

## **‘It existed indeed ... it was all over the papers’: memories of film censorship in 1950s Italy**

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### **Abstract:**

Film censorship in post-war Italy has been widely researched by scholars from the perspective of governmental and religious interventions in the attempt to control the film industry and moralise its audiences. However, cinema audiences’ experiences of this practice have been virtually neglected. The *Italian Cinema Audiences* project – funded by the AHRC – has investigated how cinema figures in the memories of people’s daily lives throughout the 1950s, a time in which cinema-going was the most popular national pastime, representing at its peak 70% of leisure expenditure. The project unveiled how Italian audiences chose films, what genres and stars they preferred, and how region, location, gender, and class influenced their choices. One of the key questions explored in our study is how film spectators remember censorship. This article presents the findings of the analysis of video-interviews conducted across the country focussing on audiences’ memories and perceptions of film censorship in the period under scrutiny. Our analysis will investigate not only the actual recollections, but also how these individual narratives have been shaped by ‘inherited templates that individuals can use to interpret’ those experiences (Rigney, 2015: 67). Our oral history data will be presented against State and Catholic Church’s archival documents which will allow us to highlight the points of contacts and conflicts between official discourses and audience’s personal memories.

**Keywords:** Film censorship, State, Church, collective memory, post-war Italy

## Introduction

Film censorship in post-war Italy has been widely researched by film historians from the perspective of both governmental and religious interventions. Studies on this topic (see, for example, Baldi, 1994; Sallustro, 2007; Bonsaver and Gordon, 2005; Treveri Gennari, 2014) have centered on the way in which the State and the Catholic Church have attempted – with various degrees of success – to control the film industry and to moralise its audiences. However, film audiences’ experiences of censorship have been virtually neglected. Within its broader focus on experiences of cinema-going, *Italian Cinema Audiences* – an AHRC-funded inter-institutional research project – examined how film spectators remember censorship in Italy in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> The project investigated the importance of cinema in everyday life, and the social experience of cinema-going, by interviewing surviving audience members. In the first phase of our study, over 1000 Italians aged over 65 responded to a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a range of participants chosen from eight provincial and eight urban locations.<sup>2</sup> The sample of our respondents was divided almost equally between men and women, city and province, and included a comprehensive range of social backgrounds. In the second stage of our project, we conducted half-hour topical in-depth interviews with 160 Italians sampled from a similar cross section of the population. The data collected in the questionnaires and in the video-interviews was complemented by box-office takings, programming and exhibition data, archival material and relevant press material from the period, adapting Barker and Mathijs’ (2008) audience project framework.<sup>3</sup> While oral history constitutes the core of our project, the triangulation of different data sources has provided original insights into the history of post-war Italian cinema, and has outlined a comprehensive account of the social practice of cinema-going.

Our study will investigate not only the actual recollections of film censorship, but also how these narratives have been shaped by inherited cultural templates that are employed by interviewees to make sense of the experiences they recount. Our oral history data will be presented against archival material and State and Catholic Church’s documents, in order to highlight the points of contact and conflict between official discourses and audience’s personal memories.

## Methodology and research background

Our study is inspired by several works on cinema-going memories in the 1950s (Harper and Porter, 1996; Labanyi, 2005; Paz, 2003; Meers et al., 2011). However, key to our research is Annette Kuhn’s concern with *memory discourse* as much as with *memory content* (see Kuhn, 2002; 2009; Kuhn et al., 2017). In her book *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Kuhn refers to ‘cinema memory as cultural memory’, claiming that her inquiry ‘is as much about memory as it is about cinema [...] about the interweaving of the two as cinema memory’ (2002: 9). Along the same lines, our methodology combines a thematic

analysis of the video-interviews (*memory content*) with a study of the specific ways in which memories are remembered and narrated by respondents (*memory discourse*).

