

THE SCANDINAVIAN STYLE

Leni, had also gathered pace by 1927–8, its motives were, at least until 1933, personal and professional as much as political.

The German cinema on the eve of Hitler's rise to power confronts one with a paradox: the narrative which attributes the rise of this cinema to the flourishing of talent in the creative ferment of the Weimar Republic must perforce see its cinema enter into decline, as the Republic disintegrates under the blows of the nationalist and Fascist right. The evidence, however, does not bear this out, since if decline there was, it was due to the drain of talent away to the richer pastures of Hollywood. If, on the other hand, one takes economic performance as an indicator of success, it was only during the political upheavals of the Republic's final years that the German film industry matured into a financially viable business. Elsewhere in Europe, too, the days of an innovative art cinema were strictly limited; what is remarkable about the German cinema is how long these days lasted right

at the heart of a commercial enterprise, which by its very nature should not have been able to afford them at all.

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The Scandinavian Style

PAOLO CHERCHI USAI

For a brief period after 1910, the countries of Scandinavia, despite their low population (less than 2.5 million in Denmark in 1901; around 5 million in Sweden in 1900) and their marginal place in the western economic system, played a major role in the early evolution of cinema, both as an art and as an industry. Their influence was concentrated into two phases: the first centred on Denmark in the four-year period 1910–13, which saw the international success of the production company Nordisk Film Kompagni; and the second on Sweden between 1917 and 1923. And, far from consisting of an isolated blossoming of local culture, Scandinavian silent cinema was extensively integrated into a wider European context. For at least ten years the aesthetic identity of Danish and Swedish films was intimately related to that of Russian and German cinema, each evolving in symbiotic relation to the others, linked by complementary distribution strategies and exchanges of directors and technical expertise. Within this network of co-operation only a marginal role was played by the other northern European nations. Finland, which did have a linguistically independent cinema, remained largely an adjunct of tsarist Russia until 1917. Iceland—part of Denmark until 1918—only saw its first film theatre opened in 1906, by the future director Alfred Lind. And Norway produced only seventeen fiction titles,

from its first film *Fiskerlivets farer: et drama på havet* ('The perils of fishing: a drama of the sea', 1908) until 1918.

ORIGINS

The first display of moving pictures in Scandinavia took place in Norway on 6 April 1896 at the Variété Club in Oslo (or Christiania as it was then called) and was organized by two pioneers of German cinema, the brothers Max and Emil Skladanowsky. Such was the success of their show, and of their Bioskop projection equipment, that they stayed on until 5 May. In Denmark, the earliest documented moving picture show was put on by the painter Vilhelm Pacht, who installed a Lumière Cinématographe in the wooden pavilion of the Raadhustplasen in Copenhagen on 7 June 1896. The equipment and the pavilion were both destroyed in a fire started by a recently sacked electrician out for revenge, but the show was relaunched on 30 June to a fanfare of publicity. Even the royal family had visited Pacht's Kinopticon on 11 June.

The arrival of cinema in Finland followed a few weeks on from its first appearance in St Petersburg on 16 May. Although the Lumière Cinématographe remained in the Helsinki town hall for only eight days after opening on 28 June, owing to the high prices of seats and the relatively small size of the city, the photographer Karl Emil



A scene from *Håxan* (*Witchcraft through the Ages*), made in Sweden in 1921 by the Danish director Benjamin Christensen

Ståhlberg was inspired to take action. He took on the distribution of Lumière films from January 1897, and outside Helsinki the 'living pictures' were made available through the exhibitor Oskar Alonen. In 1904, Ståhlberg set up in Helsinki the first permanent cinema in Finland, the *Maaailman Ympäri* ('Around the world'). In the same year were produced the first 'real-life' sequences, but it is not clear whether or not Ståhlberg was also responsible for these.

On 28 June 1896 the Industrial Exhibition at the Summer Palace in Malmö hosted the first projection in Sweden, again with Lumière material, organized by the Danish showman Harald Limkilde. The *Cinématographe* spread north a few weeks afterwards, when a correspondent of the Parisian daily *Le Soir*, Charles Marcel, presented films with the Edison Kinetoscope on 21 July at the Victoria Theatre, Stockholm, in the Glace Palace of the Djurgårten. They were not a great success, however, and

the Edison films were soon supplanted by the Skladanowsky brothers, who shot some sequences at Djurgårten itself: these were the first moving pictures to be shot in Sweden.

