

## *The Bovaryc Anti-Heroine on the Hero's Journey. Melancholic Maturing in Ingmar Bergman's Summer with Monika*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the emotions of one of Ingmar Bergman's most iconic feminine characters, from his 1953 film, *Summer with Monika*. While describing the protagonist's arc, the analytic approach focuses on Monika's maturing from a narrative perspective, following the stages of the hero's journey and exploring her descent into melancholy. Starting from the premise that Monika possesses some of the traits of Bovaryc psychology, as developed by Flaubert and Jules de Gaultier, the character's change from heroine to antiheroine is followed, putting an emphasis on the way her melancholy affects her fate.

**Keywords:** Ingmar Bergman, melancholy, emotions, Bovaryism, hero, monomyth.

### **On Bovaryism and other concepts**

The following study represents an exploration of one of Ingmar Bergman's most iconic characters, young Monika from his eponymous film, *Summer with Monika*, from 1953. The Swedish director had already depicted

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images of young love and of characters that are fitting the hopeless romantic stereotype. *Det regnar på vår kärlek / It Rains on Our Love* (1946), *Hamnstadt / Port of Call* (1948) or the later *Sommarlek / Summer Interlude* (1951) represent some of his previous searches into the depths of impossible love, nostalgia or the pains that reveal themselves mostly through the protagonist's inner conflict on his journey of self-discovery. The aim of my research is to observe Monika's character arc throughout her journey in this coming-of-age story of maturing, of learning sacrifice and responsibility and of the impossibility to abandon one's ego and coming out the right (or wrong) way. It would be difficult, however, to discuss Bergman's filmography and themes in terms of right and wrong, as themes like (self-) sacrifice, love and moral dilemmas are themselves deeply nuanced. Therefore, Monika's journey will also be interpreted in a Bovaryc key. The intention is to demonstrate that although Monika's journey begins like that of a hero, her melancholy – which functions, as “the modern feeling par excellence” in Patrizia Lombardo's terms<sup>1</sup> – redirects her path, transforming her into a Bovaryc character and, implicitly, into an anti-hero. Melancholy is, no doubt, an essential feature of Bergman's characters, noted by those who have analyzed his work<sup>2</sup>, but it must be said that it is rooted in the biographical experiences of the Swedish filmmaker, whose life was marked by “innate melancholy” or what he calls “long attack(s) of melancholy” in which he imagined subjects for his films<sup>3</sup>.

In order to demonstrate Monika's anti-heroic nature, we will refer to Joseph Campbell's study, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most relevant studies in narratology, which explains the monomyth and the stages that reflect the hero's emotional and / or physical transformation. In brief, the monomyth explores the common structure of stories that follow a

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<sup>1</sup> Patrizia Lombardo, *Cities, Words and Images. From Poe to Scorsese* (Houndmills : Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Williams, *Klein, Sartre and Imagination in the Films of Ingmar Bergman* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 21, 25, 49-66, 115-116; Noemina Câmpean, *Strindberg și Bergman. Perspective comparatiste asupra durerii inocentului [Strindberg and Bergman. Comparative perspectives on the pain of the innocent]* (București: Eikon, Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Ingmar Bergman, *The Magic Lantern. An Autobiography*, transl. from Swedish by Joan Tate (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 38, 228.

