

**Screening Censorship Conference:**  
***New Histories, Perspectives, and Theories on Film and Screen Censorship***  
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Organized by: Daniel Biltreyst & Ernest Mathijs

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Day 1, Friday 16 October 2020

Academic keynote speaker: Professor Richard Maltby

Professional keynote speakers: Manuel Mozos & Margarida Sousa

### **Keynote 1 + Q&A by Professor Richard Maltby, “Forestalling Controversy”: The Avoidance of Censorship**

The recent PEN report *Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing*, argues that “Perhaps the greatest issue with the CCP’s censorious effect on Hollywood is how it has instantiated self-censorship from filmmakers aiming to anticipate and preempt Beijing’s objections. This is, of course, exactly how censorship succeeds—others internalize it to the point where the censor actually has to do very little.” In this paper I will discuss Classical Hollywood’s Production Code as an historical example against which to test this claim, in the light of one Hollywood producer’s competing observation to PEN that such decisions over content are “merely one of the many commercial considerations that studios must take into account when developing films.”

### **Panel 1: Authors, critics and censors**

#### Maria Chalkou - *Film narratives on the margins of law and society: Nikos Koundouros’s censored films of the 1950s*

Nikos Koundouros is considered a major figure of Greek cinema and one of the very few Greek auteurs of the 1950s and 1960s, when the prolific local production invested almost exclusively in popular genre films. Although from a powerful bourgeois political family, Koundouros was a militant leftist and during the Greek civil war (1944-1949) he was exiled at the notorious prison island of Makronisos. This paper focuses on three of his films, which were made after Koundouros’s return from the exile in 1952, marked by challenging aesthetics and exceptional plasticity while dealing with issues of social marginality and oppressive law: *Magic City* (1954), a neorealist story set in the slums of Athens; *The Ogre of Athens* (1956), a bleak crime drama of false identity that recently attracted international attention due to Jonathan Franzen’s reference in his novel *Freedom* (2010); and *The Outlaws* (1958), a claustrophobic and disguised narrative on the Greek civil war. By scrutinizing newfound archive documents from the General Secretariat of Press and Information – a state institution that, from 1936 (the dictatorship of Metaxas) to 1974 (the fall of the right-wing Junta of the Colonels), exercised preventive censorship on all scripts and films produced or screened in Greece – and by using material published in the press of the time, this paper has four main objectives: a) to document unknown aspects of the state censorship applied on the three films, such as censored parts, practices of preventing the movies from being screened at international Festivals, etc; b) to unearth the censorial logic behind these interventions ranging from anticommunism to Puritanism and fears of damaging the country’s reputation abroad; c) to examine how censorship – including self-censorship – influenced the aesthetics and the narratives of the films; and finally d) to discuss Koundouros’s strategies of using his confrontation with state censorship as a means of constructing his public authorial image.

#### Penelope Petsini - “Down with censorship”?: The pretext of “appeasing political passions” as a censorial practice in Post-Dictatorship Greece (1974-1981)

Political censorship generated by fear of “enemies at home”, ranging from communists to left ideas in general, has long been the case in post-war Greece. Arguably, the conservative government that replaced the dictators in 1974 allowed neither the latitude nor the depth of free expression that was expected. The claim that any mention to Greece’s troubled

past –such as the Resistance, the civil war or the military Junta– would harm the nation and its newly established fragile democracy, resulted in political constraints whilst the targets of censorship remained the same. The issue of censorship has attracted large public attention in post-dictatorship Greece, as the question of free speech and the boundaries of expression have been unexpectedly and crucially challenged through a series of censorial acts including banning and/or censoring films considered politically “dangerous”. Seen as a sharp violation of artistic and political freedom, these cases instigated widespread public debate since, after the fall of the “April 21” regime, Greek citizens were eager to embrace the civil right they had been deprived of, that is the right to free expression. Focusing both on censorship committee’s documents and reports, as well as on data collected from the daily press of the era, this paper will present and analyse the pretext of “appeasing political passions”, which acted as a censorial practice for films, along with the most prominent cases. The research presented is part of the post-doctoral program «Censorship in Visual Arts and Film» (CIVIL), hosted by the Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University, Athens. The project has received funding from the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) and the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT).

### Daniel Morgan - *Critical censors, censorious critics, and notions of quality in post-war French cinema*

In 1946, the critics Jeander (the pen name of Jean Derobe) and Georges Sadoul pitched a proposal to the CNC, the newly formed state agency overseeing the French film industry: film censorship, they argued, should be based on the sole criterion of quality. Although the proposal was ultimately scrapped, it did initially attract interest from Georges Huisman, the first president of the CNC's censorship board. Critics continued to play a role in film censorship throughout the late 1940s and 1950s: one seat on the censorship board was always filled by a critic, and the board occasionally voted to censor films based on considerations of quality. The first part of this paper will be devoted to an analysis of archival documents presenting the critics' project, as well as several examples of films which were restricted for reasons related to quality. How did Jeander and Sadoul define quality and was their rationale for using it as a basis for censorship? What was at stake in censoring based on quality during this era, before the distinction between art cinema and popular cinema was fully developed (and before quality became a common benchmark used by censors to distinguish art cinema from pornography)?

Several years later, in 1954, François Truffaut famously maligned the “quality” French films that dominated screens at the time, attacking them as overly academic and turning the very notion of quality on its head. In the very same issue of Cahiers du cinéma, Truffaut also expressed his admiration for Hollywood’s Production Code, drawing a distinction between moral censorship, which he supported, and censorship aiming to protect the stature of public institutions, which he claimed to oppose. The influential Cahiers critics often took moralistic stances against films they disapproved of, and in his famous article “A certain tendency of French cinema,” Truffaut focused his objections on films that he found “profane” or “blasphemous,” or which took anti-clerical or anti-militarist stances. Not only did the Cahiers critics’ promotion of the directors they identified as auteurs constitute a manifesto for a new kind of cinema, but their dismissal of films and filmmakers they disliked marginalized this “quality” cinema, in the long term removing it from classrooms, retrospectives, and film canons.