FINLAND

The first Finnish film company, Pohjola, began distributing films in 1899 under the direction of a circus impresario, J. A. W. Grönroos. The first location officially designated for the projection of films was the *Kinematograf International*, opened at the end of 1901. But, like the two other cinemas which opened shortly afterwards, it survived for only a few weeks, and it was not until Karl Emil Ståhlberg's initiative in 1904 that film theatres were definitively established on a permanent basis. In 1911 there were 17 cinemas in Helsinki, and 81 in the rest of the country. By 1921, the figures had risen to 20 and 118 respectively.

The first Finnish fiction film, *Salaviinanpolttajat* ('Bootleggers'), was directed in 1907 by the Swede Louis Sparre assisted by Teuvo Puro, an actor with Finland's National Theatre, for the production company Atelier Apollo, run by Ståhlberg. In the following ten years, Finland produced another 27 fiction films and 312 documentary shorts, as well as two publicity films. Ståhlberg's near monopoly on production—between 1906 and 1913 he distributed 110 shorts, around half the entire national production—was short-lived. Already in 1907 the Swede David Fernander and the Norwegian Rasmus Hallseth had founded the Pohjoismaiden Biografi Komppania, which produced forty-seven shorts in little more than a decade. The Swedish cameraman on *Salaviinanpolttajat*, Frans Engström, split with Ståhlberg and set up—with little success—his own production company with the two protagonists of the film, Teuvo Puro and Teppo Raikas. An extant fragment of *Sylvi* (1913), directed by Puro, constitutes the earliest example of Finnish fiction film preserved today. Greater success awaited Erik Estlander, who founded Finlandia Filmi (forty-nine films between 1912 and 1916, including some shorts shot in the extreme north of the country), and the most important figure of the time, Hjalmar V. Pohjanheimo, who from 1910 onwards began to acquire several film halls, and soon turned to production. The films distributed by Pohjanheimo under the aegis of Lyyra Filmi were documentaries (1911), newsreels (from 1914), and comic and dramatic narratives, made with the help of his sons Adolf, Hilarius, Asser, and Berger, and the theatrical director Kaarle Halme.

The First World War brought the intervention of the Russian authorities, who in 1916 banned all cinematographic activity. The ban lapsed after the Revolution of February 1917 and was definitively removed in December when Finland declared its independence. The post-war period was dominated by a production company founded by Puro and the actor Erkki Karu, Suomi Filmi. Its first important feature-length film was *Anna-Liisa* (Teuvo Puro and Jussi Snellman, 1922), taken from a work by Minna Canth and influenced by Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness* (1886): a young girl who has killed her child is overwhelmed by remorse and confesses to expiate her crime. The actor Konrad Tallroth, who had already been active in Finland before the war but had then emigrated to Sweden following the banning of the film *Eräs elämän murhenäytelmä* ('The tragedy of a life'), was taken on in 1922 by Suomi for *Rakkauden kaikkivalta—Amor Omnia* ('Love conquers all'), an uneven and isolated attempt to adapt Finnish cinema to the mainstream features emerging from western Europe and the United States. Production in the following years was limited in quantity, and tended to return to traditional themes of everyday life, in the line of contemporary Swedish narrative and stylistic models. Judging by accounts written at the time, only the docu-

mentary *Finlandia* (Erkki Karu and Eero Leväluoma/Suomi Filmi, 1922) achieved a certain success abroad. Around eighty silent feature films were produced in Finland up to 1933. About forty fiction films, including shorts, are conserved at the Suomen Elokuva-Arkisto in Helsinki.

NORWAY

The first Norwegian film company of any significance was Christiania Film Co. A/S, set up in 1916. Before then, national production—represented by Norsk Kinematograf A/S, Internationalt Film Kompagni A/S, Nora Film Co. A/S, and Gladvet Film—had been in an embryonic stage. Fewer than ten fiction films had been produced between 1908 and 1913, and no record exists of important productions for the two following years.