hero's adventure, identifying their moment of crisis, their decisions and conflicts until their return. This structure can be identified in stories where transformation and change are implicit, where the stakes are high and where the spectator's or reader's curiosity is challenged by the unexpected element, the element of surprise. The hero's adventure unfolds on three levels as Campbell identifies The Departure, The Initiation and The Return to be the three major stages of the hero's journey of initiation and self-discovery. Each stage is divided into five or six parts that mark several important turns or meetings on the hero's path. The first act represents the departure. The Call to Adventure, the Refusal of the call, the Supernatural Aid, The Crossing of the First Threshold and The Belly of the Whale are the first five phases the hero must overcome in order to begin their adventure into the unknown. They lead him or her into the second act that contains stages as The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, The Woman as the Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon. The third and final act is also divided into six stages: The Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds and Freedom to Live<sup>4</sup>. The first stages of the hero's journey can be identified in the first part of the film, as I will further demonstrate. Joseph Campbell explains the typical path of the hero, using myths and legends in order to exemplify and demonstrate its universal structure. The author marks the stages of the hero's evolution, identifying the pivotal encounters and thresholds they need to experience and / or cross in order to accomplish their mission and overcome their weakness. Furthermore, I will explain and apply Bovaryism, a literal concept theorized by French philosopher Jules de Gaultier in his 1902 study, *Le Bovaryisme*. Jules de Gaultier states that Bovaryism is linked to a complex nexus of emotions:

“A weakness of personality—this is the essential fact that leads all of Flaubert's characters to conceive of themselves as other than they are. Possessing a defined character, they adopt a different one under the

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 45-227.

influence of enthusiasm, admiration, interest, or vital necessity. But this weakness of the spirit is always accompanied by an inability, and although they conceive of themselves as different, they fail to match the model they aspire to become.”<sup>5</sup>

The term derives from the name of Emma Bovary, the eponymous protagonist of *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert and one of the most iconic female characters of 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. French author’s Gustave Flaubert debut novel introduces Charles Bovary, a young country doctor whose wife dies and remarries one of his patient’s daughters, Emma Rouault. The omniscient third-person narrator then shifts his focus on Emma, following her gradual dissatisfaction marked by disappointment regarding married life, social and financial status. She feels particularly deceived by the realities of married life, as she has fuelled herself fictitious images of romance and idealized portraits of a romantic partner. Most of her distorted views on romance and perception of a love affair are in most part rooted in her consumption of more or less cheap romantic literature that fed her fantasies. Charles’s low ambition and, eventually, monotonous lifestyle and low-key existence in society are the aspects that determine Emma to act against moral and social values and standards. Her fantasies, sustained by novels that depict and explore themes as forbidden love or romantic triangles and affairs, end up materializing in her decision to commit adultery twice:

“He read in a little after dinner, but in about five minutes the warmth of the room, added to the effect of his dinner, sent him to sleep; and there he sat, his chin on his hands and his hair spreading like a mane to the standard of the lamp. Emma looked at him and shrugged her shoulders. Why, at least, was not her husband one of those men of

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<sup>5</sup> Jules de Gaultier, *Le Bovarysme* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1921), 13-14 (my translation). Original: “Une défaillance de la personnalité, tel est le fait initial qui détermine tous les personnages de Flaubert à se concevoir autres qu’ils ne sont. Pourvus d’un caractère déterminé, ils assument un caractère différent, sous l’empire d’un enthousiasme, d’une admiration, d’un intérêt, d’une nécessité vitale. Mais cette défaillance de la personnalité est toujours accompagnée chez eux d’une impuissance, et s’ils se conçoivent autres qu’ils ne sont, ils ne parviennent point à s’égalier au modèle flujs se sont proposé.”

THE BOVARYC ANTI-HEROINE ON THE HERO'S JOURNEY.  
MELANCHOLIC MATURING IN INGMAR BERGMAN'S *SUMMER WITH MONIKA*

taciturn passions, who work at their books all night, and at last, when about sixty, have rheumatism set in, though they wear a string of orders on an ill-fitting black coat? She could have wished this name of Bovary, which was hers, had been illustrious, to see it displayed at the booksellers', repeated in the newspapers, known to all France. But Charles had no ambition."<sup>6</sup>

