# Liv Ullmann's Handling of Religious Themes in Her Adaptation of Sigrid Undset's *The Wreath*

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ABSTRACT: In 1995 Liv Ullmann released *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a film adaptation of *The Wreath*, the first novel in Sigrid Undset's trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a novelistic reconstruction of fourteenth-century psychology and religious culture published between 1920 and 1922. This work was crucial to Undset's winning the Nobel Prize in 1928 "principally for her powerful descriptions of Northern life during the Middle Ages"; though its historical accuracy has been challenged, the affection with which this work is held by Norwegian readers endures. So Ullmann was taking on well-known text, which had been authored by a keen Catholic apologist, when she undertook her adaptation. Her version of the story—or rather versions, since three different cuts have been released—reduces the religious dimension of the original while increasing the focus on the psychological exploration of family tensions, whether between generations, between marriage partners, between siblings—or between friends. A comparison of the two works, preceded by a brief discussion of Undset's religious writings, illuminates each.

RÉSUMÉ: En 1995, Liv Ullmann présenta *Kristin Lavransdatter*, une adaptation cinématographique de *La Couronne*, premier roman de la trilogie de Sigrid Undset *Kristin Lavransdatter*, une reconstitution romanesque de la psychologie et de la culture religieuse du quatorzième siècle publiée entre 1920 et 1922. Cette oeuvre lui valut le prix Nobel de littérature de 1928 « principalement pour ses descriptions poignantes de la vie nordique au temps du Moyen-Âge » . Même si des doutes quant à la justesse historique demeurent, l'affection des lecteurs norvégiens pour cette oeuvre subsiste. Ullmann reprenait donc un texte bien connu, écrit par une fervente apologiste catholique, lorsqu'elle entreprit son adaptation. Sa version de l'histoire -ou plutôt ses versions, puisqu'il en existe trois différents montages- atténue la dimension religieuse du texte original tout en insistant davantage sur l'exploration psychologique des tensions familiales, que ce soit entre les générations, entre les membres du couple, entre frères et soeurs ou entre amis. Une comparaison des deux ouvrages précédée d'une brève discussion sur les écrits religieux de Undset sera ici proposée.

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When Liv Ullmann (1938-) released the second of her four feature films as a director, *Kristin Lavransdatter*[1] in 1995, she was taking on Norway's nationally beloved novel trilogy by the Nobel Prize wining author Sigrid Undset (1882-1949), a Roman Catholic convert and apologist. The series of novels consists of *Kransen* [variously titled *The Garland* / *The Bridal Wreath* / *The Wreath* in English translation], *Husfrue* [*The Mistress of Husaby*], and *Korset* [*The Cross*].[2] According to Anneli Jordahl and Håkan Lahger in a 1994 interview with Ullmann conducted before the shooting of the film, the rights to the novel had been bought by an American film production company in 1947, and they had to be bought back by Norsk Film (49).[3] As the production designer Karl Júliússon stated in an interview with Árni Thórarinsson, the crew's goal was to follow the book as much as possible (10), perhaps in deference to the audience's familiarity with the book.

Although the film does take much dialogue and incident directly from the first novel in Undset's trilogy, the film adaptation de-emphasizes Kristin's spiritual life of sin, guilt, and atonement that was so central for Undset.[4] Instead, Ullmann has made a more secular and less Catholic-oriented film. Ullmann's message is this: children should try to forgive the parents who have partially wrecked their lives, and parents should forgive the children who have brought them so much pain. In short the two works of art—though linked—diverge; comparing the two illuminates them both. My purpose in this paper is to explore the origins and formal expression of Undset's religious preoccupations and the ways in which Ullmann's different values affected her cinematic interpretation of the novel.

Although it was written before Undset's open entry into the Roman Catholic Church in 1924, the trilogy has often been read as an expression of her commitment of Roman Catholic religious values, values that she frequently espoused in print in the years following. A number of critics of the trilogy have found the expression of religious values in the novels compelling. For example, Andrew Lytle believes that Kristin and Erlend (and even Brother Edvin) are all compounds of Christian and heathen, and that insofar as they are heathen they are confused about sin. Erlend and Kristin confuse sin with the desire for love (Lytle 20). A similarly confessional approach to the novel is taken by A. H. Wisnes, who feels that it is only in the third volume, when Kristin becomes a widow, that she can turn from her egocentric self to God (131). Wisnes sees God working behind the scenes throughout the action. God "had held her fast in His service, and a secret mark had been set on her" (132).