This contribution will thus examine the sometimes unclear boundaries between censorship and criticism in France from the end of World War Two to the beginning of the New Wave. How and why did critics participate in the censorship process? Were the CNC’s censors, who rarely banned films and most often acted through negotiations with producers, ultimately acting like just another pressure group? Were the Cahiers critics actually engaging in a form of censorship? Above all, when censors and critics claimed to be evaluating the quality of films, were they actually trying to reshape cinema according to their political preferences?

### Viola Rühse - *Wolfgang Petzet's pamphlet Verbotene Filme [Banned films] and the censorship debate at the end of the Weimar Republic*

Article 118 of the constitution of the Weimar Republic emphasised that censorship is not exercised in Germany. However, an additional film law, the so-called “Lichtspielgesetz”, was created to enable state control of films. At first, censorship was morally determined, but eventually, it became more and more politically influenced. This also had consequences for film production because rather harmless and regressive films were produced to escape censorship. At the beginning of the 1930s, political censorship came to a head again, which was reactionary and also characterised by arbitrariness. This

triggered a general censorship debate. In 1931, the publishing house "Societäts-Verlag" issued the book "Verbotene Filme. Eine Streitschrift" [Banned films. A pamphlet] in Frankfurt. Its author Wolfgang Petzet explained the above-mentioned film law, the "Lichtspielgesetz" and his supplements in detail. He also critically analyzed the social and political attitude of the film censorship authorities.

Even now, Petzet's publication is used as a source of information in specialist research. However, a more detailed analysis of his book on film censorship in the Weimar Republic is still lacking, whereas the censorship debates on single films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (d: Lewis Milestone, US 1930) in Germany have been much better researched. In my paper, I examine Petzet's study, its critical attitude, and its international reception in the 1930s. The influence of Siegfried Kracauer on Petzet, which has not yet been highlighted in detail, is pointed out. Parallels and differences to other film critics are also analyzed and a vivid insight is given into the censorship debate at that time. It becomes particularly apparent that the weak points of the legal situation were recognized very clearly by his contemporaries, but were not changed. Soon afterwards, this encouraged film censorship to be put into the service of Nazi propaganda in 1933.

## Panel 2: Italy

### Maria Giusti – *Scissors for images: movie cuts and the Italian legislation on film censorship and classification*

Censorship occurs whenever the freedom of artistic expression is subject to an authoritative control, aimed at preventing the diffusion of information, ideas and opinions that may compromise the stability and the interests of the established order. Historically, in Italy censorship has affected literature, theater, painting and, from 1913, cinema. In its 100 years of existence, the system of movies' censorship has been reformed several times. Nevertheless, there is a persistent instrument: the cut. In some cases, cuts made films incomprehensible, deleting scenes or lines fundamental either for the plot or to understand writers' and directors' thought. Are cuts (or lack of them) always related to the film's topic, or may they depend on the images narrating that topic themselves? Can images weaken topics? Given that images say nothing by themselves—without an interpretative process—has it ever occurred that they have been used as a pretext to cut something different from what was actually cut? This work, in the light of an analysis of the legislation, explores the relationship between film cuts and images through the analysis of some well-known movies that have (or have not) been censored: Godard's *Une femme mariée*, Fellini's *La dolce vita*, Anonioni's *Il grido* and Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*. Today, film censorship does not exist in Italy: starting from 2017, the State can forbid movies only to minors. Is this enough to say that movie cuts do not occur anymore? Given that R-rated movies are less valuable for subsequent distribution, is it the case that movie right owners spontaneously cut their works to avoid unpleasant classifications? What can we learn from other countries' legislations?

### Mauro Giori & Tomaso Subini - *A quantitative analysis of Italian film censorship after World War II*

"Today I've been notified that *La governante* has been forbidden by censorship. It's very irritating because I think it's unfair. Anyway, this is Italy: the land of censorship. It always has been and always will be". Vitaliano Brancati wrote these words in 1953, driven by a personal urgency (his play had been banned because of obscenity), in a pamphlet entitled *Ritorno alla censura* (The return of censorship) which deeply influenced the debate in the after-war.

Two insights can be drawn from Brancati's intervention. Firstly, the title of his book implies that censorship is a dynamic phenomenon, continuously fading and coming back; secondly, the quote frames censorship as a peculiarly Italian institution and actually several historical facts suggest that this is not an idiosyncratic idea, from counter-reformation to fascism, from the postwar clerical regime to the strongest communist party in the West.

With Brancati's suggestions in mind, our paper aims at reconsidering the Italian film censorship after the war through a quantitative analysis. The statistical data about the 722 films forbidden (at least initially) by censors between 1945 and 1986, gathered from a digital repository of censorship committee's reports now available to scholars, allow to trace the fluctuations of censorship and to argue about their reasons in connection with the Italian political and cultural history. In our intention, this could challenge a preconception which has deeply influenced the literature about censorship, according to which its history should be seen as a progressive liberalization related to the establishing of modernity, as if it was just a

remnant of the past slowly (but definitively) outdated by history. A conception that does not allow to understand nor explain the present spread of discourses in favor of a restoration of censorship itself. That is to say: the return (again) of censorship.

