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Reform and Entertainment: Film Exhibition and Leisure in a Small Town in Sweden at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Åsa Jernudd

'The giant who wants to feel Mother Svea's [i.e. Sweden's] pulse, should place his hand over Örebro.'¹

Kathryn Fuller has shown that the culture of early cinema has different meanings for the American metropolis compared with small-town America. In contrast to the disruptive and fleeting experiences of early exhibition in the big cities, she proposes that movies as an entertainment form slipped easily into the culture of small towns because motion pictures combined new technology with the already familiar entertainment forms of the travelogue slide show and travelling theatre troupes. Successful travelling film exhibitors offered programmes that appealed to the conservative culture of small-town America; they operated in the town's social centre, and were endorsed by respectable civic groups with their 'high class' programmes.² Fuller has also emphasised the regional diversity of nickelodeon culture.³ Gregory A. Waller's local case study of the first three decades of film exhibition in the Southern regional centre and city of Lexington foregrounds the importance not only of the regional but also of the local in the understanding of film history from a social and cultural stand point.⁴ In the following pages, I shall steer away from discussing the teeming metropolis of early film culture in favour of examining the local and regional venues of film history in an attempt to tease out a workable framework for such a histo-

riography in the Swedish context. Waller's and Fuller's studies are my companions on this venture, with some of Miriam Hansen's ideas on the 'public dimension of cinematic reception' lurking in the background.⁵

In the introduction to his book on Lexington, Waller makes clear how different ideas of leisure produce different stories of film exhibition.⁶ Waller himself approaches leisure during the first three decades of film exhibition by emphasising commercial entertainments in a case study that tests the hypothesis of cultural standardisation and homogenisation on a national level. Much of the American research on this topic examines how ethnic culture and older forms of working-class culture reacted to the cultural homogenisation that followed industrialisation and modernisation. Early American cinema, Miriam Hansen writes, was strongly associated in public discourse with its working class and ethnic audiences that 'endowed a random leisure-time activity with a specific social meaning and implicit

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teleology (comparative to that of acculturation).⁷ The process of acculturation was part of an overarching ideology of democracy, the myth of the nickelodeon as democratic medium having the potential of a universal language. Waller's and Fuller's studies both deal with the process of cultural homogenisation on a national scale. Their studies are interesting because of their off-centre perspective on the process; in Fuller's case, through concentrating on small-town America, and in Waller's case, by focusing on a Southern regional centre where ethnic culture did not exist even though racial segregation persisted. Where Fuller's small-town perspective is eventually subjected to hegemonic national popular culture, Waller's study insists, at least until the 1930s and the coming of sound and theatre chains, on the prevalence of idiosyncratic variation.

What is the most relevant theoretical perspective for a study of early cinema and the introduction and dissemination of its culture in provincial Sweden, itself a country situated on the margins of Europe? What social and cultural issues were at stake? Before approaching the question of the make-up and impact of commercial entertainment in a small-town Nordic version of modernity, a brief description of the social and cultural milieu is required. The process of industrialisation and modernisation did not hit Sweden until very late, and when it finally came, in the early 1890s, it happened with full force. Abandoning the over-populated countryside for jobs in industry, the new class of industrial workers was recruited 'directly from the plough', as ethnographer Orvar Löfgren has put it.⁸ The cultural confrontations involved in this transformation were likely to be more abrupt than for workers in the industrial capitals of England, Germany or France, but they were not of ethnic origin as they were for a large population in the United States. Partly due to late industrialisation, bourgeois democratic ideology was not as developed in Sweden as in the US, and a different kind of modernisation and cultural homogenisation took place. The breakthrough of democracy is associated with the 1910s, but not until the 1930s did the modern Swedish welfare state coalesce into a form that survived for as long as four or five decades.⁹ The social situation in Sweden in the 1890s and 1900s was perhaps similar to the one in Germany as described by Hansen in the article 'Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?'. In Germany, class structures were more rigid than in the US and a hierarchal social order persisted alongside industrialisation

and modernisation. In a situation of transition where new social structures coexisted with older forms, Hansen observes, 'the egalitarian appeal of the new medium was more likely to be perceived as a threat than a foil for democratic mythology'.¹⁰

It was with the cinema reform movement, sponsored by teachers' associations and groups devoted to popular and continuing education, that the first public discourse on cinema appeared in Germany and, in similar fashion, in Sweden. Members of the Swedish Pedagogical Society were aided by medical doctors in their warnings against the effects of sensational films on children, the core issue in their campaign against cinema. Jan Olsson has shown how the discourse on film in Sweden was construed as a black and white division between entertainment and education, represented by fiction versus non-fiction film. As a result of the campaign against cinema, itself part of a larger reform movement revolving around new commercial entertainments, national censorship was enforced in 1911. A few years later, as in Germany, the topic of public debate on cinema was still held within the confines of a discourse of cultural up-lift, now concerning artistic quality and the value of film as art. The head of the censorship bureau, Gustaf Berg, took an active part in the debate, promoting cinema's artistic potential. Sensitive to public opinion and the restrictions imposed by the censors, the leading Swedish production company, Svenska Biografteatern (hereafter, Swedish Biograph) started producing high-quality screen adaptations of literary classics that celebrated national culture. This new production strategy was an attempt on behalf of Swedish Biograph, Olsson suggests, to exchange the audience, mainly working class and children, for the educated middle class. The strategy involved building new, up-scale theatres in the cities and larger towns; it also involved a change in pricing policy and new, more sober forms of advertising. The press, which had only just awakened to an interest in film culture, started with a critique of cinema on a regular basis, and gave the high art films celebrating national culture positive reviews. Thus the film industry, the national censorship bureau and the press united in a discourse of cultural uplift that can be understood as a continuation of the initial debates on cinema.¹¹

Reform, education and cultural uplift are obviously key words in the early public discourse on commercial entertainment in Sweden, initiated around 1906/07 when halls devoted exclusively to

film exhibition began to open in the cities and towns. Given the social mobility that arose in Sweden around the turn of the century due to rapid industrialisation, it is easy to explain this progressive discourse as an attempt on the side of the educated and ruling classes to control and discipline the audience associated, primarily, with the lower classes and children. In the 1970s and 1980s, social historical research on the early phases of working-class culture in Sweden tended to view the formation of modern Swedish society as a process of integrating the working class into hegemonic bourgeois culture. Integration was understood as a kind of 'upgrading' of the lower to the middle class by means of a top-down regulation.¹² Within film studies, the pioneering research of pre-nickelodeon exhibition in Sweden presents itself as an example of this thinking. The theoretical assumptions regarding media and historical processes implicit in the work of, for example, prominent first-generation film historian, Rune Waldekrantz, come together in a grand legitimising formation of cinema.¹³ A reworking of the idea of culture and change that involves empowering the working class and seeing change as a series of confrontations between individuals and social categories has since challenged this view.¹⁴ The case study, and an interest in everyday life, make the individuals visible and describe the cultural confrontations in history with greater nuance and flavour.

Locating public entertainment in the town of Örebro

Adding to the cartography of early film culture and guided by Waller's pioneering work, I have chosen the small town of Örebro for a case study of how film screenings were introduced in Sweden, part of a larger project that will attempt to disclose the public dimension of film culture as it made its way into everyday life in the provinces. As indicated above, the first public discourse on film in Sweden is dated to the period when the industry developed rental exchanges, new films became more accessible, and cinemas were opening in cities and towns. But what of the period that predates the cinemas? Why was there no earlier public response to the new medium? In what kind of social and cultural milieu were the initial film screenings embedded? As Waller has noted, the kind of films audiences saw during film exhibition's early period 'surely helped shape' their conception of the experience. Yet, the place of the experience is also important: the how, where and

when of its availability, publicity and exhibition.¹⁵ Rune Waldekrantz's survey of pre-nickelodeon film exhibition is the single founding study of the subject in Sweden, and functions as backdrop to my discussion.¹⁶

This essay examines film exhibition and leisure in the city of Örebro, a regional centre in the middle of the more densely populated area of southern Sweden between the two larger cities of Stockholm and Gothenburg. In the early nineteenth century, Örebro was a rural commercial centre that had developed into an expansive industrial centre by the end of the century. In the years between 1890 and 1910, the population more than doubled, from roughly 14,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. In terms of population, Örebro belongs to the category of middle-sized industrial towns after the major cities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The dominating industries in Örebro were Statens Centralverkstäder (the national railway workshops) and the manufacture of shoes, biscuits, wool and bricks. Besides industry, Örebro was a centre of commerce, administration, education and the military. Örebro is linked to the Baltic Sea, and from the early seventeenth into the twentieth century, shipping was the most important means of transportation. With the development of the railway, people and produce could connect to the national railway lines via Hallsberg and use the expanding regional railway system.¹⁷

