

# “Oh, My Sweet Hero!”

## The Filmstar Leif Wager as Emperor Alexander I in *Tanssi yli hautojen* (1950)

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The film *Tanssi yli hautojen* (“Dance over the Graves”) portrays the romance between the Russian Emperor Alexander I (1777- 1825) and Ulla Möllersvärd (1791-1878), daughter of a Finnish governor. According to rumour this took place during the parliamentary session in Porvoo, a small town in Finland, in 1809 (Junnila 1986, 22; Kajanti 1999, 77-88). The parliamentary session was a significant turning point in the history of Finland: the Russian empire had occupied Finland since the Finnish War 1808-1809. The 600-year period of Swedish rule has come to an end, and Finland was about to become a Russian Grand Duchy. In the parliamentary session in Porvoo Alexander I gave his assurance that Finland could keep its existing legislation and its Lutheran religion. In Finnish national history this act is considered to mark the inception of the Finnish state and nation. (Jussila 1996, 14-15, 38-40.)

In 1942, the producer T. J. Särkkä, studio manager of a major film studio in Finland, Suomen Filmitoimisto (SF), commissioned the writer Mika Waltari to write a script of the love story of Alexander I and Lady Ulla Möllersvärd. Because of World War II the production of the film was postponed, and the shooting of the film, *Tanssi yli hautojen*, only began early in 1950. A year before the shooting began a young actor Leif Wager (1922-2002) was cast in the leading role as Alexander I. (Lehtisalo 2000, 7; SF-Uutiset 1/1949.)

In this paper I shall discuss how the construction “Leif Wager” was combined with the image of Alexander I, and what kind of intertextual meanings it produced. First I shall discuss the star image of Leif Wager, after which I shall explore the role of Alexander in *Tanssi yli hautojen*. To conclude I shall present some interpretations of the combination of Emperor Alexander I and the star Leif Wager.

### The Star System in Finland

Some film studios in Finland had regular production, diversified operations in film business and specialised professionals on the monthly payroll from the 1930s to the 1950s. In the biggest production companies, Suomi-Filmi and Suomen Filmitoimisto especially, there were popular actors and actresses retained on monthly salaries. Their salaries increased rapidly during the forties indicating their importance to the studios, it was “the stars” whom an audience wanted to see. (Laine 1999, 132-134; 1995, 75-77.) However, Finnish “stars” never reached such a powerful position as their Hollywood counterparts. Kimmo Laine argues that the reason to this was a certain ordinariness of the actors/actresses. It was typical for Finnish stars to appear not only in films but first and foremost on the stage. Thus it was quite common to see popular filmstars live on stage. In magazines too, stars were depicted, for example, as ordinary mothers. (Laine 1995, 89.)

On the other hand, John Ellis and Richard Dyer among others have stated that a contradiction between stars as ordinary and stars as special is one of basic aspects of stardom (Dyer 2004, 43; Ellis 1994, 94-95). According to Ellis this interplay between ordinary and extraordinary makes the audience to desire the star, the person who

is simultaneously achievable and distant (Ellis 1994, 97-98). Dyer gives three explanations for the paradox: Stars are considered to be just ordinary people who live more expensively. Or, stars highlight certain human qualities which they exemplify. According to Dyer the both of these explanations serve to promote the notion that human attributes exist despite fame and success. Or, the third explanation is that stars, with their success and extravagance, are seen to typify western society. (Dyer 2004, 43.)

## The Star Image of Leif Wager in the 1940s

In 1940 Leif Wager was accepted at the theatre school of the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, but World War II brought his regular studies to a halt. He was posted to the entertainment troops, but while on leave he was able to continue his career at home. In 1942 Wager got his first role in a Suomen Filmitölliys film, a minor supporting role in a romantic drama called *Puck*. At the same time Leif Wager was offered a four-year contract by Suomen Filmitölliys. (Wager 2000, 75-76, 88-91, 96, 104-106.)

