

# ITALIAN CINEMA AND CENSORSHIP BY RELIGION

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## *ABSTRACT*

This thesis discusses clerical censorship against the film industry as a phenomenon encompassing questions of popular education and mass culture, power formation, and ideological struggles. It argues that clerical censorship should be understood not as the undertaking to simply make sins less attractive, in films, but as the Church's efforts to influence the state and police force, magistrates, or government censorship boards to prohibit or remove certain films' offensive contents, which are believed to be ideologically contrary to the Church's doctrine.

The financial, political and legal sanctions called in force by Church censorship surely go beyond the idea of moral reprimand recommend by the Catholic teachings. They put in action what Gramsci called culturally influential 'hegemony'. In particular, film boycott will be flagged out as that method which empowers the clergy (composed of high prelates, clergymen, and nuns) to influence their followers (flock of souls) to not even consider watching films, containing representations and ideas unapproved of by the Pope. In implementing its control techniques, by means of its reticular system, the church edits indexes, which set criteria for condemning and banning as 'immoral' and 'harmful', artistic products and ideological ideas, which threaten its theological standpoints. In this sense, the Catholic's habit to set film ratings and spread public shaming may be said to contribute towards Church censorship as a wide-ranging practice.

In consideration of the fact that the various forms of influence and control over the Catholic communities, exercised at local and national level by the clergy in parish churches, communities, schools, associations, and through the media, are acknowledged in this thesis as methods of clerical censorship, I also discuss the action and the militancy of self-appointed censors of Catholic background, who align themselves with the existing governmental censorship boards. In particular, this thesis conducts and examination of how filmmakers, producers, and distributors may at times witness their films being totally suppressed by state and church censorship, and at others, manage to bypass the trouble of compliance with censorship regulations by negotiating ploys to escape severe confrontation in the field of legal censorship. To reveal facts hidden behind the nation's façade of liberalism and progressivism, this thesis addresses the conceptions behind constitutional/legal censorship and Church censorship. I demonstrate how the power of film censorship located in the nation's major

centres of power, the judiciary and the religious, exercise double-edged forms of censorship, using their authority to influence society and individuals. A focus will be placed on recent reforms, which have aptly solved this impasse, and secured larger margins of freedom for the Italian film industry. Indeed, as my argument supports, cinema, as an art form, is also highly fertile in ideological and artistic dissidence against censorial forms of state and church, which attempts to influence and at times limit both the artists' expressive freedom and the audience's right to be entertained and informed.

## LONG ABSTRACT

When one observes in Italian cinema how frequently plots deal with stories which involve the institution of Catholicism, its figures, authorities, and values, or deal with the sacred to celebrate its values and tradition, or criticise its tenets, one may infer that filmmakers, producers, and distributors enjoy a relative amount of freedom of speech, representation and satire. However, the preoccupation of the clergy to oppose radical doctrine and cinematic forms of atheism emerging from Papal encyclical letters<sup>1</sup> and Catholic cinema reviews, often shows the Roman Curia's apprehension of losing ground in social and cultural influence, thus making the tensions on cinema and censorship theoretically belligerent (Arosio, 1974: 37).

The ability of the Church to regulate what can be made available to the community and govern what people want to watch, either by the law, moral threats, or hegemonic force (as in dictatorships), is the basis of my research. I will look at the Catholic church's set norms of morality and moral claims as produced by an institution possessing the characteristics that Michel Foucault's describes in *Confession of the Flesh*: 'The term *institution* generally applies to every kind of more-or-less constrained, learned behaviour. (Foucault 1980: 197)

The clergy's influence to obtain censorship, its power to control what types of films can pass the official system and thus be made available for the audience is not always self-evident. It may translate itself into the hegemonic 'force', which may be implemented by a group of people, a private individual, or a corporate chain, expressing opinions that can influence and penetrate the democratically controlled governmental systems. This force can affect the decision of producers or distributors, who may choose not to show a film for fear of a government's punitive measures, which include, for instance, the application of unfavourable official ratings.

