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Film Practices on the Interstices between Art and Commerce:
A Study of Gösta Werner's *Tåget* (1948)



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Abstract

This thesis centers on the work of the Swedish critic, filmmaker, and scholar Gösta Werner (1908-2009) and analyzes his commissioned short film *Tåget - en film om resor och jordbundenhet* (1948). Although recent developments in film studies show an upsurge of interest in the previously neglected field of the industrial film, in-depth case studies of the relationship between filmmaker and commissioner remain rare. This analysis draws on the concept of the three A's as it has been described in recent writings of Thomas Elsaesser. Studying the relationship between the filmmaker and the commissioner Statens Järnvägar (The Swedish State Railways), the reason behind the production, and the use of the film, it becomes apparent that *Tåget* moves between a wide spectrum of film cultural spheres reaching a broad and multifaceted audience. Analyzing the film text and the formal devices employed, the thesis concludes that the commissioned film domain offered Werner the opportunity to experiment while it at the same time issued constraints.

Keywords: gösta werner, statens järnvägar, commissioned film, industrial film, short film.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Gösta Werner: A Multidimensional Filmmaker

A common Swedish proverb says “A beloved child is called many things”, meaning someone who is popular is referred to by several epithets. To mention this saying in relation to the late filmmaker Gösta Werner (1908-2009) is fitting because his omnipresence in Swedish film history—as a critic, filmmaker, and scholar—has led to numerous inscriptions being attributed to his name: philanthropist, outcast, intelligent, arrogant, experimental, epigenous. Suffice to say, Werner’s role in Swedish cinema can be described as nothing less than multidimensional. Beginning in 1929, following the most recent trend in European cinephilia and the creation of film studios in Paris, Amsterdam and Stockholm, Werner became one of the founding members of Lunds studenters filmstudio (Lund Students’ Film Studio).¹ In the 1930s and 40s, film aficionados in Sweden primarily knew Werner as a film critic. In these years, Werner prominently featured as a writer in the critical journals *Biografbladet* and *Filmfront*, while for the former he also functioned as editor-in-chief. With his book *Kameran går* (1944), exploring everything from the vibrant Dadaist and Surrealist cinemas of the 1920s to the contemporary Swedish film scene, Werner became one of the most influential Swedish film writers, together with Bengt Idestam-Almqvist and Rune Waldekranz, satisfying a growing demand for in-depth critical thinking on this popular art form.² Later, Werner would successfully develop this critical approach to film in the academic world where he not only became the first Swedish scholar honored with a PhD in film studies, but also renowned around the world for his archival discoveries of lost films from the Swedish Golden Age.³

This thesis, however, focuses on Gösta Werner’s filmmaking practices and more specifically those within the field of the industrial film. Parallel to a boom in the Swedish film industry between the late 1940s and the end of the 1950s, Werner began his filmmaking career that would ultimately result in the production of well over forty

¹ Rune Waldekranz, “Gösta Werner filmskapare och forskare”, in *Gösta Werner 90 år: En hyllning till vår äldste filmare*, Svenska filmakademin, Stockholm, 1998, p. 7.

² Bengt Forslund, ”En studie i Gösta Werners författarskap”, in *Gösta Werner 90 år: En hyllning till vår äldste filmare*, Svenska filmakademin, Stockholm, 1998, p. 13.

³ Gösta Werner, *Mauritz Stiller och hans filmer: 1912–1916*, Stockholm, 1971.

films over a span of more than fifty years (1943-1998).⁴ His first ventures in the film industry include chronicles for the Royal family as well as commercials for well-known Swedish corporations such as the coffee company Gevalia. In 1946, Werner saw his major breakthrough with the controversial experimental film *Midvinterblot* (*The Sacrifice*, 1946), which still constitutes his most frequently cited contribution to film history. Following this, he directed a range of feature films, each receiving a mix of favorable and unenthusiastic reviews. As the late filmmaker himself reportedly noted, described in an obituary by the Swedish film scholar Leif Furhammar, his feature films only made his adversaries happy.⁵

More appreciated in short length format, Werner instead emerged as one of Sweden's most prominent short film directors, producing a variety of films most commonly commissioned by either private or public companies. On the one hand, Werner wrote and directed a great many short documentaries and chronicles that focused on the documentation of industries' activities and the communication of their aims, such as *En svensk storindustri* (1954), *Öden bortom horisonten* (1956) and *Land of Liberty* (1958). On the other hand, the commissioners often offered Werner significant creative freedom, which resulted in a number of inventive short films, such as *Att döda ett barn* (*To Kill a Child*, 1953) and *Skymningsljus* (*City Twilight*, 1955), being praised on artistic merits. Because the films belonging to the latter category negotiate the relationship between art and commerce, two words often diametrically opposed, in a hands-on fashion, this thesis primarily focuses on one of these films. *Tåget* (*The Train*, 1948), ordered by Statens Järnvägar (The Swedish State Railways, SJ for short), was produced the same year as Werner's made his major directorial breakthrough with *Midvinterblot* (1946). The film was widely circulated not only nationally, through Svensk Filmindustri's (SF) short film programs and SJ's own distribution system, but also internationally, on the global film festival circuit, where it won several awards.

Werner's corpus of commissioned films is largely neglected when discussing his legacy as a film pioneer. To closely analyze one of Gösta Werner's films thus becomes significant for two reasons: first of all, it can be fruitful to study how the

⁴ Leif Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige: en historia i tio kapitel*, Wiken and Svenska Filminstitutet, Höganäs, 1991, p. 199.

⁵ Leif Furhammar, "Gösta Werner," *Fokus*, 21-08-2009, collected from: <http://www.fokus.se/2009/08/gosta-werner/>, 03-09-2012, print in the possession of the author.

dynamics between the filmmaker and the commissioning body materializes in the production of the film, gaining an improved understanding of this unique yet overlooked strand of filmmaking. Secondly, such an analysis could moreover help us gain a better picture of Werner's position within the Swedish film industry as a whole.

1.2 Aims, Method and Outline

The purpose of this essay is to perform a case study of the short film *Tåget* and in that way examine the industrial production context and what affect that has on the aesthetics and rhetoric of this film. In the form of non-diegetic opening credits, the film clearly acknowledges its commissioner indicating that the film's aim is to present a cinematic vision relating to a specific industry or commissioning body. This means that the relationship between the artist and the commissioner becomes central to this paper. Taking this into consideration, my analysis subsequently focuses on how this film is structured from a formal and a rhetorical point-of-view. My main research question is: What is at stake in the negotiation between the artists' vision and the commissioning body's objective in the production of this film? What are the consequences for how this film addresses an audience? And how does this discussion affect the film's reception? Lastly, the thesis contextualizes this film by having a closer look at the complex dynamics governing the short film production in Sweden prior to the institutionalization of Svenska Filminstitutet (the Swedish Film Institute, 1963) and tries to answer how this affects Werner's marginal position within the Swedish film canon.⁶ I find *Tåget* particularly interesting because of the fact that a state-owned company, SJ, commissioned it for a purpose. At the same time, this film was produced during a period that arguably could be described as Werner's most productive years as a filmmaker, which makes the relationship between the up-and-coming filmmaker and the commissioner particularly interesting to study.

From a theoretical point-of-view, the thesis centers on two main problems. First, to trace the discursive networks, the power relations and the conflicts behind the production of these commissioned films, film theorists such as Thomas Elsaesser's appropriation of the concept "media archeology", alluding to Michel Foucault's

⁶ Cf. Janet Staiger, "The Politics of Film Canons", *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring, 1985), pp. 4-23.

notion of archaeology of knowledge⁷, become particularly central.⁸ Second, drawing on contemporary media theory, I will situate Gösta Werner's film practices in relation to the historiography of the commissioned film, emphasizing how this body of films has been ascribed multiple functions—as an artistic object, as an historical object and as a server of a utilitarian purpose.⁹

Methodologically this thesis centers on a close textual and contextual analysis of *Tåget*. When discussing the film text, I will make use of what Kristin Thompson describes as a neoformalist approach to film analysis, scrutinizing the aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions of the film.¹⁰ However, I will synthesize Thompson's approach to film analysis with the New Film History's emphasis on context and first study the production, distribution and reception of the film. In this sense, rather than focusing on ontological and representational issues imbued in the question *what is cinema?*, this thesis explores the question *when is cinema?*¹¹ In other words, my main goal is to identify the conditions that make certain strands of filmmaking possible. In doing so, I make use of the film scholar Thomas Elsaesser's concept of the three A's, studying the films' *Auftrag* (commissioner), *Anlass* (reason), and *Adressat* (use).¹²

I have divided the thesis into three levels and the chapter outline follows this. Initially, I will present an overview of the *theoretical* framework and analytical tools that I will make use of in this thesis. In doing so, I will first examine the current state of industrial film research taking Elsaesser's plea for an analysis of the three A's as a starting point. Secondly, drawing on the notion of media archaeology, I will discuss different modes of historiography relating to the industrial film. Following this, I will provide an *historical* overview of the industrial film with emphasis on Sweden, highlighting how it has developed from the silent film era of the early 1900s to the short film programs of the 1950s until its role after the introduction of the television.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, Routledge, London, 2002.

⁸ Cf. Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology", *Cinémas* 14 (2): 2004, pp. 75-117.

⁹ Cf. William Uricchio, "Historicizing Media in Transition", in David Thorburn, Henry Jenkins, and Brad Seawell, *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, pp. 23-38.

¹⁰ Kristin Thompson, "Neoformalist Film Analysis: One Approach, Many Methods", in *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 3 ff.

¹¹ Thomas Elsaesser, 2004, p. 99.

¹² Thomas Elsaesser, "Die Stadt von morgen: Filme zum Bauen und Wohnen," in Klaus Kreimeier, Antje Ehmann and Jeanpaul Goergen (eds.), *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland. Band 2: Weimarer Republik 1918-1933*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005, pp. 381-409.

In this part, I will put emphasis on the discourse when Gösta Werner's commissioned films were being produced (from the 1940s to the 1960s) and specifically the fashion in which the industrial film was conceptualized by filmmakers, critics, and audiences. I will then perform a *case study* of the film, zooming in on both its production context and its aesthetic and rhetorical structure. In the conclusion, I will situate the film and its production circumstances in the short film domain of the period, providing a final discussion on the relationship between filmmaker and commissioner.