For the entire period of silent cinema, Norway boasted no studio to speak of, and thus the affirmation of a 'national style' particular to it derived in large part from the exploitation of the Nordic landscape. The first sign of the end of a semi-amateur phase in production came in 1920 with the appearance of two films: *Kaksen på Øverland* ('The braggarts of Overland'), directed by G. A. Olsen, and *Fante-Anne* ('The lady-tramp'), acted by Asta Nielsen and directed by Rasmus Breistein. The following year saw the first important adaptation of a work by Knut Hamsun, *Markens grøde* ('The growth of the soil', Gunnar Sommerfeldt, 1921), but, significantly, the film was directed by a Dane and photographed by a Finn, George Schnéevoigt, who was resident in Denmark at the time and who had been the cameraman for Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Prænkæstan* (*The Parson's Widow*, 1920), filmed in Norway for Svenska Biografteater. Another film—*Pan* (Harald Schwenzen, 1922), produced by the newly formed Kommunernes Films-Central—was also taken from a work by Hamsun.

After an interval of a year, the first film to be considered at the time as worthy of an international audience appeared: *Till Sæters* ('In the mountains', 1924), the first film directed by the journalist Harry Ivarson. *Den nye lensmanden* ('The new commissar', Leif Sinding, 1926), produced by a new company, Svalefilm, achieved equal acclaim. The brief flourishing of Norwegian silent cinema reached its peak with *Troll-elgen* ('The magic leap', Walter Fürst, 1927), a grandiose natural fresco whose worth is in part due to the photography of the Swede Ragnar Westfelt, and with *Laila* (1929), dedicated to the Lapps in the north of the country. Even here however, it is worth noting the foreign input, from the Finno-Danish director Schnéevoigt to the acting of the Swedish Mona Mårtenson and the Danish Peter Malberg.

The somewhat limited extent of Norwegian silent cinema is today represented by about thirty titles available at the Norsk Filminstitutt, Oslo.

DENMARK

On 17 September 1904 Constantin Philipsen opened the first permanent film exhibition hall in Copenhagen. Danish fiction film production had already got under way a year earlier when the photographer to the royal family, Peter Elfelt, had made *Henrettelsen* ('The execution'), which still survives today. In 1906 an exhibitor, Ole Olsen, set up the Nordisk Film Kompagni, which was to play a fundamental role in Danish cinema throughout the silent period, and indeed in international cinema for a good part of the 1910s. By 1910, Nordisk was considered the world's second largest production company after Pathé; its first studio, built by the company in 1906, is the oldest surviving film studio in the world. Most of the fiction films of the early period were directed by ex-staff sergeant Viggo Larsen, and shot by Axel Sørensen (renamed Axel Graatkjær after 1911). Of the 248 fiction films produced between 1903 and 1910, 242 were made by Nordisk. Only after 1909 did other companies extend the panorama of Danish cinema: Biorama of Copenhagen and Fotorama of Aarhus, both founded in 1909; and Kinografen in 1910.

In 1910 a Fotorama film called *Den hvide slavehandel* ('The white slave trade') marked a turning-point in the evolution of fiction films not only in Scandinavia but throughout the world. The film dealt with the theme of prostitution in previously unheard of explicit terms, and thereby inaugurated a new genre—the 'sensational' film, set in the world of crime, vice, or the circus. On the basis of the success of the Éclair film *Nick Carter, le roi des détectives* ('Nick Carter, King of the detectives', Victorin Jasset, 1908), Nordisk began a series in 1910 whose protagonist was a brilliant criminal, Dr Gar el Hama: Eduard Schnedler-Sørensen directed both *Dødsflugten* (UK title: *The Flight from Death*; US title: *The Nihilist Conspiracy*, 1911) and *Dr. Gar el Hama II / Dr. Gar el Hama Flugt* (*Dr. Gar el Hama: Sequel to A Dead Man's Child*, 1912), and to some extent these films inspired the most famous films of criminal exploits, made in France by Jasset (*Zigomar*, 1911) and later by Louis Feuillade (*Fantômas*, 1913).

One important consequence of the move towards 'sensational' drama was the development of new techniques in lighting, in camera-positioning and in set design. The case of *Den sorte drøm* ('The black dream'), by Urban Gad (Fotorama, 1911), is particularly noteworthy in this regard. For the high anxiety of the most intense scenes, the reflectors were taken down from their usual stands and laid on the ground, so that the actors threw long, dark shadows on to the walls. The use of a hand-held lantern, clutched by the protagonists as they struggled forward in the dark, was deployed to great effect after 1914, in *Gar el Hama III: Slangøen* (*The Abduction*, or *Dr. Gar el Hama's Escape From Prison*, 1914) by Robert Dinesen, and in *Verdens undergang* (*The Flaming Sword*, or *The End of the World*, 1916) by August

