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Anna Hofman-Uddgren, Pioneer of Stockholm Cinema Culture

Digitized Tools and Resources for Research on Early Cinema History and Film Reception in Sweden

Abstract

An early historian of Swedish cinema described the theatre director and performer Anna Hofman-Uddgren as embodying “an entire epoque in Swedish entertainment life and Stockholm film” (Ides-tam-Almquist 1959). However, although Hofman-Uddgren included moving images in her variety shows in Stockholm from 1898, and became a pioneer filmmaker, directing six films in 1911, research on Hofman-Uddgren’s contribution to Stockholm’s cinema culture remains scant. This study, inspired by feminist historiographical perspectives on silent cinema (Bruno 1993; Gaines & Vatsal 2011; Stamp 2015; Gaines 2018) and by work on historical film reception (Staiger 1992; 2000; 2005), argues that Hofmann-Uddgren’s relative marginalization in Swedish film history should be considered in the light of other examples of “loss and forgetting” in the discourse around women’s contribution to early cinema (Stamp 2015). Additional theoretical and methodological insights come from reflections from within the field of digital humanities (Dang 2020; Hoyt 2019; Mandell 2016). The article asks how computer-based approaches to film research and mass digitization of archival collections affect our understanding of Hofman-Uddgren and her place within the local cinema history of Stockholm.

Keywords

film reception, early cinema history, feminist historiography, Stockholm film culture, women pioneers

Introduction

Anna Hofman-Uddgren was a Swedish theatre director and performer who introduced projections of moving images in her variety shows in Stockholm in the summer of 1898, and later went on to direct six films. Drawing methodologically on feminist historiographical perspectives on women filmmakers active in the silent era¹⁾ and on historical reception studies,²⁾ while attempting to highlight the specificities of digital resources and tools, as well as some of the effects of digitization, this article considers Hofmann-Uddgren's relative marginalization in Swedish film history in the light of other examples of "loss and forgetting" in the discourse around women's contribution to early cinema.³⁾

Discussing how reception materials uncovered by searching the digitized newspaper collections of the National Library of Sweden, Kungliga Biblioteket (KB),⁴⁾ compare with earlier film historical accounts of critics' and audiences' reception of Hofman-Uddgren's films, I suggest that earlier research has overlooked the importance of elements associated specifically with the city of Stockholm for the popularity of Hofman-Uddgren's films with contemporary audiences. By contrast, this study proposes that it was when Hofman-Uddgren used her connections in and knowledge of Stockholm entertainment to enlist popular actors from Stockholm's theatre scene in films featuring recognizable Stockholm venues and locations that her films met with approval from critics and audiences. In addition, I discuss the digital dissemination of early Swedish cinema history, highlighting differences between how sources and authorship are acknowledged in the Swedish Film Institute's database *Svensk filmdatabas*⁵⁾ compared with in its analogue predecessor, the nine-volume filmographical publication series *Svensk filmografi*.⁶⁾

In comparison with the possibilities of data mining and visualization offered by the dataset in the Media History Digital Library through the Arclight software,⁷⁾ the digital resources discussed in this article are modest both in scope and in terms of the search modes available to researchers. Furthermore, the contextual information available from Kungliga biblioteket regarding the content of their database of digitized newspapers is problemati-

- 1) Giuliana Bruno, *Street-walking on a ruined map: Cultural theory and the city films of Elvira Notari* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jane Gaines and Radha Vatsal, "How Women Worked in the US Silent Film Industry", in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, eds. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2011); Shelley Stamp, "Feminist Media Historiography and the Work Ahead", *Screening the Past*, 40 (2015), n.p.; Jane Gaines, *Pink-Slipped: What happened to women in the silent film industries?* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018).
- 2) Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000); Janet Staiger, *Media Reception Studies* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005).
- 3) Stamp, "Feminist Media Historiography and the Work Ahead".
- 4) The National Library of Sweden will be referred to as Kungliga biblioteket (or abbreviated as KB) from here onwards.
- 5) *Svensk Filmdatabas*, accessed August 31, 2021, <http://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/>.
- 6) The volume covering early cinema was published in 1986. Lars Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1: 1897–1919* (Stockholm: Norstedt/Svenska filminstitutet, 1986).
- 7) See Eric Hoyt, Kit Hughes, and Charles R. Acland, "A guide to the Arclight guidebook", in *Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities*, eds. Charles R. Acland and Eric Hoyt (Brighton: REFRAME Books, 2016), 12–20.

cally vague, as I will show in the section entitled “The corpus” below. However, research on local cinema history depend on local resources, and to improve digital tools and methods for film history, it is important to understand how software, programs and search methods that archival institutions use to provide access to their digital collections today affect researchers’ exploration of the digitized materials.

Anna Hofman-Uddgren and her films

When the theatre director and performer Anna Hofman-Uddgren was commissioned by the cinema owner N.P. Nilsson to direct films in 1911, she was familiar with the medium, having included the new attraction of moving images in her variety shows at Sveateatern in central Stockholm as early as the summer of 1898. After the introduction in 1896 of new legislation prohibiting the sale of strong liquor in entertainment venues, more women became involved in the management of Swedish variety theatre, which until then had been run mainly by male entrepreneurs, and Hofman-Uddgren was the most successful of the new women theatre directors.⁸⁾ Sveateatern and its film projector were destroyed in a fire in March 1899, but already the following year Hofman (not yet married Uddgren) was staging variety programmes including moving images again, this time at Victoriatern.⁹⁾ Since her film directorial work took place in close collaboration with her husband, the well-known journalist and writer Gustaf Uddgren, it is worth pointing out that Hofman-Uddgren introduced films into her shows already before marrying Uddgren in 1900. Following their marriage, Uddgren appears to have assisted his wife in organizing variety shows that included moving pictures, for example at the island of Djurgården in 1904.¹⁰⁾ The practice of combining live performances and film screenings continued into the 1910s, and the live element increased in the period 1908–1910,¹¹⁾ partly as the result of an extended period of mass strike action in Sweden in 1909, which had repercussions for the entertainment sector.¹²⁾ Hofman-Uddgren did not only direct such shows, but also performed for audiences in the cinemas of pioneer exhibitor N.P. Nilsson, a former horse dealer who owned the largest cinema chain in Stockholm in the early 1910s.

In 1945, Swedish cinema owner Tor E. Cederholm, who started his cinema career working as a cashier in N.P. Nilsson’s cinemas, recalled that Anna Hofman-Uddgren used to sing music hall songs in these venues.¹³⁾ Indeed, in February 1910, the signature “no”

8) Björn Ivarsson Lilieblad, “Anna Maria Viktoria Hofmann-Uddgren”, in *Svenskt kvinnobiografiskt lexikon / SKBL, the Biographical Dictionary of Swedish Women* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2020).

9) Marina Dahlquist, “Anna Hofman-Uddgren”, in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, eds. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2017).

10) Olle Waltås samling, vol. 8. This collection, held at the Swedish Film Institute, consists of copies of cuttings and official records relating to Stockholm cinemas. The creator of the collection, Olle Waltå (1923–2004), was an amateur film historian who assembled his collection while working in Swedish film distribution and in retirement.

11) Bengt Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige: Charles Magnusson och Svenska Bio* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1959), 302–303.

12) Rune Waldekrantz, “Anna Hofman-Uddgren: Sveriges första kvinnliga filmregissör”, *Chaplin* 25, no. 3 (1983), 117.

13) Tor E. Cederholm, “När vi började — biografveteraner berättar”, in *Biografägaren*, no. 9–10 (1945), 69.

claimed in *Stockholms Tidningen* that films were no longer the main reason to attend cinemas, as evidenced by the appearance of Anna Hofman-Uddgren's name "in giant lettering" on the programme for Nilsson's cinema Orientaliska Teatern.¹⁴⁾ Thus, while we do not know exactly how Hofman-Uddgren came to cross the line from directing shows that included film projections to making films herself, her contract to sing in the cinemas of the entrepreneurial cinema owner and soon-to-become film producer N.P. Nilsson was clearly an important step in the process. Her key collaborators on set on all her films were her husband Gustaf Uddgren, and the photographer Otto Bökman. Bökman was, by virtue of having shot four films, one of the most experienced film workers in Stockholm in this early phase of Swedish film production. Hofman-Uddgren "knew everyone in the world of theatre",¹⁵⁾ whereas her husband was well connected in literary and artistic circles.

