

Authenticity on the silver screen The making of three Gustavian silent films

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Abstract: The three silent films *Gustaf III och Bellman* (1908), *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* and *Två konungar* (1925) are illuminating examples of how the Gustavian period was reinvented, negotiated and visualized at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the article, object-based and visual analysis of the films, together with reception studies, are used to explore the production of period film and the strategies film directors developed in order to mediate a feeling of authenticity on screen. These strategies, based on a performative approach to authenticity, shared a number of similarities with professional art-historical practice at the turn of the twentieth century. The three case studies reveal not only how the Gustavian period was staged, but also the overlapping professional structures where filmmakers relied on specialists in the organization of material things, for example museum curators and art historians. Through their authority as experts they were able to help authenticate film productions and facilitate access for the film crew to historic sites. Likewise, the production of period films helped shape public history and influenced the management of heritage sites and museums, initiating reconstruction projects, for example.

Keywords: Swedish silent film, period film, art history, Gustavian, Gustaf III, Carl Michael Bellman, Erik Dahlberg, John W Brunius, Elis Ellis, Gösta Ekman

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The production of period film was part of an active heritage process to revive Swedish history in the early part of the twentieth century. This process was not one-way or top-down and meaning making happened in the meeting of different actors, including academics, artists, film audiences, museum curators, scenographers and others. In total there were about ten period films portraying Swedish history from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century made between 1908 and 1929 – the year when sound was introduced in Swedish cinema production.¹ Three of these films focused on the Gustavian period: *Gustaf III och Bellman* (1908), *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* and *Två konungar* (1925). The storylines were a mix of recorded historical events and fiction, focusing on King Gustav III and poet-musician Carl Michael Bellman. Although lacking sound, silent films were far from silent when screened; on the contrary, in all three films music and dance inspired by Bellman's work play a vital role. The films were shot at locations situated in, or very close to, Stockholm that had a direct historical link to the late eighteenth century, for example the Royal Palace, Drottningholm and Haga. At some of these sites film production influenced management, initiating reconstruction projects, for example. In turn, museum curators and art historians helped authenticate film productions through their authority as experts.

The aim of this article is to investigate how the Gustavian period was reinvented, negotiated and visualized in three period films made at the beginning of the twentieth century. Further, the analysis seeks to identify some of the main strategies film directors used in order to mediate a feeling of authenticity on screen. The article begins by exploring the concept and prominence given to authenticity, followed by an overview of the production of silent film in Sweden and the genre of period film. Next, each film is described – the production, directors, actors, screening and reception. All three films are then jointly analysed in relation to how costume, location and casting were used in order to create a feeling of authenticity.

In agreement with Pierre Sorlin, who stated that period film primarily tells us something about when it was made, rather than about the past, this article is not dedicated to analysing or debating historical (in)accuracy, but rather it explores *how* authenticity was negotiated and transmitted to a film audience.² This perspective draws on current research within heritage studies, which understand authen-

¹ The approximate number is based on a review of Svensk Filmdatabas (www.svenskfilmdatabas.se, accessed 1 March 2019) and the record made by Sven G. Winquist, *Svenska stumfilmer 1896–1931 och deras regissörer: En förteckning* (Stockholm, 1967). Examples of films other than the «Gustavian silent films»: *Regina von Emmeritz och Konung Gustaf II Adolf* (1910), *Carl XII:s kurr* (1924), *Karl XII* (1925), *Erik XIV* (1928) and *Gustaf Wasa* (1928).

² Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford, 1980) p. ix.

ticity as «dynamic, performative, culturally and historically contingent», a «tool that can be strategically configured and deployed according to the task at hand».³ By identifying and analysing the strategies used to stage authenticity in period film we may learn more about the different uses of history and the collaborations between academia, museums, the Royal Court and the film industry – collaborations that have continued to this day.

Films that are set in a particular historical period can be divided into *historical films*, referring to a specific historical event, or *costume films*, which are more fictional in their character.⁴ A *biographical film (biopic)* tells the story of the life of a real person, often a monarch or an artist. However, as the films in this study show, the distinction is not always clear-cut; in order to avoid placing a film into an inadequate category, I have chosen to use the term *period film*. This term also indicates that the details that need to be assembled include, but are not confined to, costume.⁵ To analyse the films I use two approaches: firstly, an object-based and visual analysis of the arrangement, manipulation and organization of objects with the aim of finding out how the director, critics and the audience related to the concept of authenticity and how conventions from pre-existing forms entered into the audience's experience of film. Secondly, reception studies provide the tools that help us understand how these films were received, but also how they are the results of interaction with critics and audiences. Further, reception studies help establish the relationships between filmic elements, practices associated with film production, heritage sites, museum exhibitions, academia and the film audience.⁶ A review of film criticism, letters from the general public, responses from actors and film directors, all published in daily newspapers and film journals, illuminates not only the contemporary critical standards and tastes but also ideologies of society, specifically concerning authenticity, public history and nationalism. The imagery from the films was mediated in the press, daily newspapers and film journals, where stills, reviews and interviews were regularly published. Other sources include studio-generated material such as publicity stills and costume drawings. The archival material is situated in Svensk Filmdatabas kept by the Swedish Film

³ Helen Silverman, «Heritage and Authenticity», in Emma Waterton & Steve Watson (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2015), p. 69. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293565.0010>.

⁴ Belén Vidal, *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic* (Amsterdam 2012), p. 10.

⁵ Anette Kuhn, Anette & Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford 2012) «costume drama (period film)». <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199587261.001.0001>.

⁶ Barbara Klinger, «Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies», *Screen*, 38:2 (1997) p. 108. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>.

Institute, the Swedish Media Database, Stockholmskällan and the database of digitized Swedish daily newspapers at the National Library of Sweden.⁷

The relation between history and film is a fascinating topic, and there are a number of studies covering different aspects of this relationship, e.g. Kathryn Anne Morey's *Bringing History to Life through Film: The Art of Cinematic Storytelling* (2014) and Robert Rosenstone's *History on Film/Film on History* (2006). Research has focused on documentary films and their value as historical sources.⁸ The professor of film studies Tommy Gustafsson, on the other hand, argues that all films, including feature films, can be used as source material, emphasizing how films give the historian access to the period when they were produced, if the scholar is able to analyse them in relation to the contemporary social and medial contexts.⁹ Belén Vidal, researcher in film studies, has claimed that «the genre is inflected by its own historicity, that is, its often oblique relationship with the present through the conventions that structure such a relationship at any given point in time.»¹⁰ The possibility of scrutinizing these temporally embedded conventions makes the production of early period films particularly interesting to study from the perspective of critical heritage studies, a field that aims to critically examine the construction and use of heritage. However, this exploration of the relationship between material culture, heritage practice and media is inevitably multidisciplinary in its character, including fields such as art history, film studies and cultural-historical media research.¹¹ Since the 1980s, researchers have explored the inherent intermediality of early cinema; still we know little of the shared history and professional exchange in the fields of art history, museums and silent film production. If we focus on the Gustavian period, it was mediated by different professions in different modes of representation such as textbooks, journals, photographs, exhibition spaces, furniture and historically informed performances such as period films. This happened while the boundaries of the art historian and museum profes-

⁷ *Gustaf III och Bellman* (1908) is available online (<https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/28980>), *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* and *Två konungar* (1925) are both available via Svensk Medie Databas (SMDB, <https://smdb.kb.se>).

