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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## The Redemption of Oedipus: A Discussion on the Father Images in Ingmar Bergman's Films from 1953 to 1982

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**ABSTRACT**

The intention of this essay is to track the evolving father characters in Ingmar Bergman's films through three decades. By case studying the constitution of father characters in *Summer with Monica* (1953), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), *Fanny and Alexander* (1982) and textual analyzing the context from the biography and interviews of Ingmar Bergman, this essay would capture the recurring features of those father images and reveal how they vary not only along with the promotion of gender equality and women's economic empowerment at the societal level but also following Bergman's paradoxical process of struggling from rebelling against to reconciling with fatherhood. It is noteworthy that a growing yearning for reconciliation has occurred in Bergman's films since 1953, compared with the hateful spiritual patricide reflected in those earlier works. By referring to Kohut's (1984) reconceptualization of the Freudian Oedipus complex, this essay would exhibit this trajectory of transforming father images in Bergman's film as a journey of self-redemption, and confirm that Bergman has reconciled with his paternal dilemma and himself within *Fanny and Alexander*.

**KEYWORDS**

Ingmar Bergman, Fatherhood, Oedipus complex, Patriarchy

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 05 March 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 17 March 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijahs.2023.3.1.10

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### 1. Introduction

In the research about Ingmar Bergman and his films, the childhood trauma of the great film auteur is always mentioned, as well as the influence of his father, who was a Lutheran pastor. In Swedish film history, the images of the father are recurrently represented in the film text. Bergman's early film works are also mainly male-centred and critically concentrated on conventional father figures to express his rebellion against patriarchal authority. Though he gradually turned to align with the stance of female values, his critique of patriarchy never stops. This essay will review the representation of the father figures in Ingmar Bergman's films from 1953 to 1982, which was a vital period when he created most of his great films and reached maturity from young to mid-age to old-age. Meanwhile, the developing social welfare system and conception of gender equality resulted in the change of family authority and the weakening of paternity, which also affected the reformation of fatherhood in Bergman's later films.

The case studies will mainly focus on three films, namely *Summer with Monica* (1953), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), and *Fanny and Alexander* (1982). Other works in this period will also be referred to discuss the construction of the father figures. How are those characters depicted? What generality and individuality do they have? And how do they evolve with the change in society and the auteur's mentality in a chronological sequence? This essay will be divided into three parts: the typical characteristics of the father roles, the evolving process of the father figures, as well as the auteur's constant questioning about love. In the first section, the common features and connotations of those father images could be intelligible by reviewing the various faces of fathers in Bergman's film. They are estranged, strict, and usually associated with physical punishment and religion. Those elements result from the privilege of fatherhood given by the patriarchal order and root in Bergman's dark memories from childhood. They

epitomise his experiences, sensations and thoughts of the family that are based on the core of patriarchy. The second part would follow the trajectory of those images developing with the variation of social concepts and the mentality of the director himself, which presents a trend of reconciliation since the 1950s - compared to the pure revolt against the father in his early films in the 1940s (Hübner, 2005) - and become more clear and definite until the 1980s. Thirdly, by referring to Bergman's autobiographies and Kohut's (1984) reinterpretation of Oedipus's complex that recognizes this mixture of love and hatred as a result of parents' failure to empathize with their children as well as his redefinition of 'cure' with the inner completeness (1984, pp.24-25), Bergman's process of reconciliation can be described as a journey of redemption. It seems that this great auteur is finding a way of cure and compensation by expressing a lifelong theme in his films: the lack of and yearning for love. As he gradually became direct while treating his father's issues and stopped concealing his longing for paternal love and communication, he found the possibility to reconcile with his father and the shadow of his father inside himself.

## **2. The Typical Characteristics of the Father**

### **2.1 Father as a Defender of Patriarchal Regulations**

Under the patriarchal social system which dominates most societies, males are given higher status, values and privileges (Lockard, 2020), and they naturally become the defenders of the existing rules. In Bergman's films, the father embodies the power centre of the family in traditional culture and is usually represented with elements that are associated with the *praepositus*: aloof, estranged, rigorous and sometimes tyrannical. They rationalise the order, execute the rules, and break the illusion. In *Summer with Monica* (1953), the father figures occupy a tiny part of the narrative. However, they are one of the vital conflicting factors behind the escapism tour of the two protagonists. In this film, fathers stand for the social order the young couple wants to escape. There are four fathers in the story: the fathers of Harry and Monica; the father of the bourgeois house where Monica is caught stealing; and Harry, who ultimately becomes a father at a very young age, which also symbolises his compromise on the regime.