Emma's frustration grows also out of her idealization of the masculine partner figure and sentimental life, having hoped for a more adventurous relationship and a spontaneous lover. This leads her to impromptu infatuations with men who present qualities that Charles lacks. Rodolphe presents charisma and a degree of self-confidence that Emma finds attractive. Being a wealthy landowner, he seduces her with his appearance and high societal status. However, Rodolphe is using his seduction methods only for fleeting adventures and his actual intentions contrast Emma's need for a meaningful, deep emotional experience. Therefore, when he leaves her, she becomes deeply melancholic, the emotional shock making her stop interacting with others for a prolonged period of time and move to the seaside in order to regain her strength. Emma's mood can translate into depression, as she falls into a deep state of despair and hopelessness as consequence of Rodolphe's abandonment. "Rodolphe had put on high, soft boots, saying to himself that no doubt Emma never had seen anything like them. In fact, she was charmed with his appearance as he stood on the landing in his great velvet coat and white corduroy breeches."<sup>7</sup> Rodolphe's entire attire and general charisma along with his approach find Emma in an emotionally vulnerable and easily available position. Emma's general boredom with married life and with her status as a new mother sustains her disillusionment in regards to what romantic life should look like, hoping to find happiness in material wealth, the aspect that leads to her ultimate tragic finale:

"The sentimental view which she has created of herself does indeed demand a sensibility different from her own, and at the same

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<sup>6</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (New York: Brentanos, 1919), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 158.

time demands circumstances different from those on which she depends. The wife of a modest country doctor, she imagines herself a great lady. With a sensual temperament, no doubt destined for countless love intrigues in which she would at least satisfy her nature's demands, she conceives of love in the form of exorbitant and unique passions, in a lavish setting, with the incidents of a novel."<sup>8</sup>

Emma Bovary wished her life had resembled more to that of a character from a novel. She made the dramatic decisions that led to her living a life full of drama and intrigues, aspects that are inherent to any kind of life based on morally questionable and even wrong decisions. "She recalled the heroines of books she had read, and the lyric region of these adulterous women began to sing in her memory with the voice of sisters that charmed her. She became herself, as it were, an actual part of these imaginings and realized the love-dream of her youth as she saw herself in this type of amorous women whom she had so envied."<sup>9</sup>

To sum up, the Bovaryc characters are defined by a larger spectrum of aspects that are related to a strong sense of disillusionment, dissatisfaction with reality, living in fantasy and conceiving themselves as other than they are. My earlier mention of Emma Bovary's affection includes the use of the term depression. However, I will further refer to Emma Bovary's character as suffering from melancholy, as diagnosing fictional characters is far from the intention and purpose of the present research. The melancholic temper seems to be inherent to the Bovaryc character. Sigmund Freud defines melancholy in his 1917 essay *Mourning and Melancholia*. His thesis relies on the fact that the nature of melancholia is comparable to mourning: "The distinguishable mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful

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<sup>8</sup> Jules de Gaultier, *Le Bovarysme*, 22-23 (my translation). Original: "La conception sentimentale qu'elle s'est formée d'elle-même exige en effet une sensibilité différente de celle qui est la sienne, en même temps que des circonstances différentes de celles dont elle dépend. La femme du modeste médecin de campagne se conçoit en un personnage de grande dame. De tempérament sensuel, vouée sans doute à des intrigues multiples où elle eût satisfait du moins les exigences de sa nature, elle conçoit l'amour sous les formes d'une passion exorbitante et unique dans un décor de faste et parmi des péripéties de roman."

<sup>9</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 163-164.

dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment."<sup>10</sup> By losing her lovers and wealth, Emma Bovary becomes passive, lost and, paradoxically enough, the prisoner of a fantasy she created in order to escape reality. Escapism is, therefore, one of the essential characteristics of the Bovaryc character.

