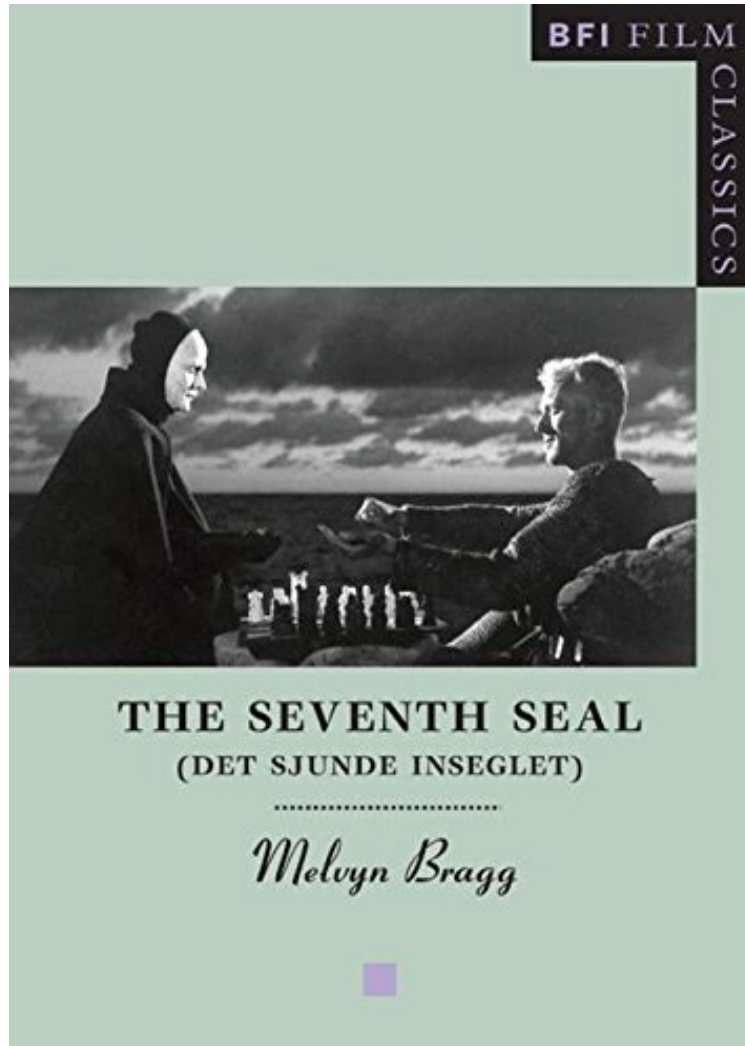


(Download ebook) The Seventh Seal (BFI Film Classics)

## The Seventh Seal (BFI Film Classics)

*Melvyn Bragg*

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**Melvyn Bragg : The Seventh Seal (BFI Film Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Seventh Seal (BFI Film Classics):

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Almost worthlessBy Kerry WaltersThere's a lot of secondary commentary on Bergman out there. My experience that most of it is pretty bad. Its authors usually think that there's something profound, revealing, and deeply important about Bergman's films, but they have a great deal of difficulty enunciating precisely what they mean. So they tend to be disappointingly vague.Melvyn Bragg's little BFI volume on Bergman's "The Seventh Seal" is one of the worst of these faux commentaries. In a total text of about 50 pages (minus the stills reproduced from the film, which are actually the best part of his book), he devotes perhaps two pages to actually talking about the movie (this in Chapter 5). The greater bulk of the book is a bizarre and spotty memoir in