Harry and Monica's fathers seem disparate; one is busy at work and estranged from his son but is gentle and polite; the other is passionate and romantic but is sottish and violent. Both are equally powerless and ineffective as fathers. Harry's father is mentioned in the conversation between Harry and Monica before his first appearance. Monica is invited for dinner at Harry's home while his father is out at work. It is obvious that Harry wants to keep the date a secret from his father, not only because they want to taste the forbidden fruit but also because of Harry's underlying fear of his father. This deep-rooted dread can be proved in the following sequences. When Monica and Harry are kissing on the sofa and begin to take off their shirts, Harry's father, who should be at a boating-club meeting, suddenly comes back because of his stomach illness. The reaction of Harry is just like a kind of conditional response that formed in similar long-term situations: he captures the sound of the door immediately, jumps up and gets dressed in a few seconds while comforting Monica that his father cannot see them clearly without glasses. Throughout the sequence, Harry grasps the teaspoon and stares at it to avoid eye contact with his father. From those side descriptions, it can be seen that Harry's father is strict with his son. His costume - suit and long coat, and behaviour - greeting Monica politely illustrate that he is a kind of staid and old-styled figure, and his estrangement is well covered by his polite manner.

On the contrary, Monica's father represents the working class and is relatively rude and enthusiastic. He hums a tune and stomps into the small, crowded home, but he seems happy and even prepares a surprise for his wife to celebrate their 25-year-acquaintance. However, he ignores Monica's feelings, and she gets angry. During the quarrel, the father threatens to hit her. Though he stops as Monica cries out, his behaviour directly triggers Monica's escape. To some extent, Monica's father is more loving, but for her, it is meaningless. Monica's family environment - poor and full of children - determines that the father cannot offer his eldest daughter enough concern and love. In short, the fathers of Monica and Harry both stand for the same function of control. The only difference is how the restriction is implemented - by threats or by cultivation.

The middle-class father in the big house is a more intuitive example of the father's role as a rule defender. He catches Monica stealing food and calls the police to take her away. While Monica is waiting for the police in the dining room, the daughter of this house sits beside her. She is well-dressed and well-mannered and is a contrasting mirror image of dirty and hungry Monica. The daughter's role laterally reflects the father's function - giving his daughter a decent life as she accepts his discipline, while Monica, who tries to resist and escape from the rules, has suffered from the pressure of reality. The father figure is the embodiment of social order that threatens the protagonists' dream escape. Besides, as Hübner (2005) mentioned, the father's reliance on traffic transports of modernity also symbolises his stance that is aligned with the patriarchal order. He informs Monica the police will arrive in 10 minutes by car; his trust in the cold machine represents his indifference and highlights his position as a patriarchal executor. Likewise, Harry's change of transport choice - from bicycle to train - also reflects his compromise with the conventional social rules.

### **2.2 Father as a Representative of God**

Additionally, another notable feature frequently occurs with the father figures in Bergman's films - the close connection with religion. As Freud wrote, '*god at bottom is nothing but an exalted father*', which reveals that the father is the model of God in any

case, and an individual's relationship with God follows the fluctuation and transformation of their relationship with their father (Freud, 1983). Bergman's life experience can be proof of this theory: he was born into a Lutheran family which was devout and glacial but lost his faith when he was an eight-year-old (Kalin, 2003). His father, Erik Bergman, was a controlling pastor who was moralistic and unforgiving (Viederman, 2016). Bergman recalled that he was brought up in an environment which was filled with 'sin, confession, punishment, forgiveness and grace', and his relationship with his father was closely linked with factors relevant to God (2007, pp. 7-8). The harshness and indifference of his father cast a shadow over his childhood, and his antipathy toward his father led him to rebel against God. Bergman maintained a critique attitude toward authority and kept questioning patriarchy and doubting the existence of God. The image of the father that is tied to religion is the common carrier of his doubt.

