoing the conflicted or claustrophobic interiors of the characters. This defies the stereotypical gendering of "love" as romantic and beautiful, as well as the expectations of what a woman's exploration of "love" would entail. These interiors evoke the early 1980s with black tapestries, silky sheets, ornamented furniture, and a warm and dusky lighting that somehow obscures more than it reveals.

In "Love in the Marketplace," the piece that Zetterling wrote and directed, scenes move from the lighted interior of an exclusive grocery store to a dark bar where pool is played, to the lit-up kitchen in the home, to the dusky dining room where the mother and son enjoy a ritualistic consumption of dinner delicacies. A clear distinction is thus made between areas of preparation—the store, the kitchen—and areas of consumption—the bar, the dining room. Likewise, in "Julia," the scenery begins in an outdoor park, shifting to the inside of a mansion with dark tapestries and heavy furniture. The entirety of "The Black Cat in the Black Mouse Socks" has a dark background, lit in warm colors of red and orange.

Zetterling's use of dark interiors in the three segments of *Love* should be understood as an intentional and significant choice. Indeed, it echoes her feminist divorce-themed television film, *We Have Many Names* (*Vi har många namn*, Sweden, 1976), which was made in the wake of her divorce from British writer David Hughes and in celebration of the 1975 United Nations International Year of the Woman. The film follows a middle-aged woman's breakdown and depression after her husband has left her for a younger woman. Much of it takes place in a darkened room, with drawn curtains. The dark aesthetics serve as an expression not only of the protagonist's present mental state but also the imprisoning aspects of marriage (Larsson 2020, 110).

Food, Sex, and Incest

The overarching omnibus theme of love has rich connotations and is interpreted differently by the various screenwriters. In these three segments, love is complicated and confused, multifaceted and complex, and each segment deals with things not being what they seem. For instance, in “Love in the Marketplace,” the young man (Gordon Thomson) shops for delicacies in a gourmet marketplace while talking on the phone to a woman with a sultry voice. On the way home, he stops at a bar where he has a vision of naked men playing pool. Once home, the woman with the sultry voice is revealed to be his mother (Maureen Fitzgerald). As they sit down to a flamboyant dinner, the two talk erotically about the food they are eating. At the end of the meal, the young man is exhausted and rests at his mother’s enormous bosom. The confusion of love (or sexual desire) with food is quite deliberate, and not only because sex and eating are generally regarded as part of the same biological survival category.

Zetterling had a passionate interest in food, even jokingly describing her and her spouse’s eating habits as though “we were worshipping some personal belly-god” (Zetterling 1985, 191–192). This interest explains her detailed knowledge of the exotic or exclusive treats that mother and son indulge in, which they almost endlessly list in a conversation that very much resembles “dirty talk.” This almost comedic touch is famously showcased in a scene from the British film *Tom Jones* by Tony Richardson (1963), where the titular protagonist (played by Albert Finney) is seduced by a woman (Joyce Redman) during a dinner they are sharing. While comedic in tone, this choice also has a serious side.

In the episode of *One Pair of Eyes* called “You Must Make People Angry,” made some ten years earlier, Zetterling stated that her aims in life were to “make food, make love, make films, make wine, make changes in the world around me, and make a thorough nuisance of myself.” Listing food first, immediately followed by love-making, indicates a sense of significance and connection. So, by having food replace sex (or love-making), Zetterling is communicating that good food can give you pleasure, and the ritual of sharing good food is an act of love. Lust and gluttony are, indeed, two of the deadly sins.

What makes the jokingly erotic scene taboo is that in this instance the liaison is between a mother and son, turning the simple act of a mother feeding her child into an incestuous, erotic one. The incestuous unease latches itself onto a behavior which is regarded not only as “normal” and “natural”—mothers taking care of their offspring by first nursing and then cooking for them—but also the whole construction of the housewife and homemaker, for which preparing food in the intimate setting of the home holds a central place. Here, this role is skewed and exaggerated, perverted, making it into what could be seen as a sublimation, or redirection, of other desires. This interpretation is further underlined by the fact that in the original screenplay, the concluding pieta shot shows the mother naked and the son suckling one of her large breasts (Zetterling no date). Sex is sublimated through the vehicles of maternal intimacy and food.