1.3 Critical Approaches to Industrial Film

Many recent investigations have brought attention to the scholarly problems the research field of industrial film faces. One of the most problematic aspects is the matter of definition. As Anna Heymer and Patrick Vonderau argue in the anthology *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (2009), there is a lack of terminological clarity partly deriving from a semantic confusion. For instance, the authors note that industrial film historically has had many epithets: “corporate film”, “non-theatrical film”, “sponsored film”, and “business film” are just a few examples.¹³ Meanwhile, as Thomas Elsaesser notes, the industrial film often serves merely as a subheading for the even broader term *Gebrauchsfilm* (utility film), within which such diverse practices as educational films, military films, and science films are included.¹⁴

Another problem highlighted by Heymer and Vonderau is that industrial films have historically been neglected partly because of their uncertain genre placement. In *Film History: An Introduction*, for instance, Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell discuss the industrial film under the heading of the documentary genre. The authors comment on this decision in the introduction: “There are other types of cinema, most notably educational, industrial, and scientific films, but, whatever their intrinsic interest, for the moment they play secondary roles in most historians' concerns.”¹⁵ *The Routledge Companion to Film History* serves as another example where the

¹³ Anna Heymer and Patrick Vonderau, “Industrial Films: An Analytical Bibliography”, in Vinzenz Hediger & Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 408.

¹⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, “Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media”, in Vinzenz Hediger & Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 23.

¹⁵ Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 2. ed., McGraw-Hill, Boston, 2002, p. 2.

dynamic between sponsors and filmmakers is only explored briefly, and that in a section on “Documentary film”, paying no particular attention to its diversity and complexity.¹⁶ Similarly, in Swedish historical film encyclopedias and overviews the industrial film either tends to be given little space or be treated as a subheading to other film genres. In Gösta Werner’s own overview *Den svenska filmens historia* from 1978, the commissioned film is briefly dealt with under the heading of “Experimentalfilm, kortfilm, dokumentärfilm” (Experimental film, Short film, and Documentary film).¹⁷ Despite having first hand experience of this domain, Werner does not explore its dynamics in depth, but discusses the niche concisely in association to a few of his and the internationally renowned short film director Arne Sucksdorff’s commissioned films. In the preface to the currently most influential overview of Swedish film history *Filmen i Sverige*, ranging from the Golden Age to the end of the 1990s, Leif Furhammar apologetically notes that both the short film and the commissioned film are treated cold-heartedly in this volume.¹⁸ Furhammar blames this on a lack of expertise on the subject, especially during the latter quarter of a century. Accordingly, the commissioned films that do get mentioned in this impressive volume, like the ones of Gösta Werner, Alex. Jute and Egil Holmsen, tend to lack proper contextualization. According to Heymer and Vonderau, the recurring conflation of different film practices is problematic because it erases the particularities that make up the industrial film as a whole. The authors argue that by seeing the industrial film as a subheading to the documentary one “overlooks the characteristic forms of production and use in industrial film, its responsibility to the *commissioning body*, and its close connection to its *use* for the company”.¹⁹

But what is the industrial film then? As we have seen, there is a need for a conceptual clarification. In my thesis, I will discuss both the terms ‘industrial film’ and ‘commissioned film’. By using dual terms I might run the risk of adding to what Heymer and Vonderau describe as a semantic confusion. The industrial film serves as a generic term including a range of films, from advertisements and informational films to documentations of the workplace and training films, all with the common

¹⁶ Brian Winston, “Documentary film”, in William Howard Gynn (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Film History*, Routledge, London, 2011, pp. 85-87.

¹⁷ Gösta Werner, *Den svenska filmens historia: en översikt*, 2nd revised edition, Norstedt, Stockholm, 1978, p. 167.

¹⁸ Leif Furhammar, 1991, p. 8.

¹⁹ Anna Heymer and Patrick Vonderau, 2009, p. 406.

denominator that they were produced with a pragmatic purpose catering to a sponsor or an industry. When positioning Gösta Werner's filmmaking practices in a historical context, one must make reference to this diverse set of film practices. Further, I will make use of the term commissioned film. I am doing so primarily for two reasons. First of all, the term 'commissioned film' is a literal translation of the Swedish term *beställningsfilm*, which was most commonly used to describe Gösta Werner's film practices in contracts, reviews, and interviews. Secondly, by using this term, I acknowledge the agency of both the commissioning body and the filmmaker. While Gösta Werner's films arguably fit within the confines of the more inclusive term industrial film, in the sense that they were made with sponsorship and for a specific purpose, one must also note that a tension arises when the filmmaker himself primarily classifies his works as artistic or experimental short films. Using this term thus becomes important because it allows us to remain historically specific in our exploration of the dynamic interplay between filmmaker and commissioner.

Despite the fact that industrial films are among "the most prolific formats or genres in film history", Hediger and Vonderau argue, more research is needed to analyze the commissioners of these films, what their purpose was, and what audiences they were aiming at.²⁰ Although the field at large remains uncharted territory, increasing academic emphasis has been put on these kinds of research questions. With regard to this, one must note that The New Film History turn in film studies has been particularly foundational. From a historical point-of-view, film studies has been intrinsically linked with comparative literature and its privileged position of the text. In the 1980s, however, forces within the discipline began highlighting the neglect of contextual analysis, arguing that film studies put excessive focus on the cinematic object, rather than the cinematic experience. In the article "The New Film History as Media Archaeology", Thomas Elsaesser explores the dichotomy between these modes of analysis and argues, drawing on Foucault, that we need to begin viewing "History as archaeology".²¹ This form of media historiography, Elsaesser says, "knows and acknowledges that only a presumption of discontinuity (in Foucault's terms, the positing of epistemic breaks) and of fragmentation (the rhetorical figure of the synecdoche or the *pars pro toto*) can give the present access to the past".²² Influential

²⁰ Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, 2009, p. 10.

²¹ Thomas Elsaesser, 2004, p. 103.

²² Ibid.

media theorist William Uricchio ties into Elsaesser's and The New Film History's idea in his view on the writing of media historiography. In the article "Historicizing Media in Transition", Uricchio says media are more than technologies and texts, but they are "cultural practices which envelopes these and other elements within a broader fabric offered by particular social orders, mentalities, and the lived experience of their producers and users".²³ Thus, the shift in attention from text to context within film studies, with issues such as the mode of distribution, circulation, and consumption becoming central objects of analysis, runs parallel to an increased emphasis on context in related disciplines as well.

While the expansion of topics that the film studies discipline examines has been immensely fruitful and productive, the debate on how to approach these histories theoretically and methodologically lingers—particularly when dealing with the neglected history of the utility and industrial film. As mentioned, Thomas Elsaesser has been a prominent figure stimulating this debate through his self-reflexive writings on how to best approach these films.²⁴ In an effort to develop a so-called "historio-pragmatic" approach, Elsaesser coined the rule of the three A's that he argues is necessary when classifying, reading and interpreting non-fiction films. In an article from 2009, Elsaesser formulates this rule in the shape of questions: "wer war der *Auftraggeber*" (who commissioned the film), "was war der *Anlass*" (what was the occasion for which it was made) and "was war die *Anwendung* oder der *Adressat*" (to what use was it put or to whom was it addressed).²⁵ "These are", Elsaesser says, "precisely the questions avant-garde artists or documentary filmmakers do not wish to be asked or routinely refuse to answer, since they fear it compromises their standing as auteurs and artists."²⁶ Although Elsaesser's description is correct in that the dynamics between filmmaker and commissioner needs to be explored more in-depth, it does not quite fully apply to Werner's relationship to the commissioned film domain. Werner does fit Elsaesser's generalization in that he was often praised as an artistic filmmaker and indeed communicated high ideals about which features qualify films as artistic in his writings. Yet, many of his commissioned films were highly

²³ William Uricchio, 2003, p. 24.

²⁴ Elsaesser began approaching the topic of the *Gebrauchsfilm* in his writings on the architect Ernst May and the films commissioned to promote the project Das Neue Frankfurt. For further information, see: Elsaesser, 2005, pp. 381-409.

²⁵ Thomas Elsaesser, 2009, p. 23.

²⁶ Ibid.

esteemed by the filmmaker himself, particularly in contrast to his feature films that he frequently dismissed. Moreover, Werner never minced his words about the fact that his films were contracted with a purpose. On the contrary, he sometimes argued that the commissioned film was the sole domain where artistic freedom still reigned.²⁷ Nonetheless, as Elsaesser sharply points out, by going beyond a traditional auteur approach and including an analysis of the commissioning bodies that make the films possible, important contributions concerning the logic of the commissioned film can be made.²⁸

When debating how to best approach the industrial film in all its diversity and immeasurable scope, many scholars have contended, like Elsaesser, that the auteur paradigm is both flawed and unproductive. In the 1950s, critics and scholars associated with the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* developed the auteur theory. For François Truffaut, one of the earliest proponents of the theory, the director emerged as the central artistic figure behind a film.²⁹ In this sense, the auteur approach was most commonly utilized to stress directors' unique stylistic and thematic visions. This, meanwhile, functioned to equate film with other art forms such as literature and painting where the author's role was easier to define and as such raise the status of film.³⁰ As for the industrial film, film scholar Yvonne Zimmermann argues that it warrants serial analysis due to its large corpuses and network mode of production. Drawing on this, Zimmermann is critical of the auteur paradigm on the account that it caused the industrial film to become a neglected part of film historiography. For one thing, she argues that the auteur movement is partly to blame for "the exclusion of industrial film from the canon of objects worthy of academic research".³¹ Simply put, canons are formed when, as Janet Staiger notes, certain films are endorsed and analyzed while others are ignored.³² The fact that the industrial and commissioned films often lack credits and biographical information has caused this genre to be described as a 'nameless' enterprise, effectively limiting its status as an

²⁷ Cf. Bengt Idestam-Almqvist (Robin Hood), "Filmskott", *Stockholmstidningen*, 1956-1-9.

²⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, 2009, p. 24.

²⁹ François Truffaut, "Une Certaine Tendance du cinéma français", *Cahiers du cinéma* 31 January 1954.

³⁰ Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, New York, 2000, p. 83.

³¹ Yvonne Zimmermann, "What Hollywood Is to America, the Corporate Film Is to Switzerland", in Vinzenz Hediger & Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 101.

³² Janet Staiger, 1985, p. 4.

academic field in the wake of the emphasis on the auteur. Moreover, the auteur movement, Zimmermann points out, harbored an overt ideological disdain for the sponsored film and instead celebrated the notion of artistic independence.³³ The industrial films that have been studied in depth, she argues, bear trace of ‘auteurs’ such as Walter Ruttmann and Hans Richter, and therefore they can neatly “be inserted into the corpus of art film”.³⁴

Other scholars tie into Zimmermann’s critique, centering particularly on the notion that the auteur approach has led to a neglect of the specific circumstances that make the industrial film a unique strand of filmmaking: its *purpose*. In the recent dissertation *Cinematic Rotterdam - The Times And Tides Of A Modern City*, Floris Paalman maps Rotterdam as a cinematic city by using a large corpus of documentary, utility and non-fiction films as his source material. In doing so, Paalman notes that scholars have approached these types of films before, but have then centered primarily on reading them as works of art. This becomes problematic, he argues, because “the reasons for commissioned productions are usually social or economic, rather than personal or artistic.”³⁵ Although Zimmermann and Paalman astutely point to many negative impacts the auteur paradigm has had on the study of the industrial film, I would argue that it is exactly in this sphere of tension—between the social/economic and the personal/artistic—that many commissioned films are positioned. In this case, to uncover these tensions, close textual and contextual analysis becomes imperative.