Leif Wager's next film role, his first leading role, in a romantic costume film *Katariina ja Munkkiniemen kreivi* (SF 1943, "Katariina and the Count of Munkkiniemi"), made him enormously popular. He played the role of Count, Mauritz Armborg, who falls in love with a beautiful servant girl Katariina. One of reasons for the film's success was *Romance*, an excessively sentimental song performed by Leif Wager. The song, the film and Wager became war-time hits. Film magazines described Wager's exceptional success with bewilderment or even with scorn: the young actor was seen as a target of the hysterical adulation of women and teenage girls. Wager himself was portrayed as a handsome and talented but modest young man. (SF-Uutiset 1/1943; Månadsrevyn 3/1943; Elokuva-Aitta 10.9.1943.)

The paradox of being ordinary and extraordinary mentioned above could be seen in the promotion publicity of Leif Wager. On the other hand in the interviews Wager seems like any other young person: a young corporal in the Finnish Army, still living with his mother and father, having nice hobbies, music and butterfly collecting, with pictures of filmstars on his bedroom wall. On the other hand the interviews were illustrated with fan photographs of Leif Wager, and Wager's good looks, musical talent and cultivated, upper middle-class family background<sup>1</sup> were highlighted in the stories. (Ibid.)

Moreover, the paradox was intensified by journalist's ambivalent attitudes towards fans of Leif Wager, and fandom in general. For example, in a story entitled "What would life be without Leif? Our schoolgirls' biggest film favourite at home" the journalist claims to be embarrassed by prying into a star's private life. But in this case s/he seems to be pleased to satisfy fans' hopes to hear more details about their favourite star. (Ibid; Elokuva-Aitta 24.3.1944.) In another story, "Leif Wager, our girl's dream hero", a journalist is astonished and amused by a vast amount of fanmail Wager receives (occasionally as many as 150 letters per day). But at the same time, in the fan column of the very same film magazine, readers are advised where to send fan post for Wager. (Elokuva-Aitta 10.9.1943.)

Film magazines were therefore constructing and maintaining fan culture, and constructing the star image of Leif Wager<sup>2</sup>. But at the same time, they were defining fandom as an irrational, immature, especially feminine and even non-Finnish phenomenon. Interestingly, it seems that the interviewers were trying to "save" Leif Wager from being a mere object of "foolish" fandom. Wager's serious interest in theatre and classical music was emphasised, in an article it was reported that: "He loves music. Plays piano and guitar. Preferably Grieg, Sibelius, Wagner." Thus the journalists were suggesting that the young man really had talent, and no mere pretty boy. (SF-Uutiset 1/1943; Månadsrevyn 3/1943; Elokuva-Aitta 10.9.1943; Elokuva-Aitta 24.3.1944.)

The film journalists assumed Wager's fans to be schoolgirls, which is somehow understandable. Wager himself was young, in his twenties in the 1940s. But a more decisive factor may have been his physical habitus, and his romantic star image. He had a delicate, slim face with large eyes and a slender body. Physically Wager was no he-man. His star image manifested traits like youth and innocence, boyishness, delicateness and sophistication, and even excessive sentimentality. Wager's sentimental role as the Count of Munkkiniemi was so popular and memorable that it almost stigmatized his star image (Wager 2000, 117-119; Nenonen 1995, 47; National Board of Antiquities, MV K22/1975). Altogether the fact that the film journalists assumed "Leif Wager" to be more appealing to a younger audience, is somehow revealing<sup>3</sup>. It suggests that certain traits of Wager's star image were connected to the stereotypes of youth: immature sentimentality and "innocent" sexuality.