The aim of my research is to explore the public dimension of film exhibition in a distinct, provincial milieu, to determine how cinema eventually created a new kind of social and cultural arena within the context of modernisation. This objective is reached through studying documentation on the culture of leisure as presented in public discourse. Of importance in this documentation is the degree to which advertised activities were open to all or to selected groups of people, the degree to which events in some way had a bearing on local public discourse and if so, how they tied into the social and cultural life of the town's people. In order to tease out the social and cultural setting for the introduction of film in Örebro, I have studied the advertisements for leisure activities in the daily newspaper, *Nerikes Allehanda*, from 1897 to 1899. *Nerikes Allehanda* is a regional paper with a liberal orientation that was founded in 1843. Though other regional papers had regular distribution, at the turn of the twentieth century, *Nerikes Allehanda* was distributed six days a week, and held a dominant position as a public



Fig. 1. Drottninggatan as it passes Örebro Teater, ca 1900, Red. Sture Larsson-Hoffmans collection. [Courtesy Örebro Länsarv.]

forum for news coverage and the advertising of regional and local events.¹⁸ Advertising in the paper was cheap; as Waldekranz noted, even the poorest of travelling showmen announced their arrival through this means.¹⁹

The clear distinction between public and other events that I had – perhaps naively – anticipated, was not to be found. On the front or second page, the paper contained a ‘public events’ heading, and on one of the last pages there was a special heading for advertisements that were accepted after the paper had been set. Under the ‘public events’ heading, commercial entertainments were listed alongside more or less public events such as bazaars, parties and evening entertainments organised by religious, temperance and workers organisations, but this was not a rule. Sometimes advertisements that appealed to the public were placed elsewhere. Due to this flexibility in the paper’s lay-out, it is sometimes difficult to discern which events were public and which were not. I have chosen to regard all advertised events that offer no restrictions regarding access as open to the public, regardless of their location in the paper. More intimate events such as ‘meetings’, ‘sermons’ and ‘discussions’ are not included unless they have an obvious public reference.

I also scanned through the current events column that included a heading reserved for news from Örebro. Public cultural events were noted and commented on in this section, theatre performances were announced and critically discussed, as were evening entertainments, lectures and the like.

To make any sense of the social geography of

Örebro’s leisure culture as it passed into the twentieth century, a short description of the topography of the town centre is necessary. Örebro is built on a ridge, as if the town had a backbone that rises from the flat landscape of Närke running in a north-south direction. The main street, Storgatan, began in an industrial area dominated by the railroad yards and continued along the ridge, changing its name to Drottninggatan as it entered the more central, fashionable and commercial area of the town. The switch from Storgatan to Drottninggatan occurs in front of the massive medieval castle, Örebro slott. Along Drottninggatan, modern two- and three-storey brick houses were built in the late 1850s after a fire had ruined the town centre. In the middle of Drottninggatan, the town’s official church, Örebro kyrka, dominates the large square, Stortorget, that opens up to the east. The railway runs parallel to the ridge, a few blocks to the west. A small river, Svartån, cuts through the town’s backbone, passing the castle to form a moat around it. Eastward bound, the river continues past the town harbour, whence it flows into Hjälmarén which, connected to Mälaren, runs into the Baltic Sea.²⁰

Bourgeois entertainment for the public

The entertainments advertised in *Nerikes Allehanda* can be divided into three categories, each singled out through pricing policy and location of the event, and the mode of address employed in the advertisement. In the first category are the more costly entertainments which were scheduled and announced as

Fig. 2. Stora Hotellet, seen from the east, ca 1900. [Courtesy Örebro stadsarkiv.]



commercial, and appealed to the bourgeoisie. There were four establishments that provided amusement for the town's high society and petty bourgeoisie, the most central of which were Stora Hotellet and the local theatre, Örebro Teater (Fig. 1). Earlier, before the fire of 1854 turned the town's centre into ruins, the functions of the two houses were combined in a single public house.²¹ In this building, the bourgeoisie socialised and formed an audience for travelling theatre troupes. Stora Hotellet (Fig. 2) was built six years after the fire, continuing the social traditions established by the earlier building, but specialising in accommodation and gatherings with eating and drinking as natural parts of the event. At Örebro Teater, built in 1853 as the largest and most lavish theatre in Sweden excepting Stockholm's Opera House, travelling theatrical and opera troupes performed.²² Both Stora Hotellet and Örebro Teater were close to the castle which lent both institutions an aura of cultural legitimacy. The entertainment district also included Frimurareholmen, an inn on an island in the river just north of the theatre, run by freemasons.

Örebro did not have a professional theatre company, nor did the town boast a professional orchestra, other than a military band, Kungliga Lifregementets Husarers musikkår, which performed commercially once or twice a year to increase their pension fund. Entertainment at the theatre and at Stora Hotellet's assembly hall was provided by travelling theatrical and opera troupes as well as travel-

ling musicians and vaudeville artists. The most frequent guests at Örebro Teater were the travelling theatre troupes which performed comedy, musical melodrama, opera bouffe and operetta. There were standard house prices for an evening performance. The most expensive seats were the ones *avant scène* at 6 Swedish kronor, whereas seats in the stalls and the first balcony cost from 1.75 to 1.5 kronor. Seats in the second balcony cost from 1.25 kronor to 75 öre, and a place standing cost 50 öre.²³ Within a similar social and cultural framework, occasional commercial performances were held at Stora Hotellet's assembly hall which could take the form of a concert, a musical soirée or an illustrated lecture. In 1897, a lecture illustrated with magic lantern slides by a travelling performer, Oscar Wennersten, cost 1 krona for adults and 50 öre for children.²⁴ Concerts and musical soirées cost between 2 kronor and 1 krona, the most common price being 1.5 kronor, and half price for children.²⁵

Stora Hotellet's assembly hall was also the town's ballroom. A number of annual balls were announced in the paper as public events: in March, the shooting club of one of the secondary schools hosted a ball to raise money for ammunition; around the same time Edv. Lindqvist's dance school held a ball open to the public as an occasion for his pupils to show off their talents; in November, the shooting club of the technical secondary school hosted a ball; in December the charity society, Örebro jultomtar, held a feast for children which was followed by a ball;

and finally, the most prominent local and regional politicians hosted a ball for the town's high society on the annual celebration of the king (Oscarsdagen) on 1 December. The typical price of admission for these functions was 1.5 kronor for men, 1.25 kronor for women, and 1 krona for children.²⁶

Stora Hotellet was a public house that had multiple recreational functions. It offered accommodation, but also had a ballroom for dances and commercial performances, a clubroom reserved for a society, Sällskapet, with close ties to the hotel management, a billiard room, bathing facilities, a barbershop, a restaurant and a café.²⁷ The hotel advertised regularly in *Nerikes Allehanda* to announce the visiting orchestra that performed for the afternoon guests at the café and the evening dinner guests. Every month a new orchestra would replace the previous one. Frimurarelogen was, likewise, a kind of public house offering diverse activities, a meeting place for drinking, eating and amusements. Belonging to and run by freemasons, Frimurarelogen competed with Stora Hotellet for afternoon and evening dinner concert guests through advertisements in *Nerikes Allehanda*, and changed its orchestra on a monthly basis. During the summer season, between May and mid-September, both Stora Hotellet and Frimurarelogen opened their outdoor restaurants, Stora Hotellet on Strömparterren, lying on a tiny island next to the castle, and Frimurarelogen on its veranda. Afternoon and evening concerts were held in these locations in the summer season. Towards the end of the summer, as days grew shorter, Frimurareholmens Veranda and Strömparterren would advertise illuminations, fireworks and Bengal lights in their respective gardens on public holidays and at weekends.

Adolfsbergs Brunn was an establishment that appealed to a select audience during the short summer season of June through August. Adolfsbergs Brunn was a health resort built around a woodland spring, a five-minute train ride from the town centre.²⁸ As a service to guests, amusements were organised, some of which were open to the public and hence advertised in the local paper. The public entertainment included concerts and dances at weekends and public holidays. Entry to the concerts was generally free.²⁹ Garden illuminations and fireworks in association with concerts were also attractions when the autumn approached, as they were at Strömparterren and Frimurarelogen.

To the list of bourgeois entertainment should

be added occasional concerts by local or visiting performers held at the town's official church, Örebro kyrka. The usual price of admission for these events was 1 krona or 1.5 kronor, and on rare occasions, 2 kronor. A few advertisements specify that children and servants were admitted at half price.³⁰

Thus Örebro high society and its petit bourgeoisie had four leisure and recreational establishments catering to their specific cultural interests: Stora Hotellet, Örebro Teater, Frimurarelogen and Adolfsbergs Brunn which offered theatre and the occasional variety performance or illustrated lecture, concerts, dinners and dances, as well as other recreational facilities such as the multi-purpose public house available at Stora Hotellet and a spa at Adolfsbergs Brunn. The second category of entertainment had a predominantly working-class appeal.