In the first phase of the *Italian Cinema Audiences* project, we have also drawn on Barker and Mathijs' methodological approach to audience studies (2008), employing the questionnaires as the basis for the identification of themes and patterns. These have constituted the foundation of our qualitative analysis, and have then allowed a 'subsequent exploration of rich semantic seams' in the video-interviews (Barker, 2009: 387). In carrying out our qualitative analysis, we have employed a software system which has enabled us to code recurrent motifs as well as to identify areas which had not yet emerged during the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires.<sup>4</sup>

The creation of thematic clusters provides the opportunity to 'reveal the complex qualities of people's experiences' both at individual and at collective levels (Barker, 2009: 382). At the same time, we have complemented computer-aided analysis with the creation of a short 'portrait'<sup>5</sup> for each participant, in order to outline how the story of the experience of cinema-going is narrated. This includes the general background of the interviewee, key concepts and key experiences related to cinema-going, as well as modalities of delivery and non-verbal communication. The portrait as an analytical tool has served two functions in our analysis: first, identifying how the self is constructed in the narrative presented in the video-interview<sup>6</sup>; second, pinpointing the ways in which memories are narrated, taking into account aspects related to misremembering, omissions, as well as mediations.<sup>7</sup> In the analysis of the respondents' testimonies on censorship, both functions of the portrait have been used.

Our aim has been to explore how individual memories reveal shared knowledge of a collective past. In relation to this, we draw on Ann Rigney's argument that the key to the articulation of this relationship lies in culture. She explains:

For memory to be 'collective' it must involve not only recollections that are held in common, but reflections that are also self-reflexively shared as part of common knowledge about the past. And memory can only become collective in this specific sense when different acts of communication and representation using whatever tools are available has come into play so as to create a common pool of stories and figures of memory to which reference can be made (Rigney, 2016: 65).

Following the central tenets of cultural memory studies,<sup>8</sup> our investigation aims at shedding light on the cultural foundations of collective memory as it emerges from individual memories. As Rigney observes, a mnemonic perspective on culture can uncover 'the intersections between autobiographical memory (relating to one's own experience) and the repertoire of inherited templates that individuals can use to interpret that experience' (2016: 67). What transpires from our participants' responses on censorship are precisely these intersections, which demonstrate how individual memory relates to collective

memory. Moreover, as we read individual accounts of experiences of film censorship against ‘official’ or ‘public’ discourses – articulated by the State, the Church, and the press – we intend to explore how the latter provide the inherited templates to which Rigney refers.

### **Film censorship in Italy: State and Church intervention in 1950s**

Censorship legislation in post-war Italy did not change significantly from the Fascist period (Argentieri, 1974; Forgacs, 2005; Cooke, 2005; Liggeri, 2012), as the new cinema law approved on the 16th May 1947 (n. 379) remained the same as the 1923 legislation. A new decree in 1945 (5/10/1945 n.678) had given power to the new Ufficio centrale per la cinematografia (Cinema Central Office - UCPC)<sup>9</sup> to control the content of films and request cuts whenever they presented content that was deemed unsuitable. In order for a film to qualify for financial contribution, its script had to be approved by the UCPC. This clearly reinforced the government’s existing censorial powers in the process of guiding Italian domestic production to follow precise ideological objectives (Treveri Gennari, 2013). This form of ‘preventative censorship’ was obviously only applicable to national film production, and was carried through unchanged in the new 1962 legislation on cinema. It was common for producers to practise ‘self-censorship’ in order to obtain governmental approval, thus securing financial contribution for their films.<sup>10</sup> In the close relationship between producers, film-makers and official bureaucrats, the Catholic Church constituted another party which played a significant role in the film industry’s operations.<sup>11</sup> It is for this reason that, when studying post-war Italian cinema, it is fundamental to investigate not only State but also Catholic intervention, specifically in relation to issues of freedom, censorship and control. This state of affairs is described by Liggeri (2012: 107-108) as ‘a bond between censorship and production: the former has the duty to oppose films unwanted by the Church, while the latter is relegated to a biased ideological subordinate position’. This was made possible by the centralization of power achieved by Giulio Andreotti (Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in the years 1947-1954) at the UCPC, which operated in line with the wishes of the Vatican. Andreotti himself (1948) – in a letter to Giovanni Battista Montini, Sostituto della Segreteria di Stato alla Città del Vaticano (Acting Secretary of the Vatican City State) – explains how he succeeded in creating this close connection between State and Catholic Church in relation to the film industry: Andreotti reminds Montini of all the operations he had carried out in order to ensure a strong Catholic presence in Italian cinema. These interventions included a financial contribution to the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (Catholic Cinema Centre – CCC)<sup>12</sup>, which up until that moment had never been funded by the State; the presence of a Catholic representative in the jury of the Venice Film Festival; the significant increase in the number of approved licenses to open parish cinemas (Archivio Giulio Andreotti, Serie Vaticano, file 178, letter p. 3, 9/11/1948). More specifically, when discussing the issue of censorship, the letter outlines how in the Commissione Censura (Censorship Committee), Andreotti carefully selected people who were as close as possible to the Catholic moral principles both ‘in their mind and in their actions’ (1948: 3-4). Moreover, as Argentieri affirms, state censorship ‘[abode] by the