### *Monika, the heroine*

Joseph Campbell's study of the monomyth includes, among others, the explanation of all seventeen stages of what has proven to be the narrative archetype generally identifiable in stories that unfold on a three-act structure and revolve around a character's dramatic arc. It is important to note that not all seventeen stages (mentioned in the previous chapter) appear in all hero's journeys. One can identify them in stories, myths and legends from different cultures and religions. Narrative chronology, the emphasis put on some stages while others might not be at all identifiable, could differ from one story to another. It is probably clear by now that the Bovaryc character traits shape the figure of an antihero rather than the one of a classical hero. Although antiheroes usually lack traits like idealism, courage or any kind of conventional heroic features, Emma Bovary can be perceived as an idealist character. However, her idealism is fuelled by fantastic notions of how life should be, in so much that it ultimately leads to her demise.

De Gaultier mentions that Flaubert's character have somewhat of a "borrowed personality"<sup>11</sup>. Emma's distorted self-image manifests itself in her continuous seek for romantic adventures resembling the ones she reads about in her novels. Her chronic dissatisfaction with the realities of marriage and motherhood leads to her making a series of decisions she does not take any responsibility for. At the end, Emma Bovary, abandoned by her romantic

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<sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia", *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement. Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1917), 244.

<sup>11</sup> Jules de Gaultier, *Le Bovarysme*, 27 ("personnalité d'emprunt").

interests and in debt, takes her own life by poisoning herself with arsenic. Her existential crises reach a climax not only because of her financial ruin and romantic disillusionment, but also because of her blemished reputation and shame, aspects related to the fast corruption of her social status. Her tragic fate marks, therefore, the character's failure to find purpose and happiness. She realizes she cannot fulfil her motherly obligations, thus the existence of her daughter turns out to be a burden for her. The responsibilities of motherhood also alienate Monika from her role as a mother in Ingmar Bergman's 1953 film. In short, the story presents a young couple's first months of a relationship that begins in a rather impulsive manner. Harry (Lars Ekborg) and Monika (Harriet Andersson) aged nineteen and seventeen, embark on an adventure with the goal of isolating themselves from their families, jobs, and other mundane aspects of their lives, living out their love solely in each other's company.

Monika lives with a large family that includes a sometimes-abusive father, while Harry, who has lost his mother, resides with his taciturn and emotionally absent father. The two meet in a café, where Monika's natural spontaneity draws Harry into a love affair defined by a hedonistic disregard for future worries – something Monika desperately craves. Her obsession with living in the moment and rejecting any form of submission or responsibility (she lacks the maturity for this) forces Harry to make decisions that jeopardize his secure position at his job. After losing his job, the couple flees urban life and spends the summer by the water, sheltered only by a boat and sustaining themselves with the land's bounty and minimal material possessions.

When Monika becomes pregnant, the first major conflict arises between the lovers, rooted in completely opposing perspectives about their next steps. Harry repeatedly suggests returning to the city to secure a stable livelihood and provide Monika with the necessary care for her pregnancy. Monika, however, refuses, preferring to continue their summer in the wilderness. Ultimately, the couple returns to the city, where Monika gives birth to a baby girl. Harry begins working while studying in the evenings to pursue better job opportunities.

It becomes evident that Monika, as Emma Bovary, is uncomfortable with motherhood, avoiding her responsibilities at every opportunity (one of



Harry's aunts takes care of the child mostly). While Harry is away, Monika reverts to her restless, adventurous lifestyle. After Harry discovers that Monika is having an affair with a former lover she claims to love, Lelle (John Harryson), he leaves her, taking custody of their child.

Bergman's film portrays the escape of the two young lovers as a mechanism to flee a claustrophobic environment, both spatially (the crowded city and the cramped spaces) and psychologically (the obligation to conform to social norms and the inevitable maturity Monika vehemently rejects). Harry is content with his current condition, although his performance at work does not meet his superiors' expectations. His dreamy, carefree nature allows him to adapt easily to Monika's needs, making her the driving force throughout the story as Lara Hübner points out in a paper where she analyses the way in which Bergman's film align itself with Monika's point of view<sup>12</sup>. Monika falls in love with Harry in a fantastical way. Her situation mirrors other instances of women's fantasies about romantic relationships: the yearning to escape the daily routine of married life.