Advertised recreation for workers

The circuses which performed in Örebro were travelling troupes that set up a large tent on the open area next to the harbour in town.³¹ Being rather larger institutions, with between 35 and 70 artists, and between 20 and 30 horses, they often stayed for a week or two.³² Horse shows, clowns, acrobatics and pantomimes were the staple turns of the circuses.³³ At least three companies visited Örebro each year: in 1897 there were three visiting circuses; in 1898 four; and in 1899 six.³⁴ There is no pattern to the timing of visits to the town.³⁵ Though there were many opportunities to attend a performance at a lower cost (for example, by waiting until the circus had played a few nights or by attending a matinee), the normal price of admission was almost as expensive as a seat in the stalls at Örebro Teater. Prices were around 1 to 1.5 kronor for seats in the stalls (there are also examples of 2 kronor per seat and 75 öre) and standing cost 50 öre. Children were admitted at half the normal price for adults.³⁶

Other institutions and events open to the workers of Örebro, and advertised in the local paper, involved the town's many voluntary associations. The liberal press, which expanded nationally in the early 1890s, was ideologically allied with the voluntary associations, having the same or similar political ambitions.³⁷ These associations were new to Swedish society, or, to be more precise, they grew on a mass scale at the time of industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and emigration, and peaked in their total membership in the 1910s. Functions advertised by the associations dominated the local pages of

Nerikes Allehanda, reflecting their importance as leisure institutions on a national scale among the lower middle-class and working-class populations in the towns and rural areas of Sweden. Most people were members of one or more associations in the 1900s and 1910s, though by the early 1920s, after the establishment of political democracy, membership dropped radically.³⁸ The very term 'voluntary association' indicates their function: people came together on voluntary terms to advance some kind of political goal. In Swedish these associations are called *folkrörelser*, a term that may be translated as 'people's movement' and indicates the scale and the class base of the movement. The three largest kinds of association were the religious, the temperance and the workers associations. Their political agendas involved individual religious freedom, temperance in the consumption of alcohol, and universal suffrage.³⁹ They opposed the hierarchal social organisation of contemporary society and challenged the old patriarchal class structure.⁴⁰

The immense popularity of the associations can be explained as a response to social change, to a new situation that required vertical rather than horizontal loyalties. It has been argued that the associations were instrumental in shaping modern society.⁴¹ Since the associations were geared toward change, reform and education were central concepts in their work and overall culture. In a classic case study of the culture and mentality of the modern life style in Sweden around the turn of the last century, Ronny Ambjörnsson has described how workers, through membership of temperance associations, became self-made individuals with the potential to express themselves in a public sphere, rather than remain locked into a fixed social structure.⁴² Though the means and the subject differed between the associations, they all involved individual empowerment through education and provided a kind of training ground for a new, more egalitarian form of society in the making.⁴³ In temperance and worker's associations, therefore, libraries were common, as too were organised discussion groups, study groups and lectures. Parties, bazaars and picnics were also part of the activities of many associations. They were generally public events and were announced in the newspaper. In the context of these programmes, variety artists, choirs and orchestras performed, and speeches, magic lanterns, lectures and recitations were held.⁴⁴ Amusements were a natural part of the social and cultural philosophy of

the voluntary associations, involving both personal and social reform.

Many associations built their venues according to specific requirements. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the building of chapels for the Baptist, Methodist and Congregational churches was intense in Sweden. Somewhat later, houses were built for the temperance movement, the local lodges of the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT), as well as Svenska Blåbandsförbundet, Templarorden, and the National Good Templar Order (NGTO), all of which were more or less religious.⁴⁵ The alternative, Nykterhetsorden Verdandi, with a social-democratic rather than a religious identity, also required halls and houses of their own for meetings and parties, and in the early 1900s, public recreational parks and houses run by the workers' associations – known in Swedish as Folkets Park ('People's Park') and Folkets Hus ('People's House') – were built.⁴⁶ Organising public festivities and bazaars was one way of raising funds; another was to offer the chapel or hall for rent to, among others, travelling performers. The chapels, temperance halls, Folkets Park and Folkets Hus became new venues of entertainment and public recreation that attracted a different audience compared with the theatre or the traditional public house. From a national survey of advertisements in the local press covering 113 locations outside the three largest cities of Sweden, we learn that in the majority of cases, the earliest exhibition of film took place in temperance halls and in the chapels of the nonconformist movement.⁴⁷

There were seven free churches operating in Örebro at the turn of the twentieth century. Most of these religious societies rented halls in buildings in the centre of or close to the town's commercial area, until they were large and wealthy enough to build their own chapels in town. These are fairly easy to locate as many of the religious societies are still active.⁴⁸ The nonconformist churches that were the most visible in the public sphere in Örebro were: Vasakyrkan, an evangelical society that had recently built its large, modern church not far from the town centre; Metodistkyrkan, belonging to the Swedish Methodist Church that also had its own house; and the local branch of the Salvation Army which had bought Betelkapellet, the oldest chapel built for nonconformist gatherings in Örebro. Vasakyrkan advertised parties, lectures, projected picture shows, musical soirées and bazaars with 20–25 öre as the

regular price of admission for adults and 10–15 öre for children. The evangelical mission of the church explains the exotic appeal of the slide shows and the lectures that often presented missionary work in distant countries.⁴⁹ Travelling entertainers and other societies rented the church hall for public performances and functions, and it is interesting to note that many of these also tended to have a foreign exotic appeal, presenting pictures and lectures about foreign people, places and travel.⁵⁰ Parties and lectures were also frequent at the Methodist Church, though the majority of the public events were organised by the society itself. A party in this context was an afternoon or evening event involving several musical performances, a speech or lecture by a local or visiting talent, and coffee. The standard entrance fee was 25 öre. The Salvation Army differed from the other churches because their public functions, mainly parties and bazaars, primarily involved music and singing rather than lectures and speeches. It was generally cheaper to attend Salvation Army functions (10 öre). Their advertisements also emphasised the decoration of the hall, sometimes with a theme, and in the late summer garden illuminations. At their bazaars and parties, cakes, fruit, coffee, music and games were provided in an environment with decorations!⁵¹

The local temperance lodges and their meeting halls are more difficult to trace than the religious societies, chiefly because there were many more lodges that were popular and active for short periods of time. There were at least six lodges of the IOGT and six of the NGTO operating in Örebro around the turn of the century, besides at least three lodges of Templarorden and one Blåbandsförening.⁵² A house on Trädgårdsgatan 28, on the outskirts of the town centre, was built by NGTO, and a house on Fredsgatan 8, close to the central railway station, was a joint building venture by several lodges of the IOGT.⁵³ Other halls used by the temperance lodges for public functions mentioned in advertisements in *Nerikes Allehanda* were located at Nygatan 11, Gamla Gatan 9, Ågatan 3, Klostergatan 20 and Kyrkogårdsgatan 16. None of these addresses was in the fashionable quarters around the castle, on Drottninggatan or in the town square, but all were located a block or two from the town centre.

Parties, auctions and bazaars were the most frequent events that the local lodges invited the public to attend. Parties were evening functions that, typically, included musical performances, recita-



tions, humorous, propagandistic or educational speeches and lectures by local people or guest speakers visiting town. A compulsory feature of the party programme was the drinking of coffee. Entrance to a party would cost around 35 öre, and advertisements would specifically mention if the coffee was free of charge. Parties were frequent. A Sunday didn't pass without a party in at least one of the lodges. The bazaars, however, were more seasonal affairs, celebrated in spring and autumn, and before Christmas. These were action-packed events with decorated halls and tombolas, cafés, sweet- and fruit stands, music and games. Sometimes there would be a post office and shooting gallery, and there would always be amusing performances of some kind. Auctions were also popular. Apart from the auction itself, there would be music and other entertainment. Lectures, often illustrated, were featured in the advertisements for the lodges from time to time when a lecturer from out of town visited Örebro. Preferred topics were, of course, the negative effects of alcohol and the positive effects of temperance as a life style, and a typical entrance charge would be 15 or 25 öre.

The local labour associations were organised into a regional body which, after 23 January 1898, was called Örebro Arbetarekommun. Thirteen associations, most of them for skilled workers but also including groups of factory workers, were at some point during 1898 and 1899 members of Örebro Arbetarekommun.⁵⁴ They held their meetings at Ågatan 3, and organised parties with a public address from time to time.⁵⁵

Fig. 3. Arbetareföreningen in the 1920s when the hall was regularly used as a cinema. Örebro Stadsarkiv. Photographer: Sam Lindskog.