⁸ Example: David Ludvigsson, *The Historian-Filmmaker's Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (Uppsala 2003), a situation commented on in Pelle Snickars & Cecilia Trenter, *Det förflyttna som film och vice versa: om medierande historiebruk* (Lund, 2004) p. 18.

⁹ Tommy Gustafsson, «Filmen som historisk källa – historiografi, pluralism och Representativitet», *Historisk Tidskrift*, 126:3 (2006): 471–90.

¹⁰ Vidal 2012, p.10.

¹¹ E.g. Solveig Jülich, Patrik Lundell, Pelle Snickars et al., *Mediernas Kulturhistoria*, vol. 8 (Stockholm, 2008), Pelle Snickars & Cecilia Trenter 2004.

sion were being established and these early professionals moved back and forth between, for example, museum practice, academia, furniture production and the auction houses.

The volume *Det förflutna som film och vice versa: Om medierande historiebruk* (2004), edited by Pelle Snickars and Cecilia Trenter, provides an excellent survey of history and film production, but it overlooks the genre investigated in this article – early period films produced in Sweden. So far, this topic has received surprisingly little academic interest from art historians and heritage scholars, although it is unlikely that anyone would deny their impact on our understanding of the past. Naturally, there are exceptions, for example *Karl XII* (1925), which has been the topic of several articles focusing on patriotism and masculinity that are principal themes in the film.¹² There is also a recent study of the reception of silent film in Sweden by Tommy Gustafsson (2016), which studies «The Formation of a Cinema Audience in Sweden, 1915–1929», thereby including the audience’s own thoughts on and reactions to the new medium. Still, studies that specifically deal with the genre of period film tend to focus on international films produced during a later period, e.g. Mats Jönsson’s (2004) dissertation *Film och historia: Historisk Hollywood-film 1960–2000* and Ulf Zander’s *Clio på bio* (2006). I would argue that early period films deserve further research, not least because of their ability to persuade and engross the audience, and, as David Lowenthal states, «plunge us into a vivid past – or bring that past directly into the present – seemingly without mediation».¹³ This article aims to make this mediation – which always takes place – visible.

Performative authenticity – organizing the symbolic carriers of period

Around the start of the twentieth century, museum professionals were faced with similar challenges to the film directors when creating museum displays. Heritage sites and museums have a performative, even theatrical quality, and the space and the narrative design of the displays invited «visitors to respond in ways not dissimilar to those of a theatre audience.»¹⁴ In order to create a perception of

¹² E.g. Tommy Gustafsson, «Nationell ära och manlighet i Karl XII (1925) – en historisk analys». *Scandia*, 71:1 (2005) pp. 46–76; Tommy Gustafsson, «An Enduring History Lesson: National Honour and Hegemonic Masculinity in the Early Swedish Blockbuster Karl XII», in Mats Jönsson & Patrik Lundell (ed.) *Media and Monarchy in Sweden* (Göteborg, 2009) pp. 69–82; Erik Tängerstad, *Fredrik den store och Karl XII som stumfilmshjältar: Produktion och reception av filmerna Fridericus Rex och Karl XII* (Florens, 1997).

¹³ Lowenthal, David, *The Past is a Foreign Country: Revisited* (Cambridge, 2015) p. 367.

¹⁴ Anthony Jackson, & Jenny Kidd, *Performing Heritage: Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation* (New York; Manchester, 2011), p. 2.

non-mediation in these spaces, the curators needed to create «a stage» that was conceived as authentic. Artefacts and heritage sites, original or recreated, formed a material stage that helped provide rich and vivid impressions, as well as matching the preconceptions and expectations of the audience.¹⁵ The period room, a popular mode of display around the turn of the century, reflected the contemporary appreciation and impact of the concept of *Zeitgeist*, the spirit associated with the portrayed period.¹⁶ The concerns raised against the period room, however, implied that it was the result of a social construction that had little to do with reality, an *iconic* authenticity.¹⁷ This, according to the critics, turned period rooms into expressions of a *symbolic* authenticity, which resulted in stereotypical representations of the past – a critique, which remind us of the more general critique against period film. Faced with accusations of inauthenticity, that they were turning kings into Buffalo Bill, innovative directors developed collaborations between academia, museums, the Royal Court, the opera and the theatre.¹⁸ In his text *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures* (1934), the art historian Erwin Panofsky discusses the physical reality of film and the inevitable need for the arrangement, manipulation and organization of objects.

«... the movies organize material things and persons, not a neutral medium, into a composition that receives its style, and may even become fantastic or pretervoluntarily symbolic, not so much by an interpretation in the artist's mind as by the actual manipulation of physical objects and recording machinery. The medium of the movies is physical reality as such: the physical reality of eighteenth-century Versailles – no matter whether it be the original or a Hollywood facsimile indistinguishable therefrom for all aesthetic intents and purposes [...] They can be arranged in all sorts of ways

¹⁵ Cornelius Holtorf, «The Time Travellers' Tools of the Trade: Some Trends at Lejre», *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, 7–8 (2014): 782–797, p. 793. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2013.818568>.

¹⁶ The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770–1831) position was that each historical period has a typical style, and that style is an expression of the intellectual and artistic atmosphere of a particular epoch, referred to as the *Zeitgeist*. Most art historians, presenting their own solutions to the problem of style, have refuted the Hegelian idea of an evolution of styles and essentialism. Nevertheless, his idea has «a certain force and logic», which have been attractive to art historians Michael Hatt & Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester, 2006), p. 25.

¹⁷ Ning Wang, «Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience», *Annals of Tourism Research* 26:2 (1999): 349–370, p. 356. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(98\)00103-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(98)00103-0).

¹⁸ E.g. «Att kapten Dunér efter att ha sett 'Två konungar' kommit till den uppfattningen att Gustav Vasa i mina händer kunde komma att bli en 'Buffalo Bill' må stå för hans räkning.» Elis Ellis, «Ang Gustav Vasa filmen», *Svenska Dagbladet*, 26 November 1925.