assessment criteria of the CCC: one of its representatives [was] even admitted illegally to the censors' meetings' (1974: 92).<sup>13</sup> If these CCC members had felt that a morally unsatisfying decision was about to be taken, they could refer to Andreotti himself who was ready to intervene.

Within the Catholic establishment, the CCC had been operating since April 1935, with the intention – amongst other responsibilities – of classifying films and distributing the classification throughout all Catholic institutions in the country.<sup>14</sup> If a film was not approved by the CCC, it could not be distributed amongst the parish cinema circuit, which in 1950s constituted almost a third of the entire exhibition sector (Cremonese, 1958: 4). Therefore, the Catholic Church had a well-developed system in place to exert pressure on the morality of film production, not only by infiltrating its representatives in State operated censorship organizations, but also through an extended network of cinemas which could potentially damage the financial success of a film, if it was considered to be morally unacceptable. Moreover, the CCC issued a review of all films with a moral evaluation and a rating, which was available in the Catholic press as well as outside the churches' entrances. The classification of films changed several times from the 1930s to the 1950s. During the years under scrutiny in this article it included the following categories: *for all, for adults, for adults with reservation, not recommended, excluded*. These moral evaluations were taken into account by Catholic audiences and were added to the traditional age restriction imposed by the State to commercial cinemas.<sup>15</sup> The most controversial themes from the Catholic censors' point of view were, not surprisingly, sex, nudity and violence, as pointed out in a 1952 open letter that Andreotti addressed to mons. Albino Galletto, Ecclesiastic Consultant to the CCC (the letter was published in the *Rivista del Cinematografo*, the official CCC magazine).

### **Remembering film censorship in 1950s Italy**

In the video-interviews, respondents were asked whether film censorship existed in the 1950s, how they knew about it, and how they felt about it. Few of the participants claimed to be unsure whether or not censorship existed, or were not able to assertively affirm that it existed. This might be explained by the self-censorship practice we have discussed in the section above, which happened at pre-production level and was not visible to audiences once films had been released. Some participants demonstrate an awareness of this practice and refer to it as a 'self-regulating process'. When asked who censored films, Antonina (Nuoro province) informs us that 'films were censored at the origin', before being circulated, 'when they were being produced'. This observation reflects her awareness of a practice whereby, in order to avoid official censorship, producers would often attempt to comply with the recommendations of the censorship board when presenting the film script (Treveri Gennari 2013: 260). Antonina knew of this common practice through the press (radio and newspaper) or her local exhibitors. Similarly, Gianni (Cagliari province) confirms that often films forbidden for underage spectators were rare because they were already 'self-regulated'. In general, results have shown that almost all of the interviewees have

responded positively to the question of whether censorship existed, and have discussed it in detail, confirming that censorship is vividly remembered as something that was perceived in a strong and distinctive manner. Indeed, most of our interviewees professed their certainty about the existence of censorship in quite emphatic ways, such as ‘well, of course it existed!’ (Anna from Naples), and ‘you bet! It absolutely existed’ (Lucia, Cagliari province).

While censorship is often associated with Fascism (and several participants refer to Mussolini’s dictatorship in their responses), only one participant, Antonio (Naples), does not seem to identify a stark divide in relation to censorship and lack of freedom between Mussolini’s regime and its aftermath, but, rather, he suggests a sort of continuity in governmental interventions:

During Fascism it was all covered up, according to the regime. Afterwards, there was Democrazia Cristiana [Christian Democracy], which was the dominant party, the governing party, it put in a lot of effort into cinema too to establish that some things could not be said, could not be seen. [...] Perhaps many people, like me, did not approve of this, because we thought that more freedom would have been useful.