Hofman-Uddgren's first films, *Stockholmsfrestelser*, *Blott en dröm* and *Stockholmsdamernas älskling*, premiered in 1911. Contemporary descriptions reveal that all three productions constructed their narratives around the attractions of Stockholm as a city. Gustaf Uddgren is credited as *Stockholmsfrestelser's* scriptwriter, and he also developed the scenario for *Systrarna*— which was produced in 1911 but opened in January 1912 — from a short story written by the Swedish author, journalist and social critic Elin Wägner.¹⁶⁾ Wägner, at this time assistant editor-in-chief at the women's weekly publication *Idun*, was a well-known figure in the Swedish campaign for women's suffrage. Having socialized with August Strindberg in Berlin in the early 1890s, Gustaf Uddgren was on friendly terms with the novelist, and the Hofman-Uddgren film team obtained his permission to adapt *Fröken Julie* and *Fadren* for the screen in 1911.

Previous research on Hofman-Uddgren

One of the first historians of Swedish cinema described Anna Hofman-Uddgren as single-handedly embodying "an entire epoch in Swedish entertainment life and Stockholm film".¹⁷⁾ However, in comparison with the more well-known directors of Swedish silent cinema Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller, Hofman-Uddgren's film work has been treated as marginal. Although she is referenced in a few articles on other topics in early Swedish cinema,¹⁸⁾ the only publications to date focused specifically on Hofman-Uddgren's contribution to Swedish film history are an article by Rune Waldekranz' in the Swedish

14) ["No"], "Två debuter", *Stockholms Tidningen*, February 17, 1910, n.p.

15) Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige*, 438.

16) Waldekranz, "Anna Hofman-Uddgren", 118.

17) Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige*, 43.

18) Mats Björkin, "Fröken Julies rakkniv: Orientaliska teatern, sensation och konst", *Filmhäftet* 25, no. 3–4 (1997), 17–21; John Fullerton, "Intimate theatres and imaginary scenes: film exhibition in Sweden before 1920", *Film History* 5, no. 4 (1993), 457–471; Ingrid Stigsdotter, "Women film exhibition pioneers in Sweden: Agency, invisibility and first wave feminism", in *Making the invisible visible: Reclaiming women's agency in Swedish film history and beyond*, ed. Ingrid Stigsdotter (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2019).

film journal *Chaplin*,¹⁹⁾ later reworked into a book chapter,²⁰⁾ and Marina Dahlquist's biographical profile for the *Women Film Pioneers Project*.²¹⁾

The scarcity of scholarship on Hofman-Uddgren is partly explained by the brevity of her filmmaking career, and partly by the fact that only one production, *Fadren*, survives today. Mats Björkin's 1997 article on the cinema owner N.P. Nilsson's film promotional strategies sheds some light on the mediation between Hofman-Uddgren's films and their audiences; Björkin shows how Nilsson, who produced Hofman-Uddgren's films, attempted to align both his own domestic productions and imported films shown at his cinemas with contemporary notions of art, in order to counter criticism from activists concerned with the effects of "sensational" topics, which at this very time led to the introduction of state censorship of films in Sweden.²²⁾

Theatre scholar Marika Lagercrantz has written an intriguing article where she claims that a rumor about Hofman-Uddgren being the illegitimate daughter of the then Swedish regent Oscar III was widespread in Stockholm cultural circles around the turn of the century, and suggests that this prevented the Swedish press from speculating about Hofman-Uddgren's private life or background.²³⁾ However, since it is impossible to verify the claims about Hofman-Uddgren's biological father, and the article does not include references to journalistic source materials, it is difficult to assess the validity of her conclusions. More recently, Björn Ivarsson Lilieblad's profile of Anna Hofman-Uddgren provides a useful overview of the late 19th century Swedish entertainment culture in which Hofman-Uddgren became a celebrity, but his brief account of her involvement with film is based on secondary sources.²⁴⁾

***Svensk filmografi*, *Svensk filmdatabas* and Swedish film historiography**

Among previous research on Hofman-Uddgren, the entries about her films in the Swedish Film Institute's filmographical reference work *Svensk filmografi* should also be mentioned. *Svensk filmografi* is a nine-volume series published between 1977 and 2002, covering Swedish films produced for cinematic release from 1897 until 1999. Its collection of important data about Swedish film production means that *Svensk filmografi* has been widely used in scholarship on Swedish film history, and because many entries on individual films feature sections on "press reactions", these articles are of interest to research on film reception. In addition, digitized information from these entries functions as the main source for metadata about films in the Swedish Film Institute's database on Swedish film, *Svensk filmdatabas*, created in 2003 and relaunched in an expanded version in 2017.

19) Waldekranz, "Anna Hofman-Uddgren", 117–121.

20) Rune Waldekranz, *Filmens historia: de första hundra åren. Del 1 Pionjäråren* (Stockholm: Nordstedt, 1985).

21) Dahlquist, "Anna Hofman-Uddgren", n.p.

22) Björkin, "Fröken Julies rakkniv", 17–21.

23) Marika V. Lagercrantz, "En oavslutad berättelse: Om varietéstjärnan Anna Hofmann", in *Kulturellt: Reflektioner i Erling Bjurströms anda*, eds. Johan Fornäs and Tobias Harding (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press 2009), 186–193.

24) Ivarsson Lilieblad, "Anna Maria Viktoria Hofmann-Uddgren", n.p.

Today, searching for a film title in *Svensk filmdatabas* is the easiest way to obtain an overview of a historical Swedish film, including its reception,²⁵⁾ and thus research published in *Svensk filmografi* arguably shapes the current view of historical Swedish film reception to a significant extent. Staffan Grönberg, editorial assistant on *Svensk Filmografi 1*, was responsible for five out of six filmographic entries on Hofman-Uddgren's films in the volume on early cinema.²⁶⁾ Four of Grönberg's texts are largely based on and refer to Waldekranz' 1983 essay, with the addition of a section on "press reactions", which makes use of reception materials compiled at Kungliga Biblioteket by Olle Waltå and/or Stefan Somme-
hag.²⁷⁾ Grönberg's entry on *Stockholmsdamernas älskling* does not have a "press reactions" heading, but the main part of the article consists of a long quote from a contemporary review. Reception materials thus play a central role in the filmographic descriptions of all of Hofman-Uddgren's lost films. By contrast, the filmographic text about the only surviving film, the Strindberg adaptation *Fadren*, has a rather different character. The author behind the entry for *Fadren* was Leif Furhammar, at the time Professor of Cinema Studies at Stockholm University, and a consultant on the *Svensk Filmografi* publication project, responsible for providing research expertise. Furhammar's text is focused on the content and style of *Fadren*, and although he lists press materials among the sources, he does not discuss the film's reception at all. The contextual information provided is limited to the conditions surrounding the production.²⁸⁾ The disparity between the presentation of Hofman-Uddgren's lost and preserved films arguably reflects the centrality of the film text in film scholarship at the time when *Svensk Filmografi 1* was published; although the editorial team describe Waltå's and Somme-
hag's collection of press materials as "crucial" for the publication of this volume,²⁹⁾ reception clearly is considered vital in the absence of textual film material; historical descriptions are necessary as a substitute for the lost text, but when a film copy survives, textual analysis dominates, and reception context is discussed at the discretion of the author. Although *Svensk Filmografi's* technical foreword touches on other methodological issues, the view of reception materials as secondary to film analysis is an example of implicit editorial choices shaping the publication project as a whole and by extension Swedish film historiography. I will have reason to return to the influence on Swedish film reception history of *Svensk filmografi* and its digital successor, *Svensk filmdatabas*, later on.

25) A google search on a Swedish film title often provides an entry in *Svensk filmdatabas* among its top-ranked results.

26) "SG" in Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1* (*Stockholmsfrestelser* 137–139; *Blott en dröm* 140–141; *Stockholmsdamernas älskling* 144; *Systrarna* 149–151; *Fröken Julie* 151–153).

27) Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1*. The research contributions behind this volume in the series is outlined in the so called "Technical foreword" (66–77), originally written by Jörn Donner for *Svensk filmografi 6* (1977) but amended and updated by the editorial team behind *Svensk filmografi 1* for the 1986 publication.