Scholars involved in film studies, such as Mino Argentieri (1974), Alfredo Baldi (1996), Domenico Liggeri (1997), Tatti Sanguineti (1999), Gian Piero Brunetta (2002) and several others in this thesis' bibliography, have addressed the legal aspects of state-maintained censorship committees. Baldi, in *Bianco e Nero* (1979) has published a detailed list of the cuts and revisions imposed on feature films and short films between 1947 and 1962. He has also edited lists of reasons for censorship measures using a classification by topics: Eros (decency,

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<sup>1</sup> For quotes from Papal encyclicals, see Chapter 6.4. *Appendix*.

morality) covered 62.4% of censorship procedures, violence (macabre scenes, gratuitous violence, etc) accounted for 15%, and offence to people, institutions, personal and collective values (including contempt of religion) 2.8%.

In particular, two cinema critics have researched the Church's involvement in the cinema question in the last decade: Luciano Sovenà, in *Omnia munda mundis* (1999), speaking from a secular perspective, discusses the contribution of the Catholic Church in setting up governmental censorship regulations for film production and distribution; and Dario E. Viganò, in *Cinema e Chiesa. I documenti del magistero* (2002), and *La Chiesa nel tempo dei media* (2008), in which he outlines a defence of the Church's ideas on the educational and social role of cinema. They are exemplary of the different ideological approaches from which to consider the Church's involvement in social issues of moral vigilance, and quest for participation in cinema matters so decisive for the history of cinema in Italy. I will develop these perspectives further, considering the intricate and often obscure routes that clerical censorial actions take in film revision and banning at different stages of the official censorship procedures.

Through my research in libraries and film archives, such as 'A.n.i.c.a', 'Archivio Luce', and 'Cineteca Nazionale', I have gathered information about cases of films, which have suffered revisions, cuts, and banning from public screening. These procedures were applied both ad interim and in the post-production stages. I discuss this in my three case studies where I deconstruct the circumstances in which authors and producers became legally responsible before the law, of offence of religion due to film choice styles, genre, themes, and message.

Chronologically, my analysis of cinema censorship runs from fascism onwards until the turn of the century, and reflects on two important phases, which relate to the 1962 establishment of cinema preventive censorship and its abolition in 2010. The historiography of cinema censorship has represented an indispensable source of data, testifying the role of the cinematic arts at the crossroads between governmental politics, hegemonic religion, and mass culture. I have edited a rather short list of authors and producers, who have been censored on various allegations and criminal charges by the Italian Boards for Film Censorship for 'contempt of religion'. Legal data on the related censorship cases are listed in volumes on censorship procedures, such as *Italia Taglia* and *Mani di forbice*, which I acknowledge in my thesis.

In order to escape the consequences of being rejected for 'valid certificates' (in Latin, *Nihil Obstat* and in Italian 'Nulla Osta'), and to avoid failure at the box office, filmmakers and producers often agreed with the censorship committees and the judging magistrates to have



their scripts amended: this would often result in metres of audio-visual content being obscured and eliminated. However, refusal of censorial clearance was the final step reached by a typical process, removing the preventive examination of a film's subject on the scripts. Overall, at the juridical level, in 50 years of cinema censorship, only three authors have been accused, or found guilty of 'defamation of religion': Rossellini, Pasolini, and the couple Cipri and Maresco. I discuss these court cases alongside the contents being censored.

Film censorship is considered henceforth through a number of Italian filmmakers' cinematic responses to issues of socio-political control, which were conceived of and accomplished to proclaim the principle of artistic freedom against the state and church's oppressive interference. I discuss active filmmakers within the avant-garde trend, labelled 'Neorealism', and provide a critique of the nation's difficult socio-economic equilibrium among the layers of society that are particularly exposed to the weight of such influences. Moving from the fascist era, and continuing throughout the first republic, I illustrate how politically committed film plots have provoked concern for issues previously unaccounted for in the official governmental political arena. Hence, I provide a review of the facts and reforms which allowed for some changes in the existing censorship legislation at the turn of the Millennium. I develop my line of argument with relevant theories regarding the role of intellectuals in society, alongside the clashes of cinema artists with the *status quo*. I have read the works of social theorists and philosophers Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, and I apply some of their terms and ideas with the purpose of illustrating and expanding upon elements of empirical material in more depth. I highlight Gramsci and Foucault's ideas, both in Chapter 2 Review of Literature, and apply their theories to specific empirical material and discussions themselves, rather than, as is the case at present, separate theoretical sections.