### Karol Jóźwiak - "Maccartismo italiano": Italian censorship in the communist and soviet press of the 1950s.

In my paper I will present results of my research on the diplomatic relations between Soviet Union and Italy after WWII paying attention to the press, both soviet (such as "Isskustvo Kino") and Italian under indirect soviet influence (e.g. "L'Unità", "Rinascita"), and the way they dealt with the notion of "Italian censorship in cinema". Both Italian and Soviet critics often discussed the illegitimate influence of Italian political circles on the cinema and the freedom of expression pointing at its implicit right-wing political agenda. Exaggeration, disgust and moralizing expressed by those critics were frequently exposed in order to hide another political agenda. A way harsher soviet mode of film production and political control over it seemed to be either out of their interest or positively justified by them. This apparent incoherency is, to me, a symptom of a more general cultural phenomenon which I frame under the notion of Sovietophilia in film culture. As a consequence of this phenomenon the problem of censorship has been to a great extent identified with the right-wing political spectrum, and reference to the soviet and communist influence on the film production has been limited. In other words, the notion of the censorship rather than describing objectively the problem of the breaking the freedom of expression, served as a weapon in the fight for the hegemony over the cinematography. I reckon the true hegemon of the cinematography was not the censor, but the one who specified how the notion of censorship is understood and contextualized. In this way the contextual reading of press is quite revealing. Especially while analyzing the problem in the transnational perspective on URRS-Italy in the middle of the cold war.

### **Panel 3: Turkey**

#### Guldeniz Kibris - *Censoring the Nation: Censorship of Turkish Cinema in the Shadow of the Cold War*

This paper analyzes Turkish film censorship between 1936 and the early 1970s. The period includes the Second World War, Turkey's transition to multiparty system, industrialization, rural to urban migration, and two military interventions: one in 1960, the second one in 1971. The 1950s and 1970s, at the same time, coincided with the Golden Age of Turkish cinema leading to an enormous production and consumption. During the period under examination, Turkish cinema was a significant area to understand the formation of Turkish nationhood in relation to market demands and state interventions in the form of censorship. Relying on censorship reports prepared by the Central Film Control Committee, this paper reveals that censorship was a powerful tool of the state to design the boundaries of Turkishness through a homogeneous and standard imagining of the Turkish national identity as opposed to heterogeneity which made different national imaginings possible. The paper also argues that these reports were never independent, in fact were the products of the dominant ideological codes of the Turkish political culture. In this regard, although the Committee was a domestic institution, it never worked independent from foreign policy. Thus, the paper also analyzes how the implications of the Commission's criteria changed over time under the influence of gradually increasing aggressiveness and militarism in the country as a response to foreign policy concerns.

#### Ilke Şanlıer Yüksel and Aydın Çam - *Historicizing the censor: An entangled historical discussion on different epochs of institutional censorship in Turkey*

Historically, various institutions and legislation control films in Turkey with different formats either through state or market regulations. For example, in the Early Republican Period, during the first half of the 20th century, there is a control and censorship mechanism where the state is at the center. In the 1960-1990 period, with the popularization of cinema, economic concerns also began to play a role in film control. Distributors and/or exhibitors censor the parts of the films they consider to be inappropriate with the moral values of the local population. Similarly, producers, distributors and exhibitors censor projects and films that do not conform to their ideological views (Kaya Mutlu, 2013). All of these are practices that diversify and differ from time to time by the internalization of legal regulations on supervision and censorship by different actors in the film industry and their concerns/interests.

Nevertheless, today in Turkey, we are faced as if with a unique format the diversity of suppressing the content and censorship and its novel reasoning. Films, which were mostly produced between 1960 and 1990, were shown many times not only in cinemas but also on television channels after private broadcasting that started in 1994. These films met with an intense public interest, while being restored and re-screened on media such as YouTube, and are now censored by the producers. These are the same films, in which particular efforts were made to overcome the state control and censorship during the period they were produced and exhibited, are now censored by their own producers. For example, while political-humour films that are shown in cinemas in different periods, whether they are disseminated in videocassette and/or television format during the 80s, the sequences that are not censored are today actually censored after restoration (sometimes shortened by 20% of the entire duration) and screened on digital platforms such as YouTube, VoD or IPTV. Although it seems like we are encountering a new form of censorship taking place in a historically new medium, in fact, it may be possible to reveal intercrossings in the history of censorship using common analytical categories and the same object of study, as *histoire croisée* approach (Werner and Zimmermann, 2006) offers. Therefore, from an entangled historical perspective of cinema (Biltereyst and Meers, 2016), our study of selected film collections restored and digitally disseminated by major production companies, and archival research on cinema journals try to theorize how today's censorship practices are internalized and institutionalized by looking at relational approaches, practices, tools and actors in different periods of Turkish history of control and censorship.

### Ece Vitriuel - Can piracy be a response to censorship? Turkish film industry's self-reflection through street vendors

Directly related to the delay in the introduction of legal platforms, the audio-visual landscape in Turkey is characterized by a strong piracy culture which needs to be tackled comprehensively, with attention being paid to other specificities of the national film industry. In 2013, with his article 'Size Dayatılan Gerçek Değil!' (What is imposed on you, it is not real!), Hasan Cömert, former editor of the culture section of an important online information platform (NTVMSNBC.com) sparked a debate on the matter. He mentioned the absurdity of saying "do not download movies" in a country where: "An important number of films that we want to see is never released theatrically. Those that are released are programmed in 3 or 5 movie theatres for one or two weeks. Censorship still exists. We are forced to see movies in shopping malls. "

His words underlining the current audio-visual market context and the policy loophole in Turkey have struck a chord especially on Twitter and many people expressed their positive reactions except for film professionals, distributors and exhibitors mainly, who undoubtedly voiced their concerns. But the director Zeki Demirkubuz who won the Audience Award in the 31th International Istanbul Film Festival in 2012 had already made a controversial move by thanking the pirate vendors at the ceremony, saying that it is thanks to them that the Turkish audience discovered his films. And finally in 2014, through the main character of his film *Pek Yakında* (Coming Soon), Cem Yılmaz, famous actor and film director, honoured those 'honest' street vendors who do not copy national titles but foreign films. So it is significant to note that, in line with the two of the six faces of piracy noted by Ramon Lobato (2012) in his *Shadow Economies of Cinema* ('piracy as access' and 'piracy as resistance'), the audio-visual piracy in Turkey is not only related to the economic value of the production but embodies also a symbolic moral attitude against the current organisation of the market.