28) "L F-r" in Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1* (*Fadren* 159–160).

29) Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1*, 68–69.

Reception studies and early Swedish cinema

Following Janet Staiger's definition of historical reception studies, this article presumes that the meaning of a text (film) is not in the film itself, that viewers' responses are shaped by their place in society and history, and that reception studies can contribute to our understanding of film culture by expanding analytic focus beyond the textual.³⁰⁾

Since so many early films are lost, film research primarily based on written sources is not unusual in the study of early cinema culture. As suggested in the previous section, in the absence of films to analyze, scholars turn to advertising, reviews and other forms of mediations between the films and their contemporary audiences. Indeed, there are intriguing similarities between Hofman-Uddgren and Elvira Notari, the first woman filmmaker in Italy and the subject of Giuliana Bruno's monograph *Street-walking on a ruined map* (1993), not only in terms of the fragmentary and often contradictory nature of the surviving records, and the lost films, but also in terms of the filmmakers' relationship with specific modern urban locations. Shelley Stamp has argued that looking "past the screen"³¹⁾ beyond on-screen representation is "particularly important for feminist media historiography", stressing that a broader understanding of (film) culture is important not (just) because the early films that do survive represent such a small percentage of the films that audiences actually saw, but "because looking past the screen changes our object of study. It moves our gaze away from representations of female characters on screen, away from the spectator-screen binary, into a world of culture, a world where women circulate, have agency, and make meaning".³²⁾

In 1911, film criticism still appeared rather randomly in the Swedish daily press,³³⁾ but material considered for this study includes articles from nine Swedish daily newspapers, including reviews and news items, as well as promotional materials.

Digital resources

As Sarah-Mai Dang notes, the term "database" can refer to a very wide range of digital objects used to organize, retrieve, store and search data.³⁴⁾ This study is based primarily on research via the database *Svenska dagstidningar*, which provides access to the digitized collection of Swedish newspapers available at Kungliga biblioteket,³⁵⁾ although some contextual information has been retrieved in the database *Nya Lundstedt Dagstidningar (NLD)*, which lists information about Swedish newspapers from the year 1900 and onwards.³⁶⁾ In

30) Staiger, *Perverse Spectators*, 162.

31) A reference to Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin, eds., *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

32) Stamp, "Feminist Media Historiography and the Work Ahead", n.p.

33) Elisabeth Liljedahl, *Stumfilmen i Sverige — kritik och debatt: Hur samtiden värderade den nya konstarten* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1975), 18; Waldekranz, "Anna Hofman-Uddgren", 118.

34) Sarah-Mai Dang, "Unknowable Facts and Digital Databases: Reflections on the Women Film Pioneers Project and Women in Film History", *DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2020), n.p.

35) *Svenska dagstidningar*, accessed August 31, 2021, <https://tidningar.kb.se/>.

36) *Svenska dagstidningar 1900–2022*, accessed April 6, 2022, <http://tidning.kb.se/nld/nld/nlnav>.

addition, this article has already mentioned, and will have reason to come back to, the Swedish Film Institute's database over film in Sweden, *Svensk filmdatabas*.³⁷⁾ In relation to the Arclight platform, Eric Hoyt has suggested that researchers consider a method he terms "scaled entity search" (SES) involving three interrelated elements, "the entities", "the corpus", and "the digital", which should always be considered in relation to each other.³⁸⁾ Although this method is designed specifically to accompany Arclight, the discussion relating to the elements can be adapted to a less advanced search tool such as *Svenska dagstidningar*. "The entities" concerns the selection of search terms, and what opportunities and limitations they create, while "the corpus" refers to the size and scope of the collection being searched. In relation to the "the digital", Hoyt proposes that researchers ask questions about technologies, algorithms and data structure, the quality of the OCR and the structure of the search index.

The entities

The primary search terms for this study were the six film titles, Anna Hofman-Uddgren's name(s), and the names of other individuals involved in the film productions. Even to perform a search based on the name of the filmmaker in focus for this study was easier said than done. The first name "Anna" was (and still is) a very common name in Sweden, and the name "Hofman" or "Hofmann" — the spelling still varies between resources³⁹⁾ — also generates far too many irrelevant results on its own, so the search must be limited either by combining first and second name or by combining the two surnames "Hofman and Uddgren". However, when the first name "Anna" is used, relevant articles referring to "Mrs Hofman-Uddgren" are excluded, and when the surname "Uddgren" is used, relevant articles referring to the actress by her unmarried name are excluded. In addition, because of Hofman-Uddgren's involvement in live entertainment, her name generates thousands of results at the end of the 19th century, when her name frequently appears in adverts and reviews, so to find relevant data about her involvement in cinema culture, the search had to be limited to a shorter time-period. This in turn means that the study excludes material about Hofman-Uddgren's theatrical career that may include interesting and relevant information providing clues to her career trajectory and interest in the new medium of film. Each search term came with its own complications — for example, the film titles *Fröken Julie* and *Fadren* had to be combined with other search terms to discern material about the films from the eponymous Strindberg plays, since these late 19th century plays were frequently performed on theatre stages both in Sweden and internationally in the early twentieth century, resulting in listings, reviews and other articles about the theatre productions that show up in a digital search on the titles.

37) *Svensk Filmdatabas*.

38) Eric Hoyt, "Arc lights and zoom lenses: Searching for influential exhibitors in film history's big data" in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, eds. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London: Routledge, 2019), 83–85.

39) The Swedish Film Institute's databases use the spelling "Hofman" (<http://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/> and <https://www.nordicwomeninfilm.com>) whereas SKBL, the Biographical Dictionary of Swedish Women uses the spelling "Hofmann" (<https://skbl.se/>). Websites accessed August 31, 2021.

The corpus

The process of digitizing Swedish newspapers is still at an early stage. As of July 2021, *Svenska dagstidningar* featured digitized daily newspapers from 1645 until 2021, over 1300 titles, including all Swedish newspapers from 2014 and seventy-five per cent of Swedish newspaper published before 1906, but for the years between 1906 and 2014 the digitization process is marked as “ongoing” for most publications, and for some not even started.⁴⁰⁾ The information available from Kungliga biblioteket on the digitization progress for this period — spanning more than one hundred years — is currently limited to the statement that “a small selection of newspapers”⁴¹⁾ have been digitized between 1906 and 2014. To estimate the scope of digital searches in the database for research on topics within most of the 20th century is therefore very difficult.

It is however possible to get some sense of the scope of my search for reception materials from 1911 and 1912. When a search on *Svenska dagstidningar* is limited to the years in which Hofman-Uddgren’s films were produced and premiered, eighteen newspapers are revealed as digitally searchable. To contextualize this figure, knowledge about the dissemination of Swedish newspapers during those years is necessary, and the best current source for this is another one of KB’s databases, *Nya Lundstedt Dagstidningar (NDL)*, which lists the titles and estimated circulation figures of Swedish newspapers year by year, from the turn of the century 1900. For the period 1911–1912, a search for newspaper titles in *NDL* lists over five hundred Swedish search results, but this figure incorporates different editions of the same newspaper, including some weekly editions.⁴²⁾ Furthermore, among Swedish newspapers published in this period there are titles targeting specific groups — for instance farm owners, supporters of the temperance movement, activists on the far left or in non-parliamentary/anarchist groups, Christians in movements challenging the state church and agricultural workers — and some of these specialized newspapers are (for different reasons) unlikely to feature adverts for cinema screenings, and even more unlikely to publish film journalism or criticism, which as has already been mentioned is rare even in newspapers targeting a broader readership. In addition, the over five hundred titles listed in *NLD* range from the most obscure to the most widely disseminated publications. When limiting the results to newspapers with circulation figures of 10 000 or above, the list from *NLD* is reduced to fifty-four titles, and while this figure still includes a few weekly publications⁴³⁾ as well as specialized titles that may not feature adverts for or

40) “Feedback: Q&A section,” *Svenska dagstidningar*, accessed August 31, 2021, <https://feedback.blogg.kb.se>.

41) “Q&A section,” *Svenska dagstidningar*, accessed August 31, 2021, <https://feedback.blogg.kb.se/forums/topic/kort-om-databasens-innehall/>.