The Bishop, the stepfather of the juvenile protagonist in *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), is precisely a typical illustration of this specific kind of father figure. In this film, Alexander and his sister moves into his home after their father's death. The cold, empty house of the Bishop is depicted with cool colours, pure white and black, to represent the owner's aloof and authoritarian personality. A concentrated reflection of the Bishop's harshness is the interrogation sequence in which Alexander suffers from physical punishment because of the defaming story he put around about his stepfather. Alexander is forced to apologise, confess, and choose a way of punishment between the castor oil and the carpet beater. Then the Bishop lashes Alexander with the carpet beater in front of his sister and other family members. After that, he locks him up inside the garret. Throughout the process, the Bishop ignores the dignity and feelings of Alexander, and his form of education is, in reality, humiliation (Marklund, 2013). In addition to being a villain whom Alexander rebels against, the Bishop is also a tragic father who has no capacity for love but only control. He lets his maid monitor Alexander and report to him; Alexander's tales about his late former wife and children rouse a great rage inside him then he vents it with violence - but in the name of God and in a seemingly decent way. He wants to maintain the marriage with Alexander's mother, but only by co-ercive control, as he limits her and her children's movements. He is unavailable for love. He only knows how to control, and his gentle demeanour and moral manner are just fake masks of his distorted uses of authority. As a spokesman for God, he brings no love or warmth to the family but only fear and hurt. Here the ineffective images of God and the father are combined are deconstructed as one.

### **3. The Evolution of Father Images: A Journey of Reconciliation**

As Bergman claimed in a documentary, his film creation began with the rebellion against authority and all sorts of patriarchy (1963). Firstly, this was against the figures representing patriarchy. He projected his resentment toward his father over and over again in his films, especially in those early works. In *A Ship Bound for India* (1947), the father tries to kill his son for the sake of his lover; the protagonist of *Three Strange Loves* (1949) regards his father's death as a relief and takes his lover to a bar to celebrate. Pure revenge of an Oedipus-type style exists in his 1940s works, in which the son subverts the father's authority, spiritually kills him, and takes his place. As Bergman grew older into maturity, experiencing marriage and fatherhood, his expression on fatherhood presented a gradual mild trend toward a conciliatory resolution since the 1950s. Thus, this essay will majorly discuss the father- images evolution in Bergman's films from the 1950s to the 1980s, which is a reflection of Oedipus's redemption journey. His intention to dissolve the bitter hatred as well as seek mutual affection with his father becomes more and more defined, though it appears very painful and floundering through the process. Then it comes to an end in 1982 with *Fanny and Alexander*. This essay will not include further films after that though Bergman created other intriguing father figures in his later works. *Fanny and Alexander* would be considered as the terminus of the reconciliatory journey, as which he straightforwardly conveyed his hope to let go of his anxieties and resentment about his father.

As to Bergman's obscure expression in the very beginning, I would say that the omen of reconciliation is a gradual, subconscious acceptance of his inevitable resemblance to his father. The 1953 film *Summer with Monica* ends in a compromise with the conventional patriarch. Since the male protagonist heads back to ordinary society and tries to become an engineer as his father hopes, he becomes more estranged and more like his father. He is always busy with work and study and spends little time at home with Monica and their daughter. Eventually, he is betrayed by Monica during his trip to work, as Monica leaves him with the infant. The tragedy of the previous generation again repeats in him: he also lost his wife and is left with a broken family, just like his father. However, in the film's ending scene, when Harry holds the baby in his arms, the young father's eyes are filled with sadness and love for his daughter. It is seemingly an attempt by Bergman to make compensation for the absence of parental love. Even in the inevitable recurring tragedy that a son who loathes his father becomes similar to his father when he grows into maturity, a compensating warmth exists in the end. Though Bergman might not be aware of it, it was an initial sign of his unconscious wish for reconciliation.