(‘arrangement’ comprising, of course, such things as make-up, lighting, and camera work), but there is no running away from them.»¹⁹

Panofsky establishes that material things and persons become the symbolic carriers of period, and when making a period film, these objects need to be organized in ways that create a style and symbolism that match the narrative and the period portrayed. Jan von Bonsdorff describes how the correct *microhistorical markers* help the narrative seem authentic, and knowing which markers to use can be the competence of the art historian. However, how to use them effectively is the task of the film director.²⁰ Examples of markers in the films included wigs and make-up, but also well-known songs by Bellman. The strategies are primarily based on what can be categorized as *performative authenticity*, which is an authenticity striving towards an *indexical* authenticity, «the real thing».²¹ However, at the same time it acknowledges that authenticity is a process and that the feeling of authenticity can be produced. This includes the idea that authenticity is not necessarily tied to a material authenticity, and that the feeling of authenticity also depends on expectations and quality of execution. In his review of *Royal Affairs in Versailles* (*Si Versailles m'était conté*, 1954) Roland Barthes questioned the poor use of the historical site, the sloppy postures, and the costumes and wigs, which were not only false, but dull, which he considered even worse. Why not make them «superbly false, showing a gorgeous disdain for any verity»?²² In other words, bad interpretations of the past he considered worse than a more relaxed artistic interpretation of the past, because the former feels neither authentic nor interesting. Regardless of what position you take, authenticity needs to be negotiated by both filmmakers and the audience.

Production of Swedish period films during the silent film era

The first film screenings in Sweden took place in 1896 in the three largest cities in Sweden. A year later the film entrepreneur Numa Peterson (1837–1902) present-

¹⁹ Erwin Panofsky, *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures*, 1934, reprinted in Angela Dalle Vacche (ed.), *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2003), p. 83.

²⁰ Jan von Bonsdorff, «Att skapa visuella mytopoetiska miljöer 'inte av denna värld' – några tankar om arkitekturen i filmtrilogin 'Sagan om Ringen'», *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 75:1 (2006), p. 72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233600500469727>.

²¹ Britta Timm Knudsen & Anne Marit Waade (eds.), *Re-investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions* (Bristol, 2010), p. 3.

²² Philips Watts & Dudley, Andrew, *Roland Barthes' cinema* (New York, NY, 2016), p. 119.

ed a «kinematograf» (cinema) during the 1897 *General Art and Industry Exhibition* in Stockholm. The press described it as an «ultramodern invention».²³ The screenings were housed next to the display of the newly invented X-ray machine in one of the structures in *Old Stockholm*, a collection of reconstructed sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings.²⁴ Even though the placing of the kinematograf might have been a coincidence, it is possible that it discloses something about the close connection between historical re-enactment, reconstructions and the new medium of film. More permanent cinemas were established in the 1910s and at first they mainly attracted the working class. Film production would become increasingly organized and sophisticated.²⁵ In 1920, 21 feature films were made in Sweden – the number of both films and producers would be pared down after that.²⁶ The «invisible» staff, the film crew, grew in number as artistic ambitions increased, and in addition to people who were part of the industry, experts were brought in to improve specific features of the films. Occasionally these experts were art historians or historians. «Star directors» and well-known actors making a large number of films attracted the audiences. However, it was also important that distribution and marketing worked, as cinemas large and small opened across the country.

The screening of a silent film was a multimedia performance that was far from silent. The audience was able to follow the story in written text in the programme and listen to music, sound effects and in some cases spoken word accompanying the film, hopefully drowning out the sound of the film projector.²⁷ It was only during the last years of the 1920s that pre-recorded sound was introduced in Swedish cinemas, and the first Swedish sound film was produced in 1929.²⁸

Period film was a marginal feature of early film production in Sweden. Partly because such films were costly to produce and difficult to export, since they primarily appealed to a Swedish audience, it was not until the 1920s that the genre had its real breakthrough. In the article «Voices from the Past – Recent Nordic Historical Films», Gunnar Iversen explains the small number of historical films produced in the past, referring to the small Nordic market and the big budgets needed to

²³ Anon., «Stockholmsutställningen – Gamla Stockholm», *Stockholmstidningen*, 13 February 1897.

²⁴ Andreas Hasselgren, «Utställningen i Stockholm 1897 – allmänna konst & industriutställningen» (Stockholm, 1897), pp. 563–566.

²⁵ Carina Sjöholm, *Gå på bio: Rum för drömmar i folkhemmets Sverige* (Eslöv, 2003), p. 39

²⁶ Jan Reinholds, *Filmindustri 1900–1975: Tekniska genombrott och produktion av fotografiska skådespel* (Lerum, 1987), p. 37.

²⁷ Reinholds 1987, p. 14.

²⁸ Sound as an authentic expression of a lived reality is discussed in Christopher Natzen's thesis *The Coming of Sound Film in Sweden 1928–1932: New and Old Technologies* (Stockholm, 2010).

create scenography and costume.²⁹ The first two period films portraying Swedish history from 1500–1800 were *Gustaf III och Bellman* (1908) and *Regina von Emeritz och Konung Gustaf II Adolf* (1910). However, it was not until around 1920 that older periods became more popular, portraying life from the Stone Age, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In 1919, museums such as Statens Historiska Museum and Nationalmuseum started to produce their own films, having realized the educational value of the medium.³⁰

Apart from educating people about the past, period films also became popular representations of the past that helped shape national identity in relation to history, often concentrating on watershed moments of a country's past.³¹ One might argue that period films, history and stars being the drawing cards in a very real sense helped support the process of «nationing» and an *imagined community*.³² This process was also supported by other popular film genres, for example films that commented on Sweden's ongoing transformation from a rural nation to a modern urban country or the relations of the ethnic majority to minorities in Swedish society.³³

The decade after the First World War became an important era for the production of period film. The film *Carl XII:s kurir* (1924) was marketed as Sweden's first *historical film* and it belonged to a genre that would become increasingly popular and was referred to as *patriotic history film*. These films were generally associated with the critique of the disarmament of the Swedish military and the Landstorm movement, which promoted military investment and enrolment for service in the armed forces. The film *Karl XII* (1925) was openly accused of being a blunt propaganda film, instigated by Swedish military officers. The film includes gigantic battle scenes and the two parts of the film amount to five hours and twelve minutes. An abbreviated version (1933), with added sound, was shown for many

²⁹ Gunnar Iversen, «Voices from the Past – Recent Nordic Historical Films», in Tommy Gustafsson, & Pietari Kääpä (ed.) *Nordic Genre Film: Small Nation Film Cultures in the Global Marketplace* (Edinburgh, 2015), p. 48.

³⁰ Discussed in Britta Zetterström Geschwind's dissertation *Publika museirum: Materialiseringar av demokratiska ideal på Statens historiska museum 1943–2013*, Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies, Stockholm University (Stockholm, 2017). Examples of films: *Stenåldersmannen* (1919) and *En vikingafilm* (1922).

³¹ Ulf Zander, *Clio på bio: Om amerikansk film, historia och identitet* (Lund, 2006), pp. 23–27.

³² Benedict Anderson, 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, 2006).