One association which is not included in the three largest movements – the religious, temperance and labour movements – but was both visible and active in Örebro's public sphere, was an association for workers called Örebro Arbetareförening (ÖAF, Fig. 3). The association was different to the labour associations which, in the early 1900s, formed a movement based on social conflict. ÖAF was liberal in political orientation, promoting agreement between the classes rather than conflict. It was founded by men from the educated class in the latter half of the nineteenth century; factory owner, D.J. Elgérus initiated the association and throughout the early years of its existence, editors and journalists at *Nerikes Allehanda* were prominent members of the society. The objective of the association was to inspire working class men (and their wives) to advance in moral, spiritual and economic wealth. To boost the member's spirit and intellect, the idea was to engage in subjects such as languages, history, fine arts, literature and in more technical and scientific matters such as astronomy, physics and biology, primarily through lectures and literature. Other aspects of the education and reform of the individual dealt with ceremonies that mirrored bourgeois forms of meeting, debating and entertainment. The more strictly economic benefits of membership involved a health and pension fund.⁵⁶

When the religious and temperance lodges advertised parties, Arbetareföreningen organised an annual ball, and in the year 1900 even abandoned their own hall in favour of Stora Hotellet's ballroom for the event.⁵⁷ In the public sphere of Örebro, ÖAF's house was a lecture hall where manual workers were admitted free of charge and were encouraged to attend wearing working clothes.⁵⁸ The society organised its balls on a regular basis and a Christmas party for children, and the association's orchestra, likewise, advertised recurring public functions.⁵⁹ Besides being a venue for the society's own lectures and balls, Arbetareföreningen's house functioned as an alternative theatre. Here, travelling entertainers, who appealed to the middle and working class, presented magic shows, vaudeville and variety shows for an evening's entertainment of 75 öre, 50 öre or 35 öre a ticket.⁶⁰

In the summer season, an establishment known as Strömsnäs, a boat ride from town, organised popular parties with games, food, music and dancing at weekends and on public holidays. Participation at Strömsnäs cost 10 öre in 1898.⁶¹ There

was also an outdoor place known as Ingenting that was used by the societies for popular parties, also with games, dancing and performances.⁶² The outdoor ice-skating rinks should also be mentioned; on the river that passed through town, a couple of rinks were prepared each year when the river froze. At weekends, in the evening, there were illuminations and music, and each skater was charged 15 or 25 öre. Every now and then, a masquerade on ice was announced.⁶³

Side-shows

The third and final category of public entertainment advertised in *Nerikes Allehanda* is defined by its ephemeral quality and cheap price of admission. In this category are included the showmen that travelled with side-show amusements visiting Örebro when there was a market in town, or when they were simply travelling through the town. Advertised amusements included various kinds of variety shows, ethnic exhibitions, wax cabinets and menageries. Admission to these entertainments, as advertised in the newspaper, was between 10 and 25 öre. If the show involved a performance, admission was 35 öre for adults. Side-shows appeared in the town centre in 1897 during Hindersmässan, the annual market in mid-January that lasted for several days.⁶⁴ The smaller markets in April and in August/September were other occasions that attracted travelling side-shows, and starting with the spring market in April 1897, offered their delights in the square in front of the harbour where visiting circuses usually set up their tent.⁶⁵ At the autumn market in 1899, cheap amusements were found also at Alnängarna, a field just north of Örebro, gradually moving the site for travelling side-shows further from the town centre.⁶⁶ An advertisement during Hindersmässan in 1900 promotes the site of Alnängarna as a kind of fair-ground.⁶⁷

The three categories of advertised entertainment presented here are differentiated in terms of location, mode of address, and pattern of attendance, creating two distinct audiences segregated by class and socio-cultural status. The differences are also reflected in the town's geography: the bourgeois establishments were found in the town's centre, around the prestigious castle, with the exception of Adolfsberg's Brunn which was a spa with the function of offering the well-to-do a break from town life during the summer season. A block or two from the town centre were the chapels, halls and buildings

frequented by the middle and working classes for their recreation, and further removed from the centre, the third category of cheap amusements was found. In this way, the social was mapped on the geographical, underscoring the importance of place for understanding the social significance of cultural consumption.⁶⁸

In a comparison with Waller's description of the cultural scene in Lexington during the early years of film exhibition, class seems to be a pertinent category of social division in Örebro. Though there were public houses in Örebro with many functions, there was, for example, no equivalent to the Lexington Opera House that 'unquestionably remained the city's pre-eminent permanent venue for commercial entertainment', a multipurpose house that offered 'first-class attractions' as well as 'popular price' shows, and also courted black theatre-goers by booking minstrel shows.⁶⁹ No single permanent venue in Örebro catered to different audiences by means of programme or pricing policies. 'Popular' and words with similar connotations were shunned in the advertisements for entertainment at Örebro Teater and at Stora Hotellet. Travelling artists with a 'popular' appeal – other than the circus – performed at Arbetareföreningen or at the many functions organised by the voluntary associations.⁷⁰

The first film screenings

In the venues in Örebro in which the first film screenings took place, the prices charged for admission and the general design of the programme, as presented in the local liberal paper, give an idea of how the first film shows fit into the social and cultural hierarchy of entertainments outlined above. As mentioned earlier, Waldekranz's national survey shows that the first screenings in provincial Sweden took place in the gathering halls of the associations. In his study of the pre-nickelodeon era, the earliest screenings are described as demonstrations of technical wonders, shown as part of a programme of mechanical attractions or as part of a magic lantern show. The received view is that by the turn of the century, it had become common practice to show a wide range of films of different genres compiled into a programme of its own; a mix of actualities, reportage, staged events and narrative films. A longer fictional film was the programme's feature around which the shorter films were arranged.⁷¹ Waldekranz has also compiled a list of the travelling film exhibitors in

Sweden in the years 1896 to 1906. The number of exhibitors increased steadily from 1896 until the year 1901.⁷²

In the case of Örebro, the earliest screening of film took place at Arbetareföreningen within a programme that demonstrated two mechanical wonders: the *kinematograph* and the *graphophon*, both advertised as Edison's latest invention.⁷³ A total of ten performances were advertised, on the afternoon and evenings of the 18–22 February 1897, with shows starting every hour. The advertisements claimed that the kinematograph produced living pictures in natural size, and was distinguished from the panorama, the kinoscope and the magic lantern, indicating that the exhibition of film was not yet a part of popular consciousness. According to the local paper, the exhibitor stopped in Örebro with his projector on the way from Gothenburg to the World Exhibition in Stockholm.⁷⁴ Waldekranz has identified the exhibitor as Arthur Rehn, who was employed by four Germans to operate a projecting machine bought in Paris. With a collection of films by Georges Méliès, Rehn held exhibitions in Gothenburg in late December and early January, after which he went on tour, stopping in at least nine towns and larger communities in central southern Sweden. Once in Stockholm he disappears from historical records.⁷⁵ The Lumière's cinematographe was the only projector allotted a place for screenings at the Stockholm exhibition, in the sector representing Stockholm's Old Town. The screenings at the Stockholm exhibition are commonly referred to as the breakthrough for film in the nation's popular consciousness, though the first public screening in Sweden took place at an Industrial Exhibition at Piltorp, Malmö on 28 June 1896, and film was screened in variety theatres in the major cities of Sweden between the two exhibitions.⁷⁶ For readers of *Nerikes Allehanda*, a journalist reporting from the World Exhibition described Lumière's cinematographe as the exhibition's best entertainment, and explained its workings as an updated version of the familiar zootrope and the praxinoscope.⁷⁷

Returning to Arbetareföreningen in Örebro and the performances that took place on 18 February 1897, perhaps the novelty of the machine and the uniqueness of this kind of event in this type of venue explain why the demonstrations had such varied prices of admission. The first class seats were 1 krona, which was expensive for an evening programme of commercial entertainment in the hall.

Other seats in the main hall cost 50 öre, and a seat in the balcony, 25 öre.⁷⁸ The programme was composed of a variety of short, spectacular, comic and amazing acts, that individually emphasised the wonder of representations of life-size photographic images in motion.⁷⁹ According to the local paper, the film show included, among other acts, a train arriving at a station, a serpentine dance, ladies with shortened skirts, people stepping on land from a rowboat, and a soldier plucking a hen. The film programme was followed by the demonstration of the graphophon.⁸⁰ What was the commentary like? Was the projectionist Rehn also a narrator and a showman? Unfortunately, no sources relate how the programme was presented. It is obvious, however, that the attraction was the medium itself and the wonder of its workings, and that the programme was construed as a special event in the context of the town's entertainments.

ÖAF was an excellent choice for introducing a new medium in a town such as Örebro. The town's progressive workers were the target audience for ordinary events performed or presented in the hall and wives were also welcome. This hall was associated with legitimate culture, with educational lectures on cultural subjects, and with travelling variety troupes that in Arbetareföreningen found an alternative to Örebro Teater. Though not a place where the bourgeoisie in general preferred to socialise or indeed were welcome to do so, special seats were offered to the well-to-do for this special event. Finally, balcony seats were set at a price that matched the lowest entrance fee for commercial entertainment. Apart from the importance of the wide range in admission prices, modelled on the theatre house or the circus, the choice of this specific hall for the presentation opened the possibility of attracting a rather large audience from the town's different classes due to ÖAF's liberal politics, especially its appeal for bridging class divisions through education.