42) *NLD* does not provide a function to list only the largest edition of a newspaper title distributed in various version, so a removal of several versions of the same newspapers from the total number has to be done manually on a list extracted from the database.

43) The inclusion of weekly publications in a database with “dagstidningar” (daily newspapers) in the title is — at least partly, if not fully — explained by the fact that frequency of publication can vary for titles over the years, so publications that were weeklies in 1911–1912 may have been published more frequently at an earlier or later stage in the history of the paper.

reviews of urban entertainment, it provides a more reasonable overview of the number of widely read daily newspapers in Sweden at this time than the original list.⁴⁴⁾

Nine out of these fifty-four titles have had their issues from 1911 and 1912 digitized and are searchable through *Svenska dagstidningar*. This means that around half of the corpus for this study originates from among the most widely read Swedish daily newspapers at the time,⁴⁵⁾ whereas the other half comes from newspapers with lower circulation figures, ranging between 1000 to 9000.⁴⁶⁾ However, considering how rare film journalism was in Swedish newspapers at this time, and that the films studied in this article were produced by one of the key cinema owners in the Swedish capital, who is likely to have gone into film production in order to provide lucrative content for his own local cinemas, it is hardly surprising that almost all of the relevant search results were found across four Stockholm-based newspapers with a wide circulation: *Stockholmstidningen*,⁴⁷⁾ *Dagens Nyheter*,⁴⁸⁾ *Svenska Dagbladet*⁴⁹⁾ and *Aftonbladet*.⁵⁰⁾ Although it was possible to search eighteen publications through the *Svenska dagstidningar* database, relevant search results were found only in seven of these titles,⁵¹⁾ and in two of the publications — the regional newspapers *Kalmar* and *Söderhamns Tidning* — the search results were limited to short news items about the adaptation of Strindberg's plays for the cinema. The highest number of relevant results appeared in the Stockholm-based national dailies *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*, and the Stockholm local daily *Stockholmstidningen*, which according to the data in *NLD* was the Swedish newspaper with the highest circulation figures during the years when Hofman-Uddgren was active as a filmmaker.

Around twenty Swedish daily newspapers with circulation figures of 15 000 or above were excluded from the corpus, since issues from the years 1911–1912 of these publications had not been digitized when this research was carried out. Considering the tendency in the available corpus to feature results mainly in Stockholm-based and Stockholm-

44) Circulation figures from years before 1942 in *NLD* are highly uncertain, since there are no official statistics and the database thus has to rely on incompatible sources that do not always specify which edition they refer to, and tend to be based on information from the newspaper itself, which may not be accurate. From the explanations to bibliographic categories in *Nya Lundstedt Dagstidningar*, accessed April 6, 2022, <http://tidning.kb.se/nld/nld/forklar>.

45) *Stockholmstidningen*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Aftonbladet*, *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, *Signalen*, *Arbetet* and *Reformatorn*.

46) For *Östgötaposten*, *Provinstidningen Dalsland*, *Trelleborgstidningen*, *Sölvesborgstidningen*, *Söderhamns tidning*, *Kalmar* and *Dalpilén* *NLD* lists circulation figures between 1000 and 9000 in 1911–1912. For *Jämtlandsposten* and *Norrskensflamman* the figures for these years are missing from the database, but they are likely to have been under 9000: the nearest available figure is 4000 in 1910 for *Jämtlandsposten* and 8200 in 1915 for *Norrskensflamman*.

47) Circulation in 1912: 130 000. The information here and in notes 46–53 below come from *NLD* and should be approached with scepticism because of uncertain and incompatible sources, as detailed in note 42 above. The reason figures are given for 1911 in some notes and 1912 in others is that there are gaps in the database.

48) Circulation in 1912: 47 199.

49) Circulation in 1911: 46 000.

50) Circulation in 1911: 33 000.

51) *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Stockholmstidningen*, *Aftonbladet*, *Jämtlandsposten*, *Kalmar*, *Söderhamns Tidning*.

centred publications, *Stockholms Dagblad*,⁵²⁾ *Socialdemokraten*,⁵³⁾ *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*,⁵⁴⁾ *Dagen*⁵⁵⁾ and *Aftontidningen*⁵⁶⁾ would have been particularly interesting to include in the digital search. Since the point of this article is not only to evaluate digital resources for research on Swedish film history, but also to investigate the reception of Hofman-Uddgren's films as carefully as is possible, I will refer to material found in some of these non-digitized publications through more traditional research methods (retrieval via micro-film), but I will also reflect on the problematic exclusion of these and other widely circulated publications — from the digital search. *Stockholmstidningen*, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, the three most widely read Stockholm-based daily newspapers at this time, all form part of the corpus, and it seems as though the digitization of these publications is complete, but to verify this with certainty is difficult,⁵⁷⁾ and as we shall see, the uneven digitization process impacts on the possibility to evaluate developments over time in the database.

The digital

Apart from limiting the search via terms and time frame, the database *Svenska dagstidningar* allows researchers to select which publications to search, or to search publications by political orientation or region. However, information about the extent to which each included publication has been digitized for a particular decade or longer period is not available in the database,⁵⁸⁾ and in the database title index the status of all incompletely digitized publications is listed simply as “ongoing”, without any specific dates, which makes it very difficult to assess what is missing.

Svenska dagstidningar has a timeline function which displays the number of search results across time on a diagram. The very existence of this function tempts users to explore trends in the use of terms over time, but the uneven percentages of digitized newspapers mentioned above means that this function is extremely misleading. Figure 1 shows the timeline result of a search for “Anna Hofman” (392 matches) across the entire database.

A quick glance at the diagram might suggest that it illustrates in relation to women film directors the point made by Laura C. Mandell in relation to literary history about

52) Circulation in 1912: 35 000

53) Circulation in 1912: 35 000.

54) Circulation in 1912: 30 000.

55) Circulation in 1912: 30 000.

56) Circulation in 1912: 23 500.

57) To see which publications are available in *Svenska dagstidningar* during a particular time period the researcher can type “*” in the search field and limit the search by date, in my case “1911-01-01 to 1912-12-31”. Since the result lists the number of issues of each publication, it is possible to check the number of issues against the number of days during these two years. However, since many publications exist in several editions, for *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* there are over 10 400 issues available from these two years, even though the total number of days in those two years were 728 (364+365, since 1912 was a leap year). In order to verify that each publication is fully accessible digitally, it is also necessary to check the publication frequency: for example, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* were published every day, while *Stockholmstidningen* (with 6626 issues searchable in the database) did not have a Sunday edition.

58) For details on how this can be checked for shorter time periods, see note 54 above.

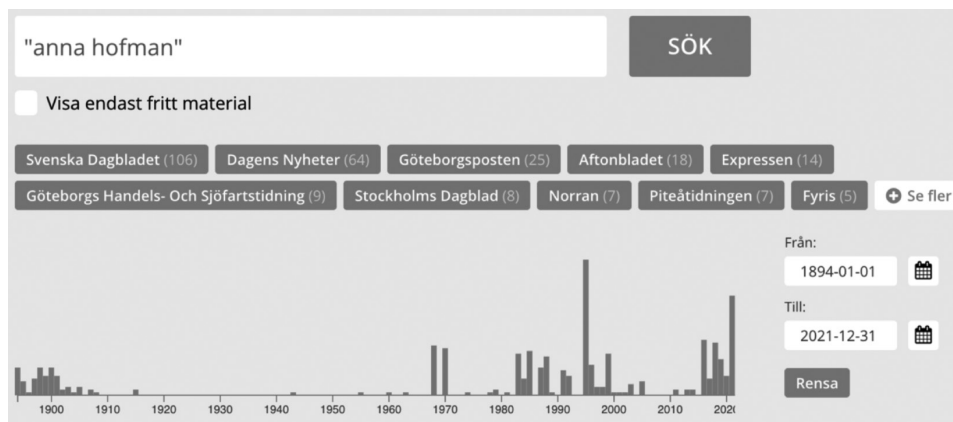


Fig. 1: Screenshot from *Svenska dagstidningar*

women writers being forgotten and recovered in cycles.⁵⁹⁾ It could also be interpreted as showing through newspaper records the story told about so many pioneers of early cinema culture on the Women Film Pioneers Website — well documented while active, and then disappearing into oblivion for much of the 20th century. However, the dip in results after the initial staples around 1900 reflects the considerable dip in the number of digitized newspapers, coupled with the fact that around 1910, Hofman-Uddgren is usually referred to as “Mrs Hofman-Uddgren”. And while there are results in the 1980s that reflect feminists’ rediscovery of the filmmaker, and a renewed interest in her life and work, there are also many results from the late 1980s that relate to a completely different person, an artist born in the 1950s.