Given that this thesis through its emphasis on one of Gösta Werner’s commissioned films undoubtedly takes the shape of an auteur study, it seems crucial to position this thesis in relation to this ongoing debate and the auteur theory at large. First of all, the point is neither to single out Werner as a forgotten auteur of the commissioned film, nor to interrogate thematic or stylistic traits permeating his oeuvre. Rather, taking Gösta Werner’s filmmaking practices as a starting point, I want to investigate and uncover the often hidden struggles between economical and artistic perspectives behind the production of commissioned films. There are three principal reasons for doing this. First of all, Gösta Werner’s estate deposited at the Swedish

³³ Yvonne Zimmermann, 2009, p. 101.

³⁴ Yvonne Zimmermann, 2009, p. 102.

³⁵ Floris Paalman, *Cinematic Rotterdam: The Times and Tides of a Modern City*, Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 2011, p. 21.

Film Institute, which includes an abundance of contextual information concerning his films, correspondences and visions, offers a unique insight into the relationship between commissioner and artist. Secondly, Werner did not have one commissioning body, but rather worked as a freelance filmmaker for a multitude of both minor and major film production companies, such as AB Kinocentralen, Svensk Filmindustri AB, Minerva Film AB and AB Filmkontakt. Moreover, Werner sketched, pitched, and produced films in direct interaction with different corporations. As such, Werner's corpus offers the opportunity to comparatively contextualize which commissioners requested films, for what reason and to what use. Thirdly, and perhaps the most important point, Werner's marked presence in Swedish film discourse as a critic and artist made an inscription on his films. Much like his contemporary Jean Mitry, co-founder of France's first cinéclub and subsequently of the Cinémathèque Française, Werner went from the film club, to film criticism, to filmmaking. According to David Bordwell, the most useful notion of authorship is that of the "biographical legend", meaning "the persona created by the artist in his public pronouncements, in his writings, and his dealings with the film industry".³⁶ Therefore, I argue that one must study Werner's legend not in opposition but in close relation to Elsaesser's rule of the three A's.

1.4 Industrial Film – A Historical Overview

In this section, I will attempt to sketch an overview of the industrial film's history and then position Gösta Werner's filmmaking practices within this history. Ever since the medium's inception in 1895, the industrial film has had a strong presence in film history. As Rick Prelinger argues, "From the earliest years of cinema, motion pictures have been produced to record, orient, train, sell, and persuade."³⁷ In fact, the first motion picture ever exhibited to the public, *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Factory*, Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1895), was a non-fictional record depicting employees at the Lumière factory dispersing after a day at work. As film historian Charles Musser observes, already during the years of early cinema, which the author dates as 1895 to 1907, the production of commissioned

³⁶ David Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, p. 9.

³⁷ Rick Prelinger, *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films*, San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006, p. vi.

films, advertisements and documentations of the workplace was commonplace in the American film industry.³⁸ Likewise, Sweden has a long history of a diverse set of non-fiction film practices. The first film screening took place on June 28 1896 at Pilstorp's summer theater in Malmö with the main attraction being the Lumière brothers' productions.³⁹ In his dissertation on Swedish visual culture at the turn of the 20th century, Pelle Snickars analyzes these kinds of programs by studying the content of catalogued titles as well as mentionings in print media. In doing so, Snickars shows that they were often quite disparate in terms of content. For instance, the programs included both fiction and commissioned films, and foreign and domestically produced films were commonly featured together side-by-side.⁴⁰ While the foreign films were rented from production companies such as Pathé, Gaumont, and Urban⁴¹, some Swedish production companies such Svenska Bio (Swedish Cinema) developed their own line of non-fiction films, often centering on environmental depictions of Sweden.⁴² According to film historian Leif Furhammar, these sorts of realist depictions in the tradition of the Lumière brothers remained the dominant mode of representation in Sweden until 1907 when the first steps toward the production of feature length fiction films were taken.⁴³ Although these practices hold a marginal place in film encyclopedias and histories, this goes to show that non-fictional depictions of industries and landscapes have existed in Swedish film history since the very beginning.

What is more, the non-fiction film practices during cinema's first decades showcased a great multiplicity. Film scholar Mats Björkin has published extensively on the topic of non-fiction film, focusing particularly on the different uses of industrial films in Swedish film history. In an article concerning the role of the industrial film as a historical document and as a communication tool, Björkin offers an overview of the multiple uses of industrial film since the 1910s. What makes these

³⁸ Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, New York: Scribner, 1990, pp. 1-15.

³⁹ Leif Furhammar, 1991, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Pelle Snickars, *Svensk film och visuell masskultur 1900*, Aura, Diss. Stockholm University, 2001, pp. 123-124.

⁴¹ Charles Urban distributed the Georges Melies' films across the world. Under the heading of the Charles Urban Trading Company, he also organized the production of documentary films, war journals and commercial films that were part of the program circulated in Sweden. Cf. Rune Waldekranz, *Filmens historia: de första hundra åren. D. 1, Pionjäråren*, Norstedt, Stockholm, 1985, p. 158.

⁴² Waldekranz, 1985, p. 124.

⁴³ Leif Furhammar, 1991, p. 16.

practices interesting, Björkin says, is their diversity.⁴⁴ These films are made with different purposes catering to a variety of needs. On the one hand, the industrial film has been used in the training of new employees and to improve the skills of the current employees. On the other hand, the industrial film has served to put an emphasis on industries' geographical and historical roots, aiming to establish or negotiate the companies' identities.⁴⁵ In an article from 2009 published in *Films that Work*, Björkin observes that the production of industrial film in Sweden had already begun in the 1910s but experienced a rapid growth in the mid-1920s. Sponsored films became popular, Björkin notices, particularly with many major corporations that later would be considered "the core industries of Sweden: mining, steel, wood, and paper".⁴⁶ Thus, in the 1920s, a quite exuberant discourse on industrial film took shape, something which industry records from the period confirms. For example, in a 1920 edition of trade paper *Industria*, published by Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen (The Swedish Employers Association), it was noted that Swedish companies had begun realizing what great opportunities film offered as a propaganda tool, chiefly because of the potential for widespread circulation.⁴⁷ Moreover, the same article stresses that these films are not only valuable as commercials, but that they also have a cultural and historical importance.

In the 1920s and 30s, Swedish society experienced major transformations as the economy grew rapidly. In what came to be known as the Golden Twenties, increasingly more time was spent on leisurely activities, such as the cinema, whereupon a vibrant discussion took shape centering on the actual purpose of film in a society. In other words, the debate centered on film and its *utility*. In her dissertation on Swedish film criticism and debate during the silent era, Elisabeth Liljedahl notes that on the one hand the key issue in the film criticism during this period was the question of film as an independent art form. Meanwhile, in the 1920s, a debate on film as a popular movement, a didactic medium and the question of whether or not

⁴⁴ Mats Björkin, "Industrifilm som dokument och kommunikationsmedium", in Pelle Snickars and Cecilia Trenter (eds), *Det förflutna som film och vice versa: Om medierade historiebruk*, Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2004, p. 245.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 245.

⁴⁶ Mats Björkin, "Technologies of Organizational Learning: Uses of Industrial Films in Sweden during the 1950s", in Vinzenz Hediger & Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 303.

⁴⁷ "Industrifilmer: Några ord om den modernaste reklamen", *Industria: industripolitisk halfmånadstidning i arbetarefrågor - organ åt Svenska arbetsgivareföreningen*, 1920, nr 13, p. 397.

cinema could serve a greater purpose than mere entertainment was pervasive.⁴⁸ Not only did these questions permeate the major forums of film debate, such as film journals, weekly magazines, student magazines and the daily press, but this period also witnessed the birth of numerous specific publications promoting them—such as, *Tidskrift för svensk skolfilm och bildningsfilm* (*The Journal for Swedish Educational Film and Informational Film*, 1924-1942), the three simultaneously edited and published journals *Undervisningsfilm*, *Upplysningsfilm* and *Värdefilm* (*Educational Film*, *Informational Film*, and *Purposeful Film*, 1927-1931), and *Tidskrift för armé- och marinfilm* (*Journal for Army and Marine Film*, 1925-1926).⁴⁹ In other words, films commissioned with a utility did not only increase in number, but they also shaped the debate on the medium as such.

In the 1930s, Sweden experienced a rapid modernization, with the conceptualization of a modern industrial company following suit. With this regard, both historian Yvonne Hirdman and film scholar Ylva Habel has asserted, Stockholmsutställningen (The Stockholm Exhibition) in 1930 became a particularly important event signifying Sweden's entry into modernity.⁵⁰ With novel ideas on Sweden's future gaining influence, a shift from a predominately agrarian society to a modern industrialized country took place. Furthermore, according to film historian Mats Jönsson, the 1930s saw the Swedish media industry become more aware of the film medium's propagandistic potential.⁵¹ It was in this period, he argues, that politicians who had previously harbored skeptic opinions toward the new medium began realizing its capacity.⁵² Importantly, parallel to this, Svensk Filmindustri (SF) began its own short film production with a special division devoted to this task. Under this heading, a mixture of informational, pedagogical and entertainment films were made. Notably, from the 1930s until the post-war years in the late 1940s, many of these films gained quite widespread circulation being screened both before full-length

⁴⁸ Cf. Elisabeth Liljedahl, *Stumfilmen i Sverige - kritik och debatt: hur samtiden värderade den nya konstarten*, Diss. Uppsala University, Stockholm, 1975, pp. 125-137.

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Liljedahl, 1975, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁰ Cf. Yvonne Hirdman, *Att lägga livet tillrätta: studier i svensk folkhemspolitik*, Carlsson, Stockholm, 1989, p. 93. Here, the exhibit is described as promising meeting ground between two decades. For an in-depth study of the impact of the Stockholm Exhibition, see: Ylva Habel, *Modern Media, Modern Audiences: Mass Media and Social Engineering in the 1930s Swedish Welfare State*, Aura, Stockholm, 2002.

⁵¹ Mats Jönsson, "Svenskt nationaldagsfirande under kalla kriget - om sannfärdigheten i en SF-journal från 1953" in Mats Jönsson and Pelle Snickars (eds.), *"Skosmörja eller arkivdokument?": om filmarkivet.se och den digitala filmhistorien*, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm, 2012, p. 212.