Blom. A variant on this effect was to have a character enter a dark room and turn on the light. The shooting was suspended and the actor blocked as the lamp in shot was about to be turned on; the scene was then lit as if by the lamp in question and shooting recommenced. Often the two segments of the shot were tinted in different colours, usually in blue for darkness and ochre for light. Another powerful effect, hardly seen outside Denmark before 1911, was the silhouette outline, shot from an interior with the lens pointing towards an open or half-open door, or a window. These ideas, which characterize two films directed by August Blom for Nordisk—*Ungdommens ret* (*The Right of Youth*, 1911) and *Exspeditricen* (*In the Prime of Life*, 1911)—are taken to an extreme in *Det hemmelighedsfulde X* (*Sealed Orders* or *Orders under Seal*, 1913), the first film by the greatest Danish director of the silent period besides Carl Theodor Dreyer, Benjamin Christensen (1879-1959). Christensen developed techniques and figures already used by the French director Léonce Perret in *L'Enfant de Paris* ('The child of Paris'), and *Le Roman d'un mousse* ('A midshipman's tale', Gaumont, 1913), and arrived at extraordinary results using silhouettes and half-lit images. His aggressive experimentalism reached its peak in the thriller *Hævnens nat* (*Blind Justice*, 1915).

Another frequent trick was to show a character who was out of range of the camera's field in a mirror: for example, in *Ved fængslets port* (*Temptations of a Great City*, 1911) by August Blom—starring the most famous male lead actor of the time, Valdemar Psilander—and in *For åbent Tæppe / Desdemona* (1911). In all probability, the mirror was used as an expedient to avoid the need for montages of several shots in a scene (since Danish directors seem not to have been keen on elaborate editing techniques), but nevertheless, its allusive and symbolic impact enriched the treatment of sexuality in films such as the frank and open *Afgrunden* by Urban Gad (*The Abyss*, Kosmorama, 1910), which saw the début of the greatest actress of Danish silent film, Asta Nielsen.

Early Danish film-makers paid relatively little attention to the narrative dynamic of their films: before 1914 tracking shots, flashbacks, and close-ups were very rarely used. They thus fell well short of the fluidity and naturalism typical of American cinema of the same period. However, the Danes had a profound and lasting influence on film production on an international scale. On a general level, their most significant contribution was in the development away from short-length narrative films to films of three, four, or even more reels—August Blom's *Atlantis* (Nordisk, 1913), with a huge budget, ran to 2,280 metres of film, excluding intertitles—and in the cultural legitimization of cinema, which was encouraged by the appearance of established actors and actresses from classical theatre.

On a more specific level, Danish cinema had an enor-

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mous impact on its neighbours. The first works by the Swedish directors Mauritz Stiller and Victor Sjöström, along with almost all Swedish films before 1916, bear the technical imprint of Denmark, and only in the following two years was an autonomous identity developed in Sweden. Danish films were also widely distributed in pre-revolutionary Russia, leading some companies to shoot alternative endings designed to satisfy the Russian taste for tragic denouements. Films shot in Russia in the earlier 1910s, and especially the first dramas by Yevgeny Bauer from 1913, display techniques of lighting (back- and multiple-lighting) and framing (doors and windows shot from within) which clearly derive from methods current in Danish cinema.

The most lucrative foreign market for Nordisk was Germany—at least until 1917, when the German government took control of the national film industry. Profits were so high that the company could invest in a huge chain of cinemas. The close relationship between Danish and German cinema in the 1910s and 1920s becomes apparent if one compares the 'sensational' themes (criminal geniuses, white slave trade, extreme passions)

and the markedly expressionist camera techniques (oblique shots, half-light effects) of pre-1914 Danish dramas with the work of German directors such as Joe May, Otto Rippert, and early Fritz Lang. Vilhelm Glückstadt, whose extraordinary work as a director has remained almost unexplored to this day, was the author of three films which reveal profound affinities with the expressionist aesthetic: *Den fremmede* ('The benefactor', 1914); *Det gamle spil om enhver / Enhver* ('Anyone', 1915), a complex tangle of flashbacks, parallel story-lines, and strongly metaphorical imagery; and the impassioned *Kornspekulanten* ('The wheat speculators', 1916), whose attribution to Glückstadt is not entirely certain, but which looks forwards to Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932).