But Wager's romantic star image was ambiguous, and it also developed during the 1940s. During the 1940s Leif Wager acted in ten films, in eight of these he played a leading role. Of these eight films one was the romantic costume film ("Katariina and the Count of Munkkiniemi" SF 1943), one a romantic adventure film set in a

period of the “Russification” in Finland (*Hevoshuijari*, “Horse Swindler” SF 1943), one an adaptation of a culturally prestigious play (*Sylvi* SF 1944), three films were so-called “problem films”, typical post-war productions which dealt with contemporary social problems like unemployment, prostitution, alcoholism or venereal diseases (*Nuoruus sumussa*, “Fogbound Youth” SF 1946; *Synd*, “The Sin” SF 1946; *Läpi usvan*, “Through the Mist” Fenno 1948), one film was a mystery (*Pikajuna pohjoiseen*, “Express Train to the North” Fenno 1947), and one a romantic hospital drama (*Vain kaksi tuntia*, “Only Two Hours” Fenno 1949). (SKF vol. 3-4; Soila 1998, 67-68.)

Heterosexual romance is involved in all of Wager’s roles. In most cases the relationship is romantic, sensitive and beautiful, it is connected to the idea of “true love” (*Katariina ja Munkkiniemien kreivi*, *Sylvi*, *Läpi usvan*, *Hevoshuijari*). But despite the romantic features of the characters Wager played, they are not perfect romantic male heroes. There was something amiss with the hero (even physically when the hero has a venereal disease). The characters are usually young and somehow easily deluded or too weak or too sensitive to act honourably, “act manly” in the film (*Katariina ja Munkkiniemien kreivi*, *Sylvi*, *Nuoruus sumussa*, *Läpi usvan*, *Hevoshuijari*). Wager also had one minor role as a young and inconsiderate seducer (*Haaviston Leeni*, “Leeni of Haavisto” SF 1948). (SKF vol. 3-4.)

In addition to the romantic traits, class and culture were the manifest features of Wager’s star image. The promotion publicity described Wager as a sensitive and cultivated young man. His sophisticated parents, cultured home, upper-class lifestyle and his marriage to a ballet dancer, Eva Hemming, were presented in film magazines. (Elokuva-Aitta 24.3.1944; SF-Uutiset 9/1943; SF-Uutiset 4/1945; Elokuva-Aitta 15.3.1946.) These traits of Wager’s star image were reinforced by his film roles. Many of them are upper-class figures: a count, a student-*jäger*, a professor’s son, a doctor (SKF vol 3-4). Wager’s slightly foreign, Scandinavian accent<sup>4</sup> when he spoke Finnish also made him sound like an upper-class person. Moreover, film reviewers described his film performances as “refined” or “cultivated” (Suomen Sosialidemokraatti 2.2.43, Aamulehti 5.2.48, Uusi Suomi 2.2.43, Aamulehti 9.10.44, Aamulehti 29.4.46, Uusi Suomi 15.2.48). When Wager played the role of a poor sailor, a reviewer considered that Wager’s appearance was unconvincing. According to the reviewer Wager was too elegant actor for the role of young rustic. (Aamulehti 5.2.1948.)

Although the boyish and playful traits of Wager’s star image were apparent in the promotion publicity, it is interesting to note that they were barely perceptible in his film roles in the 1940s. Despite of the role of Kuisma, all the film roles are serious, even tragic. The film roles differed notably from his roles in the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki during the 1940s. In the theatre he played a variety of roles in operettas, musicals and comedies. (Wager 2000, 154, 186-187, 190-191.) Thus it may be that Wager’s star image in Helsinki was slightly different from his star image in rural Finland.

### The Role of Alexander I in *Tanssi yli hautojen*

The script of the film *Keisari rakastuu* (“The Emperor falls in Love”) had been written already in 1943. As mentioned above, because of World War II the filming was postponed, but the producer T. J. Särkkä allowed Mika Waltari to write a novel from the script. Waltari’s novel version of the script, *Tanssi yli hautojen*, was published in 1944 and it became a bestseller. (Lehtisalo 2000, 7; Haavikko 1982, 302-303; Elokuva-Aitta 8.8.1950.)