³³ See e.g. Ebba Filippa Segerberg's dissertation, *Nostalgia, narrative, and modernity in Swedish silent cinema*, University of California (Berkeley, Calif., 1999). These categories include films such as *Stockholmsfrestelser* (1911), *Trädgårdsmästaren* (1912), *I minnenas band* (1916).

years in Swedish schools. The director of *Karl XII*, the playwright and actor John W. Brunius (1884–1937), created several *patriotic history films* in smaller production companies and consortiums in the 1920s. One of these was AB Historisk Film backed by Herman Rasch (1879–1957), a wealthy engineer with a strong interest in educating the Swedish people about their glorious history. Rasch would become a decisive factor in the existence of the genre.³⁴ In addition to *Karl XII*, Brunius directed *Fänrik Ståls sägner* (1926) and *Gustaf Wasa* (1928), all of them costly productions – *Karl XII* has been labelled the most expensive Swedish film from the first half of the twentieth century.³⁵

The films about the Gustavian period are generally romanticized visions of a life at court and focus on nationalistic and royalist sentiments, based on an admiration for Gustav III. The life they portray seems far removed from the masculine patriotism in *Karl XII*.³⁶ However, the image of Gustav III is not static and it has on occasion included similar elements. The 1922 commemoration of Gustav III's coup d'état on 22 August 1772 focused on his role as warrior king and autocrat. Still, this role never gained any wider recognition with the general public or on the screen. Flags, anthems or processions have actually been the exception when it comes to Gustav III; rather he has been commemorated as a patron of the arts, much thanks to memorialization in cultural institutions such as museums, theatres or opera houses.³⁷ By the 1920s the Gustavian period had come to represent what is commonly described as a golden age of art and design in Sweden and was closely linked to King Gustav III and his initiatives concerning art, literature and theatre, popularly described as – the *shimmer* that characterized Gustav's days. The film *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* ends with a quotation from Esaias Tegnér's (1782–1846) poem «Sång, den 5 April 1836». ³⁸ This poem not only portrays the ephemeral shimmer that characterized the days of «the Enchanting King», it also describes changes in the culture and how foreign influences were translated into a Swedish context. Celebrating this *shimmer* is often also a way of commemorating the King himself. Through this collective heritage process, to

³⁴ Leif Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige: En historia i tio kapitel* (Höganäs, 1991), p.114.

³⁵ Reinholds 1987, p. 58.

³⁶ The masculinity portrayed in *Karl XII* is discussed in Tommy Gustafsson, «An Enduring History Lesson», in Mats Jönsson & Patrik Lundell (eds.), *Media and Monarchy in Sweden* (Göteborg, 2009), pp. 69–81.

³⁷ Hedvig Mårdh, *A Century of Swedish Gustavian Style: Art History, Cultural Heritage and Neoclassical Revivals from the 1890s to the 1990s*, Univ. Diss. (Uppsala, 2017), p. 342.

³⁸ «Der låg ett skimmer öfver Gustafs dagar». Esaias Tegnér's poem «Sång, den 5 April 1836». Esaias Tegnér, *Samlade skrifter: Ny kritisk upplaga, kronologiskt ordnad 8* (Stockholm, 1923), p. 9.

which period films contributed, the Gustavian period constituted «an overt but not vulgar symbol of nation and power connected to notions of good taste and even moral superiority.»³⁹ This popular and effective symbol still helps confirm national ideals and essentialisms.

The first Gustavian film – Gustaf III och Bellman (1908)

The director and playwright Erik Dahlberg (1880–1950), a pioneer in Swedish film, owned one of the two film cameras in Stockholm and was employed as the manager of two cinemas in Stockholm, *Apollo* and *Centralbiografen (Nya London)*.⁴⁰ In 1908 Dahlberg made the films *Gustaf III och Bellman* and *Kolingen: vördsamt tillägnad mänskligheten*, which was the first film in a popular series about the character «Kolingen», set in Stockholm. The film *Gustaf III och Bellman*, unravelling the conspiracy to murder King Gustav III, is unfortunately not preserved in its entirety. It was among the most technically advanced films that had been made in Sweden at the time and most likely the first film about the Gustavian period. Despite Dahlberg's prominent role in Swedish film, we know little about the circumstances concerning the production and distribution of the film – and as far as we know it was never screened. Leif Furhammar suggests that this was because Charles Magnusson at the production company Svensk Bio bought the film and never distributed it to avoid competition.⁴¹ Despite the unclear circumstances concerning an actual screening, a programme describing the film and consisting of 14 pages was published by Andrén och Holm in 1909. The title of the programme is *Gustaf III och Bellman. Historiskt skådespel – Svensk originalfilm*.

The actors came from the opera and theatres in Stockholm. The movements, clothes and the setup of scenes are theatrical in character, a common characteristic in early film production.⁴² In fact, the film industry was criticized for competing with the theatres, stealing both their audiences and their actors. In the final scene the director Dahlgren used a staged set of the old Opera House that looks like a

³⁹ Mårdh 2017, p. 362.

⁴⁰ Apollo's first manager was Albin Roosval (1860–1943), brother of the art historian Johnny Roosval. He was a photographer with a keen interest in the medium, editor of *Fotografisk tidskrift* and he wrote books about architecture, interior design and Swedish kings and the court. Moreover, he edited and wrote in numerous journals about photography, theatre, art and was responsible for surveys such as the series *Svenska slott och herresäten* (Castles and Manor Houses in Sweden). He started the production company *Apollo*.

⁴¹ Furhammar 1991, p. 33.

⁴² Bengt Idestam-Almqvist, *Svensk film före Gösta Berling* (Stockholm, 1974), p. 30.



Fig. 1: Film still from the last scene in the film Gustaf III och Bellman (1908), where the king is murdered at the masked ball at the opera. The scenography is created by what looks like the backdrop used at a theatre, while the movements and clothes also have a theatrical feel to them. Film still: © Stockholmskällan. Reproduced with permission.

theatre backdrop. However, in the rest of the film Dahlberg used «real spaces», including historic sites associated with the Gustavian period, such as Haga, Gröna Lund and Hufvudsta Gård.

The script was inspired by actual historical events and includes historical persons related to the murder of the king in 1792, although it also incorporates a mix of fictive characters from well-known Bellman-related narratives. The king is portrayed as a benevolent regent who cared for his subjects and who could move freely in the capital together with his seconds. The film includes several of the catchphrases and scenes that would become more or less obligatory in films about Gustav III – for example the drinking scenes with Bellman, the masked ball and dance scenes. Most likely the intention was to accompany the screening of the film with music written by Bellman. The professor of literature Johan Stenström has described the varying functions of mediations of Bellman in the 19th century, arguing that they helped support a specific masculine ideal, the idealizing of the

⁴³ Johan Stenström, *Bellman levde på 1800-talet* (Stockholm, 2009), p. 447.

eighteenth century and the formation of national identity.⁴³ The popularity of Bellman's songs and the fictive characters was expressed and further developed in the following century in plays and films such as *Gustaf III och Bellman* and *Två konungar*. Bellmansällskapet (The Bellman Society) was founded in 1919, and has continuously published his written work and music while expanding on the research into the poet's life.

