

Women film exhibition pioneers in Sweden

Agency, invisibility and first wave feminism

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In my ongoing research on women's historical contribution to Swedish film culture, an important discovery regarding women's agency has been the number of women who were active in cinema management early on in the twentieth century. Many of these women owned or managed one or several cinemas during a short period of time in the 1910s or 1920s, and then moved on to another business, or left the workforce due to changed circumstances (such as marriage or retirement), but some of them maintained a long career in film exhibition, lasting well into the sound era. Since the formation of a Swedish cinema culture coincided with the campaigns for women's suffrage and women taking up an increasingly large share of the waged workforce, the women who made their way into cinema exhibition in the first decades of the century should be understood within the context of first wave feminism, the women's movement of the nineteenth century which reacted against women's exclusion from or marginalization in politics, economy, and society.¹ This essay builds on previous findings regarding women cinema owners and managers in the silent era, in order to discuss the methodological issues involved in researching these (largely) unknown women and why an investigation of their agency is important, despite the scarcity of available documentation.²

Swedish film exhibition and women exhibiting film in Sweden

Although there has been some research on Swedish cinema exhibition history, most publications have focused on mapping cinema exhibition locally and/or on the contribution of specific individuals (who have been male) or companies (not run by women).³ Women are occasionally mentioned in research on sound film experiments, musical practices in relation to silent film, or the coming of sound, but the most well-known innovators, entrepreneurs and musicians were male, and little is known about the female performers.⁴

The existence of women exhibiting film in Sweden in the silent era has not been entirely overlooked by historians. However, although Leif Furhammar mentions that some of the earliest cinemas in Sweden were run by financially independent women, and several female names appear in the listings of early film exhibitors in Rune Waldekranz's dissertation on film exhibition in Sweden, the extent of these women's contribution to the development of film exhibition in Sweden remains unexplored.⁵ Waldekranz's attempt, in his dissertation, to map film exhibition practices across the whole of Sweden, rather than focusing on the introduction of film in the large cities, was ahead of its time, as Jernudd rightly points out.⁶ His later attempts to present an all-encompassing history of film are more problematic and dated, but he did bring attention to the variety artist and theatre director Anna Hofman-Uddgren's pioneering contribution to Swedish film history as director of films in 1911–1912.⁷ In this context, however, Waldekranz drew attention to Hofman-Uddgren primarily as a director, and did not discuss her involvement in early film exhibition culture in Stockholm, as director of programmes for the entertainment venues Svea-Teatern, Variété-Teatern, and Victoria-Teatern between 1898 and 1904, where film screenings were mixed with live performances of various kinds.⁸

Most film exhibitors in early twentieth-century Sweden were men, but even before permanent cinema venues were established, women were involved in organizing film screenings. These pioneers

of Swedish film exhibition culture appear often, as was the case with Hofman-Uddgren, to have come in contact with the film medium through contemporary variety entertainment. The earliest example of a woman being linked to film exhibition in Sweden dates from the summer of 1896, when the chansonette artist Annette Teufel, a popular performer on the Stockholm variety circuit,⁹ became associated with a film screening at the Berns' salons, advertised as 'Annette Teufel's cinematograf'.¹⁰ The newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* stated that in the screening, the audience would encounter Teufel's 'charming representation' as a dancer, which suggests that the film programme included filmed images of Teufel dancing.¹¹ However, the article also claimed that Teufel was the owner of the 'Zinematograf', the machine used to project the films at Berns', and that she owned another such machine in London.¹² According to Waldekranz, Teufel's projector was described in the press as handled by a 'Frenchman',¹³ and from this the film historian reasoned that Teufel's name had likely been exploited in this context just to attract press coverage and audience interest, but that a French film exhibitor was probably in charge of the actual screening. Bengt Idestam-Almqvist similarly argues that the popularity of Teufel's name and persona is a more likely reason for attributing the screenings to her than any involvement on her part in the actual film projection; unlike Waldekranz, however, he claims that she was probably working with a British partner previously active in Berlin, rather than with a Frenchman, and he describes Teufel as being known for her entrepreneurial skills, implying that she would be a good business companion for the touring film exhibitor.¹⁴ Regardless of who actually projected the films, Waldekranz and Idestam-Almqvist may be correct in presuming that Teufel's involvement was primarily to attract audiences, but it is nevertheless interesting that the name, image, and reputation of a popular female artist was used to promote the film medium in Sweden at such an early stage. As Antonia Lant has shown, even prior to the invention of cinema, a pictorial tradition had been established where women were seen demonstrating optical instruments that could

Berns' Salonger.
 Hvard. kl. 3-7 e. m. Sön- & Helgd. kl. 3-6 e. m.
Table d'hôte à 2 kr.
Taffelmusik
 at
Rumäniska Kapellet,
 alternerande med det berömda Italienska
 Militärkapellet
Banda Municipale di Pratola
 från Abruzzerna (42 man i uniform)
 under anförande af Maästro Lorenzo Pupilla.
 Kl. 7-11 e. m.
Stor instrumentalkonsert
 under anförande af Hr Aug. Meissner,
 alternerande med
Rumäniska Kapellet.
OBS! Sista veckan OBS!
Rumäniska Kapellet.
Annette Teufels
Cinematograf
 kommer att förevisas dessa dagar.
 ➡ Den 1 Augusti börja ➡
Föreställningarna i
Salongerna.

Figure 3.1. Advert associating Annette Teufel with screenings at Berns' salons. *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 July 1896.

be used for entertainment and education, such as magical lanterns and dioramas.¹⁵ Furthermore, while I have found no evidence of a continuing involvement on the part of Teufel in film exhibition, it was not uncommon in the early years of film for individuals to develop a brief interest in the new medium and then abandon it altogether. It should also be noted that the presence of a French projectionist is not in itself evidence of Teufel not being actively engaged in the film screenings.

Whereas it is difficult to assess Annette Teufel's role in the Berns' film screenings in 1896, Marguerite Vrignault Chenu is an example of a woman whose presentation of films to Swedish audiences is fairly well documented. Madame Vrignault toured the three largest

Swedish cities—Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö—in 1901 showing a programme of film experiments with sound and music called ‘Immortal Theatre’ (*Odödliga Teatern*), which had been premiered in 1900 at the Paris Exposition Universelle, under the name Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre.¹⁶ In contemporary press coverage of the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre in Stockholm in 1901 Madame Vrignault received all the credit for the screenings, and Swedish journalists even described her introductory lecture in some detail.¹⁷ Waldekranz mentions ‘Madame Rignault’¹⁸ as the agent of the photographer Clément Maurice.¹⁹ However, according to Robert Hamilton Ball, Madame Vrignault (also known by her second family name, Chenu) was not acting on Maurice’s behalf; Hamilton Ball claims that she was the owner of the film programme, and toured Europe with the films after having managed the small theatre at the Paris exposition where the films were first premiered.²⁰

Waldekranz and Idestam-Almqvist noted Annette Teufel’s and Madame Chenu’s appearances in (advertising of) early film screenings in Sweden, but did not examine this further, thus downplaying whatever significance it might have had. Men became dominant in other areas of film culture, and the history of film was written as the story of great male auteurs. This seems to have influenced the writing of film exhibition history too, for previous generations of film historians tended to take for granted that women who were mentioned in descriptions of early film exhibition were just an attractive front, or were running errands for a male manager.

As Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Karen Ward Mahar point out in their essay on women in US film exhibition, ‘the *business* of running a small retail, entertainment, or service establishment’ such as a cinema was not in itself gendered as ‘masculine’ at the turn of the twentieth century, even though the film medium’s association with science and technology, and especially the need to operate a machine to project films, meant that certain aspects of the work might be described as requiring ‘masculinized skills’.²¹ In Sweden, just as in the US, many women were already active as theatre directors and managing shops at the time when cinema was introduced. Indeed,

when the first 'store-front cinema' (a shop temporarily adapted to be used for film screenings) opened in Stockholm in 1897, the owner was a woman, Svea Schmidt. Waldekranz hypothesized that Schmidt's neighbour Johan Hanson, who had already shown film in another location with his partner A. Sellgren, 'persuaded Mrs Svea Christina Schmidt who owned the shop at Drottninggatan 68 to adapt this into a cinema.'²² But in Schmidt's letter to the governor general (Överståthållarämbetet) regarding the permit to show film on the premises there is nothing to suggest that Schmidt had to be 'persuaded' by her male partners: for all we know, she may have been an entrepreneurial business woman inviting Johan Hanson to use her shop for film screenings.²³

The professional backgrounds of early film exhibitors in Sweden included, according to Tommy Gustafsson, 'funfair owners, wholesale dealers, bank managers, restaurant owners, bookkeepers, magicians, and manufacturers.'²⁴ Furthermore, temperance lodges played an important role as early Swedish film exhibition venues. This may be relevant for women's involvement in film exhibition in the sense that many Swedish women were engaged in the temperance movement and such venues would have represented respectable public spaces for women to frequent outside the domestic sphere.²⁵ As Gustafsson points out, in the first decade after the invention of film, Swedish audiences had few opportunities to visit the rare screenings organized by travelling exhibitors passing through the country, and it was not until after permanent cinemas began to establish themselves, first in the capital, Stockholm, and the second largest city, Gothenburg, in 1904–1905, and then in the provinces, that film became popularized.²⁶ The early film screenings in the context of Stockholm theatre culture where Anna Hofman-Uddgren played a part, and where other women like Annette Teufel and Marguerite Vignault Chenu appear to have contributed, are thus examples of an early, ephemeral film culture, limited to the Stockholm entertainment circuit. Nevertheless, considering that Hofman-Uddgren's producer, when she became a filmmaker, was N. P. Nilsson, one of Stockholm's early cinema owners, and her first experience of

working with film was in exhibition, her early ventures into film direction might actually be understood as a natural extension of her use of film in the Stockholm variety circuit in which she had been a leading figure since the late nineteenth century.²⁷

In the mid-1910s, Swedish cinema owners and managers began to organize in professional organizations, such as Sweden's National Association of Cinema Owners (Sveriges Biografägareförbund), founded in 1915 and the Swedish Film and Cinema Society (Svenska Film- och biografmannasällskapet), founded in 1917. Surviving records from these organizations, as well as contemporary articles in the trade press, show that cinema management was a male-dominated profession in early twentieth-century Sweden. However, women contributed to this culture. The 1910 Swedish census was the first to include the term that would become the established Swedish word for cinema theatres, *biograf*. The digitization of this census has made it possible to establish that in 1910, thirty-four individuals, out of which two were women, described themselves as cinema owners (*biografägare*) when asked to define their profession.²⁸ In addition, fifteen men described themselves as cinema managers (*biografköpare*), and five men as cinema directors (*biografdirektör*).²⁹ Considering that permanent venues for film exhibition had been established in Stockholm and Gothenburg in 1904–1905, and continued to spread across the rest of the country thereafter, and that there were twenty-five permanent cinema venues in Stockholm alone as early as 1909, it is clear that not all Swedes who owned and/or managed cinemas gave that as their occupation in the census of 1910.³⁰ Among those who did, however, women represented almost 4 per cent, and almost 6 per cent of those claiming to own a cinema, figures that can be compared to Fuller-Seeley and Ward Mahar's estimate that women accounted for between 2 and 5 per cent of American nickelodeon owners in the years following 1907.³¹

One difficulty when tracing the history of women film exhibitors in Sweden is that the digitization of the Swedish census, which enabled the identification of (some) women cinema owners in

1910, does not include the census of 1920, and only a very small section of the census of 1930 had been digitized at time of writing.³² However, even without comparable census data—which might give some clue as to whether the percentage of women among all cinema owners and managers in Sweden increased, remained stable, or decreased in the 1910s and 1920s—other records reveal that women remained a consistent minority presence among Swedish exhibitors throughout the silent era and into the cinema culture of sound film.

A life in Stockholm cinema exhibition

In 1918, the Swedish film trade journal *Filmbladet* noted that women managed just under 5 per cent of the cinemas in the capital, Stockholm.³³ The reason for *Filmbladet's* interest was its profile of a Stockholm-based female cinema owner, Wilhelmina Larsson (who changed her surname to Acrel on her marriage a few years later). Women cinema owners in the silent era tended to manage a single neighbourhood cinema rather than branching out into the entrepreneurial schemes tried by some of their male counterparts, who launched cinema chains or diversified into film production.³⁴ Yet the smaller scale of women exhibitors' businesses does not fully account for why an individual such as Larsson-Acrel, who had started work in film exhibition in 1912, and was profiled in the trade press in 1918, and then stayed in the industry and remained active in professional organizations into the 1950s, has thus far been invisible in accounts of local cinema history. Larsson-Acrel began her cinema career working for Anton Gooes, who with his brothers Gunnar and Gustav was among the early pioneers of travelling film shows in Sweden.³⁵ She worked as a cashier or box office assistant at the Bostock cinema in Lästmakaregatan in central Stockholm, and in 1914, only two years after having been contracted by Gooes, she bought the cinema from her employer.³⁶ Larsson-Acrel made her first application for a permit to show film programmes with instrumental music in July 1914.³⁷ The *Filmbladet* article describes

Larsson-Acrel's progression from cashier to owner and manager of the cinema in these enigmatic terms:

How this happened and the fact that it did happen is connected with a story that is sufficiently exciting in its own right, and which one might well, with a few handy embellishments, make into a film that would be a box office success. But be that as it may. To get to the core of the matter, in brief, Miss Larsson kept her eyes open when for one reason or another the cinema was put up for sale. She went up to the director and asked to be allowed to buy the business.

