

Title of article: Retrieving Harry Schein from the archive: An interview with Maud Nycander, Jannike Åhlund and Kersti Grunditz Brennan

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Bio

Ingrid Stigsdotter is a researcher in Cinema Studies at Stockholm University, whose research interests include reception and representation. She collaborates with the Swedish Film Institute on the research project “I-Media-Cities” (2016-2019), funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 programme, and in 2017 she coordinated the “Women’s Film History Network: Norden” with funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers’ gender equality fund.

Dagmar Brunow is a senior lecturer in film studies at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her research interests include media memory, film archives, video collectives and feminist filmmaking practice. She is the author of *Remediating Transcultural Memory. Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2015). Her current research project “The Cultural Heritage of Moving Images” (2016-2018) was financed by the Swedish research council.

Retrieving Harry Schein from the archive: An interview with Maud Nycander, Jannike Åhlund and Kersti Grunditz Brennan

Ingrid Stigsdotter and Dagmar Brunow

Harry Schein was born in a wealthy Jewish family in Vienna in 1924, but was sent to Sweden as an unaccompanied minor in 1939 as a result of the *Anschluss* (Nazi-Germany's annexation of Austria). As founder of the Swedish Film Institute and managing director of this institution between 1963 and 1978, Schein was a highly significant figure in Swedish film history. The critically acclaimed documentary *Citizen Schein* (2017) combines archival footage from public and private sources, clips from feature films and newly filmed interviews with material from Harry Schein's own photo albums and writings, including private letters. The multiple and sometimes contrary perspectives inherent in these archival materials provide depth and complexity to this portrait of the rich jet-setting entrepreneur and cinephile in the centre of 1960s Social-Democratic cultural politics, including the shadows cast by his background as a Jewish refugee. In this interview, the filmmakers Maud Nycander, Jannike Åhlund and Kersti Grunditz Brennan discuss their approach to archival materials during the making of the documentary.¹

IS/DB: How did you go about your search for material on Harry Schein? Which archives did you use? What kind of footage did you look for?

KG: As for film footage, we started with the archives of SVT (Swedish Television), searching for anything with Harry Schein in it. We also looked for period archival footage based on situations and places in Harry's life. One starting point to look for still images was Harry's own albums that we had access to through his heir Eva Fischer. We also did a first scan of the archive of TT/Scanpix. As for radio programmes featuring Harry, we first tried to get a general overview of what was available. Once we started editing, our search, especially for period footage, became more specific and we also started searching for films on Youtube.

JÅ: By identifying the narrative themes, the search for archive footage could subsequently be initiated. Some film excerpts were already evident from the start, especially films by Ingmar Bergman and Mai Zetterling in which Harry Schein had played a role. The site Filmarkivet.se provided many clips (18), mainly for the period footage, others are from Getty

¹ The interview was conducted via e-mail in March 2017. It was translated from Swedish and edited by Ingrid Stigsdotter and Dagmar Brunow.

Images and the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga Biblioteket). Some American Hollywood footage from the 1950s and Austrian footage from Vienna after the *Anschluss* have also been included. As for the stills employed in the film (ca 230), all press and other relevant archives have been searched thoroughly. We have also had access to private sources. All of the above had to be copyright cleared.

IS/DB: Did property rights prevent you from being able to include some footage in the film?

JÅ: Yes, in some cases where the production simply could not afford the copyright fee for footage that we had found, we had to refrain from using such material.

KG: We also wanted to use clips from feature films for reference, but due to cost we were very restrictive with that and chose clips only from films that had intrinsic value to the story.

IS/DB: Did ethical considerations (your own or others) prevent you from including footage in your film?

JÅ: Yes, in two or three instances we excluded parts of footage or interviews where we felt we infringed on that person's integrity.

KG: There were sections of e.g. *Nattlek (Night Games, Zetterling, 1966)* that we initially had included that we felt could not be used, taken out of the context of the film as a whole and out of the context of the time when it was made. Other than that, we did not have ethical concerns about the immediate family of the film's subject, in particular the need to consider children, since Harry had no immediate family.

IS/DB: What is the relation between archival footage and voice-over in *Citizen Schein*? Did you use the archival footage to illustrate your argument? Or did your argument develop from the work with the footage?