En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott (1925)

En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott was produced by the company Nordstjärnan and commissioned by the Swedish Red Cross, which intended to use it for «Red Cross Week». The fundraising campaign was targeted at improving the training of nurses and the social efforts carried out by the Red Cross. Advertising in the daily press during Red Cross Week reveals that the film was shown as part of longer programmes prepared by local committees, which included films, singing, theatre performances, music and speeches. *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* premiered on 28 April to a select audience that included Princes Carl and Eugen, and Princesses Märtha and Astrid, board members of the Swedish Red Cross and journalists.⁴⁴ Starting on 10 May 1925, it was shown in 200 theatres during Red Cross Week. The film acted as a test-film for a never realized adaptation by Hjalmar Bergman of Carl Johan Almqvist's novel *Drottningens juvelsmycke*, which is set around the time of the murder of the King.⁴⁵ This film was never realized because of the competition from another ambitious period film, *Två konungar*, which was released the same year.⁴⁶ The film reappeared in cinemas in 1938, the year that the lead actor Gösta Ekman died, and was intended as a commemoration. The film was at this point marketed as Ekman's unfinished film about Gustav III.⁴⁷

Prince Carl, the chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, supported the production of the film and must have been decisive in arranging the location where the film was shot – the Royal Palace. The film includes scenes in the cabinet meeting room and a technically advanced tracking shot through Karl XI's gallery. The locations, along with the well-known faces on screen, were the main attractions of the film and this

⁴⁴ «-gen», «En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott», *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 April 1925.

⁴⁵ «Marquis», «Från Stockholms horisont (Brev till Sölvesborgs-Tidningen)», *Sölvesborgs-Posten*, 4 July 1925.

⁴⁶ Furhammar 1991, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Advertisement – *En afton hos Gustaf III*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 6 February 1938.



Fig. 2. In this photograph we see the setup of two cameras and camera operators on a dolly, a wheeled camera platform, in the Karl XI gallery in the Royal Palace in Stockholm. It was used in the film *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* (1925) to create a wonderful tracking shot where the camera follows Gustaf III as he walks through the gallery. (Photo: Karl Wallberg, Svenska Filminstitutets bibliotek. Reproduced with permission.)

is underscored in reviews and marketing.⁴⁸ The different sections of the film show a cour (a weekly reception) at court in 1772. Gustav III and his court are gathered in the state apartments, watching music and dance performances, playing cards, and in parts of the film the King is dressed up in a spectacular theatre costume.

The director John W. Brunius collaborated on the film with the cameraman Hugo Edlund (1883–1953). They were both experienced filmmakers and this was not their first historical film. Five years earlier they made the well-received film *Gyurkovicsarna*. In 1925 they worked together on the film *Karl XII*, and in 1928 yet another film about a king, *Gustav Wasa* produced by AB Historisk Film. Brunius was married to the actress and theatre director Pauline Brunius (1881–1954).

⁴⁸ «Filmen bjuder bl.a. på den sensationen, att verkligen vara inspelad i kungaborgen.» Anon., «Dal och Värmland», *Provinstidningen Dalsland*, 8 May 1925, «Själva ramen kring det hela var ju också den mest idealiska man gärna kan tänka sig – det var verkliga slottsgemak, där scenerna utspelades.» «Huglek», «Tjusarkungens hov på Röda kvarn.» *Aftonbladet*, 29 May 1925.

For six years (1926–32) the couple ran the privately-owned theatre Oscarsteatern together with Gösta Ekman, the actor who portrayed Gustav III in the film. In early 1925, celebrating Svenska Teatern's fiftieth anniversary, Ekman and Pauline Brunius performed together in the comedy *Dalin och drottningen* set in the court of Gustaf III's mother Lovisa Ulrika. The play was written by the critic and writer, and brother of John W. Brunius, August Brunius (1879–1926). In this way, Brunius and Ekman were able to explore various aspects of the eighteenth century both on stage and on screen in 1925.

Apart from Ekman, the film's cast included celebrated actors such as Arthur Cederborgh (1885–1961), who would become one of the most popular supporting characters in Swedish film, and Renée Björling (1898–1975), who starred in many period dramas, for example *Två konungar*, a film that the dancer Elly Holmberg (1903–2001) also participated in. Apart from these well-established actors, a large number of amateurs participated in the film. Most of them were connected to the court and/or the upper class of Stockholm. This was believed to increase the interest in the film and thus contributed to the financial support for the Red Cross.⁴⁹

Två konungar:

a romantic portrayal of the days of Gustaf III and Bellman (1925)

The director, scriptwriter and actor Elis Ellis (1879–1956) was active in the film industry from 1916 to 1932. He worked together with the renowned cameramen Julius Jaenzon (1885–1961) and Gustaf Boge (1891–1975). Ellis described *Två konungar* as a historical romance from the time of Gustaf III and Bellman. The script was an adaptation of a play written by Ernst Didingsson (1868–1931) that premiered in 1908 at Svenska Teatern, Stockholm. Ellis worked on the script together with Henning Ohlson, a writer and sailor. The film was generally well received, although several critics agreed that the film looked good, but the drama was poor. The critic «SFINX» argued that the presentation of the period, the beautiful and imposing scenes, made the audience forget flaws in the dramaturgy, focusing instead on the atmosphere of the period.⁵⁰ *Trelleborgstidningen* rec-

⁴⁹ «För övrigt medverkar ett stort antal vackra damer och herrar ur societeten. Man kan alltså våga ett antagande att filmen 'kommer att gå'. Anon. «Hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott.» *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 May 1925.

⁵⁰ «...Henning Ohlsson och Elis Ellis – ha i första hand lagt an på att få fram den riktiga miljön kring de båda huvudfigurerna och först sekundärt tänkt på att framställa deras tragiska öden [...] en mängd vackra och ståtliga tavlor, som komma åskådaren att glömma vad som brister i fråga om spänning och i stället låta honom ryckas med av filmens – och den skildrade epokens – stämningssvärden.» «SFINX», «Apropå», *Aftonbladet*, 19 September 1925.

commended the film to everyone who loved the history of their nation and particularly those who loved the Gustavian period.⁵¹ Ellis was referred to not only as a skilful director, but also a well-educated cultural historian. *Filmjournalen* stated in 1925 that Ellis was the equal of film director Brunius when it came to the ability to revive a past cultural period.⁵² However, Ellis did not have to know it all by himself, since he used the expertise of art historians and museum curators, all of them well acquainted with the Rococo and Gustavian period. The artist Allan Egnell (1884–1960), who specialized in historical motifs, worked as architect on this and several other period films. He was assisted by the theatre historian Agne Beijer (1888–1975), an expert on Drottningholm Palace Theatre, and the art historian Sixten Strömbom (1888–1983), who was in charge of the Royal Castles Collections at Nationalmuseum. Historical music from the eighteenth century, for example Bellman, Glück and Hayden, created the right ambience. Rudolf Sahlberg (1879–1949), an experienced and appreciated bandleader at the movie theatre Röda Kvarn, arranged the music, which was much appreciated. Almost all of the critics cited the music as what made the film work and helped move the story along.⁵³

On 8 November 1925 *Två konungar* screened to a select audience, including royalty: King Gustaf V, Princess Ingeborg and Princes Wilhelm, Eugene and Carl Johan.⁵⁴ Röda Kvarn was one of the main cinemas in Sweden, with 863 seats, a large orchestra and an elegant foyer filled with neo-Gustavian furniture, and for the premiere of *Två konungar* the staff at the cinema wore Gustavian-style period clothes. The middle and upper classes had first been reluctant to embrace the medium of film, but in the 1920s the more stylish cinemas competed with the opera and theatre.⁵⁵ Sweden's Royal Court had actively supported the production of the film, allowing access to specific locations and objects. Prince Wilhelm would become a devoted filmmaker, directing more than 20 films (1914–1949), appearing

⁵¹ «-n g z-», «Märklig svensk premiär på Victoria», *Trelleborgstidningen*, 26 November 1925.