Intellectual property rights severely limit digital access to *Svenska dagstidningar*; search results are available remotely only if the material is older than 115 years.⁶⁰⁾ For this study, it meant that the material about Hofman-Uddgren’s venture into film directing was only available by using a computer terminal in KB’s microfilm reading room.⁶¹⁾ The software architecture on KB’s website makes it difficult for the library to resolve the copyright issues; since there is only one type of user account/log-in to enter the system, KB cannot differentiate between researchers, students and the general public using the database.⁶²⁾

59) Laura C. Mandell, “Gendering Digital Literary History History: What counts for digital humanities”, in *A new companion to digital humanities*, eds. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 512.

60) The contents of the other key digital resources discussed in this article, *Nya Lundstedt Dagstidningar* and *Svensk Filmdatabas*, are freely available online, since these databases do not provide access to material under copyright.

61) The service is also available from select Swedish university and public libraries.

62) Kungliga biblioteket would be in a better position to negotiate with copyright holders regarding access to newspaper material for research purposes if they were able to limit remote access to *Svenska dagstidningar* to research users, while maintaining restrictions for other user categories, but the database is currently not structured to allow this.

An important detail regarding the digital resources concerns the quality of the optical character recognition (OCR) technology. In relation to the status of digitization regarding newspapers included in the corpus, I mentioned that it is difficult to verify whether all issues of the publications from 1911 and 1912 are available in the database, but that the number of listed issues suggests that digitization of these years has been completed. Unfortunately, this does not mean that all relevant texts published in the newspapers and featuring the search terms discussed under “entities” above have necessarily been identified in the search. The kind of searchable documents featured in databases like *Svenska dagstidningar* make use of OCR, but both the quality of the original materials used and the conversion technology — which has evolved over time — affect the accuracy of search results.⁶³ The digital scanning and OCR technology used to create digital access to Swedish newspapers do not always succeed in retrieving the specified search terms in the texts accurately. This means that the process of going through search results is cumbersome and slow, since some completely irrelevant texts are captured through erroneous recognition and have to be eliminated manually, and — more problematically — that the database may fail to identify some relevant results. When cross-checking my findings with existing research on Hofman-Uddgren and references in the collected materials I could not see that *Svenska dagstidningar* had failed to identify any relevant film adverts or reviews in newspapers included in the corpus. The six articles relevant to my study that other researchers have identified, and that were not included in my search results — two debate articles and two reviews from Stockholm-based daily newspapers, and two articles from periodical magazines⁶⁴ — all came from non-digitized publications that currently are available to researchers at KB on micro-film only. This is not to say that my search in *Svenska dagstidningar* has not missed any relevant information in the corpus; the difficulties in selecting search terms that yield manageable and relevant results combined with the technical problems of OCR readings means that some interesting materials are likely to remain undiscovered. However, the search succeeded in digitally retrieving the materials that earlier historians have found through painstaking manual searches in original or microfilmed versions of the large Stockholm-based newspapers *Stockholms-tidningen*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Aftonbladet*. Since the point of this article is not only to evaluate digital resources for research on Swedish film history, but also to investigate the reception of Hofman-Uddgren’s films as carefully as is possible, I will use and refer to the micro-filmed materials. I will however reflect on problematic exclusions from the digital search both in the main discussion and in the conclusions.

63) Michelle Moravec discusses this in a different context in “Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives”, *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 91–92 (2017), 186–201, 193.

64) Walter Fevrell, “Vidräkning med biografägare N.P. Nilsson”, *Stockholms Dagblad*, April 12, 1911, 8–9; Walter Fevrell, “De danska filmen” [sic], *Stockholms Dagblad*, April 13, 1911, 7; [“Helge”], “Stockholms-frestelser”, *Dagen*, April 27, 1911, 5; [“Ingvar”], “Strindbergs ”Fröken Julie” på biograf”, *Stockholms Dagblad*, January 16, 1912. Gustaf Uddgren, [signature “Gert Bokprantare”], “Vår förste biograf-författare”, *Figaro*, no. 8, May 8 (1911), n.p.; Gustaf Uddgren, “Om Strindberg och filmen”, *Film-Journalen* 6, May 2, 1920, 171.

Early Swedish film culture

Swedish film criticism, like Swedish film production, was in an early, experimental phase in 1911–1912. Filmmaking was such a new activity that professional designations (the Swedish terms for “director”, “producer”, “scriptwriter”, “actor”, “cinematographer”...) had not yet acquired a fixed meaning in relation to the film medium, and what was expected from for example a director or writer of a film was in the process of fluctuation and negotiation.⁶⁵⁾

The amount of focus on Hofman-Uddgren in the reception of her films varied greatly — the films were sometimes associated with her direction, sometimes with her husband’s screenwriting, sometimes with Orientaliska Teatern’s owner N.P. Nilsson and his wish to extend his domain from film exhibition and distribution to film production, and finally, in the case of the literary adaptations, set in relation to the author behind the original work. This is of course connected with the fact that attribution and accreditation for film work had not yet been standardized; as Jane Gaines and Radha Vatsal point out in relation to the US film industry, which developed earlier than its Swedish counterpart, in the first decade of film production “all creative workers were uncredited”.⁶⁶⁾

In early Swedish film culture, terminology was borrowed chiefly from the stage, and so a film could be referred to as a “cinema drama”, a “cinema spectacle” but also a “piece”, an “image”, or a “series of images”, the latter two examples focusing on film’s relationship with photography rather than theatre. In the empirical material for this study, the word “film” appeared more rarely, and mainly in contexts where the medium was criticized, for example in reports from a public debate about the artistic status of cinematic drama which showed up in the search results because part of the debate concerned whether or not it would be appropriate to film Strindberg’s dramatic oeuvre.

Sensationalism, censorship and Stockholm attractions

The debate about whether film was or could be an art form took place just a few weeks before Ernst Klein (signature “Selim”) wrote a front-piece article for *Dagens Nyheter* from the set of Anna Hofman-Uddgren’s shooting of *Fröken Julie*.⁶⁷⁾ In Klein’s fascinating piece, one of the earliest published descriptions of a Swedish film production,⁶⁸⁾ Hofman-Uddgren talks about her meeting with Walter Fevrell, the first head of the Swedish board of film censorship (*Statens Biografbyrå*), to discuss her film adaptation of Strindberg’s *Fadren*. Prior to Fevrell’s appointment as director of the world’s first national film censorship body, Statens Biografbyrå, he was known as head of an educational association, Pedagogiska sällskapet, whose members were highly critical of sensationalist films. In April 1911 he denounced N.P. Nilsson’s import and screening of films featuring controversial themes such

65) Cf. Gaines & Vatsal, “How Women Worked in the US Silent Film Industry”.

66) Ibid.

67) Klein, Ernst [“Selim”], “August Strindberg på biograf”, *Dagens Nyheter*, December 1, 1911, 1.

68) Jan Olsson, *Sensationer från en bakgård: Frans Lundberg som biografägare och filmproducent i Malmö och Köpenhamn* (Stockholm and Lund: Symposion, 1989), 258–259; Dahlquist, “Anna Hofman-Uddgren,” n.p.

as decadent urban nightlife practice in *Stockholms Dagblad*,⁶⁹⁾ one of the non-digitized Stockholm newspapers. Fevrell had reported Orientaliska Teatern's owner to the Stockholm police several times, including for the forthcoming opening of Nilsson's own production *Stockholmsfrestelser*.⁷⁰⁾ In a comment to *Dagens Nyheter*'s report from the debate about film's status as art in November 1911, Fevrell mentioned having discouraged planned film adaptations of Strindberg's *Fadren* twice.⁷¹⁾ His attempt to discourage Hofman-Uddgren clearly failed, and thus her Strindberg adaptations were reviewed by the new censorship body, which began its activities in the autumn of 1911.⁷²⁾ Here we have an example of where important contextual information regarding N.P. Nilsson's and Hofman-Uddgren's relationship to censorial practices and perspectives on the film medium's artistic and sensational topics would have been missing if this study had not had access to non-digitized materials referenced in earlier research.