In the novel Waltari elaborated the character of Alexander; it became more “rounder”, more contradictory by describing Alexander’s thoughts. In the original script Alexander is a handsome charmer adored by women, and a young, politically insecure idealist. In the novel he is a handsome charmer too, but also an egocentric libertine who loves to be centre of attraction and admired by everyone. Alexander is described by Waltari as an actor who pretends to be a good, benevolent ruler. In a way, he is an enlightened monarch, but in the case of Finland also a political realist. In the novel Waltari also provides a background for Alexander’s neurotic nature: he had been involved in the assassination of his father, Tsar Paul I and suffers guilt. To sum up, one could claim that the script emphasises the romantic side of Alexander’s character, while the novel emphasises his cynical and contradictory traits. (Waltari 1944, 82, 84-85, 87-89, 92, 108, 179-180; FFA, scripts.)

The main idea of the story is the same in the original script, the novel and in the film: During the parliamentary session in Porvoo Alexander and Ulla Möllersvärd have a romantic and innocent love affair. The patriotic Ulla asks Alexander to confirm Finland’s status as a nation, and he agrees to do so. However, some of the changes in the novel were incorporated into the film version. The director-producer, T.J. Särkkä, made additions and alterations to the film originating from the novel. Basically the character of Alexander in the film is the romantic one described in the original script, but there were attempts to make it “rounder”. In the film a scene was included in which Alexander suffers some kind of nervous attack during the night at Möllerhof (Waltari 1944; 212-213,

219-220). In the scene he realizes that on the very same day years ago his father was murdered, and this causes him pangs of conscience. Probably it was meant to show the audience that Alexander is not only the smiling hero but a more complex, more tragic, and more interesting character.

However, according to contemporary reviewers the attempt failed. One possible reason is that the narration of the film does not construct the contradictory character, and therefore a sudden attack seemed (and seems) inexplicable, even ridiculous. It does not help that a voiceover is used in the scene to explain what is wrong with the Emperor. Perhaps the use of the voiceover makes the scene even more exceptional and disconnected, because there is no voiceover in the film until the last scene. Another reason could be the acting style, the director Särkkä favoured the theatrical acting style, which may have seemed exaggerated. Wager's big movements and expansive gestures may have reminded the audience of his roles in the problem films in which he suffers from venereal disease. Altogether this scene made the character of Alexander somewhat inconsistent.

In the promotion publicity of the film the beautiful romance of Alexander and Ulla was highlighted. For example, in an advertisement the film was described: "Mika Waltari's magnificent film epic about a woman who wanted to hate but who had to love. The film leaves nobody cold. A romantic love story of the charmer Emperor Alexander I and the 17-year old gentlewoman Ulla Möllersvärd." (*Elokuva-Aitta* 8.8.1950.) In the film magazine *Elokuva-Aitta* a journalist reports on the shooting of the film, and ends his report with a promise: "Youth, beauty, love...ah" (*Elokuva-Aitta* 8.8.1950). Casting Leif Wager as Alexander probably directed the expectations of the film: Leif Wager in an historical film was reminiscent of the romantic Count of Munkkiniemi.

Although the promotion publicity promised romance, love, and even passion, the relationship of Alexander and Ulla is nonsexual in the novel and in the film. They spend two nights together but on both occasions Alexander refuses to take advantage of the innocent Ulla. On the first night at Möllerhof Ulla merely soothes the agitated Alexander to sleep. At the second rendezvous in the forest cottage the chivalrous Alexander promises to watch over Ulla's sleep. In the novel this is explained by Alexander's fickle mind, but in the film there are no explanations except Alexander's gallantry. Because the narration emphasises the innocent, romantic love, it makes the whole film come across as an exceptionally naïve love story.