On the other hand, there has also been some criticism of Undset's depiction of medieval Norwegian Catholicism.[5] As long ago as 1927, just as Undset finished her tetralogy *Olav Audunsson* (and the year before she received the Nobel Prize), Edvard Bull had written that Kristin is much more of a contemporary Protestant

girl than a medieval Catholic one. Olav Solberg quotes Bull as saying that despite Undset's strong Catholic position, Kristin is driven by a puritanical view of life (105). Bull indeed claims that Undset's emphasis on self-analysis is "u-middelalderske" [unmedieval] and thus a flaw in her character descriptions (Rieber-Mohn 37). Certain critics—for example, Helge Rønning—follow Edvard Bull, insisting that Undset's historical novels are "i bunn og grunn ahistorisk" [ahistorical through and through] (55), and he claims that Undset subscribes to an unchanging view of human nature. However, such a view only puts to the side the possibility that the 1320s and 1920s—or 1990s—might have something in common due to specific parallel historical events, events that lead to an era of self-reflection or of decadence, however one is inclined to see it .

Whether she achieved her goals or not, Undset's desire was to recapture a time period more than to make the past serve as a disguised backdrop for current issues. For example, in "Kristendom og kjønnsmoral II" [Christianity and Sexual Morality II], an essay from her American exile, Undset maintains that one of the beneficial social revolutions brought to Norway through conversion to Christianity was consensual marriage (51). Often in her essays, such as "Hedenskap og kristendom i islandsk middelalder" [Heathendom and Christianity in the Icelandic Middle Ages] she states that the Catholic Middle Ages in Norway were preferable to the earlier Viking Age (135-37). Similarly, in such essays as "The Coming of Christianity to Norway" in *Saga of Saints* (1934), she praises the Catholic Middle Ages in Norway in contrast to the Viking past and the Lutheran future. She states that it is a misconception to think that paganism is more accepting of the joy of life than is Christianity, since we "easily forget that real pagan joy in life was almost always strongly tinged with pessimism." In contrast, Christianity is anti-pessimistic and will "make no concessions to man's longing for the rapture of death and the frenzy of ruin" (1934 33). As she states pithily in her untranslated 1921 essay, *Om folkeviser* [Concerning Folksongs], "Intet land blev hårdere herjet av reformationen end Norge" (175). That is, no country was more hurt by the Reformation than Norway.

Undset considered the Nazi period as a return to the worst barbarism of the pagan Viking Age, a position she expresses in the autobiographical entry she wrote for *Twentieth-Century Authors*. Undset states, "As children we were taught to be proud of our Viking forefathers. Of course nobody then dreamed that Europe was ever to see a resurrection of the Vikings' way, conquering weaker peoples and ruling by terror, violence, and rapacity" (1942 1433). In this essay, as elsewhere, Catholicism is seen as the remedy for contemporary ills.

Undset's writings dealing with Catholicism in the fourteenth century also treat some of the formidable women of the period. In her essay on Margery Kempe's autobiography from *Men, Women, and Places*, written shortly after Kempe's life story was found and edited in the mid-1930s, Undset states that although she herself feels that Kempe was an hysteric, she admires Kempe's resistance to her

male confessors' interpretation of her life. She feels that Kempe "fought bravely against her sins and frailties as far as she was aware of them herself" (1969 85). Although Undset stressed the importance of women in history, with her dogmatic version of Roman Catholicism, she cannot be considered to be in the mainstream of feminism.

In her adaptation Ullmann has chosen to present Kristin less as an embodiment of the Catholic values that saints' lives are meant to teach than as the kind of heroine who appeals to a wider Christian and humanist audience for whom sexual guilt is probably less important than are the problems between parents and children. Predictably she makes changes to both the background she evokes and the characterizations in the film. In terms of the liturgical background, Ullmann deletes almost all the long references to the saints found in the novel. We do not even know that the big festivities where Erlend dances with Kristin are for Saint Margaret's Day. Saints Didymus, Nikolaus, Olaf, and Thomas, who are all mentioned significantly in the novel, are gone. In addition, whereas Undset had grounded the novel's chronology in the feast days of the Church to indicate the passing of time, Ullmann does not. But these changes are minor in comparison to those to which I will now turn.