⁵² Ibid.

films in mainstream cinemas and through a number of special short film theaters.⁵³

In the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the introduction of new technological solutions transformed the utility film in a fundamental way. First of all, following World War II, the price of 8 mm and 16 mm film cameras was reduced.⁵⁴ Moreover, through more accessible film stock and screening apparatuses, new distribution venues were introduced. For the industry and the commissioned film, this meant that their productions gained extended life cycles through the screenings in non-theatrical venues such as conferences and private screenings. Parallel to this, in the early 1950s, the short film was beginning to be phased out as an introduction to feature film attractions in Swedish cinemas.⁵⁵ In an examination of the state of the short film printed in the journal *Tidskriften Vi*, the signature Pavane comments on the official state film study from 1950 and its lacking interest for short films.⁵⁶ The author notes that the short film has no place at the cinema, apart from acting as filling for the film programs. It has no *raison d'être* of its own, no cinemas of its own, and no economic or moral support of its own. In this sense, Pavane argues, the evolution of the short film has suffered and it has become “the stepchild of the film industry”.⁵⁷

Notably, it was in this complex period of transformation that Gösta Werner made his first impressions as a director and writer. In his overview of the history of Swedish cinema *Den svenska filmens historia* (1978), Werner comments on the difficulties short filmmakers with artistic and experimental ambitions faced during this time. In essence, Werner writes, the only demand for short films came from the commissioned film domain—from authorities, organizations, industries, and other private corporations who aimed to produce concealed commercials or public relations pieces.⁵⁸ Notably, Werner continues to argue that these distribution circumstances could explain the lack of a Swedish equivalent to the ‘free’ short film production that

⁵³ Gösta Werner, 1978, p. 170.

⁵⁴ Malin Wahlberg, “Smalfilm för bred publik: amatörfilm och filmexperiment i tidig svensk television”, in Tobias Janson and Malin Wahlberg (eds.) *TV-pionjärer och fria filmare: en bok om Lennart Ehrenborg*, Statens ljud och bildarkiv, Stockholm, 2008, p. 206.

⁵⁵ Mats Björkin, 2004, p. 246.

⁵⁶ Pavane, “Dokumentärfilmen i fara”, *Tidskriften Vi*, nr 6, 1951, p. 13.

⁵⁷ Ibid. The author’s own translation.

⁵⁸ Gösta Werner, 1978, p. 171.

was becoming influential across the world in the mid-1950s.⁵⁹ Regardless if the film became a success or not, the producer had little chance of reaching a zero result.⁶⁰ Werner's writing on this topic serves as a broad overview of the struggles that he and his contemporaries, such as Arne Sucksdorff (*Människor i stad*, 1946), overcame to produce artistic short films. Moreover, this passage also reveals a double-edged attitude toward the commissioned film domain as a whole. Whereas the commissioned film indeed made some of his and Sucksdorff's films possible, it also included certain artistic constraints. Werner further juxtaposes these conditions with the favorable climate for both the art film and the experimental film following the Swedish film reform of 1963.⁶¹ With this reform, the state and the film business agreed on a new system for film subsidies. According to film scholar Per Vesterlund, this reform did not only aim to strengthen the industry, "but also to improve the quality of the products of the industry in question."⁶² From a retrospective point-of-view, it seems as if Werner had quite ambivalent feelings toward the genre.

When sketching Werner's entry into the commissioned film domain, one must thus note that his attitude was two-fold: on the one hand, Werner had high artistic ideals, which for instance his writings in *Biografbladet* revealed, and further nourished aspirations of creating artistic cinema. On the other hand, Werner took note early of the medium's possibilities for something other than merely artistic purposes, such as propaganda, information, and education. Already in the early 1930s, parallel to writing columns for *SF Nyheter* and SF:s weekly film programs under the pseudonyms Musse Pigg (Mickey Mouse) and Ciné, Werner began sketching manuscripts for commercials and longer commissioned films. For example, in a draft from 1937 marked "Postbanken", the director describes a proposal for a commercial series centering on cinematic storytelling, with an emphasis on drama, excitement and emotion, but with a clear emphasis on the respective product.⁶³ In the following years,

⁵⁹ The most renowned free short film production took shape in Great Britain. Under the heading of 'Free Cinema', a series of short film programs were screened at the National Film Theatre (1956-1959). Lindsay Anderson was one of the proponents of the movement together with filmmakers such as Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti. For more information on Free Cinema, see Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1972.

⁶⁰ Gösta Werner, 1978, p. 171.

⁶¹ Gösta Werner, 1978, pp. 171-173.

⁶² Per Vesterlund, "Quality in the Welfare State: Some Remarks on a Document from the Archive of Harry Schein", *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 1 (1): 2010, p. 27.

⁶³ Gösta Werner, "Postbanken", 1937, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

Werner wrote several proposals for both unspecified companies and well-known ones such as Junex and Tiger of Uddevalla. During the war, meanwhile, he continued working with some of the more anonymous duties in the film business.

Notably, Werner had his breakthrough with the experimental film *Midvinterblot* (1946). Through rapid montage sequences and extreme close-ups, the film depicts the gruesome Old Scandinavian pagan rituals of sacrifice. While the film was X-rated by the Swedish censors and reportedly caused unease among portions of its audience, critics and cinephiles around the country lauded it.⁶⁴ Likewise, the film became Werner's first international triumph, receiving widespread circulation abroad predominately in cinéclubs, film festivals and cinematheques. In the book *The Film Till Now* (1949), Richard Griffith, film historian and influential film curator at the The Museum of Modern Art in New York, described *Midvinterblot* as "One of Sweden's principal contributions since sound".⁶⁵ As such, the film effectively established Gösta Werner as one of Sweden's most promising film directors. Although Werner produced a range of feature films—six in absolute numbers—it was as a short film director he would gain most prominence producing more than thirty films for a long range of contractors. Notably, it was primarily in cooperation with commissioning bodies that Werner could develop his filmmaking practices and gain an audience for his films. Suffice to say, to describe the multiplicity of these filmmaking practices in-depth goes beyond the scope of this essay. However, by performing a close textual and contextual analysis of the film *Tåget* (1948), I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the logic shaping the production of commissioned films in Sweden in the late 1940s and the short film production circumstances before the film reform in 1963.

2. Case Study: *Tåget – en film om resor och jordbundenhet*

The film *Tåget*, with the English title *The Train – A Film on Travelling and on Being Earth-Bound*, is a capturing visual rhapsody on the joy of train travel. The film takes the train as its main protagonist, with frequent point-of-view shots from the heart of

⁶⁴ Pierrot, "Fram för lilla märta", *Dagens Nyheter*, 1948-8-15.

⁶⁵ Richard Griffith, "The Film Since Then", in Paul Rotha (ed), *The Film till Now: A Survey of World Cinema*, revised and enlarged edition, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1949, p. 602.

the train, the locomotive, framing its whirring rampagings through the Swedish landscape. In this sense, the train's passengers and onlookers merely emerge as supporting actors. *Tåget* does focus on a trip from a distinctly labeled point A to point B, but as the signature Pompej notes in the journal *Skåningen* "one is taken on a journey which in a sense is not bound by time or space".⁶⁶ Stylistically, the film juxtaposes playful montage sequences focusing on the train's mechanics with more documentary like footage of iconic Swedish landscape imagery. AB Kinocentralen acted as producer and SJ, the Swedish State Railways, as commissioner. In this chapter, I will analyze the different ambitions behind the production of this film and what the film's aesthetic and rhetorical style can tell us about these negotiations.

2.1 Auftrag (commissioner)

In the autumn of 1945, the board of SJ's advertisement department discussed the prospects of making a film about the joys of travelling together with the hitherto quite unknown Scanian filmmaker Gösta Werner.⁶⁷ During the coming months, Werner gathered inspiration, wrote drafts, and negotiated the film's composition in deliberation with representatives of SJ. On the 4th of January 1946, Gösta Werner was officially hired by the production company AB Kinocentralen to direct the film with the working title *Tåget* on the basis of his own manuscript, with SJ acting as commissioning body.⁶⁸ A few months later, the critic-turned-director would receive his major breakthrough with his lurid experimental film *Midvinterblot* (1946). Concurrently, as Werner's success and promise got extensive cover in the Swedish press, the expectations were raised on his next film piece: *Tåget*. On the 20th of May 1946, four days prior to the official opening of *Midvinterblot* at the Stockholm Concert Hall, the production of *Tåget* began in Gothenburg. Besides the director, the film crew consisted of three individuals: photographer Sten Dahlgren, SJ's contact person and monitor of the project's technical aspects Carl Berglund, and one uncredited assistant. During two weeks of shooting in Southern Sweden, Werner and

⁶⁶ Pompej, "Tåget – Exklusiv kortfilm på Palladium", *Skåningen*, 1948-11-16.

⁶⁷ Letter from Bror Lindström to Gösta Werner, dated 1945-10-27, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

⁶⁸ Contract between AB Kinocentralen and Gösta Werner, dated 1946-1-4, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

his crew travelled the route Stockholm-Gothenburg-Malmö-Stockholm. For the purpose of the trip, the crew had access to a private train set which received privileged parking facilities making trips easily accessible for the filmmakers. All in all, the film took more than three months to shoot and its tableaux ranges from Sweden's southern tip to its northernmost outback.

In an early synopsis sent to SJ's department of advertisement, *Tåget* was conceptualized as a film about the joy of travelling, the rhythm of trains, and the romance of the tracks.⁶⁹ After this initial pitch, which Werner jubilantly observed the commissioning body found "thrilling", the film's synopsis was negotiated primarily in discussions with intendant Bror Lindström and the department's head-in-chief Nils Mård.⁷⁰ In a private message to Gösta Werner, intendant Lindström commented on the film's structure centering particularly on the filmic representation of train travelling. While noting that the script had the prospect of indeed becoming a spectacular film, Lindström makes sure to point out the necessity of portraying the train trip as smooth rather than fitful. Similarly, he stresses that Werner needs to abstain from shots of carriages that are too full of passengers.⁷¹ While early sketches did include the prospect of a narrator, the detailed synopsis that Werner sent to SJ did not include any diegetic sounds from the train or conductors. In response to this, Lindström urges Werner to include the iconic chant of the train conductor ('Tag plats') instructing passengers to take their seats right before departure. Notably, though, the Swedish Film Institute's print of the film, distributed via filmarkivet.se, does not include this passage and most of the reviews of the film stress that *Tåget* in fact excluded the use of dialogue altogether.⁷² In fact, the absence of dialogue figures as a crucial selling point of the film. In the synopsis sent by Werner to SJ, it is noted

⁶⁹ Synopsis from Gösta Werner to Nils Mård, dated 1945-9-25, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

⁷⁰ Hand-written note by Gösta Werner, "Tåget", n.d., collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession. The author's own translation.