In the first years of film exhibition, ÖAF was the preferred venue for travelling film exhibitors visiting Örebro. However, only the initial demonstration could charge such an expensive rate of admission, and no subsequent advertisement in *Nerikes Allehanda* presented film exhibition in so obvious a manner as a demonstration of the apparatus, though they did capitalise on the novelty of the attraction. The advertisements for subsequent film exhibitions emphasised improvements in technology rather than

the programme for the shows that only screened film. For shows that combined magic lantern with film, advertisements emphasised the wonders of the medium as such.

Only the advertisements that presented a novelty of some sort, something that could be news, had a chance of providing an extra boost in the marketing of the event through coverage in the paper's local columns. Consequently, the second advertisement for a film programme in Örebro read: 'New! American-Cinagraf. New! For the first time in Sweden.' The advertisement emphasised the novelty of the event, a first in Sweden, and indicated that the projector was not to be confused with the common kinematograf, this one, of course, being much better. So what was new? It was said to be an American projector, the American-Cinagraf, and boasted a programme of American subjects and views that lasted under an hour. Obviously, the advertisement presented a thematic structure tied to the notion of 'America' and its modernity. There was a list of titles included in the advertisement that probably created expectations of shock and of amazement, of beauty and fright of motion, and sex appeal, the advertisement promising a scene from an opera featuring a kiss, bragging that this scene alone was worth the entrance fee. The other views were described as: 'The Niagara Falls; The shock of New York's riding police in Central Park; The life boat or storm at sea; The US Light Artillery, Washington; Broadway and 14th Street in New York, with electric trams; The steamer Rosedale on Yukon River, Alaska, on the way to the gold mines; The execution of Maria Stuart; The lonely fisherman (comic); A fire alarm in New York; The express train 'The Canonball' travelling from Buffalo to New York at full speed; and finally, 'Annabelle', a serpentine dancer (coloured).' There is no presenter mentioned. The programme was shown on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 November 1897 at ÖAF with shows beginning every hour from seven to nine on Saturday and from five to nine on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Prices were 50 öre and 35 öre for adults, and 25 öre for children, less than the rate a variety show would charge in the same locale, but not in the cheapest price category.⁸¹ Waldekrantz identifies exhibitor Charles H. Johnson with the American-Cinagraf tour, one of many travelling film exhibitors who had emigrated to, and then returned from, America.⁸² *Nerikes Allehanda* gave the screening positive reviews, especially enjoying the comic turns.⁸³

In August 1899, an advertisement appears in

Nerikes Allehanda for shows at ÖAF of the kinematograf. The advertisement is not very informative, revealing nothing of the programme, its length or for how many days it stayed. The advertisement said that the kinematograf reveals 'with great clarity the movements of mankind', and it specified the price of admission as 35 öre for adults and 25 öre for children. The machine and its technical brilliance was promoted in the advertisement rather than the programme or a narrative.⁸⁴

The missionary church, Vasakyrkan, was another popular venue for early film exhibition in Örebro. Waldekrantz found it surprising that film shows were welcome in the chapels whereas touring theatre companies were not. As an explanation, he suggests that film exhibition tied into a tradition within the religious associations of magic-lantern screenings.⁸⁵ The advertising in *Nerikes Allehanda* for August Blom's illustrated lectures at Vasakyrkan offers a good example of the continuity between these two different screen practices. As mentioned earlier, Vasakyrkan had a tradition of offering public illustrated lectures presenting missionary work in exotic locations, and was keen on advertising its many public events in *Nerikes Allehanda*. Musical performances, singing, speeches, recitals, lectures and bazaars were frequent at the church. Former preacher August Blom showed film as part of a programme of illustrated lectures, visiting Vasakyrkan in January 1898, January 1899, and again in February 1901.⁸⁶

Despite his former profession and the context of the church for the performance, Blom's lectures did not have religious topics. His shows were multimedia events featuring travel. Film was screened as part of a longer evening performance with humorous narrative and a variety of media presentations. Blom began this show in 1898 with a number of songs and speeches reproduced by a phonograph, followed by projected images of Örebro, after which his images and narrative quickly jumped the Atlantic via London to America, a trip that many Swedes were familiar with at the time. A total of 700 stereopticon views were presented, and according to the advertisement, most of them were coloured. To end the show, Blom projected film with a machine he called a motograph.⁸⁷ He gave three performances of this show at Vasakyrkan: on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evening at 8 pm. According to *Nerikes Allehanda*, his multimedia shows were popular events that drew a large crowd, and the review was positive, ending with a recommendation to visit the show. First

class tickets were only 35 öre and second class seats were 25 öre.⁸⁸

In 1899, Blom was back at Vasakyrkan, again advertising an 'Illustrated lecture', this time accompanied by a 'Kinematograf presenting street-life and people in natural movement on the screen'. The stereopticon programme included a more diverse mix of views and lectures from different corners of the world compared with the earlier show which appeared to have a narrative focusing on a trip to America. This time a trip through the land of the midnight sun was followed by a collection of cities and buildings, after which came pictures from the Holy Land and paintings by Tissot presenting the life of Jesus. Finally, Blom promised views of Japan, China, India, Ceylon, among other exotic countries. The shows ran from Wednesday to Saturday, 1–4 February at 8 pm. A reserved seat cost 50 öre, first-class tickets, 35 öre and second-class tickets 25 öre. Extra performances for children were offered on Thursday and Friday at 4.30 pm when all seats, regardless of age, cost 15 öre.⁸⁹ There is no further mention of the show in the newspaper, probably because Blom's shows were no longer news. In 1901 Blom returned to Vasakyrkan with a new batch of 'at least 1,000' stereopticon views from his recent travels, including Paris and the 1900 World Exhibition. The title of this illustrated lecture tour was 'Around the World', which featured a 'kinematograf with living pictures of people in different countries'. This time he stayed for three evening performances with the same cheap prices before continuing his tour to chapels in the smaller communities of the region.⁹⁰

From these examples of early film exhibition we learn that film was introduced in localities where the middle and working class felt comfortable and where ticket prices were, in most cases, similar to an evening's amusement organised by the voluntary associations. There is one exception. In 1898, a travelling exhibitor announced three shows of Biografen, with an orchestra, to be held at Örebro Teater on Sunday, 3 December, with two evening performances at 6.15 and 8.30 pm and one matinée at 3.00 pm. Prices were cheaper than usual at the theatre, yet much more expensive than earlier film exhibitions had cost in town: 1.5 kronor, 1 krona, 50 öre and 35 öre.⁹¹ The exhibitor extended his stay at Örebro Teater giving two evening performances the following Wednesday through Saturday, and lowered the price in the stalls: 1 krona, first balcony 75 öre, second balcony 50 öre and standing in the

second balcony, 25 öre.⁹² The performance received a lot of attention in *Nerikes Allehanda*; the reviewer praised the show and recommended it on several occasions. In the local news column on the first day of the presentation, the advertisement read: 'Go and see Biografen ... He rehearsed yesterday evening for a few specially invited guests, who were simply delighted at the distinct, life-like and above all amusing performance.'⁹³ A couple of days later, a review was printed almost admonitory in tone, as if the reviewer was annoyed that the expected crowd did not show up:

The improved kinematograf, with the simplified name Biografen, showed a whole series of pictures from real life yesterday at Örebro Teater greatly pleasing the audience. Some of the pictures were amusing, others more instructively interesting, at times thrilling, and always entertaining, and were presented without a hitch and with life-like realism that gave full credit to the alleged improvement of Edison's admirable turn-of-the-century invention.

The audience at none of the performances was large – which is their loss.⁹⁴

A last effort was made by the newspaper to draw crowds to the event, a couple of days before Biografen was due to close:

At Örebro Teater these last few days, Biografen has performed, and also this evening news will be presented to the audience. Among the best pictures are the cantering Spanish artillery and a dance in a Spanish camp, the bull fight with its vivid scenes and the lithe picadors beautifully dodging the charging bull, the fire brigade, the Columbia regiment marching by, the train station in Japan and the children that play on the beach.⁹⁵

This high-class version of film exhibition in the prestigious theatre and with expensive admission obviously wasn't the success *Nerikes Allehanda*'s journalist had hoped for. Why *Nerikes Allehanda* put so much effort into boosting the event and the reasons for its failure to attract a large audience is, alas, a matter of speculation.