Despite its widespread popularity in Norway, where it was seen by a large proportion of the population, Liv Ullmann's *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1995) has provoked relatively little analysis. Although the production of the film was the subject of much interest and controversy, once released it met mixed reviews.[6] Perhaps many commentators have been left too unmoved by the film to find it worth analysis. Even Ullmann's biographers have shown little interest in the film, confining their discussions of it to a few sketchy production details.[7] Perhaps film scholars have felt that there is little to say about the film that has not already been said in the debate about the depiction of the Middle Ages in Undset's historical novels themselves.[8] Not surprisingly, the only two scholarly articles partially devoted to analyzing the film are ones that address the difficulty of presenting the Middle Ages on film.

Gunnar Iversen (2000) and Ellen Rees (2003) both discuss *Kristin Lavransdatter* in conjunction with Anja Breien and Ola Solum's film *Trollsyn* [*Second Sight*] (1994). They refer back to two earlier theoretical discussions of historical accuracy, Umberto Eco's "The Return of the Middle Ages" in *Travels in Hyperreality* (1986) and Arthur Lindley's article, "The Ahistoricism of Medieval Film" (1998). Whereas Eco finds all views of the Middle Ages a projection of our present concerns and does not bemoan this process, Lindley states, "Where films of the more recent past habitually construct their subjects as existing in linear and causative relationship to the present, films of the medieval period present their matere in an analogical relationship: as type or anti-type of the current circumstances" (4). Iversen is more sympathetic to Eco than he is to Lindley and he feels that the two

recent Norwegian films are "historical romances" that can help us think about "our relationship to the past" (21). Rees postulates specific parallels between the Norway of *Kristin Lavransdatter* and Liv Ullmann's world, pointing out Norwegian fears of being swallowed up in a European Union (cf. earlier loss of Norwegian freedom to Denmark), concern about alleged satanists burning churches (as in Fantoft on 6 June 1992), and a revival of veneration for Saint Olav (399, 413, 404). Though these studies are valuable, they do not, from my point of view, get to the heart of the film; it is time for a new analysis, one that pays more attention to how Ullmann approached her source novel.

Before turning to the film itself, however, it is important to note that it exists in multiple versions of different lengths. *Kristin Lavransdatter* exists in three versions: the 1995 international commercial release at 144 minutes (on videotape in 1998),[9] the director's-cut version at 180 minutes (on videotape in 1999), and a 189-minute version which is the same length as the Swedish-release print (on DVD in 2004). The existence of different versions complicates discussion of the film. *The Wreath*, the first novel of the trilogy, is itself divided into three parts of approximately equal length. Though the film is divided similarly, the two sections of the film that correspond to the first two parts of the novel—"Jørundgård" and "The Wreath"—are shortened in the commercially released version whereas the third part ("Lavrans Bjørgulfssøn") is substantially the same length in the 144 and 180-minute versions of the film (i.e. 72 minutes).

In the shorter, commercial version, through the excision of all of King Håkon's Christmas party we lose the one background scene with an obvious historical marker. This version contains no reference to a monarch, and in this film version it is never established (as in the director's cut) that the action of the film takes place in the first quarter of the fourteenth century (1309-1321). For Undset such determinations were important since the Black Death later in the fourteenth century provided an impetus for the revival of pagan practices.

In the film Kristin appears less involved in religion than she is in the novel, as when we see her at mass on Saint Margaret's Day at Aker Church. She has little interest in the service, looking around and happening to see Erlend. For Undset, she has indeed a reason to be distracted enough to look for him and to be drawn to him, which the film never establishes—Erlend has just rescued her from German robbers/sexual harassers. She feels both gratitude toward this knight and curiosity about him. The shorter version of the film also deemphasizes the symbolic crucifix which Kristin drops when she goes off with Erlend on Saint Margaret's Day, and which he returns to her at the seashore, since Ullmann presents the scene in long shot and we cannot actually see the crucifix.