However, Monika's circumstances lack such constraints. Her need to escape her home and, by extension, the societal system she inhabits, stems from her illusions about an ideal love and freedom, fuelled by the films she watches, in the same way Emma Bovary's worldview is transformed by the sentimental novels she reads. In a scene where Monika and Harry are at the cinema watching a breakup scene between lovers, the contrasting effects on the two are stark: Monika is deeply moved, while Harry yawns, bored. Even so, the fantastical dimension emerges when Monika and Harry directly confront the realities of a romantic relationship. Monika approaches love and her relationship with Harry superficially, idealizing it verbally but showing attachment only temporarily. Throughout the first part of the film, she repeatedly declares they are "mad about each other," compares Harry to "a character from a movie," and remarks during a visit to Harry's home, "It will be wonderful, almost like we're married." This reminds us of Emma Bovary's confusion between fiction and reality.

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<sup>12</sup> Lara Hübner, "Her defiant stare: dreams of another world in *Summer with Monika*", *Studies in European Cinema*, Volume 2 Number 2 (2014): 103-113.

In *Summer with Monika*, the influence of fiction on the protagonist's reality becomes the main source of her unhappiness. Monika initially embraces the idea of nonconformity and, for a time, conveys this feeling to Harry. The two feel they have rebelled against everyone, envisioning an extraordinary life together, even though their experiences are ordinary. Their rebellion against the system, authority, family, and society as a whole is not original; rather, this adolescent phase fuelled by Monika's media consumption is a product of her temperament and susceptibility to illusions about the world.

This is a clear case of a disillusioned teenager yearning for utopian freedom, rejecting the survival mechanisms she increasingly needs, especially after learning she is pregnant. "For Bergman, woman's love, originating in the life-giving and nurturing power of procreation, is spontaneous and complete; his men are often pale shadow – spineless intellectuals, temporizing lovers, doubters, and compromisers."<sup>13</sup> *Summer with Monika* opens and ends with shots that depict Harry thus leaving the impression that the story would revolve around him. We are not dealing with a spineless male character, but his voice is definitely not as powerful as Monika's who is obviously the decision-maker. However, from a conventional narrative point of view, Harry is the character with a more developed dramatic arc. "Here, although Monika is the center of the film, she is regarded objectively almost throughout, and the spectator's identification figure is the boy, Harry. (...) In *Summer Interlude* nature seemed almost an extension of the human characters, reflecting and expressing their moods; in *Monika*, although nature is felt as an escape from the constrictions of Stockholm working-class life, it is presented with scrupulously objective realism and an insistence on discomforts and difficulties."<sup>14</sup>

Monika's spontaneity in affection, adventurous spirit, and romanticism are stifled by the inevitability of procreation, dependency, and the constraints of a lifestyle she only partially desires. For Monika, romance and indulgence should last indefinitely, defining the value of love entirely. Yet the consequence

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<sup>13</sup> Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape. The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 316.

<sup>14</sup> Robin Wood, *Ingmar Bergman*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), 46-47.

of love (Monika's pregnancy) encapsulates all the implications of a romantic relationship and life itself, which she vehemently denies. Her repulsion for family life stems partly from her own family's image: disorder, responsibilities and the intermittent threat of an abusive father. Harry, by contrast, despite his imperfect family situation, instantly adapts to the idea of fatherhood, ready to organize his life for the baby's arrival. Having grown up without a mother and with a detached father, Harry develops instincts and values that justify his desire to build a family absolved of his own childhood traumas. Thus, Harry's coming of age transpires from his decisions regarding his fatherly responsibilities. Monika renounces the role of mother at the end of the story, as the final scenes present her return to her previous flirtatious nature, seeking fleeting adventures with potentially romantic lovers.