While most literature on Anna Hofman-Uddgren follows Waldekranz⁷³⁾ in presenting the literary adaptations *Fröken Julie* and *Systrarna* as her main achievements as a director, my analysis of reception materials suggests that positive reactions to *Systrarna* mirror the positive reception of the films Hofman-Uddgren made before the literary adaptations, which were praised for using fiction to successfully animate the real attractions of contemporary Stockholm life.

"Stockholm plays", authorship and gender

In the publicity for Orientaliska Teatern's screenings in April 1911, *Blott en Dröm* and *Stockholmsfrestelser* were both presented as "Stockholm plays"; *Stockholmsfrestelser* was also introduced as "the first Swedish feature presentation". *Svenska Dagbladet*'s reviewer described *Stockholmsfrestelser* as a "cinema play, invented by Gustaf Uddgren and executed by Orientaliska Teatern" and went on to celebrate Uddgren's "desperate wittiness", claiming that the audience "would not stop cheering".⁷⁴⁾ Here, the scriptwriter (Gustaf Uddgren) received full authorship of the film, and the production company and exhibitor (Orientaliska Teatern) was mentioned, but Anna Hofman-Uddgren remained uncredited. This was typical of *Stockholmsfrestelser*'s initial reception, reflecting the fact that discussions around the filmmaking process at this time more often mentioned "writing" than "directing".

However, in July, *Dagens Nyheter* reported that "for some time, Mrs Hofmann-Uddgren has been in full swing filming cinema dramas, enticed by the success she had this past winter with her husband's Stockholm temptations".⁷⁵⁾ In May 1911 Gustaf Uddgren talked about his wife's involvement in an interview in the cultural weekly *Figaro* titled

69) Fevrell, "Vidräkning med biografägare N.P. Nilsson", 8–9 and Fevrell, "De danska filmen" [sic], 7.

70) Fevrell, "Vidräkning med biografägare N.P. Nilsson", 9.

71) Walter Fevrell, "Ett uttalande af doktor Fevrell", *Dagens Nyheter*, November 16, 1911, 1.

72) Björkin, "Fröken Julies rakkniv", 20.

73) Waldekranz, "Anna Hofman-Uddgren", 117.

74) ["pr"] (1911), "Stockholmsfrestelser", *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 27, 1911, 11.

75) Anon., "Namn och nytt", *Dagens Nyheter*, July 8, 1911.

“Our first cinema author”,⁷⁶⁾ but did not use the term “director”. Uddgren described how the team had to film interior scenes, set at Stockholm’s Grand Hotel, outdoors in the cold March weather, with snow on the ground, since no room at Grand Hotel had sufficient natural light for the film camera:

The actors had to play without outer garments and moreover in common thin evening wear. The ladies with bare arms and necks. It was grim, I am telling you. Everyone had to take steam-baths immediately afterwards to oust the severe cold they must have caught.

— And they managed?

— Yes. And so every morning we had to summon them all, trusting that the weather would be fair. But before we reached the meeting point, it was overcast again. My wife was the one who took care of that summoning and if she had not developed such an extraordinary energy, we would never have completed the image.⁷⁷⁾

This interesting reference to Hofman-Uddgren’s involvement in the film productions would not have been accessible to a case study relying solely on digitized daily newspapers, since it appeared in a periodical and has not been digitized. As the quotation above shows, when Hofmann-Uddgren was first credited in print for her film production work as something other than an actress, she was presented as an energetic coordinator, rallying the actors together, rather than being in charge of the entire venture. Only two months later, however, *Dagens Nyheter* reported that Hofman-Uddgren was “busy shooting cinema dramas”, presenting her matter-of-factly as the creator of the productions and even joking about *Blott en dröm* being presented as “by Madame X”: “Modesty, which is indeed a noble virtue, stops Mrs Uddgren from revealing who hides behind this signature.”⁷⁸⁾

In the contemporary reception of Hofman-Uddgren’s films, her status as the first woman film director in Sweden was never mentioned, and articles about the films did not mention that women filmmakers were unusual. This is somewhat surprising, because the publications in which the films were advertised and occasionally reviewed were not otherwise uninterested in women’s changing status and opportunities. The newspapers reported on women’s ongoing fight for rights and increasing presence in the workforce and public sphere, and indeed on the very same pages of the liberal daily *Dagens Nyheter* that feature ads and reviews of Hofman-Uddgren’s films in 1911, it is possible to find an article about “Sweden’s first female author of student farces”, as well as information relating to the Swedish movement for women’s suffrage.

Perhaps Hofman-Uddgren’s established status and fame as a variety theatre director in Stockholm explains the absence of comments on her gender; as we have seen, the distinction between cinema and theatre was blurred at this point, and the step from variety — in which Hofman-Uddgren was already an influential agent — to cinema and film produc-

76) Uddgren [signature “Gert Bokprantare”], “Vår förste biograf-författare”. The scriptwriter and journalist was interviewing himself about his first experience of making a film, using one of his pen names.

77) Uddgren/“Gert Bokprantare”, “Vår förste biograf-författare”.

78) Anon., “Namn och nytt”, *Dagens Nyheter*, July 8, 1911, 6.

tion therefore perhaps did not seem remarkable to contemporary critics.⁷⁹⁾ However, while critics did not appear to consider Hofman-Uddgren's gender of particular interest when they discussed her venture into film direction, a more subtle gendering may nevertheless be at work in the language of certain reviews.

In *Svenska Dagbladet's* review of *Blott en dröm*, the signature “-f-” conceded that *Blott en Dröm* was “rather neatly composed by Madame X”,⁸⁰⁾ and applauded its emotional impact and innocence — innocence bearing positive connotations in the discourse on film at a time when censorship was being introduced to stop allegedly vulgar and violent screen content — but found the film insufficiently dramatic, and blamed this on directorial inexperience.⁸¹⁾ This was one of the few times “direction” (*regi*) was mentioned (and criticized) in the empirical material, and it is interesting that it occurred in a piece where the filmmaker's name is mentioned, and thus the writer is clearly aware of the gender of the director. The review's contrast between emotion and innocence — notions often coded as feminine — with structural know-how may well reflect the reviewer's gendered expectations of a woman being in charge of a film production. The Swedish word “nätt”, translated here as “neatly” in the expression “neatly composed” also means “dainty”, “daintily” and “petite”, carrying feminine connotations.

Genuine places and popular faces

Dagens Nyheter reported that Hofman-Uddgren worked hard, travelling around and across the city “immortalizing many genuine Stockholm places”.⁸²⁾ The signature “X.X.” reviewing *Stockholmsdamernas älskling* in *Stockholmstidningen* pointed out that the film was framed around “a series of images from Stockholm and the archipelago”, even though the main Stockholm attraction presented in this film was the protagonist, the popular operetta actor Calle Barcklind, the eponymous “darling” of the Stockholm ladies.⁸³⁾

A focus on place, space and travel is prominent also in Klein's interview, where Hofman-Uddgren told the journalist that as a filmmaker you have to “rove around, keeping your eyes open wherever you go. If you see a good part, out with the notebook, and hey presto, another scene is ready”.⁸⁴⁾ Indeed, across positive responses to Hofman-Uddgren's films there is a pattern of praising her representation of the city of Stockholm, achieved through the use of recognisable places and spaces, but also by the practice of engaging popular actors from the world of Stockholm theatre. *Dagens Nyheter's* review of *Blott en dröm* stated that “the plot is, as it should be, of the most basic kind, the various paintings from Stockholm and its surroundings are most accomplished, at times even magnificent

79) If Lagercrantz' above-mentioned suggestion (in “En oavslutad berättelse”, 188) that editors treaded carefully around Hofman-Uddgren and refrained from gossiping about her private life because they thought she was the illegitimate child of the Swedish regent is correct, this may also have affected journalists' approach to her filmmaking, including references to the appropriateness of filmmaking as a job for a woman.