My use of Gramsci refers to his *Quaderni dal carcere*, written while he was incarcerated by the fascist regime for leading the Communist Party in the 1920s. Gramsci's perspective is invaluable as he was himself a victim of political censorship. I use his notes on the role of intellectuals as mass pedagogues who participate in the state's 'superstructural' relations, and in the creation of 'hegemony'. I then relate these concepts to the role of the clergy as the Church's organic intellectuals fighting the counter discourse of cinema dissident artists by means of clerical censorship. The films condemned or boycotted by the Church are not always patently offensive of religion. This was the case for Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D.* (1952), which upset the Vatican's ideal self-image as the rescuer of the poorer classes. However, I

analyse films which have suffered pre and post-production revisions to the point of major suppression for offence of religion and/or public morality. These include masterpieces of the Italian 'auteur' cinema, such as *Il miracolo* (1948) by Roberto Rossellini, *La ricotta* (1963),<sup>2</sup> by Pier Paolo Pasolini, *L'ape regina* (1963) by Marco Ferreri, *Il Pap'occhio* (1980) by Renzo Arbore and *Totò che visse due volte* (1998) by Ciprì e Maresco, which all highlight the remarkable interference from the Catholic establishment on the cinema artists' freedom of representation and satire. The public scandal and legal trials that some of these films have stirred are evidence of the routes by which clerical authorities have attempted to silence, among other freedoms, religious dissidence. The filmmakers I discuss have provided the history of Italian cinema with a critique of the values, ideas, and reforms, which the Vatican have always regarded as inappropriate to cinema as a prevalent form of mass entertainment from a doctrinal point of view. I discuss how in negotiating the requirements to obtain valid certificates from the censorial system, main-stream filmmakers, producers, and scriptwriters have learned to resort to all available measures to secure funding for their projects, and reach their elective audience by accepting new forms of self-censorship as those theorised by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*.

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study of censorship procedures, see *Schermi proibiti. La censura in Italia, 1947-1988* (Baldi, 2002: 22).

*Personal motivation for research in the field of clerical censorship*

The reason why I became involved in cinema and clerical censorship goes back to when, between 9 and 11 years of age, I was repeatedly exposed to clerical film censorship at my local parish church's cinema theatre. Censorship was conducted directly by the nuns and priests obscuring individual scenes, which they, as catechists and guardians, did not wish us to watch. The scenes obscured were often those showing film characters kissing, expressing verbal sexual allusions, or acting violently. Of course, despite being led to believe that there was something terrible in those obscured actions, and that we had to adjust our behaviours and judgments according to those acknowledged vetoes, I am sure all of us felt disappointed by the action of censorship. This often manifested itself in the form of the nun's black veil being placed in front of the film projector, creating even more curiosity with regards to the contents of the ban.

As an adult, I can now see that limiting a precocious minor's access to cinematic subjects appearing scandalous, corruptive, or too difficult to be correctly understood, may not be defined as a real act of 'censorship', but as one of educational prevention. However, I recall that we as kids, instructed to the Catholic principles, were regularly made to witness the Roman Catholic Church's repertoire of control and punishment, whose aim was then, and still is now, to instil compliance with, and a sense of guilt for transgressing the Church's moral teachings. The catechism, in my present perception, appears as a way to teach, and learn how to expand outwards as Catholic crusaders. The various techniques of control and condemnation are acquired within the religious community and applied to all environments within the wider social life. In fact, not only activists engaged in the civil society, but also catholic followers are somewhat expected to respond to the Pope's call for the reticular boycott of blasphemous film contents threatening the Vatican's *status quo*. The clergy's methodical boycotts have certainly affected the cinema industry to a high degree, contributing to the myth of filmmaking as a potential corruptive activity. However, in recalling the circumstances from my younger years, where cinema viewing and clerical censorship interconnect, I have come to believe that more than contributing to the nation's morality, clerical condemnation and boycott of films restrict people's free conscience by imposing self-censorship on their anxiety of wrong-doing, to the point that some themselves would develop into self-appointed media censors. Indeed, in Foucauldian terms, by which I discuss Church censorship against the film industry, every