In terms of characterization, even the director's cut deemphasizes some of the religious elements in the novel relating both to false accusations against Kristin and to her actual sins. For example, the scene at the indoor funeral service of her girlhood boyfriend Arne stops when Kristin faints, and we do not see her

accused of being a slut by Arne's mother. Thus we do not get a glimpse of the psychic pain that drives her to get away from home, causing her to enter a convent. Later, in the novel, but not in the film, Kristin has fears about pregnancy. First, she feared that she was pregnant, and it turned out that she was mistaken. Later when she really is pregnant by Erlend at the time of her marriage, she wonders how her father will feel about this sin. Although the first volume of the trilogy, *The Wreath*, ends with Kristin's wedding to Erlend, the fact that she has not revealed to her father Lavrans that she has had sexual intimacy with Erlend and is expecting a child leaves the reader with the sense that the story is not yet complete, as Kristin must continue her search for God. Ullmann omits Kristin's fears of the exposure of her pregnancy to give a greater sense of closure to Kristin's story. Furthermore in the film, as compared to the novel, she is not overcome with guilt for her part in provoking the death of Eline, Erlend's former lover, when she said that either Eline must drink her own poison or she herself would drink it, since she would brook no rival for Erlend's love.

The shorter film also deletes Brynhild Fluga as a named character, and as a consequence further emphasis on sin is lost. In the shorter version, we see Erlend's servant Ulv laugh at Kristin for some mysterious reason when he takes her through the snow to Erlend. However, in the longer version, he has just laughed at Kristin for innocently offering money to Brynhild, as she does not realize that Brynhild runs a bawdy tavern used for assignations.

The presentation of Brother Edvin in the film does not reveal his distance from the secular clergy and his status as a wandering Franciscan. Nor do we see that he is *persona non grata* in Nonnesæter. The first scene in which Kristin meets Brother Edvin is changed from the town of Hamar in her local bishopric to Nidaros (Trondheim), presumably to call attention to the splendid architecture of the world's northernmost Gothic cathedral and to create a graphic match to the later scene when Erlend goes there in penitence. The second of Kristin's four meetings with Edvin takes place in the film at Christiania (Oslo) rather than at her home, as in the novel. Thus the film locates Brother Edvin in Nidaros and the capital, and it gives no sense of the friar's forced wanderings because of his outsider status.

Ullmann's convent scenes with Kristin and her friends stress more than do Undset's the perils of arranged marriage and the problems of sexual repression. Kristin and Ingeborg fantasize with their mutual friend Helga about being married, but then they realize that they must stop the game so as not to upset Helga, who will be forced to become a nun instead. We sympathize with Ingeborg when we see that her future husband, who rides up to take her away, is a frighteningly decrepit old man. To develop Helga as a repressed character whose emotional problems are worse than those of the unrepressed Kristin, Ullmann transfers the episode of hysteria in the convent at Nonnesæter from a girl peripheral to the plot to Helga. Ullmann also beefs up Helga's part by giving us outdoor scenes of

her praying. When Ullmann moves the first scene of sexual intercourse from a barn on Kristin's uncle's property to the seashore, where Erlend and his friend Ulf are playing chess while waiting for her, she has Helga accompany Kristin along the seashore. Helga is upset by Kristin's romantic dalliance on their trip to see Brother Edvin, and she is repelled by Ulf's rough advances to her.

Figuring prominently in the film is the troubled relationship between Kristin and her mother Ragnhild, who has difficulty in showing love for her. Only when Kristin gets married herself and feels she has made her own life can she forgive her mother for her joyless approach to life. Conversely, only when Kristin marries Erlend can Ragnhild let go of the trouble that her daughter has caused.[10] The film dramatizes the need for parents to recognize the unanticipated directions their children's lives have taken and the need for children to accept the strangeness of their parents' marriage and the problems that parents face in being good role models for them. Like many parents, Ragnhild and Lavrans appear mismatched emotionally, yet they have raised a family and remained together.

The film makes the reconciliation of father and daughter a lyrical moment. Ullmann makes Lavrans' previously withheld acceptance of Kristin's desire to marry the notorious Erlend a very joyful moment—one far richer emotionally than logically. In an outdoor winter scene, Lavrans, who has been criticizing Kristin, finally asks her what he can do to help her. Suddenly it is spring, and she is romping through the woods with Erlend while joyful music is heard in the background. Ullmann suggests that children must be allowed to make their own choices and take the consequences.