⁵² Sven Stolpe, «Elis Ellis' Bellmanfilm – en förnäm och fullödig filmskapelse», *Filmjournalen*, 31–32, 15 November 1925, p. 508.

⁵³ E.g. in «-n g z-», «Märklig svensk premiär på Victoria», *Trelleborgstidningen*, 26 November 1925. The music in *Karl XII* and *Två konungar* is described in detail in Ann Kerstin Wal-lengren's dissertation *En Aflon på Röda Kvarn. Svensk stumfilm som musikdrama* (1998), pp. 200–207.

⁵⁴ Anon., «'Två konungar' på Röda kvarn», *Svenska Dagbladet*, 8 November 1925.

⁵⁵ Carina Sjöholm, *Gå på bio: Run för drömmar i folkhemmets Sverige* (Eslöv, 2003), p. 42–43. Jan Reinholds, *Filmindustri 1900–1975: Tekniska genombrott och produktion av fotografiska skådespel* (Lerum, 1987), p. 45.



Fig. 3. The costume drawing for the protagonist in *Två konungar*, Thure Hjelm (wrongly labelled Christer) includes specifications regarding colour and the design of the wig. Twenty-five of Sixten Strömbo's costume drawings have been preserved in the archives of Svenska Filminstitutet. Original in colour. Reproduced with permission from the Archives of Svenska Filminstitutet.

as speaker, actor and writer in numerous productions. *Två konungar* premiered to the general public on 9 November 1925 in 14 cinemas across Sweden.⁵⁶

Costume

Costume is one of the main features of a period film and has to be perceived as authentic in order to make the film work.⁵⁷ The three directors solved this in different ways and with varying success. Clothes and wigs could be borrowed from the wardrobes of theatres and the Royal Opera, which had the drawback that they were adapted for the stage and to be seen from a distance on a lit stage. This theatrical character of the costumes is most visible in *Gustaf III och Bellman*, since it is emphasized by the scenography and choreography that is adapted to a theatrical rather than filmic performance. The wigmaker and theatrical make-up artist Carl Magnus Lundh (1882–1938) was engaged at an early point in Swedish film production, and he was hired in the production of *Gustaf III och Bellman* in 1908.⁵⁸ Lundh would become one of the most popular make-up artists in Swedish film in the 1920s and 1930s. In *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* the costumes were taken from the Royal Opera. However, some of the extras brought their own clothes taken from the wardrobes of their ancestors – they were real aristocrats in authentic clothes! A closer inspection of the clothes reveals the mix of periods and origins, accentuating the slightly unfinished feeling of the whole production.

Två konungar was the only production with a budget for purpose-made costumes. The costumes were based on Sixten Strömbom's drawings.⁵⁹ Strömbom had written his thesis on one of the main portrait artists of the Gustavian period, Lorens Pasch Jr., and in 1925 he worked in the Swedish Portrait Archive, which he had helped initiate in 1915. The mission of the archive was to find, photograph and identify all existing portraits of Swedes from 1500 to 1850.⁶⁰ Strömbom would later write a number of publications where the findings in the archive were analysed, hoping to «obtain the 'true' and most authentic portrait of a historical figure».⁶¹ One of the main interests in forming a portrait archive sprang from the

⁵⁶ Svensk filmdatabas, «*Två konungar: Romantiserad skildring från Gustaf III:s och Bellmans dagar (1925)*», Retrieved 10 April 2019, from <http://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv>.

⁵⁷ Kuhn & Westwell 2012.

⁵⁸ Svensk filmdatabas, «Manne Lundh», Retrieved 10 April 2019, from <http://svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv>.

⁵⁹ The 25 drawings are kept in the archives of the Swedish Film Institute.

⁶⁰ Charlotta Krispinsson, *Historiska porträtt som kunskapskälla: Samlingar, arkiv och konsthistorieskrivning*, Univ. Diss. (Lund, 2016), p. 212.

⁶¹ Krispinsson 2016, p. 218.

idea that a person's inner being was rendered in a portrait; there was a link between appearance and people's character. If we study Strömbom's costume drawing, we see that each costume is intended for a specific role or type of character, for example «villain» or «police». For the named characters we see that, rather than directly copying a specific portrait of a historical person, Strömbom used his professional expertise to combine characteristics from several portraits in his drawings. The costumes were then adapted to fit the individual actor. The theatre historian Beijer oversaw the reconstructions of the theatre masks, which were copied from the eighteenth-century artist Louis Jean Desprez's (1743–1804) drawings. The shots at the open-air theatre and the murder scene at the opera both make good use of Beijer's expertise. The final scene is populated by imaginary and outlandish masquerade costumes, which make the simple black coats of the King and conspirators dramatically stand out.

Authentic locations

Film locations were always commented on in the press and shootings on site often attracted an audience, which generated press coverage. Moreover, finding the right location revealed the director's level of ambition, and most directors invested a lot of effort in location shoots – despite the fact that they were costlier and involved a number of technical difficulties. Finding the right location also became part of a deliberate strategy to create a sense of authenticity in the film. Shooting the scenes at historical sites, where the characters featured in the film had visited or lived, was referred to as «authentic shots» and «authentic palace interiors».⁶² All three films discussed in this article used such «authentic shots», inviting the spectator into real historical sites of the past; if stage sets in studios were used, they often resembled the period rooms found in museums.

Gaining access to historical sites often depended on the director's connections as well as the owners' interest in promoting the site. The royal palaces were generously opened to Brunius and Ellis in 1925, and I would argue that this should be seen as a deliberate strategy from the Royal Court, making these spaces known and more relevant to the public at a point in time when the monarchy needed to redefine itself. The films were made after a period of expanding democracy, where the King's position as a constitutional monarch was the consequence of the full emergence of parliamentary government. Supporting the production of popular silent films was part of the soft power available to the monarchy at the

⁶² Anon. «Victoria», *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, 7 November 1925.