which Bragg talks about his own childhood, his early love of cinema, his lusting after Harriet Andersson in "Summer with Monika," and his religious upbringing. It's only at this point that he begins to say a few sketchy things about his book's putative topic, at which point it's too little, too late. To compound errors, Bragg incredibly ignores Bergman's two autobiographies, *The Magic Lantern* and *Images*, even though both were published and available before his own book. Instead, he refers to a 25 year old collection of interviews, *Bergman on Bergman*, which Bergman later explicitly repudiated. Give this one a miss. Truly, 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The worst book that I've read in an otherwise splendid series. By Robert Moore I absolutely love the BFI Film Classics series. Nearly every book in the series that I have read has profoundly illumined both the films under discussion and the life and careers of the principle people involved. The reason that James Agee was such an extraordinary film critic was he took you directly into the heart of each film he discussed. Bragg does not. He skirts around the film for much of this already slim volume to talk about his own reaction to the film and to talk at length about an interview he did with Bergman. He eventually does get around to *THE SEVENTH SEAL*, but he deals so much with his own reaction to things that the book should have been retitled *MELVYN BRAGG AND THE SEVENTH SEAL*. A book like this should call attention to the movie, not to the writer, yet Bragg again and again refocuses the text on himself. There is eventually some good stuff on the film itself, but all you can think while reading this is how much Bragg has intruded upon the narrative. I strongly, strongly recommend very nearly every book in this series. But not this one. Skip it. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Rigid series format inhibits a full study of Bergman classic. By Darragh O'Donoghue This is another rather disappointing entry in the BFI Classics series, a padded look at one of European cinema's most famous totems, Bergman's 'The Seventh Seal', that medieval allegory of plague, faith, doubt, death, God and chess. It is disappoint because it promises so much but doesn't deliver. The opening chapter, 'Art and Religion', looks at Bergman's attempts to return Art, its creation and reception, to the condition of medieval craftsmanship and faith, when to create was synonymous with worship. Bragg, an acclaimed novelist and arts broadcaster (he made a film about Bergman in 1978) has recently produced two major series on religious subjects, but any hope for a serious tackling of this aspect in Bergman's work, and 'The Seventh Seal' in particular, is quickly jettisoned in favour of less demanding chapters on Bragg's first exposure to cinema and Bergman (the usual 'alternative to Hollywood' stuff), and the importance of Bergman's childhood (which is obvious to anyone who's seen a Bergman film, especially 'Fanny and Alexander'; although it's alarming to discover the young Bergman's obsession with Hitler, for whom his stern pastor father was a dead ringer). Another chapter deals with the genesis of the film in a play Bergman wrote for an acting school, but fails to analyse the way Bergman, in this and all his work, systematically uses theatre and acting as a metaphor. What is especially disappointing is that the final chapter, a brief synopsis of the film, is brilliant, full of casual asides that are actually dazzling shards of critical insight. Too late, Bragg reveals he has the measure of this dark, enigmatic, unnervingly comic film (one actually dismissed by most Bergmanophiles as superficial and uncharacteristic, but Bragg doesn't mention this) - Bragg's intelligence is dimmed by the rigid format of the series.

A medieval allegory of faith and doubt, "The Seventh Seal" contains the horrors of witch-burnings and plague, yet also features flashes of peace and joy. Each volume in the "BFI Film Classics" series contains a personal commentary on the film, a brief production history and a detailed filmography.

.com This warm appreciation of *The Seventh Seal* is also a biographical account of two very different people. Melvyn Bragg, who interviewed Bergman in one of the very first broadcasts of his *South Bank Show*, recalls how he grew up with Bergman's films. As he recounts how Bergman's art accompanied him on his journey to adulthood he also traces the progress of Bergman's own life and career, which reached its maturity at the time *The Seventh Seal* was released. Bragg's unique approach to the story and the making of *The Seventh Seal* demonstrates how a great movie can have as strong an impact upon a film lover as it does upon its film maker. From the Back Cover *The Seventh Seal* is arguably Bergman's best-known work. A medieval allegory of faith and doubt, this film contains the horrors of witch-burnings and plague, yet also features flashes of peace and joy. In this appreciation, Melvyn Bragg describes his first encounter with the film and recounts his later meeting with Bergman himself. This text is part of the "BFI Film Classics" series. Each volume in the series presents a personal commentary on the film, together with a brief production history and a detailed filmography, notes and bibliography. About the Author Melvyn Bragg is an author and broadcaster. He is Controller of Arts Programmes at London Weekend Television. His latest novel is *Crystal Rooms*.