Drawing on recent and concrete censorship cases, but focusing more on the secret and for that reason, an even more dangerous censorship in terms of films made unavailable by the current organization of the distribution market, this paper seeks to understand how the Turkish film industry respond to censorship. It argues that, in addition to direct discourses on the matter, Turkish directors use pirate vendor characters in their films as a means of indirect thinking on the industry.

### Dürdane Merve Tarlabölen Solmaz – A reflexive account on censoring: Film censorship practices on television in Turkey

For TV channels in Turkey, content regulation of films was merely avoiding 'nudity', 'untaxed commercials' and 'political disturbances' in practice. After the new legislation in 2008, broadcasting all kinds of tobacco products on television was banned in Turkey and the policing obligations were given to the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). Subsequently, many conglomerates with various TV channels amongst their portfolio have formed a film broadcasting regime and created

so-called “censorship units” within, to avoid the hefty penalties. Since blurring tobacco products are accepted as successful practices, alcohol incentive scenes also banned and became the new subject of regulation.

This study reflects the scholarly attempts of the researcher, who has worked in the commercial TV companies for three years as a censor in film regulation, to create a methodology from her experience, in light of the Pierre Bourdieu's self-reflexivity. The data are collected through a ‘participatory action’ method developed to examine the censorship practices and censors’ meaning making processes. Seven participants, who are also censors, were selected purposefully and were told to suppress the same scenes while explaining the reasons for their censoring during semi-structured interviews. The scenes were also selected on purpose by -once censor-researcher clarifying the main subjects of regulation. Interviews were conducted with the participants before, after and during the monitoring of each material. The main focus of the study is to question the regulation standards of films broadcast on TV and screening regime; how the censors adapt to the fast-moving environment of censorship politics. In this paper, it will be discussed whether censorship is actually carried out according to the legal framework or according to the actual practice of censors, and how it shapes through power relations. One of the key findings reveals that the censors follow and even compete with fellow colleagues sometimes to do more than what legal regulations require.

#### **Panel 4: Latin America**

##### **Karina Aveyard & Karol Valderrama Burgos - *Hopes and fears of transformation: FOCINE and film censorship in Colombia***

Censorship is often considered primarily as an instrument of the State, formalized through government agencies charged with classifying films with audience suitability ratings and, in some cases, restricting or banning certain releases. Movie ratings in Colombia have been determined by the Ministry of Culture since the late 1990s. Prior to this, ratings were the duty of regional and national boards established from the 1930s onwards, some of them constituted by government officials and clergy representatives. Over the years, numerous films have been banned directly by these boards, but there are also many non-governmental and indirect mechanisms through which the films that reach audiences are reshaped and/or censored. Some of the most controversial subjects in Colombian cinema over the past century have been the depiction of the armed conflict and the hardships and social inequalities that result from it, and representations that threaten the country’s deeply conservative Catholic values and the status quo of different political regimes.

The FOCINE period was an active time for filmmaking (45 features, 84 half-length films, 64 documentaries made in 15 years). The organization was established to express “the Colombian identity” through cinema and generate commercial returns from the films they funded to sustain the local industry, however, it did not really achieve either of these aims. As a bureaucratic entity FOCINE lacked rigor and transparency in its funding policies, and actively contributed to various forms of informal censorship by favoring certain politically sanctioned themes and preferring fictionalized content over documentaries. The organization was also beset by discontinuity and corruption amongst its sixteen managers. It failed as both as a cultural project and industry strategy, as demonstrated by its collapse in 1993. Its demise led to a decline in the cinema sector during the 1990s. It was only until the period of 1997-2002 that new mechanisms were created (Ministry of Culture, Mixed Film Fund, and the Film Office), providing autonomy and further stability, and becoming a key precedent of the period of growth that would start in 2003 with the sanction of the 814 Cinema Law.

##### **Jorge Iturriaga - *Film censorship in the first year of Chilean military dictatorship, 1974***

This presentation seeks to identify and analyze the main changes that the Chilean military dictatorship imprinted on the Film Censorship Board in 1974, its first year in power. Through a survey of information in the press, archives of the CCC and the Ministry of Education, it was possible to outline the new orientation of the Board, the results of its ratings work and the reactions of distributors and public opinion. The presentation proposes that in its first months the dictatorship carried out a censorship restoration process by giving back the CCC the active role it had before the Salvador Allende socialist government, at the same time that it gave it new guidelines, by installing a stricter and political-doctrinaire filtering criterion. Finally, a new law not only institutionalized this new severity, but also gave censorship a halo of legitimacy based on new institutional alliances.

## Fernando Ramírez Llorens - *The emergence of the abolitionism of film censorship in Argentina, 1978-1983*

Since the early 1960s, the Argentine Catholic-State film censorship regime has been gradually tightening. Heavy control was increasingly exercised, expressed in the demands of cuts and total prohibition of films, as well as supervision of film scripts. By 1977 one out of every four feature films submitted to rating was banned.

Even though numerous voices against censorship were historically raised from different positions in the cultural field, criticism used to accept that some type of official control was in any case necessary or reasonable. However, towards the end of the 1970s, a change of attitude, which can be characterized as abolitionist, began to take shape. Promoted mainly by film critics, filmmakers and actors, for the first time all kinds of official control were radically rejected, regardless of any legal justification or argument about their social need.

This communication begins by briefly describing the background of the anti-censorship movements during the 1960s, as well as the brief failed experience of the "apertura" (opening) in 1973. Next, the work analyses the changes in positions that occurred in the late 1970s within some of these groups, as well as the process of development and consolidation of a movement with a simple but solid program of proposals for the elimination of censorship. This would end up being implemented in the early days of the postdictatorial government of President Raul Alfonsín, and would imply the end of the official preventive censorship of cinematography in Argentina.

The work offers elements to discuss the social production of censorship. Avoiding a binary interpretation of positions (support or opposition), the aim is to think which ideas and practices empowered censorship, including those of opponents, and what conditions were built to enable an effective alliance in order to articulate broader agreements that made the abolitionist position dominant.