discourse we espouse or oppose has an origin in our past, more so in the interrelated and ramified forms of control and chastisements exercised on our freedoms during our identity formation process as subjects. My goal in this thesis is to demonstrate how, in Catholic Italy, most of the legal initiatives against explicitly irreligious cinematic materials have been based on the Church's self-righteousness regarding what is or is not morally acceptable, but also about 'what' can and cannot be challenged in relation to the nation's official Church. I argue that, where people can ignore both the condemnation and the boycott practiced in Catholic parish churches and related agencies such as the CCC, ACEC, ACI, CCE, OCIC, CUCE, the possibility that clergymen could intervene against certain films and cause their total elimination by an acquired constitutional right as spokesmen of the 'state religion', has in fact affected people's freedom to access certain films, charged with 'offence of religion'. Some of which have only been made accessible following the 1984 revision of the Lateran agreements, eliminating the Church's privilege as 'state religion', and the 2000 amendment of the Criminal Code, eliminating article 402 'vilification of state religion' ('Vilipendio della religione di Stato').<sup>3</sup>

### *Claim of research originality*

I began to write on clerical censorship and Italian cinema in 2005. I presented my first conference paper on Pasolini's *La ricotta* and clerical censorship in 2006 during a film conference in London at Senate House. In the following years, I had my essay published and translated as book chapters in two collective academic volumes in England (*Italy on Screen*) and Italy (*La nuova gioventù? L'eredità di Pasolini*). Chapter 7 presents a brief summary of my three monographs on Pasolini and clerical censorship that was published before I started my PhD at Brunel. My current doctoral project is a development of that initial essay. Its originality consists of a systematic analysis of the relationships between cinema and Church censorship in Italy.

In recent years, I have published three monographs on Italian cinema, the sacred, Catholic hegemony, and Church censorship in three separate monographs, *Il Corpo and il Potere. Salò o le 120 Giornate di Sodoma di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (2006), *Il Cristo dell'eresia. Pasolini cinema e censura* (2007) and *La ricotta. Il sacro trasgredito. Cinema e censura clericale nei*

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<sup>3</sup> A complete list of Catholic cinema associations, educational agencies and film archives is given in the bibliography.

*film di Pasolini*, published in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Part of my current thesis is an expansion of my previous research on Pasolini's artistic dissidence and state/Church censorship. My research offers a cultural approach which casts new light on issues related to the involvement of the Vatican in the Italian governmental cinema censorship committees; an interference which goes largely unnoticed, and which I attempt to make more visible.

It would be misleading to consider my research as fitting into the area of philosophy or religious studies. None of the following nine Chapters include a specific discussion of religion from a philosophical and theological perspective. The Gramscian and Foucauldian theoretical boundaries, which I have set around Italian cinema and clerical censorship, attain to the sociology of religion and remain components of the wider socio-political framework of cultural history, of which I conduct my analysis. Accordingly, the line of inquiry I have chosen to follow constructs a historical and theoretical contextualisation of Church censorship. The purpose of this is to assess the impact of clerical censorship on the film industry by means of a rationalisation of the theories and practices that are based on its resources and powers. Furthermore, it is my intention to evaluate the various aesthetics discourses and cinematic styles by which film directors have expressed their artistic dissidence by engaging in forms of ideological involvement on issues which the Church considers to be under its direct control. In the selection and evaluation of the chosen films, correlated documents, and testimonial materials, my analysis is based on a methodology, which allows the interdisciplinary integration of theoretical perspectives in the methods of empirical criticism and hermeneutics.

Having summarized my thesis's project, I would like to suggest that the Catholic establishment should welcome an in-depth analysis of the intellectual history of religious censorship, which I am conducting on. This because it aims to clarify to what extent dissident cinema, which owes much of its existence to aspects of religion as all performative arts, while emancipating viewers from the moral control imposed by the usual Catholic anti-cinema polemics, at the same stimulates more constructive forms of dialogue about freedom, the arts and society, valuable for the Church itself. Starting from the old Church's prejudice, according to which cinema destroys the viewers' sense of morality by instigating wrong processes of identification with wicked themes and characters, from my intrinsically Catholic sympathizing perspective, I will open up a more nuanced understanding of how dissident cinema can have a positive impact not

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<sup>4</sup> In these books, I give details of the court trials held against Pasolini's treatment of sacred figures and narratives.

only on society and but also on institutionalized religion, in terms of the insightful critique, which gifted filmmakers are able to provide their spectators with.