Unlike Undset who shows Kristin and Erlend together, and then presents Ragnhild and Lavrans, to end the novel, Ullmann joins the two pairs, to remind us that each new generation of spouses will face the same familial problems. She has Kristin and Erlend get up out of bed the next morning after her parents' conversation and watch the older couple disappear down the country road together. We hear non-diagetically the words reprised from the parents' conversation that they are not strangers to each other. The film closes on Kristin's face as she looks resigned and accepting of her parents. The novel in contrast ends with Kristin waiting to face the fury of her father when it becomes clear that she is already going to have a child.

Just as no issue is made of Kristin's shame at the beginning of the released film, there is no shame depicted at the end. However, in the director's cut, a drunken Lavrans on the wedding night reveals to Ragnhild that he has been able to tell from the lack of modesty in Kristin's eyes that she has already slept with Erlend. He is extremely angry. In the director's cut we have just seen the men and women get the bride and groom ready for the wedding bed. After Kristin and Lavrans are left alone in their chamber, the last scenes are similar. However, it is in part Lavrans's realization that prompts his climactic, reconciliatory discussion

with his wife of their life together. They must put an end to mutual recrimination and move forward.

Ullmann's blending of the reconciliations scenes is an effective way to bring closure to the plot, given the problem of filming *The Wreath*, a book without a strong dramatic ending because the story is to be continued. Ullmann turns most of the film into a long flashback, with the first sequence occurring on the morning of the day that eventually arrives at the end of the film. The most significant difference in the editing of the two versions involves the beginning and ending of the film on Kristin's wedding day, and is related to what sin(s) Kristin does or does not remember as she prepares for the wedding. Whereas in the novel, Undset suggests that it is Kristin's part in the death of Eline, the film attenuates her guilt; in the commercial version images of misplaced guilt focus rather on her role in her little sister's crippling accident or her own seduction by Erlend. The director's cut opens with a close-up of Kristin, whose hair is being combed by Lady Aashild on the day before her wedding to Erlend. Kristin expresses her sense of having betrayed her father, who has been so good to her. Then she goes out and takes part with Erlend in the dance before her wedding. She comes back inside to stand before a bucket full of water placed beneath shelves of candles. Then in a beautiful shot in which the camera moves back and tilts, we understand better what we have just seen. Kristin and Lady Aashild are looking in the water where the candles are reflected.

At this point the director's cut transitions into flashback mode, and the voice-over, spoken by Frøydis Armand (see Haddal 74), tells us that it is in the 1300s before the coming of the Black Death. We see seven-year-old Kristin on the floor of her house on the day that she is going to go with her father for the first time into the mountains to visit their summer dairy. The scene by the large water basin is the key moment of the return of the repressed in the film, but in strong contrast, in the novel, Kristin, who almost faints, never identifies what is being repressed.

> Hun skimtet sitt eget ansikt hvitt op fra vannet, det kom så nær hun så gullkronen over det. Rundt om rørte sig så mange lyse og mørke skygger i speilet—det var noget hun var like ved å minnes—så var det som hun skulde dåne bort--hun tok for sig om karets rand. Da la fru Åshild sin hand på hennes og grov sine negler ned i holdet så vondt at hun kom til seg ved det.
> (1995 231)

> [She saw her own face rise up, white, from the water; it came so close that she could see the golden crown above. So many light and dark shadows played all around her reflection—there was something she was just about to remember—and suddenly she felt as if she would faint away. She gripped the edge of the basin.

> Then Fru Aashild placed her hand on top of hers and dug her nails so hard that Kristin came to her senses.]
> (2000 281)

Since the longer film does not suggest that there is something to be remembered, it is closer in spirit to the novel. In contrast, the shorter version makes a whole series of connections, a less successful strategy.