Dreyer is a towering figure in the pantheon of Danish cinema. His work represents the most complete synthesis of its expressionist tendencies with its meticulous figurative sobriety. His interest in psychology and in the conflicts between the unconscious and the rational elements in human actions was already apparent in his first film *Præsidenten* (*The President*, 1919), and in the episode film *Blade af Satans bog* (*Leaves from Satan's book*, 1921), and

Karin Molander as the reporter in Mauritz Stiller's brilliant comedy *Kärlek och journalistik* ('Love and journalism', 1916)



Victor Sjöström

(1879–1960)

In 1880 Sjöström's parents—a lumber merchant and a former actress—emigrated from Sweden to the United States, taking their seven-month-old baby Victor with them. But the mother soon died, and the son, to escape an unwelcome stepmother and an increasingly authoritarian father, returned to Sweden, where he was brought up by his uncle Victor, an actor at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. Fired by enthusiasm for the stage, the young Victor also became an actor, and at the age of 20 was already renowned for his sensitive performances and powerful stage presence.

In 1911 Charles Magnusson was busily reorganizing the Svenska Biografteatern film studio, where he was head of production, aiming to give cinema more cultural legitimacy by bringing in leading technical and artistic personnel from the best theatre companies in Sweden. He hired the brilliant cameraman Julius Jaenzon (later to be responsible for the distinctive look of many of Sjöström's most famous Swedish films), then in 1912 Mauritz Stiller and, shortly afterwards, Victor Sjöström. Sjöström was by then running his own theatre company in Malmö, but he eagerly accepted Magnusson's offer, driven (he wrote later) 'by a youthful desire for adventure and a curiosity to try this new medium of which then I did not have the slightest knowledge'.

After acting in a couple of films directed by Stiller, Sjöström turned to direction, making his mark with the crisp realism applied to the controversial social drama

Ingeborg Holm (1913). But it was with *Terje Vigen* in 1917 that his creativity came into full flower. The film shows a profound feeling for the Swedish landscape of his maternal origins and achieves an intimate correspondence between natural events and the inner and interpersonal conflicts of the characters. This symbiosis of inner and outer is even more prominent in *Berg-Ejvind och hans hustru* (*The Outlaw and his Wife*, 1918), the tragedy of a couple seeking refuge—but finding death—in the mountains, in a vain attempt to escape an unjust and oppressive society. 'Human love', said Sjöström, 'is the only answer to fling in the face of a cruel nature.'

Partly out of her admiration for Sjöström's films, the novelist Selma Lagerlöf had granted all her film rights to Svenska Bio. Sjöström found in her work the ideal expression of the active role played by nature in the destiny of characters torn between good and evil. In his adaptation of *The Sons of Ingmar* (*Ingmarsönerna*, 1919) this vision finds expression in a family saga of monumental scope. But it is at its most intense in *The Phantom Carriage* (*Körkarlen*, 1921), a drama of the supernatural with a complex structure of interlaced flashbacks, set on a New Year's Eve dominated by remorse and a desperate search for redemption.

Swedish cinema had profited from the country's neutrality during the First World War to make an impact on the European market and to challenge American supremacy. But after the war it lost its precarious privileged position. With the industry in crisis, both Stiller and Sjöström accepted offers to go to Hollywood. Sjöström arrived there in 1923, with a contract from Goldwyn and his name changed to Seastrom. After some



difficulty settling in, he scored a success with *He Who Gets Slapped* (1924), in which he applied his merciless analysis of character to the melodramatic masochism of the Lon Chaney character—a scientist who decides to become a clown after a false friend has gone off not only with his wife but with his most important research discovery.

Triumphant in Hollywood, Sjöström made *The Divine Woman* (1928) with his even more famous compatriot, Greta Garbo. But more important and characteristic were two films with Lillian Gish, *The Scarlet Letter* (1927) and *The Wind* (released in 1928). The former is a free adaptation of Hawthorne's novel in which he was able to develop the theme of intolerance and social isolation explored in *Berg-Ejvind*. Then, in *The Wind* he achieved the ultimate tragic fusion of the violence of the elements and of human passions in a story set in an isolated cabin in the midst of a windswept desert.