⁷¹ Letter from Bror Lindström to Gösta Werner, dated 1945-10-27, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

⁷² I put emphasis on that this holds true for this particular version of *Tåget* because there is contradictory information concerning the length of the film. According to the Swedish censors, the 35 mm copy of the film measures 572 meters, equaling approximately 21 minutes in playing time. The version distributed through filmarkivet.se only clocks 15 minutes and 16 seconds. This might indicate that portions of the original film are not included in the digital version. To examine these discrepancies in-depth goes beyond the scope of this thesis and therefore I will make use of the version published via www.filmarkivet.se (2012-09-30). For reference, see: Censorship card nr 072.004, Statens biografbyrås arkiv at Riksarkivet (the National Archives), dated 1947-06-21.

that the exclusion of dialogue will not only eliminate the risk of the film becoming outdated, but also give it an international touch improving its chances for widespread circulation beyond Swedish borders.⁷³

Drawing on these communications, it seems that SJ was intrigued by the prospect of an international audience. The fact that Lindström explicitly voices concerns about lacking guidance of the viewers' attention to the fact that the film is to be set in Sweden is a point indicating this. In the PM, he asks whether it is possible to include signs with the name Sverige and Sweden on it, perhaps appearing diegetically through the incorporation of a border crossing point in the film's establishing shot.⁷⁴ As we shall note further under the heading of 'reason', tourism was becoming an added source of revenue for the train company in the wake of World War II. Following the nationalization of the railway during World War II, the Swedish state owned SJ and the company occupied a monopolistic position. In this sense, to represent train travel in a Swedish setting arguably became synonymous with travelling with SJ.

Following this deliberation period, the contact between the producer, commissioner and filmmaker was signed. Importantly, one must note that Werner was here given full authority concerning the film's artistic and formal aspects, as long as these decisions corresponded with the general agreement drawn up between the commissioner and the filmmaker beforehand.⁷⁵ But what was SJ's reason for giving Werner this authority and more specifically for commissioning this film?

2.2 Anlång (reason)

The profitmaking state-owned companies such as SJ have long utilized media such as radio, film and television to promote their services.⁷⁶ Generally speaking, it is noted in *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, the reasons behind the use of these media ranged from providing information to creating good-will.⁷⁷ For example, SJ's advertisement

⁷³ Synopsis from Gösta Werner to Nils Mård, dated 1945-9-25, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

⁷⁴ Letter Lindström to Werner, dated 1945-10-27.

⁷⁵ Contract between AB Kinocentralen and Gösta Werner, dated 1946-1-4, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

⁷⁶ Lars Lönnback, "Statliga myndigheters upplysningsverksamhet i Sverige", *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*. Ny följd, Fahlbeckska stiftelsen, Lund, 1960, p. 303.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

department *Reklamavdelningen*, Reka for short, began its operations in 1932. When *Tåget* was commissioned in 1946, SJ's film department, a subheading of Reka, was a quite successful enterprise. The same year, an article published in the daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* highlighted SJ's information and advertisement films and the fact that they succeeded in reaching more than one and a half million yearly admissions, making it one of Sweden's largest film distributors.⁷⁸ While lesser-known filmmakers made many of SJ's films, there were also household names such as Prince Lennart Bernadotte (*Klart: Tåg ut!* from 1941, *Nattligt spår* from 1946), the grandson of King Gustaf V, who contributed to their oeuvre. In the same article, Nils Mård from the film department argued that its triumph was contingent on two things: "the nationalization and the war".⁷⁹ These two factors made an important impact on the company's willingness to use film not only to document, but also to communicate why controversial decisions were taken with the nation's best interest at hand.⁸⁰ "Naturally we had realized that the film medium was a practical and effective advertisement tool of the first order", Mård noted, "one which a modern company hardly could manage without".⁸¹ In the publication *SJ-nytt* from 1953, SJ's film department comments more in depth on the reasoning behind the production of these kinds of films. The magazine notes that their films differ from regular advertisements in the sense that they do not explicitly promote SJ or specific tourist destinations.⁸² Instead, they argue that these films aim to, in an unbiased and artistic manner, depict their subject, effectively making it a superior mode of advertisement.⁸³

But what were the specific reasons behind the production of *Tåget*? In the film journal *Biografbladet*, Gösta Werner writes a longer text about *Tåget* and its creation process. Initially, Werner's idea was to create a film set on a night train between Malmö and Stockholm, because this was the environment the director himself was most familiar with.⁸⁴ Already in 1943, six years prior to the premiere of the film, Werner began collecting notes for this project which at that time was titled

⁷⁸ "SJ spelar in filmer för att visa för miljonpublik", *Dagens Nyheter*, 1946-3-7.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. Author's own translation.

⁸² "SJ-filmer på segertåg", *SJ-Nytt*, nr 6, December 1953, p. 14.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gösta Werner, "Tåget – En kortfilms tillblivelse", *Biografbladet* nr 1, 1949, p. 3.

Expressen.⁸⁵ From a formal point-of-view, the idea was centered on travelling individuals rather than the train itself and Werner describes it as reportage. However, the director further notes that he was not satisfied with this format, particularly because the visual dynamics of the train itself got lost in the screenplays. Continuously conceptualizing the formalist aspects of the film, lending more emphasis to abstractions rather than facts, the project grew into a huge folder with materials, clippings, scripts, photographs, and correspondences.⁸⁶ Subsequently, Werner notes in *Biografbladet*, an informal proposal was given to numerous film producers, but no one showed an interest in his idea.⁸⁷ Much like the head of the film department Nils Mård, Werner stresses World War II as an important factor influencing the production of the film. Following the end of the war, commercial airlines, as Werner writes, “got off the ground”.⁸⁸ In response to the imagined death of the train as a mode of transportation, Werner once again took up and began sketching on his idea. This time with more emphasis on the timelessness of the train, replacing individuals, their vocals and the reportage with rhythmic images and music.

As we noted in the communication between commissioner and filmmaker, there was little emphasis put on the branding of SJ, but more on efforts to depict the railway as an ideal mode of transportation. This is connected to the fashion in which SJ film department reasoned on film as a modern medium for advertisement. Notably, to express the joy of travelling and the beauty of the Swedish landscape, they write in *SJ-nytt*, it is of crucial importance that the film in question is captivating and makes the spectator “thrilled about the film itself”.⁸⁹ This would hopefully lead to the film getting good reviews, mentionings, demand, and widespread circulation.⁹⁰

Moreover, in order to achieve such thrilling quality films, a good collaboration between commissioner and filmmaker is essential. *SJ-nytt* points out two points especially important for a successful cooperation: first, the filmmaker becomes engaged in the creative process and views the film as “more than merely commissioned work”; and second, considerable resources are allotted to the film

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ This binder was deposited at the Swedish Film Institute together with the rest of Gösta Werner’s estate in 1993.

⁸⁷ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 6. Author’s own translation.

⁸⁹ “SJ-filmer på segertåg”, *SJ-Nytt*, nr 6, December 1953, p. 14.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

giving the director the ability to independently choose locations and motifs best suitable for the production.⁹¹ Notably, this journal, published in 1953, highlights *Tåget* as an excellent example of a project that synthesizes these two points.

SJ's reasons behind the production of films thus seem to primarily center on the positive connotations they afford the train as a form of transportation and Sweden as a destination. Advertisement films were further seen as both modern and valuable because of the potential for widespread circulation. The conceptualization concerning how such circulation is achieved, however, seems to be the area which most directly informs the relationship between SJ and Gösta Werner—namely that it is of crucial importance that the advertisement is not explicit, but packaged as a quality film production.

2.3 Adressat (use)

For what use was *Tåget* produced and to which audiences did it cater? Much like the reasons behind the production were multiple, the film's audience was extraordinarily multifaceted. In this respect, one must note that *Tåget* had parallel life cycles in three quite distinctly separated spheres: first of all, the film gained praise in conjunction with its appearance as a program filler for the comedy *Lilla Märta kommer tillbaka* (*Little Märta Returns*, Hasse Ekman, 1948); secondly, the film was praised and circulated in many of the popular and up-and-coming cinéclubs, film studios and film festivals around the world; and lastly, the film was screened and distributed through SJ's film department and as such became a symbol for its success.

During the 1940s, the short film was a popular feature in the film programs shown in the record-breaking number of Swedish cinemas of the time.⁹² Especially for the evening shows, the short film was an almost obligatory item and it was often mentioned in the press in conjunction with reviews of the main feature. Produced in 1946-47, *Tåget* gained its premiere as a pre-film before the screening of renowned Swedish filmmaker Hasse Ekman's sequel *Lilla Märta kommer tillbaka* on the 14th of August 1948. While Ekman's film was met with unfavorable reviews questioning the director's lack of artistic ambitions, many columnists, critics and reviewers took note

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Leif Furhammar, 1991, p. 171.

of Werner's pre-film.⁹³ For instance, *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's largest morning newspaper, wrote that Werner had succeeded in creating a travel fantasy with high artistic value.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, *Morgon-tidningen* observed that this visual rhapsody on trains ought to amuse both audiences and the commissioner SJ.⁹⁵ Interestingly, while SJ evidently valued films with a certain production value, reviewers repeatedly praised *Tåget* on the account that it was *more* than merely a commissioned film. What differentiated this film, one reviewer in *Kvällsposten* noted, was its artistic composition and film photography that managed to bring newfound features of the train into light.⁹⁶

The film's aesthetic qualities were also important for its positive reception and widespread circulation in many of the film studios and cinéclubs around the country. Notably, *Tåget* had its original premiere at Uppsala Studenters Filmstudio (Uppsala Students' Film Studio) on October 28, 1947 at cinema Fågel Blå in conjunction with a screening of *Sous les toits de Paris* (René Clair, 1930).⁹⁷ In these kinds of settings, Werner was often invited to present the film and participate in discussions.⁹⁸ Not only did these venues extend the lifecycle of the film both before and after it had been shown at mainstream theaters, but they also came to position Gösta Werner's filmmaking practices in an experimental and aesthetically advanced tradition. For instance, in relation to the screening in Örebro Filmstudio (Örebro Film Studio), the daily newspaper *Örebro Dagblad* organized a review competition with *Tåget* being the object of analysis.⁹⁹ Here, the amateur reviewers stressed that the film indeed was difficult to label; was it an instructional film for railroad workers? Was it a commercial for SJ? The signature Anders Wadström contended that the film went beyond these genres and instead became an artwork of its own.¹⁰⁰ Notably, in the film studios, *Tåget* was most often screened in combination with short art and

⁹³ Cf. L.B-m, "Lilla Märta kommer tillbaka" *Arbetaren*, 16 Aug 1948, "utan konstnärliga ambitioner" *Stockholms-tidningen* wrote that the sequel did not live up to the first film's quality. Mixed results. *Afton-tidningen* writes that Lilla Märta is back but unfortunately with the same success as last time.

⁹⁴ Pierrot, "Fram för lilla märta", *Dagens Nyheter*, 1948-8-15.

⁹⁵ "Fram för lilla märta", *Morgon-tidningen*, 1948-8-15.

⁹⁶ *Kvällsposten*, 1948-10-3.

⁹⁷ "Tåget", *Uppsala Nya Tidning*, 1947-11-3.

⁹⁸ For instance, Werner participated as an invited guest at both Borås Filmstudio and Lund Filmstudio as part of the screening of *Tåget*.