Antonio’s testimony is unique also because it offers a clear-headed analysis of the political context in which State censorship operated in the period under scrutiny. Interestingly, Antonio’s remark is in stark contrast with the testimony of Maria Concetta (Bari province), who claims that censorship did not exist because ‘in that period from 1945 to 1960 freedom was discovered’, thus clearly perceiving the post-war period as one of drastic break from the regime and its totalitarian practices. Other participants who associate censorship with the Fascist regime were not sure whether this still applied to 1950s Italy. For example, Pietro (Bari) recounts: ‘in my opinion censorship certainly existed during the Fascist period. After that...I would not rule it out completely...I am not sure I can say that after the fall of Fascism censorship had ended.’

### ***Censorship enforcers***

The twofold approach of Catholic and State censorship discussed in the previous section is reflected in our participants’ testimonies. In relation to Catholic censorial intervention, respondents who attended Church-run venues remember that programming included films that were deemed suitable from a Catholic point of view, but also that Church representatives enforced censorship further either by having scenes of a sexual nature ‘cut out’ from the film or blocked out in other ways. For instance, Daniela (Turin province) remembers that the priest put his hand in front of the projector’s lens. Similarly, Maddalena (Palermo province) recounts that lights were switched on when characters were kissing. Other respondents remember reading about CCC ratings on the newspapers, seeing age-restriction signs on film posters, or priests actively enforcing those restrictions by preventing underage spectators from entering the cinema. In other cases, Catholic representatives

urged young viewers to boycott films shown in non-religious cinemas, which, according to them, were showing unsuitable content. For example, Maria (Cagliari province) recalls that the nuns who ran the kindergarten in her town used to say ‘don’t go to the cinema today because it is prohibited!’. Along the same lines, Giovanna (Milan), who frequented religious institutions, remembers being told not to go to left-wing cinemas that screened films that the Church regarded as ‘prohibited’, ‘because if you go there, we will not let you in our cinemas.’ Some interviewees are aware of the institutionalized side of religious censorship, as they discuss the CCC, as well as censorship committees with offices based in Rome. Filiberto (Palermo) remembers a committee in Rome whose task was ‘to prevent erotic and racy scenes’, ‘an office to avoid indecencies.’ Maria Teresa (Milan) talks about CCC’s offices both in Milan and in Rome, while Francesco (Bari) remembers reading the CCC’s reviews on the Catholic newspapers and ignoring them. In fact, the institutionalized religious censorship at times even worked as an incentive, as some participants admit favouring films forbidden by the Catholic establishment.

Governmental interventions figure less prominently than religious ones in our participants’ testimonies. This could be easily explained by a series of factors already discussed above: firstly, Catholic censorship was more visible to audiences because CCC ratings were displayed outside churches, and priests’ censorial interventions were often witnessed during the screenings; secondly, State censorship was often applied at pre-production level, and was thus less evident inside the cinema theatres, or not directly experienced by our audiences. Moreover, debates around what one participant, Giuseppe (Milan province), defines ‘Catholic sex phobia’ was noticeable in local and national press. And yet, political censorship is mentioned in some video-interviews, often in relation to governmental departments and censorship offices. At times, the State is described in terms of ‘regime’ – in relation to the Fascist period – and ‘Christian Democracy’ – with regard to the post-war era. Only a handful of participants talk about Andreotti, who, as noted above, in his role of Undersecretary played a significant part in post-war Italian film industry.<sup>16</sup> For example, Brunello’s (Milan province) remarks refer to Andreotti’s well-known disapproval of Neorealist films: ‘Andreotti raged against this image of Italy as down-and-out which was given abroad and [claimed] that dirty linen should not be washed in public’. The Undersecretary had written an article on the Christian Democrat magazine *Libertas*, where he openly condemned *Umberto D.*’s (Vittorio De Sica, 1952) portrayal of Italy.<sup>17</sup> This sparked a heated debate on the national press, which shaped public discourse around post-war film censorship. The ‘common knowledge about the past’ Rigney identifies to describe collective memory is here exemplified in the way our participants use those much discussed events as ‘inherited templates’ to interpret an indirect experience of censorship.