The film's first act presents Monika as a potential heroic figure: a young girl who feels despair because of her monotonous lifestyle and inconvenient familial situation embarks on an adventure. The specificities of a coming-of-age movie indicate that the character would eventually grow, overcome its weaknesses, gain self-confidence and mature. "The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. (...) The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man – perfected unspecific, universal man – he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore (as Toynbee declares and as all the mythologies of mankind indicate) is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed."<sup>15</sup> According to Campbell's theories regarding the hero's journey, The Call to Adventure is represented by Monika's encounter with Harry. The fact that the opening scene of the film presents Harry riding his bicycle linked to the beat where Monika asks Harry to go on an adventure together already puts her heroic nature under a question mark, at least from a narrative point of view. In this case, she is the one who calls another character to an adventure and not the other way around. "The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 47.

Monika's melancholy is not yet revealed. At a first look, she seems like an energetic, spontaneous and intense young girl who is falling in love, probably for the first time. However, these traits ultimately emphasize her melancholic disorder. "Melancholia here designates the clinical symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that an individual displays sporadically or chronically, often in alternation with the so-called manic phase of exultation. These two phenomena (dejection-exultation), in less marked forms and in more frequent alternation, constitute the *depressive* temperament of the neurotic."<sup>17</sup> Given the rather cyclical path of Monika's character, her initial euphoria and excitement can be interpreted as symptoms of some kind of neurosis. Analyzed from this perspective, her gradual breakdown seems inevitable. Juliana Schiesari comments on the way social roles can impact and influence women's moods and affections: "Female melancholia or depression can be shown to be a perpetual mourning for the barred status imposed on them. This mourning, however, not only points to a resistance to patriarchy that would serve as the radical basis for a collective refiguring of women's identities but also suggests the possibility of rethinking a symbolic of loss that would displace a patriarchal symbol."<sup>18</sup> Monika is dissatisfied with her family life, especially with her father who she repeatedly complains to Harry about. The feeling of loss is one of the most powerful enablers for the state of melancholy. She feels restricted and does not seem to want to perpetuate her mother's fate. Her main reason for escaping the city life is represented by her family and her living situation. However, ironically enough, Monika becomes pregnant during her escapist adventure, as if fate had played a bad joke on her. "Freud has suggested that all moments of anxiety reproduce the painful feelings of the first separation from the mother (...). Conversely, all moment of separation and new birth produce anxiety."<sup>19</sup> In Monika's case, the anxiety of departure translates to excitement and curiosity. They are both anxious about their adventure, their youth and carefree spirits making us feel hopeful for the outcome of their relationship and story. However, any

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<sup>17</sup> Julia Kristeva, "On the melancholic imaginary", *New Formations*, no. 3 (1987): 17.

<sup>18</sup> Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia. Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolic of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 47.

beginning of a story or journey also involves a series of obstacles or problems that the hero will have to face, as Joseph Campbell points out:

“The first stage of the mythological journey – which we have designated *the call to adventure* – signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight.”<sup>20</sup>

The two lovers take a boat and retreat in a secluded area outside the city, on a shore near forests and wilderness. The unknown zone for them is thus represented by life and nature, a place not too far from home, but far enough for a brief summertime adventure. Campbell mentions The Supernatural Aid as the third stage in the hero's departure. This takes place after the hero usually refuses the first call to adventure. In this film's case, there is no refusal. Almost like in a romantic comedy, the first act of the film calls upon the spectator's suspension of disbelief: after the two get acquainted, Harry immediately agrees to leave home with Monika, almost a complete stranger to him. First, their escape seems justifiable. We get a glance at both Harry's and Monika's condition and feel that they are entitled to spend one summer free from the responsibilities of adult life that seem to have caught up with them. “Not infrequently, the supernatural helper is masculine in form. In fairy lore it may be some little fellow of the wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd or smith, who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require. The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher, the ferryman, the conductor of souls to the afterworld.”<sup>21</sup> Harry does not necessarily represent the supernatural aid for Monika, although he could be seen as inheriting this archetype.

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 53.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 66.