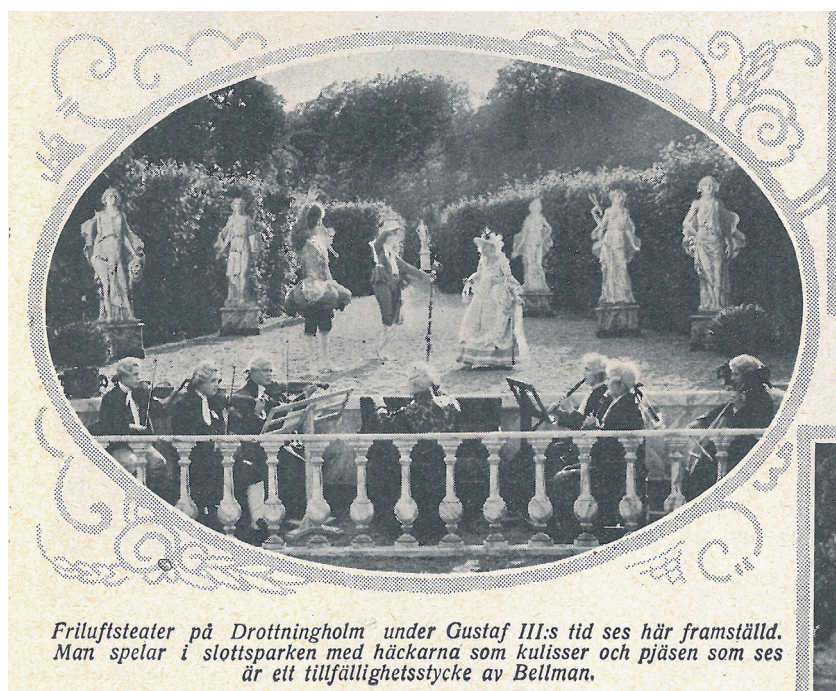


Fig. 4. The open-air theatre that was reconstructed at Drottningholm for the film *Två konungar* in 1925. The theatre historian Agne Beijer assisted in the reconstruction and the making of the costumes for the film. The illustration is part of a photomontage. («Senaste nytt från svenska filmen», *Idun*, no. B 9 ½ (1925), p. 95. Public Domain.)

time.⁶³ Prince Carl (1861–1951) was instrumental in opening the Royal Palace for *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* and the film critics were very positive when they saw the result, proclaiming that the palace beat any studio. Still, rather than referring to it as realistic, comparisons were made with turning the pages of an illustrated book. «Everything has been done to create a style that is characteristic of the time – and they have succeeded. In no essentials did this fail and a long series of beautiful pictures passed our eyes [...] you had a feeling of turning over the pages of a magnificently illustrated book.»⁶⁴ The spectacular location,

⁶³ The concept of soft power in relation to European monarchies is discussed in Frank Lorenz Müller & Heidi Mehrkens, *Royal Heirs and the Uses of Soft Power in Nineteenth-century Europe* (London, 2016).

⁶⁴ «Man har gjort allt för att åstadkomma en tidstrogen stil – och man har lyckats. På ingen punkt klickade detta och en lång serie vackra bilder passerade våra ögon [...] man hade känslan av att sitta och bläddra i ett illustrerat praktverk.» «Hake» (Hanse, H.) «Två konungar – en filmvädevill», *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 November 1925.



Fig. 5. The Royal Court provided access to Gustav III's bed in Haga, a royal carriage and the royal barge Vasaorden, which had been reconstructed two years previously. These «authentic objects» were used in the marketing of the film *Två konungar*. (Advertisement, Svenska Dagbladet, 23 November 1925. Public Domain.)

the celebrated lead actor and the well-known extras were the main attractions of the film, overshadowing the rather uneventful script and varied costume.

Royal interiors and parks were likewise used in *Två konungar* and the director Elis Ellis was very grateful to the Royal Court and the King, who according to Ellis showed a personal interest in the film and the director's efforts to make everything as authentic as possible.⁶⁵ In an interview in *Filmjournalen* he expressed his gratitude to the Marshall of the Realm, the Marshall of the Court, the Governor

⁶⁵ «Jag har verkligen rönt ett förvånansvärt stort tillmötesgående av alla myndigheter jag måst besvära», säger hr Ellis. 'Om vi skola börja högst upp, kan jag nämna, att Hans Maj:t Konungen personligen intresserade sig för våra strävanden att få allt inspelat på så autentisk mark som möjligt. Så fingo vi begagna de gustavianska rummen å Gripsholms slott, liksom Stockholms slott, Gustaf III åker bl. a. i filmen ut från borggården ned för Slottsbacken till den ödesdigra operamaskeraden.' «Ingemar», «Två konungar», *Filmjournalen*, 7:31–32, 15 November 1925, p. 517.

of the Royal Palaces and Admiral Carl Alarik Wachtmeister, who had been very accommodating, permitting access to Gripsholm Castle, the Royal Palace, Haga and Drottningholm.⁶⁶ An open-air theatre at Drottningholm was reconstructed under the supervision of Agne Beijer, who three years earlier, in 1922, had discovered and successfully reopened the old Drottningholm Palace Theatre, which was largely preserved in its original condition. The director Ellis proudly declared that the film production had contributed to the reconstruction of the open-air theatre and added one more attraction to Drottningholm.⁶⁷ However, it is also in the scenes shot in this location that you find the most evident anachronism in the film – the court of Gustav III sits very comfortably on the newly made benches in front of the stage. The masked ball featured in *Två konungar*, on the other hand, was one of the largest interior shoots so far in Swedish film production. The ball scene was filmed in a reconstruction of the Opera House in the large studio at Filmstaden, Solna, owned by the production company AB Svensk Filmindustri. An «authentic shot» would not have been possible in this case since the original Opera House had been torn down 30 years earlier, in the 1890s. The reconstruction of the Opera House was ambitious and details from the original Opera House were recreated, revealing a familiarity with the old building.

When original objects weren't available, there were ways of charging copies and reconstructions with a feeling of authenticity, making a connection to the past believable to the audience. A prominent feature in *Två konungar* is the recurring close-ups where, for example, the actor's hand touches a painting or a doorknocker, promoting an authenticity based on haptic qualities. The tempo slows down in these close-ups, it is almost as if the hands of the film audience touch the object; it is touch by proxy. These shots could be defined as «haptical images» with reference to Alois Riegl's use of the term, and are images of objects that appeal to the sense of touch rather than to sight alone.⁶⁸ Moreover, the close-ups added a sense of increased value to specific objects. Elis Ellis inserted close-ups of archival material and mixed original documents with pieces of text that were purely fictional and

⁶⁶ Sven Stolpe, «Elis Ellis' Bellmanfilm – en förnäm och fullödlig filmskapelse», *Filmjournalen*, no. 31–32, 15 November 1925, p. 509.

⁶⁷ «Se'n kan vi med litet stolthet säga, att tack vare filmen «Två konungar», har Drottningholm slott fått ännu en sevärighet till sina många andra.' (...) Ja, den gamla friluftsteatern, som Gustaf III så flitigt begagnade [...] ha vi nu satt istånd till sitt ursprungliga skick. Detta skedde under experten dr Beijers ledning. Och vi gjorde det så grundligt och omsorgsfullt, att teatern, som sagt inte blott är som den en gång var, utan därtill nu står gediget rekonstruerad.» «Ingemar», «Två konungar», *Filmjournalen*, 7:31–32, 15 November 1925, p. 517.