In Waldekrantz's national survey of the localities for early film exhibition, Waldenkrantz argues that the temperance associations rented their premises to exhibitors who included films in their presenta-

tions, whereas in Örebro, film exhibition was also introduced in the venues of two other kinds of associations, ÖAF and Vasakyrkan, where popular public entertainments, educational lectures (often illustrated) and public evenings exploiting exotic pictures and tales of missionary work and travel, were common. Both societies were respectable and charged with goodwill, and if the context can be said to influence the initial reception of film, the conclusion is that film established itself at the centre of this small town's culture, as Fuller has observed in discussing the introduction of film in small-town America.⁹⁶ It was the expanding middle class and the working class who formed the main audience for the earliest screenings, though an attempt was made to attract the bourgeoisie with a presentation of the Biograf at Örebro Teater. When compared with Waller's study, the more distinct class segregation based on the venues of entertainment found in Örebro differed from his description of the culture of public and commercial entertainment in Lexington, where racial segregation was more prominent than were questions of class.⁹⁷

An observation made by Waldekrantz regarding the pre-nickelodeon era in provincial Sweden concerns the absence of film as a side-show at local markets and fairgrounds, this being a common venue for early film exhibition in other countries.⁹⁸ Waldekrantz has studied the advertising for commercial amusements in regional newspapers at twenty-one markets in the year 1900, and found that circuses frequented all of the markets and travelling theatre troupes most of them. In some places, optical attractions such as panoramas were set up, but at only one marketplace were film screenings advertised.⁹⁹ In Örebro, film exhibitions were absent in the advertisements for cheap amusements associated with the annual markets. Bengt Idestam-Almquist offers this description of the circumstances under which Swedish travelling film exhibitors worked: 'Back home, film exhibitors didn't travel with big shows in the manner of the circus, as they did in some countries. Back home, they chased like lone wolves.'¹⁰⁰

It seems that the travelling film exhibitors who visited Örebro sought cultural legitimacy and a large audience by allying with the liberal and religious, though nonconformist, section of the voluntary association movement, where ideals and cultural forms in a non-confrontational politics were negotiated between the old and the new, and between classes.

Notes

1. My translation of 'Den jätte som vill känna Moder Svea på pulsen borde lägga handen just över Örebro.' Hjalmar Bergman, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 6 January 1923.
2. Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 4, 14.
3. *Ibid.*, 28–46.
4. Gregory A. Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995). The case study based on the idea of regional, if not local, differences in film history has won ground also in Great Britain. In a book-length study of Nottingham, the changing cultural politics of the city forms the socio-cultural context in a history of film consumption throughout the twentieth century. Mark Jancovich and Lucy Faire with Sarah Stubbings, *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption* (London: BFI, 2003). See also David R. Williams, *Cinema in Leicester 1896–1931* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 1993) and a rather sweeping account of film history in the small Swedish town of Lund, Lars Åhlander, *Filmen i Lund. Biograferna – filmerna – publiken* (Lund: Föreningen Gamla Lund, Årsbok 82, 2000).
5. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon. Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991); Miriam Hansen, 'Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?', in Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (eds.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1994), 228–246; Miriam Hansen, 'Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Permutations of the Public Sphere', *Screen* 34, 3 (Autumn 1993): 197–210.
6. The choice of socio-cultural context, he writes, is always 'to some extent arbitrary and always important in determining what we end up saying about entertainment in general and the movies in particular.' Waller, *Main Street Amusements*, xvi.
7. Miriam Hansen, 'Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?', 237.
8. Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Den kultiverade människan* (Malmö: Gleerups förlag, 1979), 30.
9. The homogenisation of culture in Sweden had a unique make-up, based on a social-democratic interpretation of a modern utopian, inclusive state. In Swedish this utopian vision is summarised in the term *folkhemmet*, a home for all the people. For a discussion of film, visual culture and commercial publicity in Stockholm in the 1930s, understood within the context of social engineering, see Ylva Habel's doctoral dissertation, *Modern Media, Modern Audiences: Mass Media and Social Engineering in the 1930s Swedish Welfare State* (Stockholm: Aura förlag, 2002).
10. Miriam Hansen, 'Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?', 235.
11. Jan Olsson, 'Svart på vitt: film, makt och censur', *Aura. Filmvetenskaplig tidskrift* 1, 1 (1995): 14–46. Olsson's essay describes how early cinema in Sweden was regulated on a national level through public discourse. On the teachers investment in film at this time and the fate of educational cinema, see Åsa Jernudd, 'Educational Cinema and Censorship in Sweden, 1911–1921', in John Fullerton and Jan Olsson (eds.), *Nordic Explorations: Film Before 1930* (Sydney: John Libbey, 1999), 152–162. For an analysis of the campaign against commercial entertainment in the Stockholm press, see Ulf Boëthius, *När Nick Carter drevs på flykten* (Södertälje: Gidlunds förlag, 1989).
12. Frykman and Löfgren's study, *Den kultiverade människan*, is a much quoted example of the theory of the cultural construction of the modern (i.e. middle-class) Swede by internalising on a personal and collective level mechanisms of discipline and control that were inherent in classical bourgeois culture.
13. Waldekrantz assumes that cultural forms evolve from primitive to advanced forms; they bloom. In the case of cinema, its bloom was the realisation of the narrative feature and the cultural values of bourgeois culture. This thinking was in no way unique; it can be recognised in pre-1980s international film historiography generally. (The change in thinking is usually dated to the 1978 FIAF meeting in Brighton when early cinema was rediscovered by the academic community.) The point is that cinema was happily married to bourgeois culture in its standardised narrative form, and indications of other identities, historical or contemporary, were marginalised or suppressed. Rune Waldekrantz, *Levande fotografier. Film och biograf i Sverige 1896–1906* (Unpublished thesis, Stockholm University, 1969). For a balance to Waldekrantz's emphasis on narrative film, see Pelle Snickars, *Svensk film och visuell masskultur 1900* (Stockholm: Aura Förlag, 2001). Tracing geo- and topographical reproductions in a variety of media in Stockholm around the year 1900, Snickars finds that such standardised nonfiction forms dominated the visual mass media at the turn of the century.
14. See, for example, Björn Horgby, *Egensinne och skötsamhet. Arbetarekulturen i Norrköping 1850–1940* (Stockholm: Carlssons bokförlag, 1993). An excellent example within a Swedish film academic context of a revised history that pays heed to the local and the individual, yet remains sensitive to social questions of class and culture is Jan Olsson,

- Sensationer från en bakgård. Frans Lundberg som biografägare och filmproducent i Malmö och Köpenhamn* (Stockholm and Lund: Symposion, 1988). There is also an example of a case study of the history of the individuals tied to a specific film company in the Swedish town of Jönköping which also outlines the early film business in the town. Mikael Nordström, and Lars Östvall, *Äventyr i filmbranschen. Om entrepreneurerna John Johansson och John Ek från Jönköping, deras biografier, distribution och filmproduktion samt nedslag i Jönköpings film- och biografiv 1897–2002* (Jönköping: Jönköping läns museum, 2002).
15. Waller, *Main Street Amusements*, 39.
 16. Rune Waldekrantz, *Levande fotografier*.
 17. The industrial boom started in 1895/96 when electric energy became available on a commercial basis in the city. Elsa Lunander, *Borgaren blir företagare. Studier kring ekonomiska, sociala och politiska förhållanden i förändringens Örebro under 1800-talet* (Studia Historica Upsaliensia 155. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989), 49–50.
 18. *Nerikes Allehanda* competed with two other papers that were distributed on a regular basis in Örebro around the turn of the twentieth century: the conservative *Örebro Tidning* (1856–1900) which was replaced by *Örebro Dagblad* (1900–1956) and the moderately liberal *Nerikes-Tidningen* (1896–1944). In 1902, the social-democratic *Örebro-kuriren* (1902–) was founded and distributed on a weekly basis. Karl-Erik Gustafsson and Per Rydén (eds.), *Den svenska pressens historia. III. Det moderna Sveriges spegel (1897–1945)* (Stockholm: Ekerlids förlag, 2001), 60.
 19. Waldekrantz, *Levande fotografier*, 116 and 215. However, another of the first generation of Swedish film historians, Bengt Idestam-Almquist, was more sceptical of the reliability of the daily press as a source for documenting early exhibition, believing that not all of the travelling showmen could afford the advertisements. Bengt Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners förlag, 1959), 86. This is, of course, a tricky issue, as no evidence exists to indicate what may not have been advertised in the press.
 20. Eva Eriksson, *Den moderna staden tar form. Arkitektur och debatt 1910–1935* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 2001), 326–327.
 21. Known as *Norstedtska huset* or *Societetshuset*.
 22. A new play was commissioned for the opening of Örebro Teater in 1853, titled *Örebro fåfänga* (Örebro vanity), alluding to the high cultural values that the prestigious building so blatantly expressed and insinuating that perhaps the building was too lavish considering the size of the town. Owner and editor-in-chief of *Nerikes Allehanda* 1855–81, Arvid Gu-maelius (1833–1908), bought Örebro Teater in 1875. A fire in 1882 led to a change of ownership, yet photographs of the building from the end of the nineteenth century reveal that a printing office and *Nerikes Allehanda's* editorial office resided in the theatre's two wings. See photos in collection of Örebro Länsarv.
 23. The advertisements did not include ticket prices for the theatre, but frequently referred to them as 'the usual'. The prices listed here are from a billboard printed in Örebro in 1899 for *Jorden runt på åttio dagar* (Around the World in 80 Days) performed on the 27 October by Selanderska sällskapet, held at Örebro Länsarv. Sällskapet Philomele charged the same prices for a musical/dramatical soirée at the theatre on 19 and 20 March 1898, as did August Lindberg's company for a performance of Ibsen's drama *Gengångare* (Ghosts) on the 13 December 1889, according to billboards at Örebro Stadsarkiv.
 24. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 17 December 1897.
 25. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 11 January 1897, 3 February 1897, 19 April 1897, 26 April 1897.
 26. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 8 February 1899, 28 April 1899 and 8 November 1899. *Oscarsbalen* was more expensive, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 18 November 1899.
 27. Minneskrift *Stora Hotellet Örebro 1858 1/10 1948* (Örebro, 1948), Örebro Stadsarkiv. Several clubs and societies met and still meet regularly at Stora Hotellet. The most famous is *Berghanteringens vänner*, representatives of the mining industries in Bergslagen, who met at Stora Hotellet during the annual market in January, Hindersmässan. See the programme for the 100 year jubilee, *Stora Hotellet Örebro under 100 år*, Örebro Stadsarkiv.
 28. The spa specialised in treatment for female ailments such as nervous strain (*svaga nerver*), gynaecological disorders, anaemia, hysteria and melancholia. *Adolfsbergs Brunns- och Badanstalt invid Örebro* (Örebro, Länstidningens Tryckeri, 1906), Arkivcentrum Örebro Län.
 29. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 9 June 1899, 21 June 1899, 14 July 1899, 15 July 1899, 21 July 1899 and 3 August 1899.
 30. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 8 April 1897, 2 June 1897; 20 January and 7 April 1898.
 31. A permanent circus building was built in January 1900, located just north of the castle, and east of Storgatan. See advertisement for Bergman's circus, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 20 January 1900.
 32. For an account of the circus in Sweden, see Per Arne Wåhlberg, *Cirkus i Sverige. Bidrag till vårt lands kulturhistoria* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 1992).
 33. An exception to the rule of having an equestrian show in the circus was the Dutch circus that arrived in town in the winter of 1899 and set up a tank with 150,000