Four years later, Bergman made *Wild Strawberries* (1957), which can be considered a further step on his way to redemption. His struggles in dealing with the inner conflicts about his father were clearly reflected in the film. The narrative of the film is about an old man's one-day journey, which epitomises his whole life. The protagonist, Isak Borg, is a typical father figure who is seemingly stand-offish and stubborn and can be seen as Bergman's self-projection to some extent. The film is also a fusion of Bergman's individual life experiences and thoughts on interpersonal powerless love. According to Viederman (2016), Bergman felt guilty and

sinful for his unavailability for love (p. 207), and he was tortured by the failure in his third marriage while making *Wild Strawberries* (p. 209). Bergman continually explored the theme of the lack of and yearning for love, both romantic and parental, as the inability to romance can be traced back to the unloving original family. His unsuccessful marriages also made him reflect on his inability to love and forced him to face the rooted conflicts in his early memories about his parents, particularly his father. Facing and uncovering the bloody scar is a preliminary attempt at a cure, as in this film, Bergman tries to put himself in his father's stance to create the complex father figure, Isak Borg. He acknowledged that he created a character who looks like his father on the outside but is himself inherently (Bergman, 1994). He seems to realise and accept the character flaws inherited from his father and goes further on the way to reconciliation.

*Wild Strawberries* is the first film which brought the conscious stream to the screen; symbolism, metaphor, dreams and other modernist techniques are widely used to reveal characters' psychological changes. Bergman expressed himself by dealing with the character's inner world. In an interview, he said, '*One of the most beautiful close-ups in my life is at the end of this film*' (Bergman, 1971). The protagonist Isak Borg dreams back to his early years in the late evening. His first love leads him to see his young parents in the distance - they were young, sitting in the sunshine and breeze. His father is fishing, and they wave to him. The atmosphere is quiet and peaceful. Then the fantastic close-up represents a very subtle smile on his face, which he maintains until the picture dissolves into the next scene. Likewise, the film's treatment of the father's identity is also very subtle. Isak Borg has a son who hates him but is undeniably modelled after him, but the film avoids the direct conflict between them. Instead, Isak's daughter-in-law communicates with him in most of the film's context in place of his son. In this way, the helpless relationship between the loveless father and son is represented more objectively through the bystander's eyes. Through the journey with his daughter-in-law, the father thinks back on his life and reflects on himself. He gradually changes, but the such transformation is unacceptable for his son. In the father-son conversation scene, the son sits beside his father's bed but never faces him directly. While post-war European cinema mainly concentrated on parental authority and duty, Bergman's avoidance of direct father-son contradiction was obvious (Cohen-Shalev, 2009). This kind of escape reflects Bergman's own ambivalence when things refer to his father. As he wrote in his autobiography, '*I couldn't talk to my father, didn't even want to*' (Bergman, 1994, p. 74). Nevertheless, several decades later, Bergman recognised his longing to find a loving relationship with his father and admitted that one of his motivations in making *Wild Strawberries* was to control and resolve the conflicts. He said that '*I was pleading with my parents: see me, understand me, and — if possible — forgive me ...* (p. 20) ', and until then, he recognised that '*a desperate attempt to justify myself to mythologically oversized parents who have turned away* (p. 22) ' motivated him to create *Wild Strawberries*.

As a representative of the film auteurs, Bergman's films are, to a large extent, an autorial art of individualised expressions based on personal life experiences to present an explicit artistic style. However, the film text cannot simply be interpreted as the director's personal infatuation, fear and dream but also a reflection of social thought. In the 1950s and 1960s, the boom of the feminist movement in Western society provided a context of multiple social collisions and influenced the conventional order of bourgeois nuclear families. According to Lindholm's (1991) explanation, instead of focusing on the right to vote like the mainstream feminist movement in British and America, the fight in Sweden addressed every aspect, including the family, and the relationship between men and women, parents and children (1991, pp. 135- 138). Besides, after WW2, the number of working women increased significantly as the demand for labour expanded in Sweden. The social welfare system also improved in aspects of women's employment to promote gender equality. Since the 1960s, the roles of both genders have shifted and transformed. While women have integrated into male society's mechanisms, family activities such as child-care have become considered a human endeavour instead of a women's duty (Bradley, 1990). In the 1970s, the necessity of fathers' involvement in child-rearing remained a pivotal part of feminist campaigns (Chodorow, 1999). Under these circumstances, Bergman gradually turned to a female vision and created those images of mothers with subjectivity and their own desires in the 1960s and 1970s. Accordingly, the father figures relatively become weakened and degraded. Films in this period, such as *The Silence* (1963), *Cries and Whispers* (1972) and *Scenes of Marriage* (1973), turned to an insight into the female psyche and conflicts in marriage. Male authority seemed lost, but its shadow still remained. To illustrate, the 1978 film *Autumn Sonata* depicts a mother-daughter contradiction, which can be seen as mirroring a father-son relationship from the female perspective. After all, Bergman never stopped discussing the patriarch, and those indoor female images contain allusions and complaints about the patriarchal pressure. Then he returned with a concentrated manifestation of fatherhood in *Fanny and Alexander* in 1982. At this time, Bergman straight-forwardly confronted himself with the father's conflict and eventually reached reconciliation.