## **Keynote 2 & Q&A: Manuel Mozos and Margarida Sousa, *Portuguese banned images from 1945 to 1974: an archive approach***

In 1945, in the post-war political context, the Portuguese dictatorial regime Estado Novo changes the Secretariado Nacional de Propaganda (SNP) into the Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI) with a new film and theatre censorship board. This board would work without interruption until the end of the dictatorship in 1974, deciding on what was to be banned, or on what would be authorized with or without cuts, following the State's ideology. The Cinemateca Portuguesa holds a collection of censorship cuts (of foreign origin mostly) taken from films exhibited in Portugal from 1945 to 1974, and "Approved with cuts" by the board. The identification and research of this collection led us to the study of the functioning of the censorship board, through the consultation of the minutes of its meetings and the paper-based documentation of each censored film held at the national archives of Torre do Tombo (ANTT). We wanted to answer questions such as: why does the film archive have this collection? What was cut and why? Throughout 30 years, how does the Estado Novo censorship link to changes in film language, to the society? What was the relationship between the censorship and the distributors and audiences? It also allowed us to study and identify the censored exhibition prints held by the archive – foreign films (several ones we didn't know that had been censored) but also and mainly Portuguese films. The research as well as the digitalisation of the censorship cuts gives us a new understanding but also a new visibility of this part of the collection and what was the cinema censorship during the Estado Novo through the documentaries we made, the exhibition programs at our theatre and better access to researchers, film directors/producers and so on.

### Keynote 3 + Q&A by Professor Linda Williams, *What is a Hard Core?*

Linda Williams is a Professor in Film, Media and Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, USA. She is the author of *Figures of Desire* (1981), a co-edited volume of feminist film criticism (*Re-vision*, 1984), an edited volume on film spectatorship, *Viewing Positions* (1993), *Reinventing Film Studies* (co-edited with Christine Gledhill, 2000), and *Screening Sex* (Duke, 2008). In 1989 she published a study of pornographic film entitled *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible* (second edition 1999).

Linda Williams' paper will be presented by Damon R. Young. Damon R. Young is Associate Professor of French and Film & Media at the University of California, Berkeley, USA.

### Panel 5: Rating, circulation and regulation

#### Julian Petley - *The Limits of the Permissible in the UK*

In most western democracies, the official bodies responsible for censoring and classifying films have considerably relaxed their standards in recent years. However, certain kinds of images are still liable to encounter censorship by such bodies, and this paper will examine the limits of the permissible in a specifically UK context, drawing on the most recent (2019) Classification Guidelines of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). As in various other comparable countries, these limits apply primarily to images of (a) sexualised violence and (b) children. The paper will explain why certain examples of such images are regarded as censorable by the BBFC, focusing in particular on the various laws which the Board has to observe in carrying out its functions.

It can, of course, be argued that, thanks to new communications technologies, those wanting to access films of the kind that the Board refuses to pass can easily do so. But this would be to ignore a new form of regulation of image consumption, also enabled by new communications technologies, namely surveillance. Well aware that online forms of film distribution have made it relatively easy to bypass the regulation of offline forms, governments, and most certainly UK governments, have increasingly turned to the criminalisation of the possession of certain kinds of images. Images of children are covered by at least five separate Acts of Parliament, and sexual violence by the 'extreme pornography' clauses of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008. This recent regulatory turn involves viewers being encouraged to self-censor their own online activity on the grounds that any infringement of the relevant laws may be revealed by surveillance, and punished. Here we enter the realm of the Panopticon and encounter questions relating to the transparency, democratic legitimacy and public accountability of the censorship process.

This paper addresses the topics of film censorship cases and of new film censorship practices.

#### Mark McKenna – *Don't be afraid, it's only business*

As prone as the British appear to be to moments of spontaneous moral panic, it is important to recognize the forces that instigate, underpin and amplify these moments, and to acknowledge that these forces are rarely benevolent, or even for that matter, spontaneous. In 1982, just as home video was finding a foothold in the United Kingdom, a moral panic erupted about the advertising that was being used to promote an array of horror films that had been imported from Europe and America and released to conservative British marketplace. These films became known as the 'video nasties', a disparate collection of unrelated films of varying qualities that were grouped together on the basis that they transgressed the boundaries of respectability. While many of these films were, and remain, difficult and challenging works, it is important to recognize that it was not a sense of public outrage or moral propriety that led to the films being banned, it was simply that the organizations and institutions involved stood to benefit from the frenzy of a moral panic. Though this was not immediately obvious. The moral panic famously led to the introduction of the Video Recordings Act, which Martin Barker (1984) and Julian Petley (1997) have explored as a convenient deflection for the Conservative Government, whose



reputation had been badly damaged in their previous term. However, what has received far less scrutiny is the benefit of the introduction of the Video Recordings Act to the major film studios and their role in its introduction. This paper will explore this history and will consider how the Video Recordings Act reshaped the British video industry.

Elisabeth Staksrud & Marita Eriksen Haugland - *Sex, drugs, violence and "intense driving"* - Examining the differences in film age rating practices and rationales in Denmark, France, Japan, Norway, and the UK.

In democracies, film rating agencies are among the few public agencies that can invoke pre-censorship, denying groups in the public access to media content.

Historically, this has been seen as a rather uncomplicated regulatory intervention: age rating regimes are typically citing the protection of children from (potentially) harmful effects of exposure to media content, and who can be against that? However, it is not necessarily agreed among both practitioners and in research what these harmful effects might be, and what kind of media content that creates a risk of harm. Despite this gap both within and between practice and research, the field is limited when it comes to comparative research across countries, cultures and types of content.

In this paper we seek to identify the stated reasons related to specific film content by national classification bodies for giving a film a certain age rating. We do this by consulting each of the selected countries' rating bureaus, looking at age rating rationales in their original language (English, Danish, French, Japanese and Norwegian), examining the differences – if any – between age classification practices and the associated rationales for what is considered harmful for children.