A high point of the silent aesthetic, *The Wind* was distributed in a synchronized version, allegedly with the ending changed. Shortly after its release, Sjöström returned to Sweden. Although, in a letter to Lillian Gish, he later referred to his time in the United States as 'perhaps the happiest days of my life', it is possible that he felt apprehensive about his future role in Hollywood after the coming of sound. After making one more film in Sweden and one in England, he went back to his former career as an actor and in the 1940s became 'artistic adviser' to Svensk Filmindustri. He acted in nineteen films—by Gustaf Molander, Arne Mattsson, and (most notably) Ingmar Bergman, his protégés at Svensk Filmindustri; his final role was in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), a film which can be seen as a moving autobiographical reflection of Sjöström's ideas on dreams and on the failings of mankind, and an expression of his wonderment in face of the role of nature in shaping human feeling.

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SELECT FILMOGRAPHY

Trädgårdsmästaren (The Gardener) (1912); Ingeborg Holm (1913); Judaspengar (Judas Money / Traitor's Reward) (1915); Terje Vigen (A Man there Was) (1917); Tösen från Stormyrörpet (The Girl from Stormy Croft / The Woman He Chose) (1917); Berg-Ejvind och hans hustru (The Outlaw and his Wife) (1918); Ingmarssönerna I-II (The Sons of Ingmar) (1919); Klostret i Sandomir (The Monastery of Sandomir / The Secret of the Monastery) (1920); Mästerman (Master Samuel) (1920); Körkarlen (The Phantom Carriage / The Stroke of Midnight) (1921); Name the Man (1924); He Who Gets Slapped (1924); The Scarlet Letter (1927); The Divine Woman (1928); The Wind (1928); A Lady to Love / Die Sehnsucht jeder Frau (1930); Markurells i Wadköping (The Markurells of Wadköping) (1931); Under the Red Robe (1937)

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Opposite: *Tösen från Stormyrörpet* (The Girl from Stormy Croft, 1917).

reached a new level of excellence in *Du skal ære din hustru* (*The Master of the House*), produced in 1925 by a new, fierce competitor of Nordisk, Palladium, run by Lau Lauritzen. Danish cinema went into gradual decline after the First World War, and Dreyer remained an isolated figure of genius in his home country. He was driven to continue his career abroad, in Norway, Sweden, Germany, and France. Danish cinema responded to its inexorable loss of influence by turning in on itself. In the early 1920s, in a last-ditch effort to stop the rot, Nordisk offered huge sums of money to the director Anders Wilhelm Sandberg to adapt a number of Dickens's novels, but the genuine success of the results in Denmark struggled to transfer abroad. A similar fate awaited the first Danish animation film, *De tre smaa mænd* ('Three little men', Robert Storm-Petersen and Carl Wieghorst, 1920), and experiments in sound cinema carried out by Axel Petersen and Arnold Poulsen after 1922. The only significant exception to the rule was the series of comedies 'Fyrtaanet og Bivognen' ('Long and short'), produced between 1921 and 1927 by Carl Schenstrøm and Harald Madsen. *Klovnen* ('Clowns', Anders Wilhelm Sandberg, 1926) was the last great drama film made by Nordisk to be distributed in America, but its success was not sufficient to prevent the virtually total eclipse of Denmark in the arena of the great producing nations.

Around 2,700 fiction and non-fiction titles were produced in Denmark between 1896 and 1930. Most of the films of which copies have survived (including about 400 fiction films) are to be found at Det Danske Filmmuseum in Copenhagen.

SWEDEN

The first entrepreneur to dedicate himself full-time to cinema in Sweden was Numa Peterson, a photographer who had begun his activity by showing Lumière films. In 1897 a Lumière agent, Georges Promio, taught an employee of Petersen's, Ernest Florman, how to film events live and how to stage short comic episodes. However, foreign companies remained the dominant force in the Swedish market until 1908, when an accountant who was also an amateur photographer, Charles Magnusson, was offered the chance to join Svenska Biografteatern, a company which had been formed at Kristianstad in February of the year before. He had some success with a series of films synchronized with gramophone recordings, and then moved on to dedicate his energies to productions which reflected the themes and personalities of Swedish theatre. He was assisted in his task by Gustaf 'Munk' Linden, the author of an ambitious and popular version of the historical drama *Regina von Emmeritz and King Gustaf II Adolf* (1910), and by the first female director in Scandinavia, Anna Hofman-Uddgren, who was given per-

mission by August Strindberg to adapt his plays *Miss Julie* and *The Father* for the screen. Both appeared in 1912. The modest success of these films and the growing competition from Denmark induced the owners to transfer production to Stockholm, where a larger studio set could be built and where the chain of cinemas throughout Sweden could be better co-ordinated.