Explicit sexual indications in the script have also been omitted from the film. In the script there is a scene in which the ladies of Porvoo make preparations for Alexander's visit. In the scene they admire Alexander's throne, making it into a fetish: When one young lady sits on the throne, they are horrified because "improper" thoughts crossed their minds. In another scene in the forest cottage it is conceivable that Alexander's pistol is used as a sexual symbol. The sexual innuendos retained in the film are more subtle: the appearance of the actors (especially the costumes of the actresses), their performances (especially their looks) and the ways in which the leading actors (Leif Wager and Eila Peitsalo) are filmed. The sexuality of Alexander is played down: he is a sex object (an object of women's desire) and a sexual subject (a lover of Ulla), but not as conspicuously as in the original script. In the film this tension between the promises of sexual passion, sexual innuendo and the naïve, "pure and innocent" love is like some kind of a provocative play: temptation without fulfilment.

This play did not appeal to the critics. In the reviews the romantic features of the film were considered unconvincing. They wondered at "the bedroom manners of the royal lover", and considered the love story out-dated: "The cloyingly sighing love of Alexander I and Ulla Möllersvärd is not of this world...", stated one of the reviewers. (*Helsingin Sanomat* 13.8.1950; *Ilta-Sanomat* 12.8.1950; *Uusi Suomi* 13.8.1950; *Vaasa* 6.9.1950; *Vasabladet* 5.9.1950; *Työkansan Sanomat* 22.8.1950; *Keskisuomalainen* 22.9.1950.) Some reviewers thought that this kind of the sentimentality would appeal to the schoolgirls, women in general or to the masses (*Savo* 12.9.1950; *Uusi Aura* 13.8.1950; *Taiteen Maailma* 9/1950; *Vaasa* 6.9.1950; *Satakunnan Kansa* 16.8.1950; *Helsingin Sanomat* 13.8.1950; *Uusi Suomi* 13.8.1950; *Aamulehti* 13.8.1950; *Uusi Aika* 16.8.1950). In other words, the critics read the film as a romantic costume film or an old-fashioned love story.

Undoubtedly the film was addressed to an audience who wanted to see romantic costume films (FBFC archives, brochure on *Tanssi yli hautojen*). But one thing the reviewers did not consider was that a part of "the masses" might enjoy the film because it is unconvincing, because of the tensions between the sexual innuendos and the naïve story. For an audience it might be appealing to imagine "what might have happened". Those who had already read the novel could fill in "the gaps" of the story. For them Alexander's character was different, he was not a romantic chivalrous monarch but a weak lover. Consequently the film and the character of Alexander offered the audience several reading routes.

Probably this was the intention of the studio, Suomen Filmitoimisto. Because the most explicit sexual scenes were omitted, the film could be rated suitable for children, and classified to be good enough quality to be exempted from stamp duty (FBFC archives, decision of classification 10.8.1950). This way the studio could address a larger potential audience and increase its revenue. At the same time, the studio could use the publicity of the novel, and



address the film to different audiences: those who liked romantic love stories, those who wanted to see a costume film, and those who wanted to see Leif Wager, but also those who were curious about the adaptation of the novel, and those who were intrigued by the combination of romance, passion and renunciation<sup>5</sup>.

### A Perfect Fit: Alexander I as a Star

I suggest that Leif Wager's star image made him a perfect fit for the role of Alexander I in the film *Tanssi yli hautojen* (1950). Richard Dyer's concept of a perfect fit means that: "[A]ll aspects of a star's image fit with all the traits of a character" (Dyer 2004, 129). "Wager" as an upper-class, cultivated and romantic star matched the role of Emperor Alexander I to perfection. Moreover, the contradiction within Wager's star image between romantic, sentimental lover and weak, troubled young man fitted Alexander's character in the film perfectly. However, not only did Leif Wager fit the role of Alexander I, but it is significant how well the character of Alexander I fits the role of a popular filmstar.