80) [“-f-”], “I marginalen”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 26, 1911, 12.

81) Ibid.

82) Anon. “Namn och nytt”, *Dagens Nyheter*, July 8, 1911.

83) [“X.X.”], “I förbifarten”, *Stockholmstidningen*, October 13, 1911, n.p.

84) Klein/“Selim”, “August Strindberg på biograf”, 1.

and they motivate to the full a visit to the nicely decorated cinema theatre”.⁸⁵⁾ This sentence tells us a great deal about film culture in Sweden in 1911: films were at this point expected to tell simple stories, critics encouraged well-executed imagery of recognisable locations, and they paid a great deal of attention to the cinema theatre as a physical venue.

On the whole, the critical reception of Hofman-Uddgren's first three films can be described as positive; especially the first film was met with general approval. The producer N.P. Nilsson even reproduced *Dagen's* positive review of *Stockholmfrestelser* in its entirety in an ad for Orientaliska Teatern that ran in both *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Stockholmstidningen* — a helpful reference for this study, since the Stockholm-based daily *Dagen*, published between 1896 and 1920 and managed by the same ownership as *Aftonbladet*, has not been digitized. To some extent, the positive reactions may be related to the fact that N.P. Nilsson's track record as importer of sensational films and Fevrell's attempts to stop his screenings had raised suspicions that a film entitled “Stockholm temptations” might depict Stockholm's night life in a lurid and explicit way.⁸⁶⁾ Indeed, a note in *Stockholmstidningen* prior to the opening suggests that there was some apprehension about the film: “One must hope that ‘Stockholm Temptations’ will be more tasteful than many of the sensational images imported from abroad”.⁸⁷⁾ When the film turned out to tempt viewers with glimpses of Stockholm's entertainment venues, attractive views and the appearance of popular actors, critics appear to have been pleasantly surprised.

Strindberg, Wägner, and film authorship

Earlier research on the reception of Anna Hofman-Uddgren's films has emphasized the fact that she was the first filmmaker to adapt August Strindberg for the screen, and considered the Stockholm films as mere trifles before her attempt to create serious art. However, after considering traces of the films in Swedish newspapers, my conclusion is that the Strindberg adaptations were seen by very few people, and negatively received by both critics and audiences. *Fadren* appears not to have been reviewed at all, whereas the reviews of *Fröken Julie* were mixed, and among the more positive responses, the one in *Stockholms Dagblad*⁸⁸⁾ was hardly impartial since it was written by “Dorian”, another one of Gustaf Uddgren's many pen names. The Strindberg adaptations disappeared quickly from Orientaliska Teatern's flagship cinema on Drottninggatan; *Fröken Julie* ten days after its opening, and *Fadren* after only five days.⁸⁹⁾

For *Systrarna*, the third film Hofman-Uddgren made based on a story by an acclaimed author, Elin Wägner, there is also very little trace of critical reception, but the film appears to have been more successful in cinemas. Wägner had recently published the popular novels *Norrtullsligan* (1908), about office girls in Stockholm, and *Pennskaftet* (1910), about a

85) Anon. “Namn och nytt”, *Dagens Nyheter*, September 26, 1911, 8.

86) Fevrell, “Vidräkning med biografägare N.P. Nilsson”, 8–9.

87) Anon., “I förbifarten”, *Stockholmstidningen*, April 25, 1911, 3.

88) Gustaf Uddgren, [signature “Dorian”], “Strindberg på biograf”, *Stockholmstidningen*, January 16, 1912, n.p.

89) Waldekranz, “Anna Hofman-Uddgren”, 121.



Fig. 2: Adverts for *Systrarna* in *Dagens Nyheter* 12 January 1912, p. 11 (left) and *Svenska Dagbladet*, 4 April 1912, p. 16 (right)

woman journalist engaged in the fight for women's suffrage, and in the advertising for *Systrarna*, N.P. Nilsson presented the films as “Elin Wägners magnificent cinema drama *Systrarna*”.

The ads appear to try to capitalize on Wägners's association with “Stockholm girls” from the successful newspaper serial turned novel *Norrtullsligan*, presenting the film as “The moving life story of two Stockholm girls”. They also stress that the film's actors are popular artists from Stockholm's theatre scenes, and in different ways, the two ads emphasize the inclusion of Stockholm imagery — in *Dagens Nyheter*, the advert specifies that the action takes place in Stockholm and the nearby sea resort of Saltsjöbaden in the summer of 1911, whereas the ad in *Svenska Dagbladet* states that the film is shot in Stockholm and its surroundings, further highlighting the local appeal by calling it “an image especially for Stockholm!”.

The film premiered in January 1912, but returned to Stockholm cinemas in April. The Stockholm theme seemed to attract audiences beyond the capital as well, as ads in the regional newspaper *Jämtlandsposten* testify to its distribution in Östersund. The marketing of the Strindberg films emphasized the novelist and the actors from Strindberg's theatre company Intima Teatern. *Systrarna*, on the other hand, seemed to combine the theme of the contemporary city from the earlier films, with Elin Wägners's reputation as an author of stories about contemporary women. The traces that survive of *Systrarna*'s screenings, indicating repeat screenings and regional distribution, suggest that it was much more popular with audiences than the Strindberg plays.

In his article about N.P. Nilsson's marketing strategies, Mats Björkin proposes that the cinema owner, faced with the introduction of film censorship and critical attacks on his exhibition of films with sensational themes, tried to emphasize “artistic” aspects when marketing both foreign imports and the Swedish films he himself produced, making use

of the notion “art film” (*konstfilm*) to describe both Danish sensational films and Hofman-Uddgren’s literary adaptations.⁹⁰

Considering the uncertainties about what it actually meant to direct a film at this time, when the term “direction” was understood in relation to theatre, rather than film, early cinema entrepreneurs like N.P. Nilsson who went into film production in order to furnish their own cinemas with new content to screen, were clearly important agents in relation to the films. However, in the above-cited interview in *Dagens Nyheter*, Hofmann-Uddgren expressed herself in terms that define her as creator of the films.⁹¹ She also claimed that Strindberg had given her permission to film the plays for Orientaliska Teatern, without mentioning her husband’s name. Gustaf Uddgren, on the other hand, vacillated interestingly between emphasizing his own and his wife’s contribution in different ways. He brought up Hofman-Uddgren’s involvement in the production of *Stockholmsfrestelser*, but then did not use the term director.⁹² In his review of *Fröken Julie* under the signature “Dorian”, he stated clearly that Hofman-Uddgren had directed the film,⁹³ but when he reminisced about the Strindberg productions in *Film-Journalen* eight years later — another interesting publication not identified in through the digital search, because it appeared in a periodical and several years after the making of the films — he did not mention his wife’s role.⁹⁴

Interestingly, in *Film-Journalen* Uddgren stated that *Fadren* was a failure because the actors were too arrogant “to listen to what the film director requested that they do”⁹⁵. Since he did not mention the director’s name, readers unaware that Hofman-Uddgren had directed the film would be likely to presume that “the director” in the quote above was Gustaf himself. However, although both Hofman-Uddgren and her husband made statements about their experience of filmmaking without mentioning the name of their closest collaborator, this does not necessarily mean their claims of authorship are in conflict; as Gaines and Vatsal show in the US context, husband-wife teams was very common in the early years of film production, and these collaborations “raise the difficult question as to whether the female contribution was submerged or whether joint authorship had its own assumed standard.”⁹⁶ There is nevertheless something intriguing about the contrast between the on-set visit by a curious journalist observing the first woman filmmaker at work adapting Strindberg’s plays, and the first published retrospective account of the production, where the male screenwriter reminisces about the filmmaking without mentioning his wife’s involvement.

Feminist historians of silent cinema have unearthed numerous stories from various national contexts of women film workers being recognized in their contemporary context, but then erased once the film culture turns into film history.⁹⁷ Hofman-Uddgren did not have her name erased and replaced by her husband’s, as evidenced by Idestam-Almquist’s

90) Björkin, “Fröken Julies rakkniv”, 17.

91) Hofman-Uddgren interviewed in Klein/“Selim,” “August Strindberg på biograf”, 1.

92) Uddgren/“Gert Bokprantare”, “Vår förste biograf-författare”, n.p.