First, we identify all the films that have been rated in the five countries during a six-year period (2010 – 2015). We then analyze if and how these films (504 in total) have been rated differently – or not – in the five selected countries. Next, we examine the various content specific reasons given for the variations in ratings (ranging from "allowed for all" to "18" for the same movie) by the rating boards themselves. In doing this we also reveal systematic patterns of differences, showing how, for instance, only 30 percent of films received the same rating in France and in the UK, making both countries far more likely to agree with e.g. the Japanese, than with each other.

Finally, we discuss one example, the film *The Secret in Their Eyes* (Campanella, 2009), to illustrate how even similar rationales and assessments of content can lead to different ratings between countries, and the regulatory implications of our findings.

Ben Strassfeld - *Indecent Detroit: Censorship Across Media in the Motor City*

In recent decades, scholarship on the history of film censorship has greatly expanded our collective knowledge of how cinema has been regulated across the globe. However, this work has often been wedded to medium specificity, focusing exclusively on the history of film censorship without regard for the censoring of other types of media. In this paper, I explore the connections between different forms of media censorship through a case study of censorship in Detroit during the 1950s and 1960s. During that time, the Detroit Police Department's Censor Bureau not only inspected every movie intended for theatrical exhibition in the city, but also censored literature, comic books, burlesque, the performing arts, and pornography. I argue that there was significant continuity in the approach taken by the Detroit Censor Bureau to these different tasks, with normative conceptions of race, gender, and sexuality informing censorship across media formats. Moreover, this paper also shows how Catholic groups—who scholars have examined in relation to their advocacy for movie censorship—also played a significant role in instigating the censorship of these other media formats. Similarly, the laws being used to censor movies were also being applied to other media, again pointing to the convergences between the regulation of these various forms of entertainment. Overall then, through an examination of Detroit's history of censorship, this paper attempts to demonstrate how movie censorship has hardly ever occurred in isolation, but instead has been closely linked with other forms of media regulation.

**Panel 6: Poland**

Emil Sowiński - *State censorship and its role in the production and distribution of debut films produced by Irzykowski Film Studio in the late People's Republic of Poland.*

The aim of this paper is to analyze the role of the censorship in the production process that took place

at Irzykowski Film Studio which played an extraordinary role in the Polish film industry, mainly because of the notable and sometimes controversial films produced there. Irzykowski Film Studio was founded in 1981 by a group of young graduates' students of Lodz Film School. It was modelled after the Hungarian Balazs Studio as an institution that allowed young filmmakers to start their careers directly after graduating from the Film School. Even though it existed inside the framework of the socialist state-owned film industry, it was much more independent from censorship than the Film Units (i.e. the basic organizational entities of Polish film production system at the time). While the Film Units had to wait for the official approval from Ministry of Culture and Censorship Agency, the leaders of the Studio did not need to confront these institutions since they were able to decide about the production process all by themselves. Therefore, state censorship was not allowed to interfere in the preproduction stage and could only decide whether the controversial film would have received the exhibition licence. In other words, they were not allowed to influence for a decision of any production and it had to make a judgment about any finished film. The paper some new insight into communist censorship reveal some little known facts about its impact on young directors. A case study of *Nadzór* (Custody by W. Saniewski, 1984) shall illustrate the production process and illuminate the distribution practices Studio of the 1980s.

### Mikołaj Kunicki - *Party Apparatchiks as Filmmakers and Filmmakers as Gladiators: The Film Approval Commissions in Communist Poland, 1955-1968.*

Using primary and secondary sources, this paper examines the predominant practice of censoring films in communist Poland, meetings of the Script Assessment Commissions (Komisje Ocen Scenariuszy) and Commissions of Film Approval (Komisje Kolaudacyjne). Part-government, part-industry bodies, the commissions were headed by the boss of the Polish film industry and populated by filmmakers, communist party officials in charge of culture and propaganda, film critics and censors. Their verdicts mandated the admission of movies for production and distribution.

Following the collapse of Stalinism, the treatment of filmmakers by the party stemmed from the regime's policies toward the artistic intelligentsia and oscillated between rigid dictates, mutual accommodations, and negotiated autonomies (Kunicki 2016). Recent scholarship on a history of cinema and television in the Soviet bloc also highlights the impact of economic factors, market mechanisms and socio-political contexts on cultures of production (Szczepanik 2013; Adamczak 2014; Evans 2016).

This paper discards the mythical figure of a censor; instead it proposes that the assessment and approval commissions blended soft censorship, self-censorship, and negotiations between political control and artistic creativity. These meetings also show the gradual erosion of institutional censorship and its replacement by what Miklós Haraszti has defined as "the velvet prison," in which the state rewarded compliant artists, displayed asubstantial permissiveness and even co-opted dissent (Haraszti 1987). The transcripts of commissions also provide a rare opportunity to learn about the communist elite's cinematic taste, intellectual horizons and reflections on popular culture. I argue that some of these bigwigs became so immersed in discussions with members of Poland's film community that they 'became' filmmakers, that is, self-ascribed experts in cinema. At the same time, some filmmakers used commissions to settle scores with their adversaries from the industry.

I narrow the scope of my observation to the period from 1955, the year of the partial de-centralisation the Polish film industry, to 1968. The latter date signalled the state-sponsored anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual campaign, which severely affected the film industry, and led to the dismissal of Tadeusz Zaorski (1917-1993), the longest-serving chairman of the Chief Board of Cinema (Naczelny Zarząd Kinematografii) and broker between filmmakers and authorities.