Magnusson demanded and was given absolute control over the move. He planned the new studios at Lidingö, near Kyrkviken, and acquired the support of a group of artists and technicians who were to define the course of silent cinema in Sweden: Julius Jaenzon, appointed chief cameraman and director of the studios at Lidingö; Georg af Klercker, head of production and director; Victor Sjöström, 'the best director on the market today' according to the magazine *Scenisk Konst*, 6-7 April 1912; and Mauritz Stiller, a Russian-Jewish theatre actor and director whose uneven stage career had led him back and forth between Sweden and Finland for many years. Magnusson himself directed a number of films between 1909 and 1912, but he soon settled into a role as producer-patron, offering his formidable intuition and energy in support of the most risky ideas put to him by his directors, but also ensuring the collaboration of high-calibre intellectuals, such as Selma Lagerlöf, whose novels were filmed by Stiller and Sjöström. In 1919 a new young financier, Ivan Kreuger, appeared on the scene and engineered the merger of Magnusson's company with its rival Film Scandia A/S to form a new company, Svenska Filmindustri. New studios were built, new cinemas were opened, and old ones restored. By 1920 Svenska Filmindustri had become a world power, with subsidiaries across the globe. The 'golden age' of Swedish cinema, stretching from 1916 to 1921, was in part due to Sweden's neutrality in the Great War. At a time when almost all the other great film industries in Europe (including that of Denmark) were threatened by embargoes and serious financial difficulties, Sweden continued to export films without hindrance, and, by the same token, took full advantage of the drastic reduction in imports. However, even these favourable conditions would have had little impact were it not for the creative contribution of a number of exceptionally talented directors.

The first in chronological order—before Stiller and Sjöström joined Svenska Biografteatern—was Georg af Klercker, whose films are characterized by an extreme figurative precision, a meticulous attention to acting, and by a restrained and rigorous reinterpretation of the canons of bourgeois drama, social realism, and the 'circus' genre, initiated in Denmark by Robert Dinesen and Alfred Lind with the seminal *De fire djævle* ('The four devils', Kinografen, 1911) and characterized by sentimental plots, spectacular clashes, and vendettas

amongst riders and acrobats. After *Dödsritten under cirkuskupolen* (*The Last Performance*, 1912), the company's first international success, Klercker moved briefly to Denmark. He returned to Sweden on the invitation of a new company, F. V. Hasselblad Fotografiska AB of Göteborg, for whom he directed twenty-eight films between 1915 and 1917. One of the best was *Förstadtprästen* ('The suburban vicar', 1917), the story of a priest working to help society's rejects, filmed on location in the poor districts of Göteborg.

Mauritz Stiller (1883-1928) specialized in comedies with a carefully controlled pace and a subtle vein of social satire which verged on the burlesque, in which the construction and articulation of events took precedence over psychological analysis and description. Two typical examples of his style are provided by *Den moderna suffragetten* ('The modern suffragette', 1913) and *Kärlek och journalistik* ('Love and journalism', 1916). He moved on with *Thomas Graals bästa film* (*Wanted: A Film Actress*, 1917) and *Thomas Graals bästa barn* (*Marriage à la mode*, 1918) to a set of 'moral tales' marked by a disillusioned perspective on the precarious nature of relations between the sexes and on the inconstancy of passion. This tendency in Stiller's work reached a peak of cynicism and disrespect in *Erotikon* (*Just like a Man*; also known as *After We are Married* or *Bonds that Cheat*, 1920), but is offset at the turn of the decade by his growing penchant for treatments of themes such as ambition and guilt. *Herr Arnes pengar* (UK title: *Snows of Destiny*; US title *Sir Arne's Treasure*, 1919) and *Gösta Berlings saga* (UK title: *The Atonement of Gösta Berling*; US title: *The Legend of Gösta Berling*, 1923), both taken from novels by Selma Lagerlöf, elaborate such themes with a figurative intensity and epic energy which no director in Europe had thus far achieved. *Gösta Berlings saga* also introduced a talented young actress, Greta Garbo, whose inseparable companion and mentor Stiller was to become. Invited to Hollywood by Louis B. Mayer, Stiller insisted on bringing Garbo with him; but whereas their departure from Sweden was the first step in her meteoric rise to stardom, for Stiller it coincided with a creative crisis from which he never recovered.