Although some reviewers scorned the sentimental story of the film, most of them considered Leif Wager's role successful. Some of them thought Wager even looked like Alexander I (Ilta-Sanomat 12.8.1950; Helsingin Sanomat 18.8.1950; Uusi Suomi 13.8.1950; Satakunnan Kansa 16.8.1950). If one compares Wager in costume to a portrait of Alexander I, one might concede that there are similarities: they both had large eyes, blond curly hair and side whiskers (naturally, because of the make-up). But it could not be argued that they resemble each other. (SF-Uutiset 1/1949; [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksanteri\\_I\\_\(Ven%C3%A4j%C3%A4\)](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksanteri_I_(Ven%C3%A4j%C3%A4))). One could doubt whether the reviewers remembered what Alexander I looked like in the paintings. Thus it is probable that Wager resembled the image of Alexander which the reviewers had in their minds, the image of Alexander I in cultural memory.

Most of the reviewers applauded Wager's general appearance and his performance for its credibility. He was regarded as majestic, cultivated, handsome and refined, cultured and dignified, suitable to perform the part of a charmer emperor (Helsingin Sanomat 13.8.1950; Ilta-Sanomat 12.8.1950; Uusi Suomi 13.8.1950; Vaasa 6.9.1950; Suomen Sosialidemokraatti 13.8.1950; Aamulehti 13.8.1950; Savo 19.9.1950; Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 16.8.1950; Keskisuomalainen 22.9.1950; Satakunnan Kansa 16.8.1950; Savon Sanomat 6.9.1950; Uusi Aika 16.8.1950; Elokuva-Aitta 16/1950). Probably Wager also aimed at this kind of performance. In the film he wears his uniform in an extremely upright position, but he moves elegantly and has delicate gestures. In the scenes where Alexander is in public, Wager smiles benignly, and his speech is artificial and formal. In the scenes with Ulla (played by Eila Peitsalo) he acts like a self-assured charmer, he has firm, but tender movements and a keen glance. Most of the critics considered the performances in the love scenes especially good (Suomen Sosialidemokraatti 13.8.1950; Savon Sanomat 6.9.1950; Elokuva-Aitta 16/1950; Taiteen Maa 9/1950; Kaleva 16.8.1950; Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 16.8.1950; Uusi Aika 16.8.1950; Uusi Suomi 13.8.1950; Vaasa 6.9.1950; Helsingin Sanomat 13.8.1950).

The most interesting point is the fact that contemporaries considered Wager's performance a credible image of Alexander I. In a traditional Finnish history schoolbook, *Maamme kirja* ("The Book of Our Country"), Alexander I is described as a wise and fair ruler who genuinely wanted to win Finnish people's confidence. His enlightened views guided Finland to a new era. According to *Maamme kirja* he also won the hearts of the Finns by his generous acts. (Topelius 1993, 431-437.) In the popular history book of the 1930s, *Kumpujen yöstä*, the writer Aarno Karimo depicts the parliamentary session in Porvoo. According to him the people of Porvoo were captivated by the Emperor's agreeable appearance. Karimo describes Alexander I as "a well-meaning and warm-hearted man". (Karimo 1932, 170, 175.) Probably the contemporaries connected this notion of benevolence to the historical imagery of Alexander I: he was the man who made Finland's development to independence possible. So why would not the handsome, cultivated and popular Leif Wager resemble Alexander I?

In the film the Emperor's popularity is expressed in an interesting way. Alexander I is like a filmstar, a handsome man who is admired by the Finns, particularly by women. The highborn ladies watching Alexander arriving to Porvoo act like "hysterical schoolgirls" seeing their favourite actor, for example Leif Wager. One of them, an elderly spinster, cries "Oh, my sweet hero" and faints. In the film the relationship between Alexander and the people resembles the relationship between a star and his fans: he is gazed at and admired from afar (through the window, from the gallery of a church). This composition also replicates the relation between the actor Leif Wager and the film's audience watching Wager on the screen. Wager/Alexander poses in the film in order to be looked at by the diegetic audience and by the real audience. The image of Alexander, a filmstar and Leif Wager are merging.