*Fanny and Alexander*, which was released 25 years after *Wild Strawberries*, can be considered as a review and summary of his film career over nearly four decades, as well as an attempt to recover his cinematic view from the 1950s and the process of overcoming the discouragement and hopelessness of the 1960s and 1970s (Kalin, 2003). The film converges all the elements of his obsession: childhood, dreams, imagination, religion, ghost and God, life and death, as well as love and hate. Compared with *Wild Strawberries*, *Fanny and Alexander* do not try to hide their presentation of the autobiographical theme, as Bergman's own childhood memory is discretely inserted in the film (Cohen-Shalev, 2009). The story depicts the circannual life of the Ekdahl family from the perspective of the child protagonist, Alexander. Just like Bergman in his childhood, Alexander has a keen sense of perception and fantastic

imagination, full of curiosity about the world. Similarly, their light-hearted childhood ends prematurely. Nevertheless, the film is full of the meanings of reconciliation and compensation, and Bergman decided to portray the bright side of life from the very beginning. The narrative of the film is located in the grandmother's house in Uppsala, taking the home of Bergman's own grandmother as the prototype (Bergman, 1994). Consequently, his inspiration from childhood memory contributed to forming the warm atmosphere of the home and the family (Marklund, 2013).

Though the story revolves around a female-dominated family, Bergman creates various representations of the father throughout the film to demonstrate the complexity of fatherhood. These include the childish uncle Carl who farts to amuse the children, and the mysterious Isak, who supernaturally saves Alexander and Fanny. Moreover, Alexander's birth father, Oscar and his stepfather, the Bishop, together manifest strong duality. Oscar is a rare father-image in Bergman's films - he is patient, humorous and full of love. He manages a theatre, is hardworking and passionate and is highly recognised by his mother in morality and talent. Bergman projected his affection for theatre on this character. Alexander's interest in theatre also comes from his father, which also reflects his admiration for him. Except for his poor health, Oscar is nearly an ideal father, just as Bergman imagined him to make up for his own regret. Unfortunately, he is deliberately weakened - he passed away early and left his children. Oscar's leaving is difficult to accept for Alexander, so he rejects coming close to him at the end of his life. To some extent, the ghost's existence compensates for the regretful farewell. After his death, Alexander witnessed his ghost several times. The first time is after the funeral - Fanny awakes Alexander to see someone playing the piano. The ghost of Oscar in the white suit gazes at his children. A close-up focuses on his face, and the light in his eyes gradually fades away, which symbolises his vanished life. Oscar represents the bright side of the father, and his untimely death and re-emergence as a ghost manifests Bergman's reminiscent affection for the paternal love that he momentarily had but had lost for a long period.

The Bishop, on the contrary, is shaped as a sanctimonious hypocrite and the origin of all kinds of evil things and misfortune. He is a representative personage of evil fatherhood and widely considered as a projection of Bergman's father because of his career and his family, which consists of female members - mother, aunt and sister, the same as the family of Erik Bergman (Cowie, 1992). However, the Bishop is not - at least not only - a projection of Bergman's father but also a projection of himself. Bergman clarified that *'there is a lot of me in the Bishop, rather than in Alexander'* (p. 338) '. Just like Bergman's confrontation with 'the father' living inside his body like a ghost, *'He (the Bishop) is haunted by his own evil'* (p. 339) ', Bergman wrote. In the process of Alexander's confrontation with his stepfather, Bergman not only continued his criticism of patriarchy but also embodied his criticism of himself on this character. With the death of the Bishop, a part of Bergman inside Alexander has completed the spiritual patricide, while another part of Bergman hides in the interior of the stepfather and has finished the mental suicide - the Oedipus-parallel completes his redemption. Alexander rebels against his stepfather and defeats him in a magical dream, achieving what the juvenile Bergman wanted. The Bishop is dead in a fire, just like the old Bergman atoned for his steamy side in life. With the death of the Bishop, the dark side of the father has gone, and the wrath from adolescence has dissolved as well. In this way, Bergman can reconcile with his father and with his own life, and he can forgive all sorts of unforgiveness.