Duplicity and Ambiguity

Such sublimation of desire works for both mother and son. In the bar where the son stops on the way home, he drinks a beer, calls his mother, and watches the men play pool. In a point-of-view shot from his perspective, the men are naked. The shot expresses a homoerotic desire which is to be later displaced onto the food. The audience still does not know that the sultry voice on the phone belongs to his mother. However, the shot still conveys a desire which is different from the one he has been vocalizing on the phone, giving a sense of duplicity or ambiguity. Is he a straight man with an attraction to men? Is he a gay man with internalized homophobia pretending to be straight? Is he bisexual? Does his lover know? With the disclosure that the woman on the phone is his mother, these questions are not resolved but instead replaced with others—is he denying his sexuality and substituting it with delicious food? Is his mother jealously indulging his food erotica to keep him regressively tied to her rather than exploring his sexuality? Is Zetterling simply portraying a different kind of love—the oral pleasure of delightful tastes and the physical bliss of fullness?

The sense of duplicity or ambiguity in “Love in the Marketplace” is also present in “The Black Cat with the Black Mouse Socks.” Written by Mitchell, she seems to be referencing her own story about how she came to don blackface—an unknown black man in the street complimented her when she was looking for a costume for a Halloween party in 1976. She later said that “this spirit went into me” (Grier 2012), so she went to the party dressed up as him. In the years between that Halloween party and “The Black Cat with the Black Mouse Socks,” Mitchell used blackface as an alternative persona by the name of Art Nouveau, even appearing in this guise on the cover of her album *Don Juan’s Reckless Daughter* (1977).

The segment begins by establishing the masquerade in a brief scene set in a dressing room. A shot of the cover of the book *The Life: The Lore and Folk Poetry of the Black Hustler*, a 1976 sociological collection edited by Dennis Wepman, is the first image. The camera then moves to disclose the protagonist, Paula (Mitchell), in blackface in front of a mirror. The room is filled with various costumes and makeup. Paula applies the finishing touches on her costume by placing a “hot shit”-pin on the jacket’s lapel. In a few short moments, the segment emphasized both dress-up and costuming as a choice of different identities, displayed the performative act of creating and appropriating an identity, and hinted at a kind of mental preparation or inspiration through the book.

Paula is not dressing up as just any kind of black man. She wears a very clearly defined black male stereotype, the pimp or the hustler, assuming a self-confidence and swagger through the “hot shit”-pin. As the story unfolds, an explanation for the other persona’s need is provided: her former boyfriend is at the party with his new girlfriend. At the party, she changes the music to a jazzy score by Miles Davis, confronts her ex-boyfriend, and everyone compliments her costume. She wins the prizes for both best female costume and worst

male costume. Before she leaves, she is photographed outside by a friend with a Polaroid camera.

Mitchell's use of blackface has been analyzed by Miles Park Grier (2012) and has also, more recently, been discussed in Ann Powers' (2024) biography of Mitchell, *Travelling: On the Path of Joni Mitchell*. While also pointing to the problematic aspects of Mitchell's intermittent disguise, Grier observes that the persona of Art Nouveau was a way for Mitchell to escape expectations of her as a white female folk singer and negotiate the music industry's sexism. The criticism levelled at Mitchell, however, points to her act as appropriating and perpetuating a denigrating and offensive black stereotype from a position of white privilege; according to commentators, such an act would have already been considered offensive in 1976 (BBC News 2016; Dart 2024). The fact that Paula wins prizes for "best female" and "worst male" costumes almost seems to comment on the privilege of a white woman dressing up as a black man—she can only win, whereas he will be regarded as the "worst."

The prizes she wins at the party also register the "body as something more than simply the inert ground upon which performances are enacted" (Meagher 2007, 17). Discussing another example, Cindy Sherman's use of blackface, Michelle Meagher argued that the images of Sherman's early work, in which she dressed up as black, are not as successful as the artworks in which Sherman portrays herself as a white woman. Observing that her black portrayals come across as superficial and clichéd in comparison with her white guises, and that Sherman soon abandoned such efforts, Meagher argues that the postmodern celebration of Sherman as someone who slips in and out of identities overlooks the constraints that the lived experience of the body places on us (Meagher 2007).

However problematic and offensive, the drag and the blackface in this short film (by all accounts, Mitchell's farewell to her black alter ego) align with the notion of duplicity or ambiguity characteristic of the Zetterling-directed segments. At first, no one recognizes Paula. Her costume also serves as a disguise, behind which she can hide, a persona she can adopt to enter the social arena and confront her ex-boyfriend. Beyond the thrill of doing something daring—crossing both gender and racial lines—is the thrill of being unrecognizable, behind a mask, a completely different person.

In "Julia," duplicity manifests in a literal closet and the events that unfold around it. Julia (Janet-Laine Greene) has an affair with a married man (Lawrence Dane). When his wife returns home, Julia has to hide in the closet. To stop the wife from opening the closet, the man seduces her. Hidden in the closet, Julia hears the seduction and the lovemaking, and she later breaks up with the man. This part of the segment is told in a flashback, when Julia and the man meet again. The attraction is still present, but she feels betrayed by him after this incident. In a repetition of previous events, the wife comes home. This time, however, Julia presents herself and the film ends with her proudly declaring, "I am Julia."