The shorter version dispenses with both the hair combing and the dance, before it opens with the canted shot of the water basin. However, with the deletion of the first scene we also lose Kristin's feeling that she has betrayed her father. The voice-over of the shorter version tells us that Kristin thinks she sees the image of the elf maiden in the water basin, and then we are taken immediately to her experience of looking into the water as a seven-year-old to see if she looks like her father. She seems to see the elf maiden beckoning her. Then the voice-over says that Kristin thought she heard her sister scream. Eight shots of Ulvhild being crushed by the falling log are then inserted in the childhood scene by the water before Lavrans comes to Kristin's side and gives her the crucifix to put around her neck to calm her fears.

The voice-over in the commercial release tells us that Kristin confused the elderly Lady Aashild with the elf maiden, when Aashild answered Ragnhild's request to come and save little Ulvhild. The elf maiden motif is a figure from the folk ballads which Unset includes at least in part to stress the conflict in medieval Norway between paganism and Christianity. Sherrill Harbison discusses the theme of the elf maiden, who in Norwegian folklore is connected with "abduction and erotic abandonment" (2000b x), and who is said to take young girls off to the mountains for an orgy with the mountain king. She points out that the elf maiden and Kristin's name are both found in the ballad about "Liti Kirsti." Thus Kristin herself—and not just the society around her—is presented with pagan and Christian sides.

Ullmann seems to include the ballads less for religious symbolism than for the creation of fokloric historical detail. She expands the use of the one ballad recited in the course of the novel, the one at Saint Margaret's fair. It is the ballad of Herr Oluf, which is mentioned along with "Liti Kersti" by Undset in her essay, "Om folkeviser" (1986 236-39). The music from it is used on two other occasions. In addition, another ballad with religious symbolism is sung by Aashild at the wedding party at the beginning of the film, but it is not really possible to identify what the ballad means.[11]

Even more striking than the diagetic adaptation of folk music is Ullmann's non-diagetic use of two pieces of Roman Catholic Church music by the contemporary Polish composer Henryk Górecki, *O Domina nostra* and *Beatus Vir*.[12] She fits them into a secular context related to human romantic love. *O Domina Nostra: Meditations on Our Lady of Jasna Góra* for soprano and organ (1982), in

particular is used throughout the film to underline the meetings of Kristin and her beloved Erlend. Finally, it is extended to the reconciling conversation between Ragnhild and Lavrans. Given the placement of the music in the film, it would not seem that Ullmann is using it to bring Marian devotion into the action—though for those familiar with this piece of music, it may recall the importance of Marian devotion in the fourteenth century.

The deemphasizing of religion and the attention given to family relations in Ullmann's film may at first seem to draw the story closer to the Icelandic family sagas that captivated Undset from an early age. Undset went on to translate three of them into modern Norwegian. However, Ullmann's film does not as much move backward in the direction of the sagas as forward in the direction of our own day. Ullmann made a film in which a larger number of Christians both Catholic and Protestant (perhaps Undset would call them nominal Christians) could see their own family problems reflected. Ullmann's diminishment of the importance of Kristin's sinful act in helping to provoke Eline's death, something her parents never learn of in the novel, makes it easier to readjust the story to one about the need for mutual forgiveness between parents and children. Thus Ullmann takes the opposite view from Undset and tries to find in the past those issues that make it most relevant to the present rather than stressing those characteristics which make it most irretrievably past.

Should we consider Ullmann's adaptation "faithful" to Undset's *The Wreath*, given its shift in emphasis? Furthermore, is it successful on its own terms as a film? I believe finally that Ullmann is faithful to Undset, as she does not violate the overall sense of *The Wreath*. If she were to film the whole trilogy in the same rather secular manner, the adaptation would not be faithful overall, for the author's religious themes emerge more fully in the later novels. Given the problem of filming an open-ended novel, she was successful in general, although individual parts of the film—especially in its commercial version—seem to me flawed because of continuity problems and loss of detail caused by editing used to trim the film down to a marketable length.

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NOTES

1. The most expensive Norwegian film hitherto produced, the project was plagued with production problems. Three articles in the column "The Business," by staff writer Mr. Busy in the March 1995, December 1995, and January 1996 issues of *Sight & Sound*, give

some indication of the difficulties involved. The lead actress Elisabeth Matheson twice injured herself, the film went at least $2.5 million over its $7 million budget, and Ullmann became involved in a heated debate over the length of the film with co-producer Lilli Tyc-Holm of Munich-based Cine International.