In some manner, he does save the young girl from her situation and attends to her needs, fulfils her immediate desires. The two embark on a boat conducted by Harry and leave for the unknown. The Supernatural Aid and the Crossing of the First Threshold are represented by the same sequence of departure. The couple arrives at the Stockholm Archipelago where they end up spending most part of the summer.

“The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died.”<sup>22</sup> Following Campbell’s perspective, one may say that, in a way, the lovers have died – for society, for their family. The young lovers’ absence would probably have been reported or at least noticed in a different kind of story with different stakes and message. However, the film hints in no way to the reactions and actions of the adults responsible for Harry and Monika. This emphasizes the feeling of alienation, of not belonging and somehow justifies Monika and Harry’s need for protection and company. Bergman’s film and narrative structure follows a fairy-tale pattern, but only up to the point where the initiation begins. Monika’s character is one who actually refuses initiation (in Campbell’s structure The Initiation logically follows The Departure). However, we can probably identify some of the stages in what Harry’s development and maturation are concerned. We will focus, nonetheless, on Monika’s arc and melancholy, observing the elements that make her a failed heroine.

The next stages of the hero’s journey reflect the hero’s struggles to overcome obstacles, face encounters with different characters and embody various archetypes. The Meeting with the Goddess and The Woman as Temptress represent encounters with characters that would help or tempt the hero, sometimes making him abandon his adventure for a while. The Atonement with the Father symbolizes a confrontation as well as a reconciliation with the father figure. It does not have to be represented by a male entity, but at the end of this encounter the hero will have gained new powers, mercy and will be atoned.

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<sup>22</sup> Campbell, *The Hero*, 83.

### *Becoming Bovary*

At the beginning of my study I argued that Monika instils traits that would place her in the category of the Bovaryc character. At a closer look, her melancholy is palpable and obvious from the beginning of the film. The first time Monika appears in the film is through a looking glass. She wants to put some lipstick on, but gives up after noticing there is not enough left. The fact that we are first introduced to her reflection rather to her unfiltered image probably foreshadows the seek for her own self.



**Fig. 1:** Monika's indelible, continuous melancholy

The first act of the film introduces us to her family and workplace where she is either abused or ridiculed by men. Her meeting with Harry seems like the opportunity for the perfect escape. When they go to the cinema together, Monika is first seen crying at the ending of what seems to be a romantic movie, as the characters say their good-byes after affirming that they "may never see each other again". Later, she paraphrases from it: "You may kiss me now, Harry.", wanting to quote the line "You may kiss

me now, honey.” The ending of the movie they are watching somehow foreshadows their own break-up. While watching this scene Monika bursts into tears while Harry yawns indifferently. In spite of their opposite reactions, their further actual approaches to the decisions they have to make, attitudes and actions indicate that the emotionally involved one is Harry, while Monika quickly develops feelings of frustration and boredom. These feelings are enabled by her unplanned pregnancy and realization of an even more restricted lifestyle. At first, she seems infatuated with Harry, but the accelerated rhythm of their romantic relationship does not allow them to actually know each other before making any long-term commitments. What should have been a carefree, adventurous summer turns into a new beginning full of responsibilities and sacrifices, things Monika tried so desperately to escape from. Her fight with her drunk, abusive father marks the end of the first act, as she storms out of the house and seeks refuge at Harry’s place. Unable to take her in, Harry lets Monika spend some time in his father’s boat by which they would eventually depart.