“Julia” is the only one of the three segments in which duplicity is resolved and identity established. The other two, by contrast, appear to be an escape from whatever identities they may contain—Paula escapes from her identity as the white woman and the son in “Love in the Marketplace” finds a refuge from his homoerotic desires in the bliss of over-indulging in the delicacies provided by his mother. Nevertheless, in “Julia,” the same kind of dark interiors as in the two other episodes, combined with heavy and ornate furniture, add to a sense of something internally twisted. Duplicity and ambiguity, even when they are seemingly resolved, pervade the narrative and aesthetic frames of these three segments, suggesting these themes as constitutive of love and also, perhaps, the figure of the woman.

Concluding Remarks

It may very well be that early 1980s Canada was “too young to have an old-boy network that disdains women” (Ogle 1981). The fate of *Love*, however, seems demonstrative of something different. As an ambitious endeavor to provide women with a voice and an opportunity to express themselves on the theme of love, its trajectory seems remarkably anti-climactic. The alleged thirty units of \$90,000 invested in the film probably yielded no financial returns. Although garnering some attention during production, it has not dramatically impacted Canadian film history. It did initiate one woman director’s career, Ullmann. As noted, Zetterling, the only one in the collective with previous experience directing, makes no mention of *Love* in her autobiography, despite significantly contributing to the final film by directing three of the six segments.

Questions remain: What was the impetus behind making *Love*? Why did it fail? Why did three of the original nine screenplays never make it into the film? Why did Zetterling direct two screenplays written by others, if the idea was for women to write and direct? Did the thirty unit-holders benefit financially from Canada’s tax laws, which made it possible to write off any losses from film production?

As one of Zetterling’s Canadian ventures, *Love* was both a means to much-needed work, as indicated by the quote from her autobiography, and also an opportunity to make a theatrically distributed fiction film. Throughout her career, there is a tension between commissioned work for television with varying degrees of artistic freedom, and fiction filmmaking centralizing the filmmaker, the screenwriter/director, the (in this case female) *auteur*. Although Zetterling worked across genres, formats, and media throughout her career, the struggle to make feature fiction films, preferably with her screenplays, was predicated on a belief that this was the arena where she could gain cultural and artistic prestige, while pursuing her wish to freely express herself artistically. This may be why some of her commissioned productions seem to dissolve the border between fiction and documentary, such as *Vincent the Dutchman*, *Mai Zetterling’s Stockholm*, or *Concrete Grandma*. The elusiveness of possibilities within feature filmmaking, moreover, must have amplified the force of this wish.

Of all the sheets of paper with unfiled screenplays in the Zetterling collection, most are for feature fiction films—a biopic on Swedish author Carl Jonas Love Almquist, an adaptation of her own novel *Bird of Passage* (1976), and the countless versions of her adaptation of Swedish social realist diary novel *Rapport från en skurhink* (“Report from a Scrub Bucket,” Maja Ekelöf 1970).

Similarly, as an omnibus film, *Love* seemingly responds to the same need to find spaces for women within fiction filmmaking, a compromise to give more women the chance to write and direct. The production of one feature film, with one screenwriter/director, compared with an omnibus film, giving six screenwriters and three directors that opportunity, could theoretically be a good idea.

At the same time, small nation welfare state cinema, such as those in Sweden and Canada, struggled under the dominance of popular American Hollywood film, repeatedly attempting to define itself as something other, something different, from those marketable commercial products of entertainment that won the audience. An *auteur*-centered cinema with some form of financial support became, for many national cinemas, the response (see Elsaesser 2005; Hedling 2016). For someone like Zetterling, Canada offered a chance to make films in a system similar to that in Sweden.

With the three episodes of *Love*, Zetterling delved into fictional landscapes within a cinematic framework, the kind of work she strove toward, yet so often escaped her. The three segments are tied together not only by the film’s overarching theme of love—which is abstract enough—but by an exploration of or a questioning of identities and desires, against the backdrops of dark and weirdly twisted interiors, somehow prefiguring some of Canadian Atom Egoyan’s work (such as *Family Viewing*, 1987, *Speaking Parts*, 1989 or *Exotica*, 1994). Regardless, the triptych from *Love* could be described as fitting into a portrayal of Canadian cinema as being, in part, about “weird sex” (Monk 2001). In this way, Zetterling inscribed herself into a national cinema without being remembered by it at all.

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