Enforcers of State censorship are identified in figures such as magistrates and the police. But, at the same time, respondents remember that it was film exhibitors who would not let underage spectators into the cinemas, or their parents would prevent them from going. It has to be noted that the vast majority of our interviewees were children or teenagers in the 1950s. Many mention age-restriction ratings and recall the prohibition

associated with this quite vividly. For instance, in relation to age restrictions, Antonio (Milan) says that he was a 'victim of censorship'. Similarly, Enea (Milan) says 'I lived my life as a film spectator under various bans.' Marta (Milan) notes that they 'felt locked in a cage' and that 'adults were the world that oppressed' them, suggesting that censoring practices were perceived by some as a top-down imposition during their childhood and adolescence.

### ***Censored themes remembered by the audience***

The themes remembered in relation to film censorship revolve mainly around sex, nudity and, to a lesser degree, politics, and violence. As it transpires from many testimonies, Catholic institutions were seen as predominantly responsible for censoring scenes of a sexual nature. Only a few participants talk about the political aspect of Church censorship, and refer to the practice of censoring negative or non-orthodox representations of the Church or religion. While nudity seems to be less distinctively associated with Church interventions than sexual behaviour, it is discussed by our participants exclusively in relation to female characters: popular actresses are mentioned in the video-interviews and their films are referred to when discussing nudity, as in the case of the infamous scene in *La cena delle beffe* (*The Jester's Supper*, Alessandro Blasetti, 1942) in which Clara Calamai shows her naked breasts. Along the same lines, Marino (Milan) expresses his frustration at not being able to watch 'ten meters of a naked Brigitte Bardot' because 'that was always a beautiful thing to see'.

Annette Kuhn's distinction between *memory content* and *memory discourse* is here exemplified by the marked gender-based distinction in the articulation of memories related to sexuality and nudity, as male respondents discuss both themes openly, while female respondents make references to scenes of a sexual nature exclusively, and through allusive language. This confirms not only the distinct nature of individual memories, but also the intersection between individual and collective memories (in this case, the censorship of sexual content). In fact, as previously stated, what Rigney defines as inherited templates that are used by individuals to interpret their experience are, in this case, gender-specific. For male audiences the articulation of sexual themes becomes a vehicle to express a sexually uninhibited masculinity, while for female ones it represents a way to construct a sexually constrained femininity, thus reiterating a set of normative assumptions in relation to gender identity which define both their past and their present selves.

On the contrary, violence is a theme discussed in relation to censorship in an equal way and with similar modalities by both male and female interviewees. Violence is cited either as a general theme which was subjected to censorial practice or referred to in well-known scenes of controversial films. The only film explicitly associated with violence is *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (*Rocco and His Brothers*, Luchino Visconti, 1960).<sup>18</sup> Luciana (Torino) remembers going to see the film with her husband before it was censored. She comments on the scene that was eventually cut (the one in which 'Annie Girardot gets badly stabbed by Renato Salvatori'), admitting that it was 'very realistic, and very violent.' And yet, she also offers a critical evaluation of censorship, which she hated because she thought that 'if the



director wanted them [the scenes] like this, there was a reason.’ The censorial intervention on *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* is remembered by another participant, who refers to the edited scene as ‘risqué’. The film’s sexually graphic and violent scenes were the object of a heated controversy when the film opened at the Venice Film Festival in September 1960. Moreover, the film was subjected to two censorial interventions: one before it premiered in October 1960, and one on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November of the same year, after pressure was exerted on its producer to further amend the contentious scenes. The dispute over the morality of *Rocco* was closely followed in the national press, where both left-wing and Catholic-oriented newspapers debated on the appropriateness of censorship intervention. While in the pages of the communist newspaper *L’Unità* the criticism levelled against the film was defined as a ‘despicable clerical persecution’, an article from *Il Quotidiano*, the official newspaper of the Catholic Action, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1960 attacked the film for ‘its lack of morality and its ethical and aesthetic perversion.’ The public debates about Visconti’s film in the press of that time are reflected in respondents’ memories, confirming the significance of those ‘inherited templates’ in the interpretation of direct and indirect experiences of censorship, as in the case surrounding *Umberto D.* recounted in the previous section.