With the departure to America of Sjöström (1923), Stiller and Garbo (1925), the actor Lars Hanson, and the Danish director Benjamin Christensen who had made his most ambitious film in Sweden, the perturbing documentary drama *Häxan* (*Witchcraft through the Ages*, 1921), Swedish cinema entered a phase of steep decline. Instead of deciding on a renewal of the themes and styles which had brought them such glory, directors of not negligible talent such as Gustaf Molander, John W. Brunius, and Gustaf Edgren were forced to ape their conventions in a wan attempt to adapt characteristics of their national cinema to the genres and narrative models of 1920s Hollywood. 'We can now say', wrote Ture Dahlin in 1931 in

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L'Art cinématographique, 'that the great silent cinema of Sweden is dead, dead and buried. . . . It would take a genius to resurrect it from its present, routine state.'

The fiction films made in Sweden in the silent period are estimated to have been about 500 (including shorts synchronized with phonograph recordings). About 200 are at present preserved at the Svenska Filminstitutet in Stockholm.

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Pre-Revolutionary Russia

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Original as it may seem in style and subject-matter, film production in Russia started as an offshoot of international trade. Because neither cameras nor film stock were manufactured in Russia in the 1910s, Russian production companies developed in a very different way from the major film companies in the west. Rather than being a corollary of the equipment industry, national film-making in Russia was actuated by importers (in the first place), distributors, and (in rare cases) theatre owners.

With the notable exception of the ex-photographer Alexander Drankov, the importer was the key to the first production companies in Russia. The importer was a go-between linking foreign film producers and local exhibitors; the more companies an importer was able to enlist, the more chances he had to launch his own production. Alexander Khanzhonkov's production company started as a small commission agency selling films and projection equipment manufactured by Théophile Pathé, Urban, Hepworth, Bioscope, and Itala Film. Companies like Gaumont (until 1909), Warwick, Ambrosio, Nordisk, and Vitagraph were represented by Pavel Thiemann, another powerful figure in the pre-revolutionary film industry. Because it took a lot of travelling between Russia and the exporting countries, the share of early American films on the Russian market was relatively small. Pathé-Frères preferred to send their own representatives engaged in equipment sales (from 1904), laboratory services, or production (1908-13). Gaumont followed Pathé's example, but on a more modest scale.

Around 1906-7, film theatres in Moscow and St Petersburg started renting used prints to the provinces, and the system of importers purchasing films from production companies to resell to exhibitors began to be replaced. Specialized distribution agencies in Moscow supplied prints to the city's theatres and regional agencies. Each regional agency controlled several provinces, known as their 'distribution district' (*prokatnyi rayon*), renting prints to local cinemas.

Incidentally or otherwise, the first home-produced films

appeared when the distribution system was fully established on the Russian film market. Combining production with distribution in this way was the only hope of success for a film-producing company in Russia in the 1910s. A vertically semi-integrated system allowed Russian studios to invest the money they earned from distributing foreign films into native productions—a system that would be used, with variable success, by the stock-holding company Sovkino in the mid-1920s.

STRATEGIES

Two types of strategy—disruptive and competitive—were employed by studios competing for the Russian market. Disruption (*sryv*), was a notorious gimmick whereby a competitor's production was undermined by a cheaper (and sloppier) version of the same subject (story, title) released earlier or on the same day. Borrowed from the theatre entrepreneur F. Korsh (who used the method to rob competitors' first productions of their novelty value), disruption was systematically employed in the film industry by financially insecure companies like Drankov or Perski in order to tempt regional renting agencies with a low-price alternative to Khanzhonkov's or Pathé's hits. This policy achieved little beyond hectic production races and a pervasive atmosphere of paranoid secrecy. Distinct from disruption, a strategy of competition (developed by studios with solid financial backing: first Khanzhonkov, Pathé-Frères, Thiemann, and Reinhardt, later Yermoliev and Kharitonov) consisted of promoting the idea of 'quality pictures' and turning a recognizable studio style into a marketable value.

STYLE

In terms of style, Russian pre-revolutionary film-making falls into two periods, before and after 1913. From 1908 and the first Russian-made movie (Drankov's *Stenka Razin*) until 1913, the two main competitors were Khanzhonkov & Co. and Pathé-Frères. However, in 1913 all foreign production in Russia was curtailed, and the