- litres of water in and around which performances were held with fountains, boats and illuminations, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 16 February 1899.
34. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 21 April 1897, 14 May 1897, 2 September 1897; *Nerikes Allehanda*, 12 January 1898, 9 April 1898, 1 September 1898, 10 November 1898. An amateur circus performed equestrian and gymnastic acts, followed by a 'tableau vivant' in the town's stable in 1898. Its purpose was to raise funds in defence of the nation, led by *Lokalföreningen i Örebro af Sveriges Kvinnoförbund för Fosterlandets försvar*, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 22 March 1898; *Nerikes Allehanda*, 25 January 1899, 16 February 1899, 28 April 1899, 30 May 1899, 2 August 1899 and 26 August 1899.
 35. Not even the week-long market held annually in January, Hindersmässan, would be sure of attracting a circus. There is no mention of circus visits in *Nerikes Allehanda* in January 1897 or in January 1902.
 36. The above admission rates should be understood in the context of average incomes of the period. The hourly earnings for male workers in manufacturing and mining in 1898 was 28 öre. The hourly earnings of unskilled public service workers in 1898 were 27 öre and for skilled public service workers, 36 öre. Gösta Bagge, Erik Lundberg and Ingvar Svenilsson, *Wages, Cost of Living and National Income in Sweden 1860–1930*. Vol. 2. *Wages in Sweden 1860–1930. Part 1* (London: P.S. King; Stockholm: Norstedt, 1933), 48, and Vol. 2, *Part 2*, 26–27. Another source reveals the actual income of a woman in the tobacco industry in 1900 who worked 58.5 hours a week and earned 11 öre per hour. Lars O. Lagerqvist and Ernst Nathorst-Böös, *Vad kostade det? Priser och löner från medeltid till våra dagar* (Stockholm: LTs förlag, 1984), 101.
 37. Karl-Erik Gustafsson and Per Rydén, *Den svenska pressens historia. II. Åren då allting hände (1830–1897)* (Stockholm: Ekerlids förlag, 2001), 263.
 38. Between 1850 and 1920, the Swedish population increased from 3.5 to 5.9 million. In 1900 the temperance movement had more than 200,000 members; in 1910 membership peaked to 350,000 and then dropped. The religious organisations had 150,000 members in 1900, in 1920, 300,000. The labour associations had slightly under 50,000 members in 1900, and in 1920 the figure was 300,000. Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren. Idéer och ideal i ett norrländskt sågverkssamhälle 1880–1930* (Carlsson bokförlag, 1998), 235. Sven Lundkvist, *Folkrörelserna i det svenska samhället 1850–1920* (Historiska inst vid Uppsala Uni, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 37, 66–75.
 39. It should be noted that although many of the associations had the same or similar goals, the politics involved in reaching these goals varied considerably between and also within associations. Sven Lundkvist, *Politik, nykterhet och reformer. En studie i folk-rörelsernas politiska verksamhet 1900–1920* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974), 46–69. Male members dominated the movements, the majority of which belonged to the lower middle class or skilled workers. The religious societies included members from all levels of society, though women from the lowest strata dominated numerically. Lundkvist, *Folk-rörelserna i det svenska samhället 1850–1920*, 128.
 40. Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*, 239.
 41. Lundkvist, *Politik, nykterhet och reformer*.
 42. Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*, 82–95.
 43. *Ibid.*, 247–269.
 44. Recitations (*deklamationer*), as distinct from a public reading, involved the recitation of a text by heart.
 45. It is interesting to note that the temperance halls, though discreet in their outward appearance, inherited their interior architectural design from the non-conformist church chapel. Karin Lindvall and Christian Richette, 'Folk-rörelser och folk-rörelsemiljöer', in Egon Thun (ed.), *Från Bergslags och Bondebygd 1979* (Örebro: Årsbok för Örebro Läns Hembygdsförbund och Stiftelsen Örebro Läns Museum, 1979), 111–230, 193.
 46. Jan-Bertil Schnell, 'Folk-rörelsernas byggnader', in Thomas Hall and Katarina Dunér (eds.), *Svenska hus. Landsbygdens arkitektur – från bondesamhälle till industrialism* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 1999), 197–209.
 47. Waldekrantz, *Levande fotografier*, 215–220.
 48. Örebro Första Baptistförsamling, a baptist society, met in Betelkyrkan (built in 1876); Örebro Evangelisk Lutherska Missionsförening, an evangelical society, met at Lutherska missionshuset (1862); Örebro Brödräfsamling belonged to Svenska Missionsförbundet, another evangelical society with slightly different beliefs, and built Vasakyrkan in 1890; Örebro Metodistförsamling, a local division of the Methodist church of Sweden, met in Salemkapellet (1871); Örebro Adventistförsamling, belonging to the Swedish equivalent of the American Seventh-Day Adventist church, met in Adventkyrkan (1891); Frälsningsarmén, a local division of the international Salvation Army, bought Gamla Betelkapellet (1858) from the baptists in 1889; and Baptistförsamlingen Filadelfia, a local Pentecostal society, built Filadelfiakyrkan in 1898 – earlier they had meetings at Norra Salen. Olle Bergström, *Från Betelkapellet till Sörby kyrkan. Några fakta om väckelserörelsens uppkomst och utveckling i Örebro*, (Örebro: Högskolan i Örebro, unpublished, 1983), held at Arkivcentrum, Örebro.
 49. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 31 March 1897; 27 December 1898; 8 September and 11 September 1899.
 50. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 10 January 1897, 21 February