### Konrad Klejsa - *Censorship of American and British hippie counterculture films in People's Republic of Poland, 1965-1975*

The policy of the People's Poland towards foreign film has always been set against the background of various political, social and economic contexts. The hippie counterculture is a particularly interesting case – despite the fact that it was considered anti-establishment in the West, its domestic versions have been fiercely fought in communist countries. Film censorship in People's Republic of Poland was multilayered. The first stage was gaining the opinion of the body responsible for selecting movies to import, Council of Cinema Repertoire – which consisted of several party officials, filmmakers and writers. However, the council's consent did not guarantee distribution. In addition each film had to obtain

the approval of the Main Office of Press, Publication and Performances, while dubious cases were solved by the Communist Party's Committee on Culture, whose delegates could also suspend foreign currency payments intended to be made for the purchases of each license from the Western distributor.

The paper shall consist of two parts. First, the structure of film distribution in People's Republic of Poland of the 1960s and 1970s shall be briefly explained. The statistical figures – derived from the database which lists all full-length movies bought for Polish cinema distribution after the IIWW (the website shall be launched in Autumn 2020) – allow a better understanding of the extent to which audiences in communist countries have been deprived of the access to many important movies from the West.

The second part of the paper will discuss a case study of two movies: *Easy Rider*, which was not allowed to be screened, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* which hit the cinemas in Poland in 1974. The latter title had been initially approved by the Council of Cinema Repertoire as early as 1968 but the censorship office withheld *2001* from distribution for six additional years, mostly for political reasons.

## Panel 7: India

### Omen Achom - *The Influence of Insurgent Groups in Film Censorship and Policy and in Manipur*

The RPF (Revolutionary People's Front), an insurgent group banned the screening, transmission, and viewing of Hindi films in Manipur in 2000. Manipur, an Indian state in the North Eastern region bordering Burma and an erstwhile princely state under British rule, became a politically contested place since its forceful annexation by India after its independence from the British. Hindi films had played a major role in the construction of the national identity and in fostering normative behaviour in India. So much so that "film is perhaps the single strongest agency for the creation of a national mythology of heroism, consumerism, leisure, and sociality" (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1996: 8). Even after having a separate Manipuri film industry, in its native language, it was Bollywood films that captured the imagination of Manipuris. Bollywood films were screened alongside Manipuri films. Hindi, one of the official languages of the country, is an alien language to the Manipuris. Further, the tension between the Indian state and the insurgent groups resulted in a war like conflict, a violent atmosphere created with heavy militarization and restrictions on civil rights. The insurgent groups take various measures to stop the cultural imperialism manifested through film, language, and religion. Also, acting as an extra-institutional censoring body the Insurgent groups enforce cultural and moral disciplining on the filmmakers in the state to maintain what they call the dignity and culture of the Manipuri society. A preview committee was formed to negotiate between the Film Forum, Manipur, and Insurgents groups. For a Manipuri film to be screened in public, the film has to clear the screening by this preview committee. The paper tries to study the immediate consequence of this action and the position of militant insurgency in film policy and censoring.

### C. Amaldas – *Outrages being Sellable Entities? A Look at Film Censorship Controversies in Neoliberal India*

The complex history of censoring films in India illustrates how various ruling classes -- the British earlier, and post-independence Indian state which is a feudal landlord and bourgeoisie coalition -used this process for political mileage. This regulation on cinema ultimately was the responsibility of the state or its machinery, mainly Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) or its earlier forms. The discourse around film censorship in India had taken a turbulent turn in the 1990s with the emergence of decentralized far right groups pressuring the CBFC to take actions against a number of films. These outrages turned to vandalism to stop public screenings claiming many of these films exhibited vulgarity, obscenity and values alien to the "nation". Christophe Jaffrelot points to a number of factors for this upsurge like largescale mobilization against Mandal Commission report (1990), Ramjanmabhoomi movement (1980-90), demolition of Babri Masjid (1992) and Bombay riots (1992-93) (3-26). The decade also marked a serious shift when Indian market was opened for private investment. It was the start of a series of policy changes India would undergo to become a neoliberal state, where the citizen was left alone to compete in a globalized world of private capital. A neoliberal state rejects the social democratic notion of public good social justice, defines citizens as consumers of services which the state provides, and as active participants in the market promoting their own interests. Controversies around a song sequence *Choli Ke Peechey Kya He (What's Behind the Blouse)* in *Khalnayak* in 1993 could be counted as the first in a pattern of controversies and a newborn practice ever since.

The economic anxiety of people losing jobs, being left out of the neoliberal world, and withdrawal of many welfare schemes were triggers far right groups could use for their political project which Nandana Bose describes as a "search for order" (*The*

*Hindu Right and the Politics of Censorship 4*). This paper tries to look at how various film censorship controversies erupted from these anxieties, right wing forces came up for public action which sometimes turned violent- “profitable provocation” as William Mazzarella and Raminder Kaur notes (Kaur and Mazzarella 4) - and most importantly how the production companies responded to them. It aims to look at the political economy of many of these violent episodes, especially the ones after Bollywood’s promotion to an “industry status” (Bose, *Between the Godfather and the Mafia* 1-4) in 1998 from *Fire* (1998) to *Padmaavat* (2018), and trace whether these public outrages helped production companies for their marketing benefits.

### Ipsita Sahu - Narratives of Conflict: Film Culture, Censorship and Political Dictatorship in 1970s India

Due to lack of equipment and resources, the newly established state-run public broadcasting medium of television in India was yet to come unto its own in the 1970s. Television was therefore largely dependent on film content, both commercial and educational films. This led to a transactional relationship between the state and the biggest, although unorganized commercial industry, the Bombay film industry, notorious for its stakes in black money. While television presented a new opportunity for the Bombay film industry to extend a friendly alliance with the state, market its films and build its star system, the telecast of film based programmes allowed the government to attract viewership and widely disseminate messages of citizenship and propaganda on television. However, the declaration of ‘emergency’ between 1975-77, a period when constitutional rights were withheld in India, pushed the limits of this relationship. As media became a critical site of censorship and governance during the dictatorial regime, conflicts between the state and the Bombay film industry arose when both films and film personalities including major stars were used in imaginative ways for staging political events and conducting political rallies. Instances of the film industry’s noncompliance in turn lead to heavy censorship, bans and even raids in institutions such as the FTII (Films and Television Institute of India). This paper will map such terrains of conflict and censorship between the two medias of television and cinema during a charged political moment in India. Though such as case study the paper will analyse the fluid and diverse ways through which censorial interventions played out across technologies, film text, star image and institutional sites.