Yes, well, that would do. As long as she could raise the money.

It was this very chapter of the film that would make for an exciting act under the title 'The hunt for money', because the hunt offered a fair deal of both exciting and surprising points. But they are a private matter. In a nutshell, Miss Larsson managed to get hold of the money and buy the cinema, which she has owned and managed for four years now.³⁸

The documented information about Larsson-Acrel's work in Swedish film exhibition does not quite match the hints of action and adventure in *Filmbladet's* story, but her career was nevertheless interesting. In May 1919 she was one of the first women to join Sweden's National Association of Cinema Owners (later the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association, or Sveriges Biografägareförbund), and the same year she was also active as the treasurer of the local Stockholm Cinema Owners' Association (Stockholms Biografägarförening).³⁹ In both *Filmbladet's* 1918 profile and a later interview in the trade journal *Biografägaren*, in which she looked back at her career as a cinema exhibitor, Larsson-Acrel described Bostock as rundown at the time when she took over the business in 1914.⁴⁰ She refurbished the cinema and made further improvements with careful programme selections, arranging to have the first run of films from Pathé Frères, and making a deal with the distributor Skandinavisk Filmcentral for Bostock to receive their programmes, which included several Chaplin shorts,

immediately after the cinema where their films had their first run.⁴¹ According to Olle Waltå, two Chaplin films (*A Film Johnnie* and *Getting Acquainted*, both 1914) had their Swedish premiere at the Bostock in 1918.⁴² In her comments in 1934 Larsson-Acrel emphasized that cinema management involved not only looking after the venue so that the physical place was comfortable and welcoming, but also a clever choice of programmes for her intended audiences.

In her application to the authorities in July 1916 for a permit to screen films at the Bostock, 'Stig Arne Acrel' was named as the cinema's projectionist, and in December 1921, Wilhelmina became Mrs Acrel. As a married woman, she continued to own and manage the Bostock cinema for over thirty years. Although Bostock was the exhibition venue with which she was primarily associated—she reportedly stood behind the counter and sold the tickets herself throughout the silent era—she also had shorter stints as the director of other Stockholm cinemas: she bought Skånebiografen in 1916, which she renamed Södra Kvarn, but sold it the following year; and for a few months in 1923–1924 she managed both the Grevture in Grevturegatan (a few minutes' walk from the Bostock) and Stjärnbiografen, southwest of the other two cinemas. An advert for Grevture in the local daily newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* in January 1924 shows that Acrel was screening the Austrian sex education film *Kvinnans hygien* (*Hygiene der Ehe*, dir. Erwin Junger, 1922, *Marital Hygiene*).⁴³ The film was presented in the following words:

Make sure to get hold of your tickets in time, because you must see what every woman ought to know:

Kvinnans hygien

The film is based on the Latin motto 'Homo sum nihil humani a me alienum puto', that is, 'Since I am a human being, nothing human should be unknown to me.' Every Swedish woman should know both her own body as the process of fertilization and her duty as a mother to give life to healthy, capable citizens.

Shown only to adult women.

Attention! Female staff only.⁴⁴

Elisabet Björklund has described how this film was shown to women-only audiences when it premiered in Sweden, pointing out that when the film was passed by the Swedish censors in November 1923, the censorship card noted that the film's distributor, Oscar Rosenberg, promised that the film would only be shown to female audiences.⁴⁵ At this time, the practice of gender-segregation for screenings of sex education films was being introduced in order to create a respectable and safe context for this sensitive topic, although as Björklund shows, paradoxically the practice was often interpreted as sensationalist, since the special treatment of the films framed the content as daring.⁴⁶ Contemporary adverts in other cinemas presented the film in terms similar to the Grevture advert, but Larsson-Acrel appears to have been unique among Stockholm cinema owners in promising that the gender segregation would extend to the staff too, which might be considered an advantage for those attending a screening of this kind.⁴⁷

Larsson-Acrel continued to manage the Bostock until 1945, when she sold it to AB Europa Film, but its status among Stockholm cinemas appears to have peaked in the late 1910s and early 1920s.⁴⁸ In 1929, she was made director of a distribution company set up by the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association called Filmbyrån (The Film Agency), renamed Sverige Film (Sweden Film) in 1945, and she remained head of this venture until the mid-1950s.⁴⁹

Of all the women cinema owners in Sweden that I have been able to identify who were active in the silent era, Larsson-Acrel had the longest career. Starting out as an unmarried woman in her twenties, the second woman admitted to membership in the National Cinema Owners' Association—accepted into a professionalized circle of film exhibitors—her life was not typical of Swedish women cinema owners of the silent era. The fact that she had profiles in two influential trade publications—*Filmbladet* in 1918 and *Biografägaren* in 1934—and featured in the portraits of Swedish film sector notables that the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association published in 1920 proves that she did not go unnoticed by her peers. The majority of her contemporary female colleagues have

left fewer traces. Sometimes just a name, sometimes the address of a cinema or a home address, and in some cases a date of birth. But despite the fact that Larsson-Acrel was an active member of several professional organizations, and featured several times in the trade press, she is completely absent from published histories of the Bostock cinema, which attracted attention in the Swedish press for example in the 1970s, when it became a pornographic cinema, and in the 1980s, when it finally closed down, mourned as one of the oldest cinemas in the Nordic countries.⁵⁰

Kurt Berglund's book about Stockholm cinemas, published in the 1990s, mentions only the Gooes brothers and Europa Film as owners of Bostock, even though Anton Gooes ran the cinema for fewer than nine years, whereas Larsson-Acrel owned the business for over three decades, including the transition from silent to sound.⁵¹ The Gooes brothers are known as early pioneers of film exhibition whereas Europa Film was a well-known film production company of long standing, active from the early sound period until the 1980s: the cinema owners who already form part of the received national film historiography have been deemed more relevant to the contextualization of the Bostock cinema than an unknown woman. But film history is not just a succession of great inventions, deeds, and achievements; film historians should also consider the daily grind by individuals who never became famous because their work—whether in production, distribution, or exhibition—was only moderately successful. We need to discuss the problems of inclusion for professionals in a field where the internal jargon revealed that being a man was assumed to be natural and normal.⁵² Take a broader view of Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel's (non)treatment in film historical accounts, consider other conspicuous absences, and one might reasonably argue that it is indeed typical of the invisibility of, and low value placed on, women's contributions to film culture.