⁹⁹ Sten Böckmann, "Resultatet av recensionstävlingen kring Gösta Werners film "Tåget"" *Örebro Dagblad* 31 July 1953.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

experimental films. For instance, at the opening of Borås Filmstudio, the film was screened in conjunction with Norman McLaren's trendsetting film *Begone Dull Care* (1949) and Sacha Guitry's feature length art film *La poison* (1951).¹⁰¹ Similarly, Werner's film was included in the film series *Kort och Gott*, curated by Eivor Burbeck, an experimental filmmaker and poet¹⁰², as part of Stockholm University's short film series. Burbeck divided the films into four programs: documentary film, experimental film, puppet film, and art film. *Tåget* was placed in the documentary program together with films made by filmmakers such as Basil Wright, Jean Mitry, and Arne Sucksdorff. The frequent inclusion of *Tåget* in these sorts of contexts added to the film's status as a work of art.

Whereas these venues were important exhibition and discussion venues domestically, the blossoming film festival circuit was where *Tåget* made its biggest impression. The success in these venues, moreover, became a source of pride for SJ's film department. Notably, as communications with Nils Mård from SJ reveals, the commissioner had the final say in which festivals the film entered. However, Mård was enthusiastic about these additional screening opportunities. Most famously, the film participated in the prestigious Venice International Film Festival, where it won the award for best short documentary film in 1948 in competition with among other films the Danish film director Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Landsbykirken (The Danish Village Church, 1948)*.¹⁰³ The film's success in this venue was extensively covered in the Swedish press. Moreover, the film appeared in the competition for the second edition of the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Born in 1947, the festival emerged as an alternative to the major established film festivals in Venice and Cannes, and gradually became one of the central festivals for documentary and experimental films. According to film theorist and documentary filmmaker John Grierson, the festival, instituted by the Edinburgh Film Guild, was groundbreaking in the sense that it broke with the "exclusive attention to the avant-garde" and was one of the first to broaden the film festival concept to include more neglected forms of

¹⁰¹ *Västgötademokraten*, 1956-2-6.

¹⁰² Lars Gustaf Andersson, "Eivor Burbeck i fantasins museum", *Magasinet Walden*, collected from: <http://www.magasinetwalden.se/walden/2012/11/eivor-burbeck-i-fantasins-museum.html> (2012-12-16, in the author's possession).

¹⁰³ Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee della Biennale, "9. Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica – Premi", collected from: <http://asac.labiennale.org/it/passpres/cinema/annali.php?m=21&c=p> (2013-01-02, in the author's possession).

filmmaking.¹⁰⁴ Notably, in the magazine *SJ-nytt*, the international attention paid to *Tåget* was stressed saliently.¹⁰⁵

Although the commissioner was jubilant about the film's exposure around the world, the most important use of *Tåget* for the commissioner was perhaps forums in which SJ's brand image was involved more directly. Notably, the film was not merely given exposure and awards in prestigious film festivals with an artistic air, but also gained significant circulation with the assistance of SJ. For instance, *Tåget* was exhibited at the International Railway Congress in Lucerne, where "the first post-war convention of this kind" was held in 1947.¹⁰⁶ Several hundred delegates from Europe and the rest of the world, including SJ, met to discuss the traffic situation following the war. Moreover, SJ were not lone film exhibitors at this conference; many other companies brought film productions from their native countries. Among these films, a competition was held and *Tåget* came out as its winner.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, SJ note in *SJ-nytt*, the film was screened and subsequently awarded at a meeting for the European railway companies in Paris 1948.¹⁰⁸ Beyond this, SJ's film department took much pride in the exhibition and distribution of film through their own management. On the one hand, films were shown in the different traffic districts, either in local cinemas or SJ's own locales, gathering both employees and management as an audience.¹⁰⁹ In Stockholm, SJ had their own film theater with a 35 mm projector, an audio system and 120 seats. According to Nils Mård, the film department had high hopes of expansion, providing theaters in the other districts as well.¹¹⁰ Besides this theater, SJ also distributed film through the postal service. The cost of renting the films was 2 Swedish crowns regardless of length and distance to where it was being shipped. According to the magazine *SJ-nytt*, approximately 700 titles were in constant

¹⁰⁴ Grierson is cited in Phillip French, "A bit of History: Philip French on the Edinburgh Film Guild at the time of its 75th anniversary in 2004", collected from:

http://edinburghfilmguild.org.uk/wordpress/?page_id=4 (2012-12-16, in the author's possession).

¹⁰⁵ "SJ-filmer på segertåg", *SJ-Nytt*, nr 6, December 1953, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ Dr. W. Meile (President of C.F.F.), "The International Railway Congress in Lucerne", *La Suisse Switzerland La Suiza*, Official travel review of the Swiss nation, 1947.

¹⁰⁷ Hans Bergrahm, "Märklig bilddikt", *Kvällsposten*, 1948-10-3. For a commentary from Werner on the competition in Lucerne, see: Letter from Gösta Werner to Legation de Suède (The Swedish Embassy) in Montevideo, dated 1952-1-2, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

¹⁰⁸ "SJ-filmer på segertåg", *SJ-Nytt*, nr 6, December 1953, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

circulation and the distribution of 50 films was expedited daily.¹¹¹

It seems that for SJ, the film medium became a central communication tool because of its ability to reach massive audiences effectively. Meanwhile, looking closer at the use of *Tåget*, one can note that the film indeed reached a broad and diverse audience—both with a direct and indirect impact on commissioner's image.

2.4 Film Analysis

As illustrated in the previous sections, *Tåget* was not conceived as an explicit commercial, but rather as a quality film implicitly benefitting SJ's image. In much recent research on the industrial film, many researchers, such as Thomas Elsaesser, have stressed that this genre demands analysis beyond the cinematic text, emphasizing the sender (commissioner and filmmaker), the medium (film) and the receiver (audiences). Meanwhile, for proponents of an aesthetic approach to film analysis, such as the influential neoformalist Kristin Thompson, the film text serves as an invaluable source of information imbued with devices, cues, functions and motivations that are crucial to study in depth if one wants to gain a complete picture of a film and its historical context. By performing a close textual analysis of *Tåget* as a film text, this analysis adds another dimension to the relationship between artistic visions and commissioning body; namely, the relationship between the *Auftrag* (commissioner), *Anlass* (reason), and *Adressat* (use) and the aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions of the film.

In my analysis, I will also bring another important aspect of the relationship between the filmmaker and the commissioning body to the fore: the artistic visions of the filmmaker Gösta Werner. The reason for this is that Werner emerges as quite an unusual filmmaker in the sense that he produced vast amounts of text about his profession and his films.¹¹² Importantly, in his writings on film as an editor, critic and

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² It goes without saying that Gösta Werner was not unique in the practice of combining film practice with film criticism and scholarship, but what made him unusual was the sheer scope of his writings. Already in the 1920s, Werner began to write on the topic of film in the high school paper *Katedralskole-bladet*. During his years as a student of Art History at Lund University, graduating in 1931, Werner took an interest in aesthetic queries, writing in Sweden's oldest student paper *Lundagård*. Following this, Werner began to feature regularly in more renowned film publications, such as *Biografbladet*, *Filmjournalen* and Svenska Filmsamfundets årsbok (The Swedish Film Academy's yearbook). In 1944, Werner's first book length study of film *Kameran går* was published. Whereas in the late 1940s and 1950s Werner had his most productive years as a filmmaker and produced less texts, the 1960s saw Werner write multiple volumes on individual filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein as

theorist, Werner developed a set of aesthetic thoughts and ideals. Naturally, one must note that these texts do not form one coherent view on cinema but are of a varied kind. This depends on the uniquely long time-span, between the early 1920s to mid-2000s, during which these writings were conceived. At the same time, certain features recur in his writing. Werner consistently underlined the medium specificity of film, stressing its visual potential. While one cannot view these texts as essentialist or definitive interpretations of his filmic works, they are instructive when seeking an improved understanding of the filmmaker's view on film as art. In other words, I will juxtapose Werner's practical and theoretical ideas with the analysis of the formal strategies employed in *Tåget* in an effort to situate the film within a broader historical context.

Yet, as Kristin Thompson posits in *Breaking the Glass Armor* (1988), let us begin this analysis by having a closer look at the film text. Although the boundaries between the feature film and the short film are not set in stone, *Tåget* with a running time of less than twentyone minutes can be said to belong to the latter category.¹¹³ While the finished film's subheading reads "A Film on Travelling and on Being Earth-Bound", Gösta Werner argued that one could just as well have characterized the film as being "A film about the train as reality and fantasy".¹¹⁴

The establishing shot immediately frames the object that shall be the film's center of attention: the train. A distant framing of an abandoned boat on a desolate beach, followed by a medium shot of an overgrown train-track, opens the film. After a cut, the forsaken railway becomes concealed by white smoke whereupon a slow pan to the left reveals that the smoke was that of a locomotive moving forward. By

well as overviews on the topic of film form. In 1971, the first Swedish academic dissertation in film studies was published on Mauritz Stiller and his films. As a scholar, Werner produced a wide range of book length studies, both on individual films such as *Herr Arnes pengar* (Mauritz Stiller, 1919) and film writers such as Stig Dagerman and Hjalmar Bergman. Even when Werner was a hundred years of age, he remained active writing short chronicles and festival reviews for the film journal *Victor*. Thus, when discussing Werner's thoughts on film form, it is crucial to acknowledge the multiplicity of his authorship.

¹¹³ *Tåget* can be defined as a short film by most standards. For instance, according to the Swedish Film Institute, short films are ones that have a running time less than 72 minutes. See: Svenska Filminstitutet, "Stöd till spridning av kort- och dokumentärfilm", collected from <http://sfi.se/PageFiles/6882/Riktlinjer%20kort-%20och%20dok%20100928.pdf> (2012-12-26, print in the author's possession). To the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, "A short film is defined as an original motion picture that has a running time of 40 minutes or less, including all credits". See: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, "Rule Nineteen: Special Rules for the Short Film Awards", collected from <http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/rules/rule19.html> (2012-12-16, print in the author's possession).

¹¹⁴ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 11.

contrasting abandoned tracks with energetic trains, the opening sequence quickly establishes that the train is not an outdated form of transportation but as vibrant as ever. Like the film's simple title suggests, this is a film about the dynamics of train travel. In terms of characterization, one must note that *Tåget* consistently takes the train as its main protagonist. This is signaled in two ways. First of all, from a narrative point-of-view, the film focuses on a network of short narratives each having the train as a common denominator. There are multiple characters, stories within the story, which take place within the confines of the film: a young couple kisses before the man departs with the train and the woman longingly waves to him; another woman looks sternly toward the passing train from her bedroom window; a man lies awake in his bed looking yearningly out the window; a girl standing in the pouring rain delivers a letter to a mailbox next to the train station as the train hurries by. None of these characters reappear, but simply engage with the train as it passes. Nevertheless, these characters are crucial elements of the film's narrative causality in the sense that they act as supporting elements to the train and thus motivate the dramatic emphasis put on it.