## PART 1

### *CHAPTER 1 – Introduction*

‘The truth of censorship is not a generally understood *truth*: it is the *truth* of power.’ (Einaudi *Encyclopaedia*)

‘We are all fond of practising censorship.’ (Cox, 1979: 312)

Film censorship and offence of religion have remained for decades remarkably alive as unsettled, problematic areas of the constitutional law in Italy, recording deep divisions and divergent attitudes in both the Italian boards of Film Revision and in the Supreme Court.

The Church of Rome is capable of, and has been prepared to enforce by law legal punishments on filmmakers, producers, and distributors for making available material considered censurable on moral grounds (‘blasphemy, public indecency, corruption’) and/or for legal reasons (‘offence of state religion’). Indeed, the Roman Curia’s claims of ethical authority as state religion (before 2000) or main religion (after 2000) have constructed an area where disagreements abound, proving the deep separation which exists between the lay and the religious strata of the Italian society. Litigation has occurred, specifically over film plots judged as threats to Catholicism’s cultural prestige. As a result of the tensions, particularly in the media, between the clerical and the secular (sometimes anticlerical) intelligentsia, but most importantly, of the censorial measures imposed by the state’s Office for Preventive Censorship, all that the spectators finally see on the cinema screen hides the at times very complicated negotiations on revisions and cuts to be applied to a film’s content at audio-visual level. These occur at three different stages of the official procedures. In the postproduction phases, censorial matters are considerably more problematic as legal actions may impose the short-term, the long-term, or the permanent suppression of a certain film.

Italian front line, communist intellectual, Alberto Moravia, who collaborated as a novelist, video-journalist, and scriptwriter alongside filmmakers Mario Bolognini, Dino Risi, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, argued that the true reason underlying cinema censorship is not a moral preoccupation for its sexual, violent or immoral contents. Moravia, who inspired others such as Bernardo Bertolucci and Damiano Damiani, asserted that censorship expresses the ruling powers’ need to control the artists’ free opinion, and impose on the producers the guidelines regarding what law forbids. In this thesis therefore, I explore Church censorship to determine

whether the concern relates to the protection of ‘common good’, as opposed to the expression of a time-honoured hegemonic power, primarily concerned with the endurance of the *status quo*.<sup>5</sup> As Moravia, co-script writer of the film *La giornata balorda* (1960) noted at the time of his prosecution: ‘The Church, by a singular process of historical evolution, is fixed on sexual sinning and closes its eyes to other more serious and widespread sins’ (Moravia, Chap 7.3: 166).

Before I start my discussion, I would like to point out that my analysis crosses the fields of the philosophy of religion, cultural history, and media studies. I refer to ‘religion’ as a social function, as well as a governmental field, which generates various institutional fields, which it rules or intervenes on. I argue that clerical censorship against the cinema industry’s freedoms has a pervasive force that extends constitutional and legal boundaries set by the state system. This force is created by the Church’s hegemonic status and capillary interference with the Italian state. For this reason, clerical censorship is difficult to pin down and oppose, more so at a socio-cultural level. I identify this force by drawing on the theories of eminent sociologists of the media and religion who support the view that the influence of Catholicism in Italy is endemic. To substantiate this view, I discuss the interpretation and application of censorship regulations against a number of films targeted by legislative and cultural boycott, by means of people in power, as well as institutions and organisations with direct and indirect ideological or social affiliations with the Vatican State. I employ Gianni Vattimo’s post-religious perspective that no meaning or truth is given ‘once and for all’. Furthermore, that ‘meaning’ and ‘truth’ in religion are also based upon heterogeneous, fragmented, and often unreliable systems built on partial or subjective interpretations. These interpretations are influenced by changing socio-political and cultural factors as well as by dominant discourses.