Researching Swedish cinema exhibition history

In Swedish film trade journals, the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association's archives and published registers, the 1910 census, and business records, I have so far found evidence of around 120 women who owned and/or managed cinemas or travelling film shows in Sweden in the era of silent cinema.⁵³ This includes most of the women who became members of the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association in the silent era, and many women who remained active as cinema owners in the same place for long periods, but it likely excludes a large number of women involved in film exhibition in temporary venues, as well as many of those who tried their luck in the business only for a few years, and women who ran cinemas owned by their husband and who received no individual credit in their own name.⁵⁴ For the first few years of cinema, I have consulted primary sources that document film exhibition in Stockholm, while for local cinema exhibition in small and average-sized towns I have had to rely on secondary sources, which are often thin on the detail of women's roles.⁵⁵

The Swedish Cinema Owners' Association published a register regularly from 1930, which provides useful information about the women who owned or managed cinemas in the early years of sound cinema and throughout the 1930s and 1940s, while mapping women's ownership and management in the 1910s and 1920s has proved more difficult.⁵⁶ Numerous women who were neither cinema owners nor managers were involved in cinema exhibition in other ways, whether as musicians, usherettes, or box office assistants: work that may be compared to the below-the-line professions in film production.⁵⁷ Erin Hill writes of Hollywood in the classical era that "Women were never absent from film history; they often simply weren't documented as part of it because they did "women's work", which was—by definition—insignificant, tedious, low status, and noncreative."⁵⁸ The focus of this essay is women as cinema owners or managers, but Hill's comment is nevertheless highly relevant for women in film exhibition too. For example, the only explicit references to women that I have found in the minutes of the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association's board in

the silent era (apart from lists of approved members that include women) are when board members in December 1918 and January 1919 discussed employing a low-paid female office assistant, and again in 1920 when they had to fill the position again, because the assistant had found more lucrative work elsewhere.⁵⁹ Furthermore, women often gained experience from more than one area of work in film exhibition or related businesses before becoming the manager or owner of a cinema.

One reason that this area of film culture is under-researched is that film history has tended to prioritize production over exhibition, distribution, and consumption. As Antonia Lant has noted, feminist film research in the 1970s and 1980s focused on the need to acknowledge women's work 'on both sides of the camera', and inevitably did not cover the many kinds of jobs available in the field of cinema culture.⁶⁰ And Hill's words on women's work in the context of American production seem applicable as a reason for research into other fields, including exhibition: 'Examining the types of work women could and did do in the wake of sex segregation reveals their agency—both in their own careers and in their industry's history.'⁶¹ Hill describes her work on media production as providing 'historical fill light' to the auteurist view of film history, where writers' 'esteem for great movie makers often acts like a spotlight, plunging the contributions of the less conspicuous into darkness and rendering the great men themselves less interesting by blowing out their most well-known features with harsh, flat light.'⁶² By widening the focus from production—which is usually perceived as the more creative, artistic side of film culture—to exhibition, and by investigating *women's* work in film exhibition, my research aims to spread the 'historical fill light' even further.

Cinema owners and the women's movement

As in many other countries, the formation of a Swedish cinema culture coincided with the campaign for women's suffrage and with women taking up a much larger part of the paid workforce. As

already noted, this was the direct result of the movement initiated in the nineteenth century known today as first-wave feminism, which strove 'to extend the social contract so that it included political citizenship for women.'⁶³

The public debate about labour legislation was affected by the increase in women in waged work in the early twentieth century. According to the official statistics based on the Swedish census, the total number of working women in Sweden increased by around 25 per cent between 1900 and 1910, and then by another 31 per cent between 1910 and 1920.⁶⁴ The percentage of adult Swedish women in waged work rose from 30 per cent in 1910 to 36 per cent in 1920, and continued to increase throughout the 1920s so that by 1930 fully 38 per cent of the adult female population of Sweden was in the waged workforce in some capacity.⁶⁵

So was this increase of women in waged work mirrored in the new work sector of film exhibition? We have seen that only 34 Swedes, men and women, called themselves 'cinema owners' in the Swedish census of 1910. One of them was Anton Gooes, Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel's employer at the Bostock in Stockholm, who as we know sold the cinema to her in 1914. But the two women included among the cinema owners in the census did not belong to the Stockholm cinema culture: Matilda Andersson (née Pettersson, born 1847 in the town of Borås) was based in Karlstad, and Selma Åman (born 1879) ran a cinema in Eskilstuna. The role of women in early provincial film exhibition certainly merits further investigation, considering that the first two women in Sweden who officially declared their profession to be 'cinema owner' were both based in provincial towns rather than in any of the larger Swedish cities.

About Matilda Andersson little is known, except for the fact that she was a widow, and that in the year when the census was collected, she also registered her name in *Kvinnligt yrkesregister* ('Register of female professions'), a Swedish publication that appeared between 1904 and 1922, initially on an annual basis but slowing down during the First World War. The register featured adverts and listings for individual professional women and businesses run by women, and

LOCATING WOMEN'S AGENCY IN THE ARCHIVE

Sida 188.
Utdrag ur Församlingsboken för *Eskilstuna* förs. i *Salmenacka* lin. 4. 1/1 1910.

Hus- nummer 1-100	By eller lögstuga (kvartier eller stads- delar). Namn (nationalitet) i hvarje person; familje- ställning (h. = hustru, v. = vid, f. = fäst, o. = o. s. s.) titel (om nämnd i lin. 1 till 3 s. s. s.), icke äggt.	Ålder och nummer i yrkesregister. Namn i yrkes- registret. Ålder (om nämnd i lin. 1 till 3 s. s. s.).	Födelse- ort (Om nämnd i lin. 1 eller 1 s. s.).	Förhållanden										Troskapsinlämnade Nationalitet (Nationalitet Förvarande).	
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1	Robertson Maria Anna Petrusdotter	1874	Eskilstuna												
2	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1875	Eskilstuna												
3	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1876	Eskilstuna												
4	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1877	Eskilstuna												
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13	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1886	Eskilstuna												
14	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1887	Eskilstuna												
15	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1888	Eskilstuna												
16	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1889	Eskilstuna												
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18	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1891	Eskilstuna												
19	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1892	Eskilstuna												
20	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1893	Eskilstuna												
21	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1894	Eskilstuna												
22	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1895	Eskilstuna												
23	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1896	Eskilstuna												
24	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1897	Eskilstuna												
25	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1898	Eskilstuna												
26	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1899	Eskilstuna												
27	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1900	Eskilstuna												
28	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1901	Eskilstuna												
29	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1902	Eskilstuna												
30	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1903	Eskilstuna												
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34	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1907	Eskilstuna												
35	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1908	Eskilstuna												
36	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1909	Eskilstuna												
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39	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1912	Eskilstuna												
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42	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1915	Eskilstuna												
43	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1916	Eskilstuna												
44	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1917	Eskilstuna												
45	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1918	Eskilstuna												
46	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1919	Eskilstuna												
47	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1920	Eskilstuna												
48	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1921	Eskilstuna												
49	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1922	Eskilstuna												
50	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1923	Eskilstuna												
51	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1924	Eskilstuna												
52	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1925	Eskilstuna												
53	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1926	Eskilstuna												
54	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1927	Eskilstuna												
55	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1928	Eskilstuna												
56	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1929	Eskilstuna												
57	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1930	Eskilstuna												
58	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1931	Eskilstuna												
59	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1932	Eskilstuna												
60	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1933	Eskilstuna												
61	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1934	Eskilstuna												
62	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1935	Eskilstuna												
63	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1936	Eskilstuna												
64	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1937	Eskilstuna												
65	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1938	Eskilstuna												
66	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1939	Eskilstuna												
67	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1940	Eskilstuna												
68	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1941	Eskilstuna												
69	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1942	Eskilstuna												
70	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1943	Eskilstuna												
71	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1944	Eskilstuna												
72	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1945	Eskilstuna												
73	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1946	Eskilstuna												
74	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1947	Eskilstuna												
75	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1948	Eskilstuna												
76	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1949	Eskilstuna												
77	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1950	Eskilstuna												
78	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1951	Eskilstuna												
79	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1952	Eskilstuna												
80	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1953	Eskilstuna												
81	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1954	Eskilstuna												
82	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1955	Eskilstuna												
83	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1956	Eskilstuna												
84	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1957	Eskilstuna												
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88	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1961	Eskilstuna												
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90	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1963	Eskilstuna												
91	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1964	Eskilstuna												
92	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1965	Eskilstuna												
93	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1966	Eskilstuna												
94	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1967	Eskilstuna												
95	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1968	Eskilstuna												
96	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1969	Eskilstuna												
97	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1970	Eskilstuna												
98	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1971	Eskilstuna												
99	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1972	Eskilstuna												
100	Robertson Johanna Petrusdotter	1973	Eskilstuna												
Summa	(Se denna sida)														