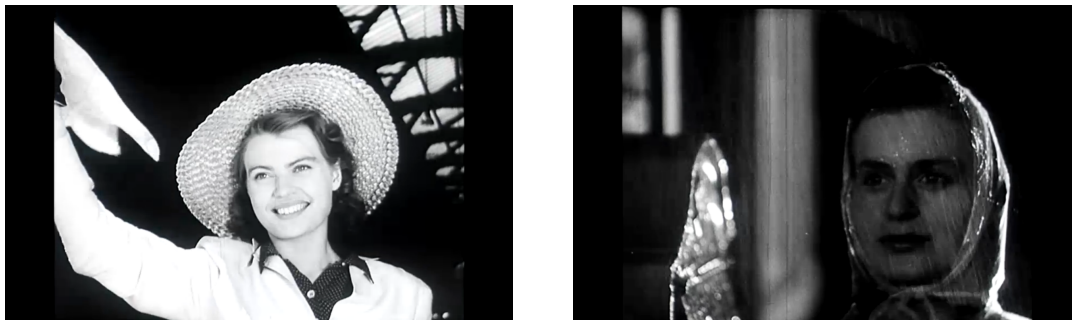


Figure 1. Two stills from *Tåget* (Gösta Werner, 1948), collected from www.filmarkivet.se with the approval of Telepicture Marketing Ltd ©. Supporting characters interchangeably engaging with the passing train.

Secondly, from an aesthetic point-of-view, the use of montage, shot/reverse shots and point-of-view shots stresses the perspective of the locomotive. Immediately after the opening sequence, the camera closes in on the train in a vast number of shots, varying between extreme close-ups and long shots. Cutting together these images in montage sequences, reminiscent of Soviet montage in the disparate tradition of filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein (who coined the term), Vsevlod Pudovkin, and Aleksandr Dovzhenko, the first half of the film centers strongly on capturing the train's inner and outer mechanics. It is not until after the train leaves the station and embarks on its journey that the most swift montage sequences come to a

halt and the first supporting characters are introduced in the film. The film now takes on the point-of-view of the train. Notably, the pacing shifts from fast to slow. On the one hand, there are slow-paced, meditative shots filmed from a low camera angle centering on motifs such as cables and wires. On the other hand, there are more rapid shots filmed from a high camera angle focusing primarily on the train tracks, switches and the surrounding nature. When the film interweaves supporting characters, reverse shots show these individuals from the train's angle. Through these formal devices, point-of-view shots and shot/reverse shots, the film highlights the train as the film's main focal point of attention. Or, as the director of the film argued, this film technique made the train become "personalized".¹¹⁵



Figure 2. Two stills from *Tåget* (Gösta Werner, 1948), collected from www.filmarkivet.se with the approval of Telepicture Marketing Ltd ©. Point-of-view shots from the train.

The emphasis on visual storytelling—an important feature for Werner—is further enhanced by the absence of both dialogue and a narrator. Whereas many commissioned films rely on these traits, a score made up of modern classical music written by Sven-Erik Bäck, a prominent Swedish composer, dominates the sound in this film. In fact, despite the negotiations the filmmaker underwent with SJ, there is no diegetic sound (in the form of dialogue or chants) included in this film. In its place, a musical score encompassing a variety of instruments alternates between calm and startling sound effects. For instance, the wind instruments create a harmonious string running through the film. In the film's more dramatic scenes, this harmony is repeatedly broken by bombastic music from percussion instruments. According to Gösta Werner, Bäck's musical style was akin to the influential composer Igor Stravinsky's.¹¹⁶ In an article on music experiments written by the Uppsala author Paul Patera, it is noted that Bäck had the aspiration of using a chamber orchestra, typically

¹¹⁵ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Gösta Werner to Amos Vogel, dated 1950-5-19, collected from Gösta Werner's archive deposited at the Swedish Film Institute's archive in Stockholm, copy in the author's possession.

described as an orchestra consisting of thirty members or less.¹¹⁷ Due to economical constraints, Patera notes, Bäck abandoned these plans in favor of a smaller orchestra. Despite this, Bäck's music and most centrally its modern style gained much attention from film critics. For instance, Patera described Bäck's music, alongside Sven Erik Johanson's music for the industrial film *Post på hjul* (1949) which illuminates the Swedish postal service, as the first radical film music in Sweden's film history.¹¹⁸ The daily *Örebro Dagblad* wrote: "The train's own sounds and his [Bäck's] discrete tone language merge into a suggestive entity, through which the train's outer and inner monologue speaks. The humans are silent".¹¹⁹ For the signature Pierrot in *Aftontidningen*, the replacement of diegetic sound for music was successful, but "the modernist succession of tones seemed disturbing to many".¹²⁰

To describe the film style manifested in *Tåget*, Werner used the term *visionär* (visionary), which, according to the director, often lead to disdain from many of his peers.¹²¹ With the word visionary, often coupled with the term 'realism' in his writings, Werner stresses visual expressiveness and he describes pushing visual storytelling to its limits. With regard to *Tåget*, Werner argued that this visionary effect could be achieved not only by capturing stunning features, such as switches, night trains and pouring rain, but also linking the images with "a human reaction".¹²² As this analysis shows, the film production offered Werner the possibility to experiment with different cinematic strategies and devices. In this sense, it seems that this film correlates well with Werner's own authorial vision.

Notably, these stylistic choices seem particularly curious when comparing *Tåget* to other films commissioned by SJ in the late-1940s. Although SJ's output was massive—the company produced more than 60 original pictures up until 1948—certain aesthetic and rhetorical patterns are discernable. Generally speaking, two categories—documentation films and landscape documentaries—dominate SJ's output in these years. Furthermore, one must notice that these films seldom acknowledge the director. Instead, the narrator is most often the one credited. First of all, many films center on the documentation and communication of works-in-

¹¹⁷ Paul Patera, "Musikexperiment!", *Expressen*, 1950-6-25.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Sten Böckmann, 1953. The author's own translation.

¹²⁰ Pierrot, "Fram för lilla Märta", *Aftontidningen*, 1948-8-15.

¹²¹ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 6.

¹²² *Ibid.*

progress, such as the construction of new train lines or the renovation of existing ones. In contrast to *Tåget*, these films commonly feature a narrator that guides the viewer and offers feasible explanations to complex processes and technical terms. Moreover, the narrator is often coupled with visual aids such as diagrams, charts and non-diegetic texts. The use of static camera and long takes emerge as stylistic traits for these films. For example, *Där vagnarna rulla* (1943), directed by the SJ chief supervisor Sven Linell, describes the work of the railway personnel at Hallsberg's shunting yard. Marked as an educational film in the opening credits, the film relies heavily on the aforementioned traits with both the narrator and the visual elements centering on explaining the complex switch process in great detail. Other contemporary examples catering to these conventions include *Masstransporter i kristid* (1942), *Godsvård* (Evert Gustafsson, 1944) and *Tunga don på revision* (Lennart Bernadotte, 1946). Another influential type of SJ films is the landscape documentary, which takes a slightly different form of expression. A great many of these films center on specific Swedish landscapes, such as *Medelpad: En film från Statens Järnvägar* (1947), *Från Östersjön till Västerhav: En film från Statens Järnvägar* (1946), *På dal: Glimtar från Dalsland, dess industri, hantverk och hemslöjd* (1946), and *Hälsingland: En rapsodi* (Lars-Göran Lantz, 1949). In these films, the presence of SJ is not as marked as in the previous category. Instead, images depicting the Swedish nature predominate. Similar to the films documenting work processes, these films rhetorically rely heavily on the guidance of the narrator. Moreover, relatively static long shots and extreme long shots of flowers, meadows, hills, and trees stand out as recurring aesthetic traits. In comparison to both the documentation films and the landscape documentaries, the use of rapid cutting, expressive angles, and modernist music make *Tåget* stand out in SJ's film collection. Yet, the question remains in which sense SJ has a presence in Gösta Werner's film?

There are few explicit references made to SJ in *Tåget*. First of all, the only non-diegetic texts in the film appear in the very beginning during the film's opening credits. Moreover, this is the only time explicit mention is made of the commissioner through an intertitle thanking not only the board of the Swedish State Railways, but also all of the employees of the company who assisted the crew during the three months of shooting the film. Similarly, there are few diegetic texts and signs that highlight SJ's role in the film. On a few accounts, SJ' logotype, white capital letters SJ on a dark background, become visible as carriages pass by in high speed. Also, a

train parked on a station platform showcases the, in a Swedish context, iconic logo.



Figure 3. Two stills from *Tåget* (Gösta Werner, 1948), collected from www.filmarkivet.se with the approval of Telepicture Marketing Ltd ©. Non-diegetic text in the opening credits.

Instead, the commissioner primarily makes an impression on this film by negotiating the fashion in which the trip across Sweden is represented. As noted, the film revolves around train travel in a universal sense to a high degree. In the montage sequences centering on the locomotive and its mechanics, the specific setting remains unknown. In this sense, the train trip does not focus on a linear journey from a clearly designated place (such as a city or border crossing) to another. However, as noted in the section on *Auftrag* (commissioner), SJ's representative Lindström stressed the importance of communicating that the film was set in Sweden. Although the film does not include a diegetic border patrol sign, which SJ asked for in the communications with the filmmaker, it does put an emphasis on the fact that the film is set in Sweden. Notably, it does so principally in two ways: first of all, the film does include diegetic signs, albeit not exactly the ones SJ requested in their communications with the filmmaker. For example, in one scene, the side of a train with the text “Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits et Des Grands Express Européens” on it is shot from below from a quite distorted angle. Following this, a wipe takes us to a poster for the Nord Express, which a young boy silently observes with a copy of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* in his hands. Notably, this poster encompasses multiple languages—English, French, German, Polish—to proclaim its message. From 1946, following the end of World War II, the famous Belgian railway company Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits began to operate a train line called Nord Express which ran from Paris-Hamburg-Flensburg-Copenhagen-Stockholm.¹²³ As the camera slowly pans out to include other elements, such as advertisements for international destinations in the form of Basque Country and domestic destinations in

¹²³ The International Railway Preservation Society, “The Nord Express”, collected from <http://www.irps-wl.org.uk/wagon-lits/services/nord> (2012-12-29, print in the author's possession)

the form of Strömsundsbron in the Swedish province Jämtland, the Nord Express poster remains centered in the image. Although the emphasis on this poster does not clearly denote SJ, it does indicate where this travel takes place.



Figure 4. Two stills from *Tåget* (Gösta Werner, 1948), collected from www.filmarkivet.se with the approval of Telepicture Marketing Ltd ©. Diegetic texts on train and posters indicating setting.