## Conclusion

The most of the film reviewers did not consider the story of the film plausible. They did not believe that a romance might have affected Alexander's political actions, some of the reviewers even disapproved of the way in which the film mixed Finland's political history with a private romance. The romance itself was also considered implausible. But none of the critics seemed to disapprove of the way in which the political figure, Alexander I, was depicted as a star (Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 16.8.1950; Uusi Aika 13.8.1950; Hufvudstadsbladet 14.8.1950; Vapaa Sana 14.8.1950; Satakunnan Kansa 16.8.1950). He was simultaneously extraordinary (a charismatic ruler, a benefactor of Finland, beautiful and spectacular), and ordinary (an insecure young man seeking affection and comfort). How could this merging of the star and the historical person be explained?

One explanation might be that the star image of Alexander I recycled the mythical image of Finland's benefactor, but at the same time transformed it into something more modern, from a known historical hero to a popular celebrity. In this case one could apply Ellis's idea of stars who are here and distant at the same time: a distant, historical person is modernized, he is here, on the screen, to be looked at, to be sensed<sup>6</sup>. Alexander's character and his popularity were made more understandable by portraying him as a modern star.

In the film Alexander's exceptionality and his mythical importance to Finland are emphasised in another way too. *Tanssi yli hautojen* could be interpreted as an allegory of the relation between the Soviet Union and Finland after World War II. The Soviet Union did not occupy Finland after the war, but influenced in Finland's politics through the Allied Control Commission installed in Helsinki (1944-1947). This caused much tension in Finnish political life (Hentilä 1996, 205-210, 228). The political situation stabilised by the end of the decade, and the film could be interpreted as a comment on recent history and the pressure from the Soviet Union. The film's representations of the Russians were very negative, even racially stereotypical. The only exception in the film is Alexander I who looks and acts differently from his barbaric Russian subjects. This comparison between Alexander I and the other Russians highlights the negative traits of the Russians, and at the same time shows us the real national benefactor, who does not abuse Finland (Ulla).

If one considers Richard Dyer's explanations of the extraordinariness and ordinariness of stars, I would suggest that in the case "the historical person as a star" it is not the human attributes that are emphasised, but the exceptionality of the individual. Thus "the natural" hierarchy between the self-evident ruler and the people is legitimised.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wager's grandfather was a wealthy businessman, his father an opera singer, and his mother a freelance journalist (see Wager 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Wager being on the front cover of the collector's book for the fan pictures tells that for someone Wager was the epitome of a star (see Elokuvalukemisto 15-16/1944, an advertisement of the collector's book).

<sup>3</sup> In reader polls Wager was mentioned, but he was not at the top of the list for the best Finnish male actor (Elokuva-Aitta 30.9.1947, Elokuva-Aitta 9.2.1949, Elokuva-Aitta 7.2.1950). In 1947 he was fourth. One could draw the conclusion that he was popular but not everyone's favourite.

<sup>4</sup> Wager's family was originally Norwegian (see Wager 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Of course these are only examples of features which might interest an audience, not a classification of the real audience.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful for this idea of sensing to the keynote plenarist Susan Hayword at the conference "A History of Stardom Reconsidered".

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## Films

*Tanssi yli hautojen (Dansen över gravarna)* Finland  
Production: Suomen Filmitieteellinen/ Toivo J. Särkkä. Manuscript: Mika Waltari. Director: Toivo Särkkä. Photography: Kalle Peronkoski. Sound: Kurt Vilja. Editing: Armas Vallasvuo. Art direction: Karl Fager. Costumes: Fiinu Autio, Ahti Yrjölä. Music: Nils-Erik Fougstedt. Actors: Leif Wager, Eila Peitsalo, Ossi Korhonen, Siiri Angerkoski, Mauri Jaakkola, Arvo Lehesmaa, Tyyne Haarla, Emma Väänänen, Rauha Rentola. Première: 11 August 1950 Helsinki.

## Web pages

A portrait of Alexander I in Wikipedia: [http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksanteri\\_I\\_\(Ven%C3%A4j%C3%A4\)](http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksanteri_I_(Ven%C3%A4j%C3%A4)). The link checked 25 July 2007.

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