2. The film appeared just a little too early to take advantage of the new translation of *Kristin Lavransdatter* into English by Tiina Nunnally, one judged far superior to the translation by Charles Archer made shortly after the original Norwegian publication.
3. That the American version was never made is perhaps not surprising. Despite its popularity in Norway and the existence of a substantial Norwegian-American community, Ullmann's film adaptation of *Kristin Lavransdatter* had little impact in America where Undset is far less known, although she came as a refugee to the U.S. when Norway was taken over by Germany in World War II.
4. The central importance of religion to the novels has become a matter of discussion. Mitzi Brunsdale proposes three possible ways of interpreting Undset's novel trilogy: 1) a humanistic parable of the journey from youth to old age; 2) an allegory of the soul's path from sin to purgatory to a vision of God; and 3) an archetypal depiction of the different routes that men and women must travel because of their genders (75).
5. According to Liv Bliksrud, Undset's novels of the Middle Ages respond to the debate created by the appearance of two important books in the period just before World War I. The historian Edvard Bull in *Folk og kirke i middelalderen* (1912) stressed the relevance of the heroic Viking past to Norway's Middle Ages, and the literary historian Fredrik Paasche in contrast in his *Kristendom og kvad* (1914) insisted on the importance of the role that medieval Christianity had played in making Norway a part of cultivated Europe (Bliksrud 1997 100-01). Naturally, Undset took Paasche's side in the subsequent debate. Ullmann's film is true to Undset's sympathies to the extent that Brother Edvin maintains his the prominent role and Nidaros Cathedral is given an important locational role. See also Harbison 2000b xxi.
6. Nevertheless *Kristin Lavransdatter* won the Gjest Baardsen Prize for Best Picture and the Andreas Prize at the 1995 Haugesund Nordic Film Festival (Lochen 1995a 2), and with its success came talk of filming the second volume of the trilogy with Eva Isaksen as director (Lochen 1995b 24).
7. See Bjørnstad 23-37; Haddel 218-26. Nor is there much useful information in Long's *Liv Ullmann: Interviews*.
8. Olav Solberg gives a short, invaluable summary of criticism on *Kristin Lavransdatter* as a historical novel in his introduction to *Tekst møter tekst: Kristin Lavransdatter og mellomalderen* (9-24), and his discussion refers to many books and articles that I do not have space to mention here. He then goes on to discuss the trilogy in terms borrowed from David Cowart's *History and the Contemporary Novel*. Vigdis Ystad (105-12) also summarizes some of the earlier debate concerning history in Undset's medieval novels.
9. In Robert Emmet Long's interview with Ullman, conducted in 2004 (215-25), Ullmann admitted that her strategy for shortening the film for the distributor did not turn out well in her eyes: "So I cut a little bit away from this and a little bit away from that. And that's no good" (221).

10. Although one ought not overemphasize the autobiographical in seeking the sources of a film's preoccupations, such an approach is encouraged by Liv Ullmann's decision to dedicate the film to Linn Ullmann, her daughter (and only child) by Ingmar Bergman. Liv Ullmann herself chronicled the difficulties of their relationship in her books *Changing* and *Choices*, and Linn herself went on to write a novel, *Før du sovner*, in 1998, about the relationships of four generations of women in a Norwegian family. In contrast, interestingly enough, Undset's novel trilogy was dedicated to her father, Ingvald, a scholar of medieval Norway, in appreciation for his stimulation of her lifelong passion for this period of history.
11. In "Om folkeviser," Undset claims that there is more brutality in Danish ballads than in Norwegian ones, where combat is often less horrific because of the fairy tale element (1986 260). Yet, Anne-Lisa Amadou point out that critics such as Ådel Gjöstein Blom believe that Undset's generalization does not hold up (355).
12. In her interview on the DVD version (2004) of *Kristin Lavransdatter*, Ullmann states that she called up Gorecki on the telephone, and he willingly consented to let her use his music after she explained to him the nature of the film. Górecki, a deeply religious man, wrote his thirty-minute work, *O Domina Nostra*, for the celebration of the 600$^{th}$ anniversary of the Black Madonna (Harley 91). As Harley points out, in this piece the Virgin Mary is presented as an all-powerful Queen rather than as a tearful human mother, as we see her in his Symphony no. 3.

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