JÅ: Both, although the access to archival footage in many instances dictated how the narrative was to develop. We avoided using narratives that couldn't be properly portrayed. Inevitably, there are also bits and parts where the archival footage merely serves as illustration.

KG: The voice-over script was created in close dialogue with the archival footage; what stories could be told, what details to be highlighted, how sentences are constructed to resonate with what we see in the footage. Period archival footage was searched for and chosen based on ideas for voice-over content to invoke a sense of presence to still images; then the actual voice-over was developed from how the footage could be edited.

IS/DB: Did you alter the footage you included, and if so, how?

KG: We tried to maintain the general feel of the footage. Most of the archival news or

documentary footage was shot on 16 mm and thus 4:3 and we kept it that way. Some of the older film footage was either transferred to 29,97 fps or in the original 24 fps. Since it was all silent, we chose to conform it to 25 fps (making it run slower or faster) rather than converting it to 25 fps (maintaining the speed), in order to reduce the amount of degeneration that comes with converting frame rates. In only two instances did we turn colour footage into black and white – to make it work better with the rest of the archival footage used for the same scene.

MN: In most cases we have kept the original composition; only rarely did we convert an image from portrait to landscape orientation. To some archival footage we added graininess and scratches to mask pixilation and give the material a more unified feel. On several occasions we used slow motion as an effect in order to emphasize something.

IS/DB: How did you employ sound and music in the film?

KG: We used a lot of silent footage, or footage without synch sound, or with synch sound mixed with an original voice-over narration that we didn't want to keep. To recreate a sense of presence in the footage, we added new synch sound through foley and also used music both to drive the narrative forward and to create cohesion in longer scenes made up of still images, interviews and archival footage.

MN: We searched for musicians who would be able to create music typical of the time periods depicted, and our selection was the duo Frid & Frid.

IS/DB: Do you regard your film as intervening in dominant documentary modes of representation and hegemonic historiography in any way?

MN: Our focus has been to portray a complex person in relation to the time in which his life and work took place.

KG: I would say it is a rather traditional type of historical / biographical documentary.

MN: A unique aspect of the film is having an actor reading excerpts from Harry Schein's letters and texts while imitating his voice. By using this strategy we hoped to create a sense of intimacy with the protagonist.

KG: The actor imitating Harry Schein is the least traditional aspect of this film. But I still wouldn't call that intervening in the tradition, since the use of actors to read/narrate biographical texts like letters and journals has been fairly common for the past decade or so.

IS/DB: What have been your respective roles in making the film? Which parts of the work have been carried out by one of you, and which aspects of the working process have been collective? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a collaborative effort?

KG: Jannike and Maud have done the initial content research, set up parameters for the initial archival search and conducted most of the interviews. All three of us have gone through

the archival footage, the still images, Harry's writings and the typed-up content of the interviews. Together we have created the story – from interviews, texts and by writing the script for the narration. Kersti has done the actual editing and with that also worked with the music. Together, also with the producer, Rebecka Hamberger, we have worked with the final shaping of the story and the final look and feel of the film.

The advantage of working together is that you get a broader palette for understanding and for connecting the dots, creating more layered storytelling and adding complexity to the characters portrayed. The disadvantages come when you are not in synch and the differences in opinion steal energy from the creation rather than adding fruitful friction.

JÅ: The film's credits list Maud Nycander as director, Kersti Grunditz Brennan as editor and Jannike Åhlund as writer – the latter function shared by all three. Maud and Kersti did by far the most of the continual work in the editing room. Jannike paid regular visits and helped move the story ahead as the editing progressed and new 'chapters' were added in the rough cut. The film's producer Rebecka Hamberger also added creative input intermittently.

The definite advantage of being a group is of course the enrichment of multiple perspectives, ideas and aesthetic preferences. Moulding the storyline together was a highly rewarding experience. The disadvantages are rather the same. Although there were few instances with differences that could not be reconciled or overcome easily, the process is slowed down by a sort of majority vote. A disadvantage may also be that a [documentary] film with one clear-cut director will be carried by her distinct personal voice and temperament. However, I don't think that *Citizen Schein* lacks that personal tone, in spite of the group effort.

On a more practical note, being a group effort, with half of the group lacking prior documentary experience, it can at times also be highly confusing as to who does what with regard to distribution of responsibilities.

Film references

Zetterling, Mai (1966), *Nattlek*, Sweden.