Figure 3.2. From the Swedish census 1910, Eskilstuna parish, including listing of cinema owner Selma Åman. Courtesy of Riksarkivet (Swedish National Archives).

its aim, according to the editor Bertha Wiman, was to ‘disseminate knowledge about professional, independent women working in our country in various fields, in order to make the capital of female labour force, knowledge, and professional skills as fruitful as possible.’⁶⁶ *Kvinnligt yrkesregister* also reported on women’s organizations’ national and international congresses, and published articles about the social and legal position of women in Sweden, with yearly summaries of what had been achieved in the ongoing campaigns for

women's rights, in particular in terms of suffrage and employment regulations. In 1921, Sweden's Constitution was amended to give women the right to vote. The publication of *Kvinnligt yrkesregister* ended in 1922, signalling the strong link between the reasons for publishing the register and the campaign for women's suffrage. Several of the women who contributed to the publication were journalists with progressive views, and educated professions such as 'lecturers', 'teachers', and 'writers' featured prominently in the register.

Andersson's listing appeared in the 1910 issue of *Kvinnligt yrkesregister*, with her cinema theatre (*biografteater*) placed alphabetically between sculptresses (*bildhuggare*) and suppliers of artificial flowers (*blommor, artificiella*). It reappeared in 1911 and in 1912, and in 1913 her name was joined by a second cinema owner, Anna Ternow in Oskarshamn. After this, the publication did not feature any more cinema theatre listings. There is no other evidence to suggest that these two women were engaged in the campaigns for married women's right to work, women's right to vote, or related issues, but the fact that they chose to advertise their businesses in this context is thought-provoking given our understanding of the work of pioneering women film exhibitors in the new entertainment culture that was developing in Sweden in the early 1910s.

There was at least one clear link between Swedish film exhibition in the silent era and the women's movement, though: Anna Johansson-Visborg, a labour and union activist (and later politician) in Stockholm. Her husband Sven Wisborg was a cinema musician when they met, but in 1914 they started to run Hornstullsbiografen in the Stockholm neighbourhood of Södermalm, and a few years later in 1921 they built Brommateatern, which Anna Johansson-Visborg would manage for over thirty years.⁶⁷ Although famous in her capacity as a Social Democrat politician and union official rather than for her work as a cinema owner and manager, Johansson-Visborg is an interesting example of a woman engaged in progressive labour politics and women's suffrage who also worked in cinema management for many years. It is also interesting to note that *Kvinnligt yrkesregister* was mentioned in *Filmbladet*, the leading



Figure 3.3. Anna Johansson-Visborg. Photograph from *Stockholms stadsfullmäktiges sjuttiofemårsjubileum, 1913–1938*. Photo: Stockholms stadsarkiv (Stockholm City Archive).

cinema trade journal, in 1917, and that the film censor Gustaf Berg, a regular contributor to *Filmbladet*, wrote an article for *Kvinnligt yrkesregister* in 1916.⁶⁸ Although *Filmbladet* did not publish articles in direct support of women's suffrage, Berg's contribution to *Kvinnligt yrkesregister*, like the decision of the editor to mention the register despite the few references to film-related work in the publication, suggests that influential figures in the Swedish cinema trade were monitoring the progress of the women's movement, and that some of the women active in the campaign for suffrage were interested in Swedish film culture.

Selma Åman, the second woman cinema owner listed in the 1910 census, is not quite as mysterious as Matilda Andersson, thanks

to an interview in *Filmbladet* in 1916 and a profile in the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association's portrait gallery.⁶⁹ In the *Filmbladet* article, Åman explained that her career in film exhibition began in the town of Borås in 1904, when her husband took over a cinema business there, and she, after some negotiation with her husband, was trusted with the responsibility of selling tickets. In 1906 the couple moved to the town of Eskilstuna, and when her husband fell ill Åman gradually took over the business, becoming its formal owner when her husband died.⁷⁰ She bought a better venue for the business, and successfully managed the cinema for several years before selling it to the large film company Svenska Bio in 1913. Åman then stayed on working as the local manager for Svenska Bio, and this was her role when *Filmbladet* interviewed her in 1916. Having started in the business before the first major debates about the potential damaging effects of film, which eventually led to the establishment of state censorship in Sweden in 1911, Åman explicitly contrasted the 'simple' entertainment of the early years with the mature art form that she associated with the cinema of 1916.⁷¹

Box offices and projection booths

At times in the interview with Åman, her description of the gendering of the cinema space prefigures Lant's description of the projectionist's booth as a male sphere. Åman talked about her late husband's initial reluctance to allow her access to 'all the mysteries of Cinema', on the basis that it 'was something that us dames could not understand.'⁷² The projection booth, that 'world of wonder', 'was not to be entered on any account.'⁷³ But she went on to explain that her own curiosity, coupled with necessity when her husband fell ill, led her to teach herself the business of cinema, including how to project films, after an incident with a drunken projectionist: 'After that experience there was practice and experimentation night and day, until I felt safe with the cinema machinery and had the time to train a new projectionist.'⁷⁴