#### **4. The Lack of and Yearning for Love: A Life-long Theme of Ingmar Bergman**

The period that Bergman's film productivity concentrated on was partly coincident with the blooming of auteurism, which reached an emblematic peak in the 1950s with the articles of Truffaut and Bazin in the renowned film journal, *Cahiers du Cinema* (Thompson et al., 2003) and became wide-accepted as the auteur theory in the 1960s (Andrews, 2012). Auteur theory advocates the importance of the film director as authors, which means they are the origin of content and creativity with *'highly centralised and subjective control'* through the film making process (Santas, 2002, p. 18). Ingmar Bergman is proverbially recognised as a typical film auteur because of his distinct aesthetic style and unique individual themes. His films embodied his life experiences and the artistic manifestation of individual thoughts. He created his own world of film images, which is personal and subjective but resonates widely, as the themes he explored are the most ancient and acute problems that human beings face. In particular, the lack of and the longing for love is a lifelong theme consistently distributed in Bergman's films. The question about love can result from his upbringing, environment, and marital situation. As Van Belle (2019) proposed, Bergman tries to balance the ideal love and actual love in his life. This kind of contradiction existed when he was a child, as he yearned for love from his father but was rejected. According to Kohut's (1984) redevelopment of Freudian theory, it is the inability of the caregivers to empathize with the normal expression of love and hate in the child's psycho development but respond with a hostile and overpowering counterattack that leads to the pathological development of the Oedipus complex (1984, p. 25). And he redefined the process of cure as structurally completing a healthy self instead of entirely overcoming the Oedipus complex (p. 117). From the films mentioned above, we can see Bergman's knot rooted in childhood and his struggles to find a cure.

Besides, Bergman is deeply influenced by the thoughts of philosophers like Nietzsche and Sartre, and his films are always permeated with the pessimism that comes from existentialism. According to Sartre (1981), individuals' natural happiness depends on whether we can maintain some balance between rejecting and accepting our childhood or not - complete acceptance or rejection will make us lost. The influence of childhood on Bergman cannot be underestimated. He has spoken of his childhood

many times. Once in an interview (1998), he said that he has always been trying to get rid of the influences from his experiences of harsh upbringing throughout his life and trying to get closer to the positive side. On the other hand, he also admitted that his writing is entirely based on childhood reminiscence. He can always naturally return to his childhood and recall all the valuable things he did during that time. It seems that Bergman was tightly entangled with his early memories and was swinging between acceptance and rejection. In order to find a spiritual outlet, he was always in dialogue with his childhood.