### **Panel 8: Canada**

#### Michael Marlatt - Splicing Back Against the Censors: Digitizing the Discarded Ontario Board of Censors Card Catalogue Collection

In 2019, the Ontario Government, spearheaded by premier Doug Ford, shut down the Ontario Film Review Board. The Ontario Film Review Board, known as the Ontario Censor Board pre1985, dates back to 1911 and is particularly notable for the strictness of its censorship. From at least 1922 until the transition to the Ontario Film Review Board, a record for each film was kept including information on format, length, title, submission fee, date submitted, exchange (who was screening the picture), maker, date reviewed, members present, decision of each member and, significantly, section(s) that needed to be cut for approval. After the closure, these records were nearly discarded after various Ontario archives refused them. The multi-university Archive/Counter-Archive project was able to rescue them and by doing so, nearly one hundred years of provincial film history and over 100,000 individual censorship records were saved.

Archive/Counter-Archive’s plans with the collection involve preservation in the form of rehousing, scanning, and cataloguing each record. Archive/Counter-Archive will also be partnering with the Archives of Ontario to host student preservation workshops. Our intention is to use the collection to teach non-archivally trained students about best preservation practises in the process of investigating the importance of the censored material. Students and researchers will benefit from learning how films were censored in Ontario, down to details of where in the film cuts were required, the length of each particular cut, and a written description of the content to be cut. Notably, this approach foregrounding the material records also highlights the value of studying the original language used to censor the films and the means by which they were originally ordered. Both aspects reveal particular societal biases that censorship practices ended up perpetrating in the Canadian film market.

### Daniel Sacco - "The Ontario Censors meet The New French Extremity"

It is historically the case that innovations in the stylistic presentation of sex and violence onscreen have significantly coincided with changes in processes and practices of film content restriction. An illustrative example from the current millennium involved a handful of French art-house films that gained critical and commercial notoriety for what appeared to be a shared connection between selfreflexive aesthetic strategies, violent sexuality, and polarized reception. By transgressing "relevant" genre boundaries and by resisting rigid categorization, the films of the "New French Extremity" provoked fevered censorial impulses throughout the shift away from formal film censorship (and towards the American-inspired "classification"-oriented model) in the late modern West. Within this context, this paper examines the controversy surrounding the release of Catherine Breillat's *Fat Girl* (2001) in Ontario, Canada. After refusing classification to this critically lauded film on the grounds that it constituted "child pornography" (underage characters were shown engaged in sexual activity), the Ontario Film Review Board came under fire from the Canadian press, along with numerous lawyers, politicians, and filmmakers, who condemned its apparent lack of discretion in downgrading sophisticated artistic expression to the level of rough pornography. As an evidently direct result, the OFRB eventually overturned its decision and amended its policies to limit its own ability to regulate mainstream narrative cinema, promising greater emphasis on "merit" and "intent." Since the 1911 statute from which the OFRB originates represents the first major attempt anywhere to implement social control of motion pictures, Ontario can be seen as serving Western cinematic censorship practices both as incubator and hospice. I argue the scenes that the board initially sought to excise were those most vitally bound to Breillat's confrontational feminist politics, and that the board's ill-advised proclamation that it could excise *Fat Girl's* "potentially harmful" elements, and simultaneously preserve the power of Breillat's intended message while upholding the value and importance of freedom of artistic expression, proved disastrous in a fashion that demonstrates why defending government censorship of motion pictures in the context of Western liberal democracies has become a practical impossibility.

### Jonathan Petrychyn - The Censor Board Strikes Back! The 1984 International Conference of Film Regulators and the Transnational Distribution of Classification Systems

On September 27, 2019, the Government of Ontario announced that it was winding down the Ontario Film Authority (OFA) and had plans to develop a new system for classifying and licencing films. This change has rightfully put film exhibitors and queer activists on edge, as many of us remember the Censor Wars that gripped Ontario in the 1980s and 1990s, and how these wars affected not only the film industry, but also queer activism, for decades. This paper excavates the history of the Second International Conference of Film Regulators, little-known conference held in Toronto in 1984 held at the height of the Censor Wars, that brought together film classification and censor boards from across Canada, the United States, and Europe to share information and knowledge about film classification, censorship, and the effects of media on society. While Taryn Sirove's (2019) recent authoritative volume on the censorship battles of the 1980s in Ontario makes passing reference to the conference, and there is a robust history of film censorship and classification in Canada (Veronneau 2013) and the place of sexuality within these systems (Kuhn 1988), there has been no research to my knowledge that attempts to assess the effect and legacy of this conference on the history of film classification in Canada. Drawing on the archival holdings of this conference held in the TIFF Reference Library that I gathered while in residence there in June 2019, I contend that changes made to Ontario's film classification system in the wake of the Censor Wars can be traced back to the transnational exchange of ideas at this conference. This paper aims to re-assess the history of film censorship in Ontario and to provide a framework for understanding the ongoing changes to film classification in Ontario.

### **Keynote 4 & Q&A by Rachel Talalay, *Tank Girl*, or 25 years of filmmaking under pressure: does it count as censorship?**

Rachel Talalay is a film and television director and producer. She worked for New Line Cinema as a producer on the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (1984-1994), and produced John Waters' *Hairspray* (1988) and *Cry-Baby* (1990). She

directed *Freddy's Dead: the Final Nightmare* (1994) and the cult classic *Tank Girl* (1995). She will reflect upon film and censorship with clips from *Tank Girl*, *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Hairspray*.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: <http://www.censorship-symposium.org/>

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