Lant contrasts the 'opaque box' where the usually male projectionist worked with the transparent glass boxes where the usually

female box office assistants were on display as they sold tickets.⁷⁵ These two professions do appear to have been among the most divided along gender lines in the Swedish cinema business. The first part of the business that Åman's husband gave her access to was ticket sales, and as previously mentioned, the Bostock's Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel started her cinema career as a cashier. The Stockholm cinema owner K. Hjalmar Lundblad, who would become an important local cinema manager, started his cinema career in 1906 as a projectionist at Östermalmsbiografen, and he seems to have met his wife Stina (née Schagerström) when she was a box office assistant at the same cinema.⁷⁶ In an article in *Filmbladet* in 1919, Stina Lundblad was held up as an example of how 'the unerring judgement of a woman' can result in a cinema characterized by 'meticulous order, good selection of pictures' and 'comfort and wellbeing'.⁷⁷ Part of this article can be found in the Waltå collection, an archive consisting of copies of press materials and official records relating to Stockholm cinemas. But the copy of the *Filmbladet* article about the Lundblad couple included in the archive section on Östermalmsbiografen has been edited by Waltå so that it seems to profile only Hjalmar Lundblad.⁷⁸ The parts of the text where Stina was mentioned have been omitted, as has the reference to her in the title of the article—a clear example of a woman film exhibitor literally being edited out of film history because the person amassing the archive decided that her involvement was unimportant. Yet, the reader who consults the original article will find that it argued that a woman's touch could be important to the success of a cinema, if only because women made up more than half the cinema audience, and that a woman working in a cinema might be better placed to cater to a female audience's taste.

Why Waltå—who in his documentation of other cinemas mentions women owners, and even remarks on Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel's long career—decided that Stina Lundblad was irrelevant to the history of Östermalmsbiografen we will never know, but one guess is that Waltå, who worked for years in Swedish film exhibition and

distribution, knew that Stina was later less active in the business. In K. Hjalmar Lundblad's archive (held by the Swedish Film Institute), a small collection of mainly professional correspondence, the references to his wife are few, and associated with social events. In 1918 both Hjalmar and Stina were named in an invitation to dinner with staff from the film company Svenska Filmskompaniet, but thereafter she was hardly mentioned at all except in relation to the planning of a wedding (probably their daughter's) at the Swedish open-air museum Skansen in 1930, and a few polite greetings in letters from Lundblad's clients who were on close enough terms to know his family. Considering that after the coming of sound Lundblad was successful enough to expand his business into a small chain (which he owned well into the 1960s), it seems likely that Stina's work in the cinema diminished or ceased completely when the Lundblad cinema firm became more prosperous.⁷⁹

But in 1919 *Filmbladet* praised Stina for her contribution to her husband's work, and given that both their backgrounds were described in *Sveriges Film- och Biografmän* (1920), one might presume that at least in the beginning, Stina was more qualified to deal with accounts and figures than her husband: K. Hjalmar had begun life as a mechanic before becoming a projectionist when he was 25, whereas his wife trained at a business school (Påhlmans Handelsinstitut), and worked in a book and music shop before becoming a cinema cashier.⁸⁰

Taste and music

Filmbladet's 1918 article about Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel has similarities with the description of Stina Lundblad, in that Larsson-Acrel's good taste is emphasized: the author points out that having bought the Bostock, Larsson-Acrel had to 'paint and renovate and decorate and embellish' the venue while 'at the same time, the programmes were selected with greater discrimination.'⁸¹ Both Larsson-Acrel in 1918 and Åman in 1916 referred to an earlier era of 'bad' films, which they contrasted with a contemporary, more sophisticated

film culture. For example, Åman talks about competition from a travelling exhibitor who showed much poorer film programmes, but attracted children by giving away sweets and lowering ticket prices.⁸² And when Larsson-Acrel mentioned the business she took over in 1914, she described finding it 'dragged down' by all sorts of inferior music and variety performances, while after four years of her improvements 'the cinema is something completely different. And the audience is also a different one.'⁸³

Larsson-Acrel links bad taste to bad musical performances in the cinema. Piano-playing skills were an important component in middle-class female education in the early twentieth century, and it is well known that many women worked as cinema musicians.⁸⁴ Indeed, film programmes from Selma Åman's cinema in Eskilstuna for 1910–1913 advertised the fact that the films were accompanied by 'first-class music by Miss Signe Björklund', and when the Elite cinema in Stockholm advertised in the daily press to recruit a pianist in 1910, they specified that they preferred a female musician.⁸⁵ And just as women could advance from working the cash register to managing the cinema, female musicians could also move from accompanying films to curating programmes. One example of a woman crossing over from piano-playing to cinema management was the musician Ingeborg Sofia Emelia Krysell (née Kahl) who started as a pianist at Visby Biografteater, a cinema on the island of Gotland. After three years there, working under the name Ingeborg Kahl, she seems to have become director and musician at a rival cinema, Skandiabiografen, where she stayed for at least five years.⁸⁶

To replace rowdy variety acts with respectable women pianists could possibly be seen as a way to elevate the status of the cinema—or just a way to cut costs. Gustafsson warns against the tendency to accept at face value the description of Swedish cinema audiences in the 1910s as consisting of only uneducated members of the working class, pointing out that while Swedish population was then overwhelmingly dominated by the working class in terms of social stratification, there is ample evidence in contemporary

newspaper articles and photographs of members of the middle class visiting cinemas, even though the general image of the audience in public discourse was that of ‘a faceless mass of the uninformed’.⁸⁷ Regardless of whether the kinds of audiences at cinemas managed by Åman and Larsson-Acrel really did change or not, their statements fell within a teleological discourse of cinema culture as constantly improving, which chimed with the business interests of the industry. After all, at a certain point in early American film production, women directors and screenwriters came to represent ‘propriety and uplift’ in a much-criticized business sector, just as a discourse of taste, interior decoration, comfort, and politeness formed around women working in American cinema exhibition.⁸⁸ When it came to the overall management of cinemas and the selection of film programmes, some characteristics that at this point were associated with femininity seem to have been welcomed in Sweden in the 1910s—as in US screen culture at this time—allowing *Filmladet* to profile women cinema owners as well-suited to their jobs.

Conclusion

Since women entered into the cinema business at different times during the formation of Swedish cinema culture, and differed in terms of age, background, and civil status, it is important to acknowledge that while they shared a minority status as women in a male-dominated work culture, women in Swedish film exhibition never constituted a homogenous group. Fuller-Seeley and Ward Mahar suggest that the American film industry’s ‘concerns over outside censorship gave women influence in the business’, and that some women film exhibitors ‘really did appear to be interested in cleansing the movies.’⁸⁹ To what extent the individuals whose work in film exhibition I have traced in this essay were influential beyond the walls of their own cinemas is difficult to evaluate, and in order to analyse whether there were any particular patterns in their curatorial practices that might be seen as connected to their

status as women pioneers in a male world a far more detailed study of cinema programming practices will be needed.