Like violence, political themes have a scant presence in the video-interviews. When participants mention them, they associate them with the State and more specifically with aspects of dialogues that characters were not allowed to mention, visions of poverty-stricken Italy, and satire against political figures. One of our participants’ recollections allows us to reflect on this scant presence. Enea (Milan) claims that, while in the United States censorship was associated with political questions, in Italy, predominantly, it was related to sexual themes. This is in line with our participants’ broader perception of the immediate post-war years as a period marked by a sense of increased political freedom in comparison with the Fascist regime and its totalitarian practices, as mentioned above.

### ***Modalities and evaluation of censorship***

The modalities of remembering censorship practices are varied. In general respondents’ recollections are not specific in terms of films that were subjected to censorial intervention, unless they are related to personal experience. In fact, often participants are able to rely on personal memories, providing anecdotal recounting of censorship. For example Lucia (Medio Campidano province) narrates an episode about wanting to watch Alessandro Blasetti’s film *Fabiola* (1949), which was rated for adults, when she was a teenager. She remembers asking the priest, who allowed her to watch the film, while he denied access to another girl of the same age. Lucia comments on the fact that she never understood why. Lucia’s story, as several others of a similar kind, reflects a common modality of remembering that Rigney explains in relation to the narrative nature of recollection: ‘experiences are not in themselves stories, but become narrativized through the application of models of story-telling which help turn events into meaningful structures’ (2016: 70). The meaningful structures to which Rigney refers are used by our respondents to validate their

claims by providing evidence of lived experiences. Moreover, they expose the interconnection between personal and collective memory we have discussed above. However, not all participants' claims are evidence-based. Some provide more general statements, with the use of expression such as 'we knew/heard/felt/realized that', which are both markers of a collective-focus and indicators of common knowledge of censoring practices.

The evaluation of censorship is also varied amongst our participants. The majority associates censorial practices with lack of freedom. They often use strong expressions ('I have always detested it', 'It bothered me', 'I found it a really stupid thing', 'We considered it reactionary and absurd') to articulate their dislike. However, some found censorship useful as it indicated what films were suitable for different age groups. In addition, a small number of interviewees see censorship as appropriate for that historical period. For instance, Ninetta (Naples) states that:

We realised afterwards that censorship was overly zealous...it didn't need to be there. But they are different periods, ways of living, points of view and ways of growing up. Censorship in that era perhaps made sense. Nowadays for us it is very much outdated. At the time it was part of that period's mentality.

Ninetta, like other respondents, compares past and present practices of censorship. And yet, she refuses to judge past censorial interventions negatively, from the vantage point of the present, because they were the product of a different historical period. Some participants even evaluate censorship in positive terms, as they associate it with a certain level of attraction. They remember going to watch films that were banned and explain this both as a form of curiosity and as an act of transgression. As Renzo (Milan) recounts, people wanted to see banned films because 'they thought [those films] were interesting and almost always they were.'

## **Conclusion**

As several studies have illustrated (Erll, 2008; Erll and Rigney, 2009), oral history testimonies do not present unmediated events that occurred in the past, but, rather, they reveal 'deeper layers of our thinking [...] indicating the centuries-long development of the culture in which we have our being' (Yow, 2015: 26). In our investigation of the relationship between film censorship in 1950s Italy and personal and collective memory, we have explored themes and modalities of individual recollections. We have also uncovered how those recollections are anchored to a shared knowledge of a common past, which our respondents use to validate their claims, while turning events into 'meaningful structures'.

The deeper layers of thinking to which Yow refers have emerged in this article through an in-depth analysis of participants' individual narratives in connection with archival sources. The oral history presented against State and Catholic Church's documents, as well

as press material, has allowed the emergence of the points of contact and conflicts between official discourses and audience's personal memories.