Throughout my thesis, I analyse the problematic aspects of the religious censors’ methods against the historical background of the Italian avant-garde cinema and within a theoretical framework comprising of law, history of ideas, ethics, and the sociology of the cinema as a medium of public communication. I discuss Pope Pius XII’s emphasis on the need of the ‘ideal film’, planned to create order around the cinema world ‘as a field of unusually wide and deep influence in the thinking, the habits, the life of the countries where it develops its power – particularly among the poorest classes, for whom the Cinema is often the sole recreation after

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<sup>5</sup> For a critical analysis of the notion of the ‘common good’, see Stefano Zamagni, ‘Il bene comune nella società dopo moderna.’ for the conference ‘Bene comune nell’era della globalizzazione’, Pisa, 18-21 October 2007. [www.mieacpozzuoli.it/settsoc/zamagni.pdf](http://www.mieacpozzuoli.it/settsoc/zamagni.pdf)



work, and among the youth, who see in the Cinema a quick and attractive means of quenching the natural thirst for knowledge and experience which the age promises them.’ (Pope Pius XII, 6.4. b.). I consequently highlight the intervention of individuals and groups of Catholic affiliation in the implementation of censorial practices and legal measures during three main phases: pre-Second World War (rise and fall of fascism), post-world war and first democratic republic (from 1945 up until the 1980s), second democratic republic (from the 1990s to present).

I concentrate on the ideological aspects of the non-conventional cinematic film-plots which have displeased the Church’s hierarchies – the neorealist episode *Il miracolo* (1948) the expressionist short-film *La ricotta* (1963), and the post-modernist trilogy *Totò che visse due volte* (1999), in particular – and address them as forms of ‘counter-discourse’. From the mid-forties onwards, Italian mainstream cinema directors who had been making films for a decade under Fascism, began to express their political agenda by means of artistic manifestos, analogous to those of French experimental artists, Jean Cocteau, René Clair, and Luis Buñuel. However, unlike the Surrealists and the Expressionists, Italian Neorealist filmmakers set out to represent unspoken social realities, thus initiating a trend of politically committed ‘auteur cinema’. Their films often stirred up scandal, specifically when they addressed the repercussions on society in terms of injustice and inequality of the hegemonic alliance between Fascism and Catholicism. As figures prove, the scandal-stirring skill of progressive filmmakers made it possible for ‘auteur cinema’ to obtain a success at box office similar to, and at times greater than that of commercial films; despite the organised action of clerical boycott. (Chap. 6, fig. 1 and fig. 2) Hereafter, I present the terminology and interdisciplinary areas I deal with.

\* Under the generic term ‘state’, I refer to the various forms of government (monarchy, fascist dictatorship, and republicanism), which have alternated in the Italian nation within the Twentieth century.

\* By ‘cinema censorship’, I refer to the preventive control of films, the granting or denying of permission to produce, distribute and show cinematic products in public cinema theatres. This is a task, which is usually carried out by state boards of cinema censorship, determining the standards and level of morality of films at political, legal, and social level. When such control is appropriately applied, no public action should follow that seeks to obtain the partial or total suspension of a film. However, the civil society always has the power to call for police and magistrate intervention regarding a film’s alleged offence of decency, religion, public figures,

or for threatening the public order or breaching given constitutional articles or laws. This second option is hereafter defined as 'post-production censorship'.

Each country has its own organisation of film censorship that reflects the nation's dominant conception of morality and public order. In France and Italy, the censorship boards depend, as aforementioned, on the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. In Italy, Article 21 of the constitution protects the liberty of representation. However, the law can be called in to force against corruptive films. Law 161, 21 April 1962 (Revision of film and theatre works) establishes that censorship boards may be awarded a preventive clearance ('preventive *Nihil Obstat*'), based on the opinion of a committee of experts. Such committees are presided over by a judge, and are inclusive of university professors, film industry executives, and various social representatives. In the past, before the Revision of the Lateran Agreements, a representative of the clergy was appointed and expected by law to take part in the cinema censorship committees. In Britain, censorship boards merely have moral concerns, as opposed to the political ones in Italy and France. In the United States, on the contrary, censorship is operated by the film industry itself (Rizzoli Larousse 2005: 135).

\* With *clerical* censorship (or Church censorship, or censorship by religion), I refer to the form of censorship that is urged by the church hierarchies and approved by the state legal system with regulations aimed at protecting, not so much religious orthodoxy, but the reputation, endorsement, and sovereignty of the Catholic Church. I discuss issues, which specifically involve the crime defined as 'contempt of religion'. The aim is to evaluate the changes that have occurred at legal and constitutional levels in relation to such a crime.

\* With 'Church of Rome', I refer to the century-old unchanged Catholic institution, with its registered offices and headquarters (the 'Holy See') set in the heart of the Vatican State. In relation to the Church of Rome, I refer to the question of the Italian nation's confessionalism, which derived from the Roman Catholicism as 'state religion.'