- 1897, 11 March 1897, 30 May 1897; 22 January 1898, 8 February 1898, 4 April 1898; and 11 December 1899.
51. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 9 September 1898, 3 November 1898; 7 December 1899; 23 April 1900, 8 May 1900, 30 August 1900 and 9 November 1900.
 52. These details were prepared by Håkan Henriksson, archivist at Arkivcentrum, Örebro (with the reservation of not being complete) by reading programmes printed by the associations.
 53. The house on Trädgårdsgatan was built in the 1880s, a two-story brick building with a large open hall and windows. The house on Fredsgatan was built in 1900 and was a large brick building with decoration around the windows and two towers flanking its sides. It had both a smaller hall for internal meetings and a larger hall used for public events. Karin Lindvall and Christian Richette, 'Folkrörelser och folkrörelsemiljöer', Egon Thun (ed.), *Från Bergslag och Bondebygd 1979*, 111–230 and 193–196.
 54. Mats Ekström, *Arbetarklass och arbetarrörelse i Örebro 1890–1950* (Örebro: Högskolan i Örebro, Department of Sociology, unpublished paper, 1987), held at Örebro University.
 55. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 22 April 1897; 5 January 1898, 18 February 1898, 25 February 1898, 19 March 1898, 23 March 1898; 14 February and 28 April 1899. They later advertised parties at Gamla Gatan 9. In the summer of 1902, Örebro Arbetarekommun opened an amusement park, a Folkets Park, in the vicinity of the railway yards. At Folkets Park there was a café, games to rent, and on weekends and public holidays there was dancing and entertainment. See *Nerikes Allehanda*, 5 July 1902, 12 July 1902, 22 July 1902 and 31 July 1902.
 56. In 1881, the workers in the local society expelled employers from leading positions in the society on the grounds that it was difficult to debate political issues and discuss workers social conditions with the employers present. *Örebro Arbetareförenings Minneskrift 1881–1931* (Örebro, 1931), leaflet printed for ÖAF's jubilee held at Örebro Stadsarkiv. Researchers disagree as to the degree of compliance with hegemonic ideology in these liberal workers' associations. A good guess is that it differed from place to place and changed over time, the expansion of the middle class having likely contributed to increased compliance. See Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*, 241–242 and Björn Horgby, *Egensinne och skötsamhet*, 46–55.
 57. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 4 January 1900. The children's Christmas party, which later in the evening turned into a ball, was also held at Stora Hotellet, perhaps in celebration of the turn of a century. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 10 January 1900.
 58. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 28 January 1899, 18 November and 1 December 1899.
 59. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 January 1897, 7 January 1897, 19 January 1897, 4 February 1897, 12 March 1897, 18 March 1897, 27 October 1897, 29 December 1897; 7 January 1898, 18 February 1898, 3 November 1898; 2 January 1899, 22 February 1899, 24 March 1899, 12 October 1899 and 26 October 1899.
 60. In 1897, the following artists advertised performances at Arbetareföreningen in *Nerikes Allehanda*: comedian Gasparone with pianist Miss Svanfeldt, 21 March; Gymnast and juggler O. Andréen and singer J. Berthmann, 25 March and 1 April; A. Hammar, 23 April; Illusionist Professor Charlis Pettersén, 7 and 15 October; H.W. Lindholm, 26 November; Lars Bonde, 10 and 16 December; comedian 'Pehr i Fryksdalen', 23 December.
 61. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 27 July 1898, 3 August 1898, 10 August 1898, 24 August 1898, 31 August 1898 and 2 September 1898.
 62. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 21 June 1898, 9 July 1898, 14 July 1898, 30 July 1898, 5 August 1898, 19 August 1898 and 2 September 1898.
 63. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 17 January 1897, 4 February 1897, 5 February 1897, 12 February 1897; 17 January 1899, 30 January 1899, 2 February 1899, 13 February 1899 and 14 February 1899.
 64. A wax doll of Dr Nansen and pictures of his expedition to the North Pole was exhibited in the courtyard of Östlund's ammunition store, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 24 January 1897; another advertisement featured a tattooed man put on display in the east wing of the theatre, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 29 January 1897.
 65. An aborigine was exhibited during the spring market, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 19 April 1897; in time for the autumn market a menagerie set up its tent, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 1 September, 1897; and a panorama was installed, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 5 September 1897. Other side-shows at the harbour were a theatre of illusions and a theatre featuring spiritual séances and snake shows, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 September 1898; Klein's Menagerie, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 21 January 1899; comedian R. Moberg, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 29 April 1899.
 66. Lindberg's circus appeared at Alnängarna, Bros. H. Düringer's Ceroplastic and Anatomic Museum, and Lüttgren's Panopticon were exhibited at Alnängarna, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 26 and 30 August 1899; whereas Scholz' Menagerie set up his tent by the harbour, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 31 August 1899.
 67. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 25 January 1900.
 68. As Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings convincingly argue in *The Place of the Audience*.
 69. Waller, *Main Street Amusements*, 38–64; 40, 42, 44.
 70. On the rare occasions when variety-show artists performed at the theatre house with cheaper admission than was customary, the entertainment would

- preferably and reassuringly be advertised as a 'Family Soirée', to guarantee its respectability. See the advertisements for Mr and Mrs August Wahlgren, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 21 November 1897; Julia Nilsson and Lars Bondesson *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 February 1898; and H. Nihlén, C. Alfonso and A. Zackrisson, *Nerikes Allehanda*, 2 April 1898.
71. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 104, 107 and 134–144.
 72. In 1901 and 1902 there was a decline in the number of exhibitors, but in 1903 the market was more bouyant, thanks to the increase in supply of attractive, preferably narrative films. *Ibid.*, 120.
 73. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 17 February 1897. As in the US, Edison's name had high commercial value being used to market audio and visual inventions of all kinds. See Waller, *Main Street Amusements*, 28, 29 and Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 26, 73 and 123.
 74. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 17 February 1897, 18 February 1897.
 75. The enterprising Germans were baker Otto Meichner, gardener Max Ferdinand Haberman and two visiting countrymen, Ornaz and Buchau. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 71–74 and 121–122.
 76. Waldekranz, *ibid.*, 93; A reassessment of the story commonly told of the first screenings and cinemas in Sweden is offered in Bengt Liljenberg, *Filmen kommer till Sverige. Anteckningar om filmens väg till Sverige, om föreisarna och de första föreställningarna* (Malmö: Förlag Kolibri AB, 2002), 36.
 77. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 12 June 1897.
 78. The seats in the front rows were definitely not the best seats in terms of viewing comfort, yet the early film exhibitors modelled their ticket prices on the theatre and the circus. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 224.
 79. An example of the 'cinema of attractions'. See Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', in Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (eds.), *Early Cinema*, 56–62.
 80. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 18 February 1897. Waldekranz has reconstructed the programme and identified the films in a Méliès catalogue as: *Danse serpentine* (no. 44), *Arrivée d'un train* (no. 7 or 35), *Place de L'Opéra* (no. 9 or 17), *Les Haleurs de bateau* (no. 49?), *Défense d'afficher* (no. 15), *Salut malencontreux* (no. 36), *Cortège du tsar, Versailles* (no. 48), *Cortège du tsar, Bois de Boulogne* (no. 50), *Dessinateur: reine Victoria* (no. 61), *Baignade en mer* (no. 40), *Jetée et plage de Trouville* (no. 32), *Le Bivouac* (no. 64), *L'arroseur* (no. 6). Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 75–76.
 81. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 18 November 1897.
 82. Others were A. Blom, E. Lundbäck, K. Rudbäck, G. E. Gooes Jr., and N. Svensson. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 120, 285. Waldekranz writes that Johnson started his tour in Arboga on 27 November 1897, 134. This must be incorrect considering Johnson exhibited his American-Cinagraf in Örebro on 20 November 1897. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 18 November 1897.
 83. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 20 November 1897.
 84. It could be that *Nerikes Allehanda* ignored the event because of poor advertising combined, perhaps, with the fact that the medium was no longer new. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 21 August 1899.
 85. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 220.
 86. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 22 January 1898; 28 January 1899; 16 February 1901. Blom returned once more in 1902 for shows at the Baptist church. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 14 February 1902.
 87. According to the advertisement in *Nerikes Allehanda*, 22 January 1898, though the paper's criticism of the event speaks of the motograph as if it were a phonograph. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 February 1898.
 88. When he had closed in Örebro, Blom continued his tour moving on to smaller community chapels in the vicinity of Örebro and, in the case of Kumla, at the railway station. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 22 January 1898 and 3 February 1898.
 89. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 28 and 31 January 1899.
 90. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 16 and 20 February 1901.
 91. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 December 1898.
 92. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 6 and 8 December 1898.
 93. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 3 December 1898.
 94. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 5 December 1898.
 95. *Nerikes Allehanda*, 9 December 1898.
 96. Fuller, *At the Picture Show*.
 97. Waller, *Main Street Amusements*.
 98. See the work of Vanessa Toulmin on film as fair-ground attraction in Great Britain: 'Telling the Tale. The Story of the Fairground Bioscope Shows and the Showmen who Operated Them', *Film History* 6, 2 (1994): 219–237, and entries for 'The Fairground Bioscope' and 'Bioscope Biographies' in Colin Harding and Simon Popple (eds.), *In the Kingdom of Shadows: A Companion to Early Cinema* (London: Cygnus Arts; Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 191–206 and 249–261, respectively.
 99. Waldekranz, *Levande fotografier*, 216–218.
 100. My translation: 'Hos oss för inte filmvisarna omkring som stora shows i cirkusstil, vilket skedde på sina håll i utlandet. Hos oss jagade de för det mesta som ensamma vargar.' Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige*, 124.