Thus, there are several dimensions to consider when analysing Wilhelmina Larsson-Acrel's women-only screenings of a sex education film on 'marital hygiene'. While it may be tempting to place her programming of *Kvinnans hygien* in a context of taste and cleanliness, and of course the ideals of women's education, questions regarding commercial appeal and sensationalism must also be taken into account, as well as the rather unsavoury—but at the time widespread—ideas about eugenics which were part of the film's message. Nevertheless, the similarities between American and Swedish discourses on propriety and comfort are fascinating. And considering that in 1911 Sweden, unlike the US, actually introduced state censorship, after years of debate in which female teachers, such as the censor Marie-Louise Gagner, were highly active, women can of course be seen to have shaped silent Swedish film culture in terms of influencing what was *not* to be screened.⁹⁰

Like its American counterparts, the trade journal *Filmbladet* appears to have championed women cinema owners in the latter half of the 1910s, possibly as part of a general drive to create a cleaner, nicer image of the cinema-going context. But more importantly, it is clear that further research is needed into the work practices and curatorial choices of women cinema owners. Whereas here I have focused mainly on cinema owners in the Stockholm area, future research on women's agency in film exhibition will also need to consider the development of cinema culture in provincial towns and rural areas. The relationship between cinema culture and women's rights also merits more in-depth exploration. In early Swedish cinema culture there was an interesting tension between an emerging modern urban entertainment culture with questionable morals and violence, and, on the other hand, an educational tradition closely connected with the temperance movement. To understand the role women played in Swedish silent cinema culture, it is also necessary to consider how women could justify their presence in a film culture that was associated with both vice and educational potential.

As this essay has shown, while earlier generations of Swedish film historians may have painstakingly documented other aspects of cinema culture, their interest in businessmen and commercial and/or artistic success has meant that research topics such as the place of women in the music culture of silent cinema, gendered exhibition practices, or the relationship between cinema and the women's movement remain largely uncharted.

Notes

- 1 For first, second and third wave feminism, see Gillis et al. 2004, 1.
- 2 Stigsdotter 2016; Stigsdotter 2013.
- 3 For local conditions, see, for example, Jernudd 2012; Jernudd 2007; Nordström & Östvall 2002; Vesterlund 2006, 68–99. For individuals and companies, see Olsson 1999; Olsson 1989 which does, however, include a discussion of Lundberg's female employee Mimi von Platen (23), and mentions that Lundberg's sister Maria Persson who lived in Copenhagen was involved in the Danish side of his cinema business (29–32).
- 4 Wallengren 1998; Natzén 2010, 215–18; Natzén 2014, 36–48. See also Christopher Natzén elsewhere in this volume.
- 5 Furhammar 2003, 24; Waldekranz 1969.
- 6 Jernudd 2012, 20.
- 7 Waldekranz 1986, 257–72.
- 8 Activities that Waldekranz would have been aware of, since he listed these screenings in 'Levande Fotografier' (1969).
- 9 For Annette Teufel and the Stockholm variety scene of the 1890s, see Ivarsson Lilieblad 2009.
- 10 *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 July 1896.
- 11 *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 6 August 1896, 'tjusande återbild'. All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Waldekranz 1969, 70.
- 14 Idestam-Almqvist 1959, 84–5.
- 15 Lant 2006, 563; see *ibid.* 9 & 581 for women in adverts for cinematic attractions and women as managers of magic lantern shows. For reasons of space I will not explore the question of women's involvement in exhibiting pre-cinematic moving image attractions such as panoramas in Sweden, but it is worth noting that Waldekranz (1969) lists a 'Mrs Augusta Engelbrecht' as owner of the Panorama International in Stockholm (4), whereas Svenska Filminstitutet (Swedish Film

- Institute) (SFI) Stockholm, Olle Waltås samling (Olle Waltå collection) lists 'Berta Engelbrektsson' as manager of Panorama International. The Olle Waltå collection, held at the Swedish Film Institute, consists of copies of articles and official records related to Stockholm's cinemas. Olle Waltå (1923–2004) was an amateur film historian who put together his collection over 40 years in Swedish film distribution and in retirement. His source on this occasion was the police register for events (*tillställningsdiarier*) in Stockholms Stadsarkiv (Stockholm City Archives).
- 16 The concept of 'Immortal Theatre' (*Odödliga Teatern*), the Swedish expression used to market the early screenings with sound and music, is usually credited to Numa Peterson, who saw the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre in Paris in 1900 and would go on to create his own 'Swedish immortal theatre'; see Natzén 2010, 95.
 - 17 *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 2 September 1901; see also SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 7.
 - 18 A misspelling probably inherited from the French film historian George Sadoul; see Hamilton Ball 1968, 304.
 - 19 Waldekranz 1969, 208–209.
 - 20 Hamilton Ball 1968, 27–8.
 - 21 Fuller-Seeley & Ward Mahar 2013, original emphasis.
 - 22 Waldekranz 1969, 100.
 - 23 Letter cited in *ibid.* 101.
 - 24 Gustafsson 2016, 245.
 - 25 According to Jernudd (2012, 21), the Free Church movement in particular attracted younger working-class women.
 - 26 Gustafsson 2016, 244–5.
 - 27 For more on N. P. Nilsson, see Idestam-Almqvist 1959, 156–60.
 - 28 National Archives of Sweden (Riksarkivet), digitized census records 1910 (available to registered users of the National Archives' 'Digital Research Room'), <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/folkkrakningar>, accessed 22 May 2019.
 - 29 Five additional individuals used the word for 'cinema' in the descriptions of their professions in 1910—two female pianists, one female cashier, one male conductor and one male janitor.
 - 30 Jernudd 2012, 23; Berglund 1992, 38. Cinema owners whose educational background or managerial status allowed this probably used other titles ('managing director', 'engineer', 'architect') than 'cinema owner', which in 1910 had a lower status than these more established titles, being so recent.
 - 31 Fuller-Seeley & Ward Mahar 2013.
 - 32 Information about the digitization project is available (in Swedish) at <https://riksarkivet.se/swecens>, accessed 22 May 2019.
 - 33 *Filmbladet* was published between 1915 and 1924; 'Film- och Biogubbar XXIV: Fröken Wilhelmina Larsson' 1918, 37.
 - 34 Although, as already noted, Anna Hofman-Uddgren transitioned from organizing film programmes to directing films.