Primarily I focus on Church censorship, however I also address political censorship in conjunction with it. My argument endeavours to demonstrate that whenever 'auteur' cinema, producing waves of counterculture and artistic dissidence, addresses the sacred in its problematic aspects, the Catholic censors react by means of clerical censorship to protect the Vatican's prestige, arranging transversal ways of preventing the circulation of films considered cinematic attacks to religion. I plan to relate the filmmakers' plea for artistic autonomy to the equally important task of political commitment. I specifically discuss the plots, which have

been judged contrary to the Church's tenets, in addition to their ways of addressing and solving issues of free speech under state and church censorship.

A relevant number of the theorists working in the sociology of the media and cultural studies fields, whose ideas I examine in my study, have ideological affiliations with Antonio Gramsci's ideas, in *Quaderni dal carcere*, a work which has greatly influenced scholarly investigation. I draw an intellectual map of Gramsci's intellectual heritage and examine the ways concepts such as hegemony, the role of intellectuals in the civil society are being employed in the fields of the sociology of religion and the sociology of the media. Similarly, I adopt a methodological perspective inspired by Gramscian theories. Gramsci's conceptualisation of the role of intellectuals will help to underline the significance of 'auteur' cinema in promoting debates around issues that are capable of soliciting processes of self-awareness among distinct groups and classes within civil society. Cinema, in this context, is understood as a medium of communication for reformist contents, and the defence of freedom of expression, representation and satire. I apply these concepts to illustrate the complicated history of cinema censorship, proposing that my approach will result in new insights for the conceptualisation of Church censorship and the effects that it has on the film industry.

In particular, my plan is to contextualise Gramsci's idea of 'hegemony' in relatively recent current affairs to address the constitutional and cultural anomaly of the Italian nation, which, despite the 1984 'Revision of the 1929 Lateran Agreements, still allows the endurance of strong governmental liaisons between the Vatican and the society *via* the Italian Ministry of Education. One such liaison relates to the Church's privileged in providing teachers of religious education to the state system, which are recruited by means of special employment channels.<sup>6</sup>

The aforementioned 'Revision of the Lateran Pacts' has not changed the fact that nationwide the Catholic religion is still imparted as a discipline of the National curriculum on the basis of its supposedly institutional primacy, and thus expected to indicate ethical guidelines in civil and political matters, or even to censor values and activities pertaining to the lay socio-cultural arena.<sup>7</sup> As it is being argued, the teachings of the Catholic religion in state school is intended to

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<sup>6</sup> Despite the Revision of the Concordat between State and Church, the legal status of the teacher of religion is still regulated by law n.824/30, based on the 1929 Lateran agreements.

[didaweb.net/fuoriregistro/documenti/religione Cattolica.doc](http://didaweb.net/fuoriregistro/documenti/religione Cattolica.doc)

<sup>7</sup> Decree 5.08.2002 - The President of the Italian Republic officially approves the teaching of Catholic education in Italian public schools (from nursery level to high school level).

guide the students to adapt their views to the institutionalised presence of the Roman Catholic Church in their nation's ideological and cultural schemes, violating the 'sovereign principle of the state's laicity', dictated by the Italian Constitution.

My thesis develops its argument with a liberal approach to the Church's hierarchical system, by which censorial intrusion in cinema's broadcasting occurs by means of broad prescriptive parameters that change only slightly across time and place. It is my view that this intrusion, justified by the prejudice of the church that cinema has a corrupting effect on individuals, aims at attaining power sharing. Furthermore, that it is aligned with the political classes who serve the needs of the capitalist world's corporations and not the legitimate problems of the population. As one can ascertain from excerpts of encyclical letters on the cinema (6.4, a. b.: *Appendix*), from the first half of the Twentieth century onwards, and with the sole exception of Pope Francis, the various Popes have continued to believe that the cinema's narrative imagination may affect viewers' morality. I quote Papal encyclicals, which contain praise for the cinema industry as well as censorial notes, as a testimony of the huge interest of the Roman Curia in the cinema as a mass phenomenon. This type of censorship is based on the assumption that viewers are the passive subjects of an evil influence. The dominant idea in Pope Pius XI's Encyclical letter, *Vigilanti Cura*, was that cinema might have a special hold on people, to the point of being detrimental for the Catholic upbringing and the education imparted to Italian people.<sup>8</sup> On the grounds of such concerns, film-directors may be accused of deliberately soliciting their viewers' potentially dangerous imitative attitudes.