⁶⁸ Angela Dalle Vacche (ed.), *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2003), p. 5.

part of the film's story – an interesting and efficient, but perhaps not very honest, way of using old documents. The aura of the original documents and objects rubs off on the added material, to some extent.

Finding the right actor and posture

The casting process can be quite complex since the audiences will have an idea, often conflicting ideas, about the historical person being portrayed – the way he or she looks, moves or acts. We find numerous discussions in film reviews about what a king, or a Swede for that matter should look like. At the beginning of the twentieth century these discussions can be linked to a renewed interest in physiognomy, the idea that you can judge someone's personality, or ethnicity and race in some cases, from their external expression, especially from the face.⁶⁹ One example is when the Danish actor and film director Arne Weel (1891–1975), who played the Gustav III in *Två konungar*, was criticized for being too short and too Danish.⁷⁰ On top of this, critics noted that it was a Norwegian actor, Harald Schwenzen, who played the young hero Ture Hjelm. Nordic film actors were common in Swedish productions, especially before the late 1920s when sound was introduced and language differences got in the way. One actor whom the critics did agree fitted his role was the musician Åke Claesson (1889–1967). He made his film debut as Bellman in *Två konungar*, but he was already familiar with the role and would return as a character actor in three more films: *Ulla min Ulla* (1930/38), *Sol över Klara* (1942) and *Hans majestäts rival* (1943). His ability to sing and play the lute was much appreciated, as were his profile and facial features, which were thought to resemble von Krafft's well-known portrait, for example. However, it is important to note that not only did the actors have to look the part, they also needed to move as the audience expected an eighteenth-century person to move. In *Gustaf III och Bellman* (1908) the role of the King was given to Carl «Texas» Johannesson, who was a well-known ballet dancer. *Två konungar* was choreographed by Sven Tropp (1890–1964), a ballet master who also acted in this and other films 1915–1941.⁷¹ Sven Tropp was married to the ballet mistress Elly Holmberg (1903–2001), who

⁶⁹ Wolfgang Brückle, «Face-Off in Weimar Culture: The Physiognomic Paradigm, Competing Portrait Anthologies, and August Sander's *Face of Our Time*», in *Tate Papers*, no. 19, Spring 2013, Retrieved 10 January 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/>.

⁷⁰ «Han är för det första för liten; vidare är han dansk!» Sven Stolpe, «Elis Ellis' Bellmanfilm – en förnäm och fullödlig filmskapelse», *Filmjournalen*, 15 November 1925.

⁷¹ Svensk filmdatabas, «Sven Tropp», <http://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se>.



Fig. 6. When the establishment acts as ghosts at the Royal Palace, photographs from the recording of *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* in 1925. The focus of the article is on the members of high society who acted as extras in the film. *Idun*, no. 25, 1925, pp. 548–549. Public Domain.

appeared in this film and also *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott*. The choice to engage professional well-established dancers reveals the emphasis given to dance and choreography in all three films. The control and transformation of the body act as a visual vehicle for time travelling on the screen. For that reason, the actor's ability to control his or her posture becomes an important feature.

Gösta Ekman (1890–1938), one of the most popular actors in Sweden during the 1920s and 1930s, was cast in historical roles throughout his career. In 1913 he gave a successful performance on stage in Gothenburg as Gustaf III's father King Adolf Fredrik in the play *Hermelin och purpur*, written by Sophie Elkan. Ekman portrayed Adolf Fredrik as irresistible, even though the King came across as rather dull in Elkan's script.⁷² Actually his portrayal was so charmingly convincing that he was engaged as an actor in Stockholm. In the film *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott*, Ekman portrays Gustaf III as an elegant and sophisticated monarch, moving gracefully through the Royal Palace, and in the reviews and in the mar-

⁷² Carina Burman, *Djävulspakten: Gösta Ekmans liv och konstnärskap* (Stockholm, 2011), pp. 94–95.

keting of the film the King is described with the popular epithet «the Enchanting King» (Tjusarkungen). This was a role that seemed to suit Ekman. His star-quality meant that he was also asked to portray the Warrior King Karl XII. This was a king who spent most of his time riding and fighting with swords. Even though most critics comment on the perceived discrepancy between his off-stage queer persona and his portrayal of kings and soldiers at war, his efforts were generally critically acclaimed. In an interview in 1933, Ekman jokingly revealed that he probably got his first film role in 1911 because he looked good in a uniform.⁷³ Apart from the star Ekman, the unique selling point of *En afton hos Gustaf III på Stockholms slott* was the large number of people from high society, including members of the royal family, who acted as extras, creating the desired atmosphere. Their appearance in the film naturally created a buzz. The journal *Idun* published a photographic report from the film set at the Royal Palace with the headline *När societeten spelar gengångare på Stockholms slott* (When the establishment acts as ghosts at the Royal Palace).⁷⁴ The article implied that the extras constituted a spiritual link between high society then and now; it was as if they were ghosts from the past, and their participation made the film feel even more authentic.

Conclusion

Period films are combinations of history and myth, and for them to work, film directors need to use and develop a number of strategies to create an authentic (enough) feeling. This article explores how the visualization of the past and the concept of authenticity were reinvented, negotiated and visualized in these productions. In order to successfully create staged authenticity, filmmakers relied on specialists in the organization of material things, for example museum curators and art historians such as Agne Beijer and Sixten Strömbom, who also helped authenticate film productions through their authority as experts. Analysing the strategies used by the three film directors, we are reminded that authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a variety of sources, for example materials, design, location, craftsmanship, spirit and feeling.⁷⁵ To that one might also add appearance. Interviews reveal how the directors put a lot of effort into finding the right actor, adhering to ideas about what a historic person, or a Swedish person

⁷³ Ekman starred as Lieutenant Count Konrad von X in the film *Blott en dröm: Stockholmskådespel i 53 tablåer* (1911), «Cyrano», «För tidigt jubileum», *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 January 1933.

⁷⁴ Anon. «När societeten spelar gengångare på Stockholm slott», *Idun*, 25 (1925): 548–549.

⁷⁵ *The Nara Document on Authenticity*, ICOMOS, 1994, Section 13.

for that matter, should look like – ideas that were related to the research conducted at the Swedish Portrait Archive. Authentic locations were found in and around Stockholm, and when such sites were unavailable the filmmakers used already existing theatre scenography or created ambitious reconstructions, for example the outdoor theatre at Drottningholm. As Victor Edman has shown in his study *Sjuttonhundratalet som svenskt ideal* (2008), this happened at a time when reconstructions were about to be increasingly accepted and know-how about how to stage the past was developed at museums and heritage institutions. So, with the help of experts, film directors negotiated the demand for authenticity, while addressing the need to create an atmosphere and style that spoke to the audience and their expectations. Thus, they were exploring the complex balance between *symbolic* and *material* authenticity, and between *historical accuracy* and creating an *authentic look*.⁷⁶ Mastering this balance, period films have continued to shape our preconception of the past over the last century, and understanding the production of early period films clarifies the ways in which new media relate to expertise in academia, heritage sites and museums.

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⁷⁶ Kuhn & Westwell 2012.