Whether or not Monika and Harry would have fled anyway is debatable. The conflict with her father propels the characters into adventure. However, there is no reconciling. The only other masculine figure Monika encounters is Lelle, her former love interest and the man from the family she once steals from in order to feed herself and Harry. These encounters could have played important parts in a classic heroic journey, but at the end of the film Monika returns to Lelle, the antagonist who becomes jealous of her new relationship and lover. Monika’s mental and emotional state starts degrading after the news of her pregnancy. Simone de Beauvoir explains in her feminist study, *The Second Sex*, how young girls are reduced to passivity: “she is *married*, *given* in marriage by her parents. Boys *marry*; they *take* a wife.”<sup>23</sup> Monika opposes these roles and the first she opposes to is the one of the mother. When Harry proposes that they should marry and do something with their lives, Monika seems enthusiastic and is mostly excited by the idea of staying at home and taking care of their children while he will work to make a living

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<sup>23</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 442.



for them. Harry senses the urgency of their situation and tries to persuade Monika to return to the city where they would live in safe conditions until the baby is born. Monika refuses, but eventually grows sick of eating the fruits of the earth and goes to steal food from a family's household. She is caught, but soon enough also freed out of pity. Her repulsion towards the idea of family transpires in this sequence. After getting caught, she is forced to interact with the family members, but all she does is mock them and eventually steal some meat and run. "Monika is an animal imprisoned in a cage: her attitude toward her baby immediately suggests an animal, her healthy body as if made for childbearing, her carnal delight quickly giving way to indifference and the sense of the child as an encumbrance."<sup>24</sup>

Monika's dissatisfaction with the reality of her life grows rapidly. She eventually accepts to return home – in this sense we could interpret that some stages that mark the hero's adventure end are also identifiable, as the hero's return represents one of the major stages that closes the journey. However, she does not gain any specific positive traits or powers, her moral values are not changed and she does not achieve her goals. Like Emma Bovary, she rejects the new roles imposed to her, although they represent what she initially thought she wanted. Her actions contradict, however, the need she once verbalized. The end of the movie shows the level of Monika's psychological and emotional deterioration as she always acts against her condition. She refuses to soothe her child when he cries, she is constantly unhappy because she has to stay at home, because Harry is absent and because she thinks she is no longer good looking. She claims that she wants to live her life while she is young. Motherhood becomes suffocating for Monika, this is not the lifestyle that she was hoping for, she feels trapped and unprepared for these responsibilities. She does not feel validated and wanted, so she resorts to adultery and begins an affair with Lelle, to Harry's disappointment and despair. Despite the romantic rift between the two young people, Monika remains present in Harry's imagination and fantasies, according to Dan Williams:

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, *Ingmar Bergman*, 48.

“This is precisely what happens at the end of *Summer with Monika* as the space of the island is represented allowing Monika to return in Harry’s imagination. This image is melancholic because Monika has disappeared, but it is also constructive because it allows repressed emotion to be expressed. Thus, both Sartre and Klein lead us back to a fuller examination of how this image is integrated into the film. Whilst it can be read along Freudian lines as wish fulfilment of the male psyche, it is also implicated in a complex patterning that runs through the narrative, evoking symmetry and asymmetry as part of the imagined restoration of loss, and carries the possibility of insight alongside its obvious nostalgic qualities.”<sup>25</sup>

But, as it has been suggested above, Harry is not the main character in Bergman’s film. He is only the one who, interacting with Monika, shows us how love can turn into hatred, in a very Baudelairean way, as Jean-Luc Godard intuited in a short review he wrote about Bergman’s film: “‘Love at leisure, love unto death’... *Summer with Monika* is the first Baudelairean film. Only Bergman can film men as they are loved but hated by women, and women as they are hated but loved by men.”<sup>26</sup> As in Flaubert’s novel, the Bovaryc woman draws the audience’s full attention. She presents, at the end, another strong need: to relive the feelings of a new affair, being free of any kind of constraints or obligations (especially moral). As well as in Emma Bovary’s case, nostalgia plays an important role in the character’s descent. In her case, the state of melancholy is the result of the freedom she lost once she sought more independence.

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<sup>25</sup> Dan Williams, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard. Critical writings by Jean-Luc Godard*, Translated and edited by Tom Milne, New forewords by Annette Michelson (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1986), 85.

THE BOVARYC ANTI-HEROINE ON THE HERO'S JOURNEY.  
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