Often respondents have actively expressed their views on censorship, providing both personal examples and their experiences of censorial practices in post-war Italy, allowing cultural foundations of collective memory to emerge from individual narratives. The geographical origin of our participants has not been an indication of different exposures to censorship, while gender has at times constituted a discerning factor which has influenced participants' modalities of recollection. In interpreting personal experience through Rigney's 'inherited templates', one could argue that the respondents' dominant discourse has been one of acceptance of censorship as appropriate for that particular historical period. At the same time, interviewees have demonstrated a lack of awareness of the continuity in legal censorial practices between pre- and post-war period. State and Church are presented as the predominant censorship enforcers both at high (official) and at low (personal) levels. However, what is missing in the recounting of the enforcement of censorship is the actual specificity of the film, which only appears in a small number of cases. In all the others, recollections are indefinite, broad, often based on collective discourses, shared narratives and common historical configurations which elicit the multifaceted relationship between collective cultural memory, and oral history.

**Note:** We confirm that the interviewees have given their permission for their quotations to be used.

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## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup>The *Italian Cinema Audiences* project (2013-2016) was a collaborative research project exploring memories of cinema-going in Italy in the 1950s, led by the universities of Oxford Brookes, Bristol and Exeter. For further information, visit [www.italiancinemaaudiences.org](http://www.italiancinemaaudiences.org)

<sup>2</sup> The cities of Bari, Rome, Turin, Milan, Palermo, Naples, Cagliari, and Florence were selected from the sixteen urban centres used by AGIS (the Italian National Exhibitors Association) to monitor box-office intake in the chosen period. These urban locations were complemented by provincial locations in Puglia, Lazio, Piedmont, Lombardy, Sicily, Campania, Sardinia, and Tuscany.

<sup>3</sup> We have also been inspired by Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers' *The 'Enlightened' City* research project (<http://www.cims.ugent.be/research/past-research-projects/-enlightened-city>). See:

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Bilteyst, Daniel, Lotze, Kathleen and Meers, Philippe, 'Triangulation in Historical Audience Research: Reflections and Experiences from a Multi-Methodological Research Project on cinema audiences in Flanders', *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 9 (2), 2012, pp. 690-715.

<sup>4</sup> The themes we have identified and explored include: place memories, favourite stars, favourite genres, and programming choices. As a question on censorship was not explicitly asked in the questionnaire, and the issue did not come up spontaneously in participants' responses, we decided to address this in the video-interviews.

<sup>5</sup> We would like to thank Professor Martin Barker for suggesting this analytical tool.

<sup>6</sup> As Harding affirms, the interview 'presents an occasion for creating narratives of self [...] and producing subjectivity' (2006: 1).

<sup>7</sup> See Polishuk, 1998; Abrams, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on cultural memory studies see Erll, Astrid, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Hereafter UCPC.

<sup>10</sup> In 1945 Anica (the National Producers' Association) had become aware of the importance of producing morally acceptable films, and published their own Cinema Code (Codice per la cinematografia), which gave clear guidelines on what content was acceptable, covering areas such as obscenity, sexual relationships, vulgarity, religion, and national beliefs (see Treveri Gennari, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Christian Democratic governments, the Catholic Church, and Hollywood see Treveri Gennari, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Hereafter CCC.

<sup>13</sup> Authors' translation.

<sup>14</sup> *Cine Annuario* 1948: 45; *Guida Cinematografica* 1963: XXX. However, in 1933 the need to control what Catholics could watch in parish cinemas had already led to the creation of a Commissione di Revisione (Censorship Committee).

<sup>15</sup> In the 1950s the age restriction was 16.

<sup>16</sup> For Andreotti's key role in this context see Treveri Gennari, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D.* sparked a heated controversy when it was released in 1952. The film's portrayal of the financial struggle of a pensioner in post-war Rome was perceived as a denunciation of Italy's wider socio-economic problems. Giulio Andreotti (1952, p. 5), in fact, stated that 'if it is true that evil can be fought also brutally exposing its harshest aspects, it is also true that if in the world one is led erroneously to believe that what is portrayed in *Umberto D.* is Italy in the second half of the twentieth century, De Sica would have provided a real disservice to his country.' (Authors' translation).

<sup>18</sup> In his book *Luchino Visconti. Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (2011), Mauro Giori devotes a full chapter (pp. 49-100) to issues of State censorial intervention in Visconti's film.