Bergman persistently expressed the theme of helplessness in love. The fear of unavailability for love and not being loved has permeated his films. The love here refers to not only paternal love but also love in romances, as the absence of love in Bergman's growth environment resulted in his lack of loving ability in adulthood. In his constant exploration of this theme, he was awake but anxious to find his way out of the impact of his past. The shadow of his parent's troubled marriage made Bergman pessimistic about love, though he had spent a lifetime longing and searching for it. When he was a child, the extramarital affair with his mother made him especially sensitive to fidelity and betrayal. Accordingly, his roles as the father are usually endowed with the elements of being betrayed – for instance, Harry in *Summer with Monica*, Isak in *Wild Strawberries* and the Bishop in *Fanny and Alexander*. After experiencing failures in marriages and estranged relationships with his own children, Bergman gradually captured his longing for love and fear of losing it, and this kind of sense became explicit as he aged chronologically. He stepped on a redemption journey to find the fatherly mutual affection he painfully yearned for. In *Wild Strawberries*, within the reflection of the protagonist, mid-aged Bergman revealed the most straightforward panic about steadfast love, cruel unlove, and endless depression. At the end of *Fanny and Alexander*, just like Alexander in Grandmother's arms listening to her reading script, Bergman revisited his childhood where he found an actual shelter. He ultimately reached a possible reconciliation with his father through a life-long journey full of wrath, confrontation and destruction. In Chapter 24 of *The Magic Lantern*, Bergman recalls his child-life with his father, and together on their way to preach by bicycle in the countryside (2005, pp. 130- 131), all sorts of light-hearted memory flooded back. He recognised in a late documentary that his original family was not hell (1998). After many years of struggle, Bergman could regard his father as a normal human being instead of 'mythologically oversized parents' and 'the infantile, bitter hatred dissolved and disappeared. Then we were able to meet in a mood of affection and mutual understanding' (Bergman, 1994, p. 22). The conflict occurs, and it may have vanished, but the trace remains there; Bergman's journey to reconciliation shaped the various images of fatherhood and shaped himself as well.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the film career of the respected film auteur Ingmar Bergman can be seen as a process of controlling his relationship with his father. Bergman had too much trouble with his father and had been haunted by his father's shadow all his life, from the resentment of the inaccessible fatherly love in his adolescence to the constant self-dissection and reflection in his mid-age adulthood, and reached an end with desire for reconciliation in his later years. Notably, the eternal theme of Bergman's films, the impossibility of love, is also rooted in the longing and lack of fatherhood in his childhood. He was seeking the healing of the trauma from his loveless childhood through his cinematic oeuvre, and the representation of the father is an unavoidable point of penetration in the whole process.

To recapitulate, the father figures in Bergman's films are usually endowed with personality traits such as indifference, estrangement and tyranny. They majorly play two kinds of roles: namely, the creator and defender of patriarchal regulations and the representative of God. This kind of representation partly results from the projection of Bergman's own priestly father. Despite the interrelation between religious and paternal authority, Bergman's cultural metonymy between 'FATHER' and 'father' is more direct, as his father is an actual spokesman of God. Bergman's questioning of God also comes from his father. Even after the 1960s, Bergman stopped openly questioning religion, and issues about God and the father remained. The contemporary feminism campaigns in the same period also influenced Bergman's film works, but his own life experiences were still maintained as the most influential factor. Though he moved to the interior and started exploring female visions in the later works, he still persisted with problems he could not solve with his father. He was always confronted with the shadow of his father, which existed inside himself.

In the 1940s, his struggle was manifested by a thorough overthrow. He tried to eliminate his trauma by completely denying his father and God, but this kind of Oedipus' patricide was ineffective for him. From the 1950s to the 1980s, the scope which this essay covered, there was a proceeding tendency for reconciliation manifested in his films, beginning with the initial symptoms in the ending scenes of *Summer with Monica* in 1953; and becoming more obvious in *Wild Strawberries* in 1957; Ultimately, in *Fanny and Alexander* in 1982, he explicitly recognised his intense wish for a reconciliatory resolution. It is arguable whether Bergman's reconciliation with his father was completed in this film. But it is apparent that he had already put self-forgiveness into *Fanny and Alexander* as an attempt to overcome and transcend the divisive issues that have badgered his life. Before this film, Bergman kept dissecting and probing himself in all sorts of ways, but his desire for reconciliation in this film had lightened all the weighty issues, and he demonstrably wanted a release to let himself go. Though conventional Freudian defined analytic cure as the ultimate resolution of oedipal conflicts, Kohut's (1984) idea that we do not have to transcend it thoroughly seems more desirable. Therefore, this essay regards *Fanny and Alexander* as the end of Bergman's reconciliation journey.

Ultimately, the characters Bergman portrayed in the three films - from those marginal figures of family and society to the aged who yearned for understanding with his family, then to the reunited family members - also reflect his increasing intention of reconciliation. Almost all the characters in Bergman's films have a strong desire for the acquisition of love, which is also attributed to his own lifelong conflict that stems from his childhood and his relationship with his father. His life experiences were all about the broken unity of the ideal and actual love, and the journey towards reconciliation is a way for remedy and self-redemption. The various evolving father figures within the journey also serve as an illustrated handbook of Ingmar Bergman himself in this particular period, leaving the provoking theme of the father-child relationship that has a profound influence on every individual's life span.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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