Secondly, the film's finale couples a strong emphasis on landscape imagery with iconic elements related to the North of Sweden, further stressing Sweden as the setting for the train fare. Notably, landscape shots recur throughout the film but gain the most emphasis toward the film's finale. As Werner states in *Biografbladet*, both the emphasis on landscape shots and the end in the North of Sweden were clearly stated demands from SJ.¹²⁴ As for the former, one must note that within the genre of commissioned documentary film, to which many of SJ's commissioned films arguably belong, this form of nature images had a pivotal importance. Meanwhile, tourism scholars commonly describe the North of Sweden as a "dream destination" for both foreign nationals and Swedes, which might aid our understanding of why SJ highlighted the inclusion of images from Lapland in the film.¹²⁵ Werner has admitted that the insertion of these elements was a point of contention and it conflicted with his own authorial vision: "I hated the idea of having to move away from the visionary design, that I felt that I had given the film already in the script, and instead make the ending documentary-like with trains in the mountains of Lapland".¹²⁶ Toward the conclusion of the short story, what is often from a narrative point-of-view described as *dénouement* (resolution), shots of trees, rivers, mountains, and valleys are interwoven with a scene where a young Sámi (Sweden's native inhabitants) follows the train tracks, puts his ear to them and listens to the train's vibrations. In the end sequence, the pace is slower and the action is falling. Moreover, the music is calmer

¹²⁴ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Douglas G. Pearce, "Tourist organizations in Sweden Department of Geography", *Tourism Management* 17 (6): 1996, p. 421.

¹²⁶ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 7. The author's own translation.

and there are significantly less cuts than other portions of the film. As the lonely Sámi boy walks along the train tracks, dressed in traditional Sámi garments, the serenity and desolation of the train tracks parallels the film's establishing shot. Despite these compromises, Werner said that the parallel between the dead and lively train tracks in the film's opening and closing was what finally made him content with the ending.¹²⁷

Because of economical limitations, the Swedish short film of the late 1940s and early 1950s was often described as a particularly demanding genre. Short film director Arne Sucksdorff, for instance, argued that the best short films are the ones that make the most of the constraints that the short film format entails.¹²⁸ In *Filmboken*, published in 1952 with articles by among others Rune Waldekranz and Bengt Idestam-Almquist (Robin Hood), Gösta Werner commented on the short film production in Sweden and described it as traditionally having close ties to the industrial film and the commissioned film.¹²⁹ Werner observed: "This has rarely brought about any possibilities for artistic results except in the cases where the customers have requested pure goodwill propaganda".¹³⁰ Werner contended that this was the only practical approach "for the ambitiously working or artistically striving Swedish short film."¹³¹ In a sense, the marriage between artistic ambitions and commercial motivations signifies the short film of this time, making it a particularly dynamic and intricate period in Swedish short film history.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Filmmaking on the Interstices of Art and Commerce

Gösta Werner's short film *Tåget* moves between a wide spectrum of film cultural spheres. From prestigious international film festivals to SJ's internal film theaters, the film reached a broad and multifaceted audience. Meanwhile, the creative process entailed a long range of negotiations between the filmmaker Gösta Werner and the commissioning body. To gain an improved understanding of commissioned films,

¹²⁷ Gösta Werner, 1949, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Arne Sucksdorff, "Från kortfilm till långfilm", *Biografbladet* nr 4, 1949, p. 251.

¹²⁹ Gösta Werner, "Kortfilm, experimentfilm, dokumentärfilm", in Hugo Wortzelius & Nils Larsson (eds.), *Filmboken: en bok om film och filmskapare*, vol. 6, Orbis, Uppsala, 1952, p. 376.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

such as *Tåget*, I have argued that one needs to examine the relationship between filmmaker and commissioner in great depth, focusing both on the production context and the film text. In the following, I will comment on how this study sheds light on my main research question: *What is at stake in the negotiation between the artists' vision and the commissioning body's objective in the production of this film?*

There is clearly no univocal answer to this question. Rather, this thesis shows that compromises are part and parcel of the commissioned film genre and as such the negotiations are of a varying kind. Gösta Werner wrote and directed a range of commissioned films, some of which were oriented toward the documentation of industrial practices and others offered him substantial artistic freedom. As I have argued, *Tåget* belongs to the latter category, which makes the film an interesting case study in order to flesh out the intricacies involved—which representatives are involved, how power relations manifest and what conflicts occur—in the relationship between artist and commissioner. By asking this type of questions, using Thomas Elsaesser's rule of the three A's as a framework, this thesis highlights some of the specific historical conditions that made the production of *Tåget* possible. In terms of *Auftrag* (commissioner), one must note that a lengthy deliberation period between the producer AB Kinocentralen, the commissioner SJ and the filmmaker Gösta Werner preceded the contractual agreement between these parties. Whereas sources show that SJ gave their views on the film form, style, and content during this period, the final agreement involved full artistic authority for the filmmaker. Interrogating the *Anlass* (reason) behind the production of this film, no definite motivation emerges but rather it seems multifaceted. For one thing, SJ stressed the production of film as an effective tool, able not only to promote Sweden as a tourist destination, but also to communicate the joy of using the train as a mode of transportation. In contrast to common belief concerning the commissioned film domain, the concept of quality film was not unfamiliar to the commissioner, but rather seems central to the idea behind SJ's advertisement philosophy. As the study of the *Adressat* (audience) reveals, film was seen as a particularly valuable medium because of the potential for widespread circulation. *Tåget*, for instance, gained a multifaceted audience within three quite distinct film cultural spheres: first, the film reached a broad mainstream audience acting as program filler in film theaters; second, the film appealed to film aficionados both domestically and internationally gaining distribution in local cinéclubs and film studios as well as competitive international film festivals; and third, the film was seen

by a demographic linked to the railway industry, through SJ's internal distribution outlets and screenings at railway conferences. For a film to achieve such widespread circulation, SJ stressed the concept of quality, which could only be achieved, representatives of the advertisement department noted, if the filmmaker was given artistic freedom and substantial resources.

Although both the filmmaker and the commissioner held high ambitions for the film, the compromises between the parties had consequences for how *Tåget* addresses an audience. This primarily becomes apparent when studying the film text. On the one hand, Werner's authorial vision shapes the film to a significant degree. For instance, the cinematic devices—montage editing, point-of-view shots and modernist music—corresponds with Werner's recurring emphasis on visual storytelling. Drawing on this, the film stands out in SJ's oeuvre both from a rhetorical and an aesthetic point-of-view. On the other hand, SJ's exerted influence over the film's form. Although *Tåget* does not include any non-diegetic explanatory intertitles, besides the opening credits acknowledging SJ's assistance in the film production, the film includes diegetic signs indicating spatiotemporal location such as the poster for the Nord Express. Moreover, SJ's requests concerning the ending of the film conflicted with Werner's idea of a *visionary* film. Although Werner came to terms with these compromises, one can conclude that the commissioned film domain offered the opportunity to experiment while at the same time issuing constraints.

3.2 Avenues for Further Research

My case study of *Tåget* (1948) by no means offers a complete picture of Gösta Werner's filmmaking practices or the commissioned film domain at the time. In this sense, there are multiple avenues for further research to be explored.

Despite being one of Sweden's few internationally renowned short film directors, Gösta Werner's filmmaking practices occupy a marginal position in Swedish film history. Similarly, even though the commissioned film constitutes one of the most prolific film formats in history it remains an under-researched topic within the field of film studies. Thomas Elsaesser astutely notes that the relationship between filmmaker and commissioner is hardly ever explored in depth. Such information is often hidden behind the scenes of film productions and Elsaesser argues that filmmakers rarely touch upon the topic voluntarily. In this sense, there are many

unanswered questions concerning the conditions that made this strand of filmmaking possible. A possible avenue for further research might be to attempt to break open the black box, so to speak, of the commissioned film domain by closely studying the negotiation between filmmaker and commissioner. In a Swedish context, Werner's position as a freelance filmmaker, working for a multitude of film production companies, makes his film practices a particularly exciting object for study. Meanwhile, the scope of Gösta Werner's estate—including communications, contracts, designs, and manuscripts—offers a unique archival possibility to gain insight into this specific and historically neglected set of questions.

4. References

4.1 Film sources

Titles marked with * have not been seen by the author.

Films are listed in order of appearance in the thesis.

4.1.1 Primary source

Original title: *Tåget – en film om resor och jordbundenhet*

Production company: AB Kinocentralen

Distribution company: AB Terrafilm

Production country: Sweden,

Official premiere: 1948

Commissioner: Statens järnvägar

Director: Gösta Werner

Scriptwriter: Gösta Werner

Cinematographer: Sten Dahlgren

Editing: Gösta Werner

Music: Sven-Erik Bäck

4.1.2 Films directed by Gösta Werner

Midvinterblot

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: Gösta Werner, 1946. Length: 12 minutes.

Archive: Kungliga Bibliotekets avdelning för audiovisuella medier (National Library of Sweden, Audiovisual Media)

En svensk storindustri *

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: AB Svensk Filmindustri, Informativ Film, and Stora Kopparbergs Bergslags AB, 1954. Length: 53 minutes.

Archive: Svenska Filminstitutets arkiv (The Swedish Film Institute archive)

Öden bortom horisonten

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: AB Svensk Filmindustri, Kungliga Vattenfallsstyrelsen, 1956. Length: 14 minutes. Archive: Kungliga Bibliotekets avdelning för audiovisuella medier (National Library of Sweden, Audiovisual Media)

Land of Liberty *

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: AB Svensk Filmindustri, Lamco, 1958. Length: Unknown. Archive: Svenska Filminstitutets arkiv (The Swedish Film Institute archive)

Att döda ett barn

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: Minerva Film AB, Försäkringsbolagens upplysningstjänst, 1953. Length: 9 minutes. Archive: Kungliga Bibliotekets avdelning för audiovisuella medier (National Library of Sweden, Audiovisual Media)

Skymningsljus

Director: Gösta Werner. Production: AB Svensk Filmindustri, Kooperativa Förbundet, Luma, 1955. Length: 9 minutes. Archive: Kungliga Bibliotekets avdelning för audiovisuella medier (National Library of Sweden, Audiovisual Media)

4.1.3 Films commissioned by SJ

Klart: Tåg ut! (Lennart Bernadotte, 1941)

Nattligt spår (Lennart Bernadotte, 1946)

Masstransporter i kristid (1942)

Godsvård (Evert Gustafsson, 1944)

Tunga don på revision (Lennart Bernadotte, 1946).

Där vagnarna rulla (Sven Linell, 1943)

Medelpad: En film från Statens Järnvägar (1947)

Från Östersjön till Västerhav: En film från Statens Järnvägar (1946)

På dal: Glimtar från Dalsland, dess industri, hantverk och hemslöjd (1946)

Hälsingland: En rapsodi (Lars-Göran Lantz, 1949).

4.1.4 Other films

La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon (Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1895)

Människor i stad (Arne Sucksdorff, 1946)

Lilla Märta kommer tillbaka (Hasse Ekman, 1948)

Sous les toits de Paris (René Clair, 1930)

Begone Dull Care (Norman McLaren, 1949)

La poison (Sacha Guitry, 1951)

Landsbykirken (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1948)

Post på hjul (Bo Bjelfvenstam, 1949)

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