93) Uddgren/“Dorian”, “Strindberg på biograf”, n.p.

94) Uddgren, “Om Strindberg och filmen”, 171.

95) Ibid.

96) Gaines & Vatsal, “How Women Worked in the US Silent Film Industry”, n.p.

97) Ibid; Bruno, *Street-walking on a ruined map*; Stamp, “Feminist Media Historiography and the Work Ahead”.

description of her as a “powerful lady” in his 1959 account of early Swedish film culture.⁹⁸⁾ But would we even know that she directed films had she not had that first page interview in *Dagens Nyheter*? The article includes her photograph, a vivid description of her directing — “a lady eagerly waving and directing with her umbrella”⁹⁹⁾ — and several unequivocal claims of agency in relation to the film work, which is referred to in the interview as “art”. Despite this, film historian Gösta Werner attributed the directorial credit to August Falck, who played the male protagonist in the two Strindberg adaptations,¹⁰⁰⁾ that is, one of the actors that according to Uddgren’s ambiguous recollections refused to follow the instructions from the film’s director.

Concluding remarks

While Klein’s report in *Dagens Nyheter* has likely helped Hofman-Uddgren escape oblivion, it may also have contributed to the focus placed on the Strindberg adaptations, rather than on her earlier films, in existing accounts of her career. This is itself an example of gendering, since it builds on the presumption that films based on source texts by a genial male author are naturally of more interest than an original screenplay by a young female writer (*Systrarna*), or films in lighter genres, whose attractions are very different from that of the chamber play (*Stockholmsfrestelser*, *Blott en dröm*, *Stockholmsdamernas älskling*). Interviewed by Klein, Hofman-Uddgren herself described her first three films as “unassuming little attempts for a start”, ignored *Systrarna*, and predicted that the result of her work with Strindberg’s plays would be “magnificent”.¹⁰¹⁾ However, neither of the Strindberg adaptations appears to have been popular with audiences, nor with critics.

In *Systrarna*, Hofman-Uddgren apparently re-used elements that had made her earlier films popular: recognizable Stockholm locations and venues, the movement and life of a modern city, and popular actors from Stockholm’s theatre scene — it marked the screen debut of Gösta Ekman, who would become one of the stars of Swedish silent cinema. Journalists paid little attention to Hofmann-Uddgren’s gender when writing about her films, and negative responses to her films did not refer to the director’s gender. Perhaps the uncertainty of what film was in Sweden in 1911–1912, reflected in the fluctuating terminology, often borrowed from the stage, made it possible for this woman from the world of variety theatre to move rather seamlessly into filmmaking.

Drawing on feminist film historiography, my analysis highlights different details in the reception of Hofman-Uddgren’s films compared with previous studies. But to what extent does my use of Hoyt’s scaled entity search (SES) affect the research outcomes? Has the use of the *Svenska dagstidningar* database unearthed other materials compared to earlier research efforts? Or did it just manage to retrieve materials that other researchers have already found through traditional research, with the exception of articles in non-digitized

98) Idestam-Almquist, *När filmen kom till Sverige*, 43.

99) Klein/“Selim”, “August Strindberg på biograf”, 1.

100) *Den svenska filmens historia: en översikt* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1978), 13. Werner credits Hofman-Uddgren only as director of Wägner’s *Systrarna*.

101) Hofman-Uddgren cited in Klein/“Selim”, “August Strindberg på biograf”, 1.

publications, that I had to retrieve manually, as a complement to the digital research? The differences are subtle, but I would like to point out two ways in which this research method draws attention to other issues in comparison with earlier studies. Firstly, when searching for film titles in a large corpus of digitized texts, adverts and cinema listings tend to become foregrounded in relation to reviews, since the quantities of marketing materials usually outnumber the critical or journalistic texts.¹⁰²⁾ While researchers approaching materials through analogue resources can of course identify the same adverts and listings, and Mats Björkin has explored N.P. Nilsson's marketing strategies, I would suggest that the experience of scrolling through digitized materials and the visual quality of the materials in the database — which is superior to the grainy microfilm versions — draws the attention towards film advertising, and facilitates the identification of recurring patterns, like the many references to “Stockholm” in adverts for screenings of *Systrarna*. Secondly, the research method highlights regional differences, since all but three of the search results discussed in this article come from Stockholm-based newspapers, even though a majority of the publications included in the digitized corpus were regional newspapers. The local search results from beyond Stockholm were mainly short items reporting that Strindberg's plays were going to be adapted for the cinema, and a few cinema listings from *Jämtlandsposten* providing evidence that some of Hofman-Uddgren's films were shown outside of Stockholm. In comparison with the “press reactions” published in *Svensk Filmografi*, which draws on newspapers published in the three largest Swedish cities — Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö — and for some periods have surveyed only the Stockholm-based newspapers,¹⁰³⁾ the digital search method makes it possible to explore film reception beyond the large urban centers, and once the digitization of a particular regional publication has been completed and included in *Svenska dagstidningar*, the extra amount of work required by the reception researcher to include a wider geographical span is negligible, in stark contrast with the time-consuming research process which forced *Svensk filmografi* to exclude reception material from beyond the large cities.

The complete absence of Malmö-based newspapers in the corpus from *Svenska dagstidningar* is problematic, but the search did not yield any results in the two Gothenburg-based newspapers included in the corpus, and perhaps the lack of reception materials from other locations simply reflects the local character of Hofman-Uddgren's films, and their roots in Stockholm entertainment culture.

So far, the discussion of digitization in this article has focused on the experience of using KB's newspaper databases to retrieve material about the reception of Anna Hofman-Uddgren's early films. However, I would like to conclude by returning to an important aspect of digitization in relation to dissemination.

Both Waldekranz' research on Hofman-Uddgren's film work and the national filmography of early Swedish cinema *Svensk filmografi* (introduced in the beginning of this article), were published before the impact of mass digitization, as well as before the development of systematic approaches to film reception analysis. Yet, later scholarship on

102) This is of course not only true for this early period, but also for periods when film reviews have become an established journalistic genre.

103) Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi* 1, 74.

Hofman-Uddgren has accepted the account of the films' reception presented in these sources without asking critical questions or revisiting all of the primary sources on which these analyses were based. In *Svensk filmdatabas*, the Swedish Film Institute's online database of Swedish film, several of Anna Hofman-Uddgren's films are presented with excerpts from Waldekranz (1983) as quoted in *Svensk filmografi* as contextual commentary. Indeed, since the information about historical reception in *Svensk filmdatabas* is based on *Svensk filmografi*, and searching for a film title in *Svensk filmdatabas* is, as I mentioned earlier, currently the easiest way to obtain information about a historical Swedish film title, the data on Swedish films from *Svensk filmografi* has arguably shaped the understanding of early Swedish film reception to a significant extent — and this influence continues and broadens with *Svensk filmdatabas*, where the information becomes accessible to anyone with an internet connection.

In *Svensk filmografi 1*, many early film titles are presented with a section on “press reactions”, summaries of the films' critical reception.¹⁰⁴⁾ The collection of empirical material, selection of quotes and analysis of the texts are subject to the interpretative skills and perspectives of the researcher, and while the technical foreword does problematize this, it is at least possible for the reader to find out who is responsible for each entry, since the authors' initials are listed in the publication. By contrast, in *Svensk filmdatabas*, which makes the “press reactions” from *Svensk filmografi* freely available online, no authors are listed in the information about reception. This reinforces the impression — already implied problematically in *Svensk filmografi* — that these quotes are representative or complete representations of the film's reception in the Swedish press, objectively telling us how the films were received, rather than a selection or interpretation of reception material. The presentation of “press reactions” as simply factual is further underlined by the fact that the section is usually followed by a “comment”, featuring a text by a named author, giving the impression that the “press reactions” are descriptive and neutral, whereas the “comments” will include personal opinions.

While access to digitized materials can provide historical reception studies with new insights or perspectives by facilitating new kinds of searches, as some of the findings presented in this article suggest, we also need to discuss the implications of online resources concealing their own blind spots while making information about film culture, including historical reception, available to much larger groups than ever before.

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104) Åhlander, ed., *Svensk filmografi 1*.

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Systrarna (Hofman-Uddgren, 1912)

Biography

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