- 35 Berglund 1992, 26–7. The spelling ‘Gooes’ will be used in this chapter based on the spelling used in the Swedish census records, although the spelling ‘Goes’ is sometimes found in both contemporary publications and film historical references.
- 36 *Filmbladet* 4/3 (1918), 37–8.
- 37 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 14.
- 38 *Filmbladet* 4/3 (1918), 37.
- 39 The first woman to enlist as member in the register was Miss Alma Markusson, another Stockholm-based cinema owner (membership number 24) in November 1918, while Larsson-Acrel appears to have been the second woman to join (membership number 55); Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1920, 26.
- 40 Acrel quoted in ‘Kort intervju med 20-årsjubilerande biografägarrinna’ 1934, 4.
- 41 Public records copied by Waltå support this claim. In particular there appears to have been a major refurbishment in 1922 (SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 14); Acrel in *Biografägaren* 9/12, 25 August 1934, 4.
- 42 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 14.
- 43 Acrel in *Biografägaren* 12, 25 August 1934, 4; *Filmbladet* 4/3 (1918), 38; Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1920, 26. The Swedish release title of *Kvinnans hygien* is important for the discussion here, and is therefore used throughout.
- 44 *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 21 January 1924, 4. The emphasis on reproduction by ‘healthy capable citizens’ suggests that the film was inspired at least in part by eugenics, which also fits with the original German title *Hygiene der Ehe* which could be translated as ‘marital hygiene’ or ‘the hygiene of marriage’.
- 45 Björklund 2012, 67. The title chosen for Swedish distribution, *Kvinnans hygien* (‘Female hygiene’ or ‘Women’s hygiene’), might be connected with the stated intention to screen the film for women only.
- 46 Björklund 2012, 66–8.
- 47 *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 21 January 1924, 4.
- 48 Apart from the information provided in the 1918 *Filmbladet* article, Acrel appears in the records of the Swedish Cinema Owners’ Association and the local Stockholm Cinema Owners’ Association (*Stockholms Biografägareförening*), which was taken over by the national organization in 1920, and is listed as owner and manager of the Bostock in the registers of Swedish cinema owners published by the Association of Cinema Owners in 1930, 1936, 1939, and 1942. Additional information has been found in the Waltå collection; however, I have not been able to check the veracity of all of the press citations and archival records Waltå refers to.
- 49 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 14. Acrel also appears to have returned to cinema management in the 1950s, despite having sold the Bostock in 1945: she is listed as running the Atlas cinema in the early 1950s, and she seems to have taken over the Artist cinema from another woman, Svea Zetterström, in 1957, which she then sold in 1958.
- 50 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 14, press cuttings.

- 51 Berglund 2012, 288.
- 52 Examples include the title of *Filmbladet's* series profiling people in the industry, 'Film och biogubbar', which translates as 'Film and cinema lads', and frequent references in the press and in professional organisations to 'biografmän' ('cinema men').
- 53 In the early 1920s the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association had around 200 members. In *Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1920*, 95 the Association estimated the total number of cinemas in Sweden (run by members and non-members) to be 703.
- 54 A survey of the membership records for 1915 to 1931 is necessarily inconclusive, given varying legibility and the inconsistent use of gender-specific titles—Fröken (Miss), Fru (Mrs), Herr (Mr).
- 55 Jernudd 2012 & 2007; Nordström & Östvall 2002; Vesterlund 2006; and the pioneering efforts of Waldekranz 1969. Vesterlund 2006, 69 does mention cinema's potential as a new public arena for women as a relevant area of research, but does not apply a gender perspective in his discussion of early screenings in Gävle.
- 56 *Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1930*; *Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1936 & 1942*.
- 57 For the below-the-line concept and gender, see Banks 2009, 87–98.
- 58 Hill 2016, 5. Rather than labelling women as below-the-line workers, Hill (*ibid.* 9) writes of 'movie workers', a term which may include roles that fit neither below nor above the line.
- 59 One of the board members commented that it would be difficult to find a 'qualified' assistant for the proposed salary; Svenska Filminstitutet (Swedish Film Institute) (SFI) Stockholm, *Sveriges Biografägareförbunds arkiv* (Archive of the Swedish Cinema Owners' Association), Board minutes, 7 December 1918 & 25 January 1919; SFI, *Sveriges Biografägareförbunds arkiv*, Board minutes, 9 January 1920.
- 60 Lant 2006, 548–9.
- 61 Hill 2016, 6.
- 62 *Ibid.* 13–14.
- 63 Gillis et al. 2004, 1.
- 64 Kungliga statistiska centralbyrån 1919, 47; Kungliga statistiska centralbyrån 1927, 61.
- 65 *Ibid.* 68–9, though the increase from 1910 to 1920 was probably somewhat exaggerated due to the methods used in 1910, which excluded some types of female work that were later included; Statistiska centralbyrån 1938, 70.
- 66 Wiman 1912, 9.
- 67 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 20; Höglund 1951, 64; Berglund 2012, 75–6. They opted for different spellings of the family name when they married, her with 'V', his with 'W'.
- 68 *Filmbladet* 3 (1917), 13; Berg 1916, 91–2 & 96. A curious contribution, being the only text by a man in all the years it was published, and relating to women's interests only insofar as it mentions that film provides its audiences with new ideas about interior design and fashion.

- 69 'Film- och biogubbar XV' 1916, 149–50; Sveriges biografägareförbund 1920, 80.
- 70 *Filmbladet* 10 (1916), 149, where Åman explained that the reason they moved to Eskilstuna was that it was one of the few towns in Sweden that did not yet have a cinema.
- 71 Gustafsson 2016, 245; Jernudd 2012, 23; 'Film- och biogubbar XV' 1916, 149.
- 72 Lant 2006, 579.
- 73 'Film- och biogubbar XV' 1916, 149.
- 74 *Ibid.* 150.
- 75 Lant 2006, 579.
- 76 'Film- och biogubbar XXXXIV & XXXXV' 1919, 356–7.
- 77 *Ibid.* 356.
- 78 SFI, Olle Waltås samling, vol. 15.
- 79 The archival records provide fascinating insights into the gendered roles among Swedish cinema employees in the 1930s and 1940s. Employee lists show the work was divided between male projectionists and attendants/caretakers and female cashiers/box office assistants and cleaners. There are numerous copies of letters of recommendation, almost all for female box office employees who are praised for their work, whereas male employees are mainly documented in correspondence as projectionists who were fired or received warnings for unreliability and drunkenness—the drinking in the projectionist's booth that Selma Åman described in 1916 appears to have become a well-established tradition by the 1940s.
- 80 Sveriges biografägareförbund 1920, 27. K. Hjalmar Lundblad studied at Tekniska Skolan in Stockholm, but the article does not specify which subjects or to what level.
- 81 *Filmbladet* 4/3 (1918), 38.
- 82 'Film- och biogubbar XV', *Filmbladet* 10 (1916), 149–50.
- 83 *Filmbladet* 4/3 (1918), 37.
- 84 See Christopher Natzén elsewhere in this volume.
- 85 Advert in *Dagens Nyheter*, 6 December 1910, 12.
- 86 Sveriges Biografägareförbund 1920, 60.
- 87 Gustafsson 2016, 245.
- 88 Lant 2006, 561, 580.
- 89 Fuller-Seeley & Ward Mahar 2013.
- 90 Jernudd 2012, 23; Olsson 2013.

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