One of the aims of my research is thus to uncover some hidden implications of the function of state censorship boards, whose decisions prove susceptible to external intervention. I demonstrate how restrictions on a film's contents are imposed at two main stages, as pre and post production intervention, the former being a matter of governmental action (preventive film revision) and the latter being the effect of denunciation on the ground of the likely negative effects of cinema on society. I propose the inspection of films, which have suffered the latter form of censorship.

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<http://www.governo.it/Presidenza/USRI/confessioni/norme/87DPR339.html>

<sup>8</sup> Pio XI, *Vigilanti cura*, 29 June 1936: 'L'efficacia, infatti, delle nostre scuole, delle nostre associazioni cattoliche ed anche delle nostre chiese viene menomata e messa in pericolo dalla piaga dei film cattivi e perniciosi. L'ufficio deve essere costituito da membri che tanto siano competenti in ciò che riguarda il cinema, quanto radicati nei principi della moralità e della dottrina cristiana; essi dovranno, inoltre, avere la guida e l'assistenza diretta di un sacerdote scelto dai vescovi.' (Viganò, 2002: 61-62)

The film industry's self-controlled negotiations with the two centres of sovereignty have been practiced on a regular basis at the Offices of Film Revision. They appear diplomatic, and at times mandatory, more so when issues of concern occur around cinematic representations of power and religion. During periods such as the second half of the twentieth century, despite the advancing secularisation processes, irreligion remains to be perceived as a highly controversial issue in public screenings, which is potentially detrimental for the institutional prestige of the Vatican. Although this may be partly true for commercial cinema, it has rarely been the case for Italian cinema's *auteurism*, given that filmmakers, with strong social and political claims of autonomy, rarely escape the censors' inspections. This is often precisely attributed to the power of their representations. The cinema industry, which historically has been highly exposed to the clergy's list of censurable art forms, appears to have learned, sometimes at the expense of expressive freedom, built-in forms of censorship to secure circulation and reproduction of its commercial products. Therefore, it could be suggested that, to some extent, film producers and filmmakers may comply with the censorship process, a point that I am going to discuss and provide evidence of within this thesis.

The main question is how clerical film censorship operates. In the post-production phase, the law allows any citizen to initiate a legal procedure against the public screening of a film. Censorship authorities and/or self-appointed individuals may request, at their discretion, the intervention of police officers and magistrates to ban films containing contents judged as inadmissible. Often for political motivations, this calls in to force the application of laws such as Article 528 of the Criminal Code: 'Divulcation of publications and events contrary to public morality'. As the three discussed trials against vilification of religion appear to prove, it is often the case that censors hide a political irritation behind the concern for public welfare.

I analyse plots that have opened the route to the nation's emancipation from its parochial and fascist legacies, which have shown how the Church has struggled to maintain its ascendancy between the 1950s and 1980s, riding the wave of the secularisation. In *The Sociology of Religion* (1920-1921), Max Weber argues that the clergy gain influence in the community by means of charismatic leadership. Following Weber's theory on the existence of three orders of powers, one of which being the 'authority of charisma', one can assume that the Vatican exercised a similar form of power over the people involved in the maintenance of the *status quo*.

The study of the history of censorship and Italian cinema requires, for this reason, an attentive

analysis of old and new socio-political factors and constitutional decrees, which regulate the broadcasting of films in respect of the decisions that grant or restrict the artists' constitutional freedoms, thus impacting on the film industry's freedoms. It further requires an understanding of the underlying socio-political landscapes, against which, veiled forms of public control affecting both society and culture take place.

There is little to do, apparently, to prevent the ecclesiastics' pervasive control over the Catholic followers' conscience. Reformists had to resort to refusing to allow official Catholic representatives to participate in censorship boards. Observers in cultural history, and sociologists of religion, often of leftist ideas in the sixties, have begun to criticise the Church's interferences with civil society (for instance, as in electoral campaigns or in popular referendums). Critique of institutionalised religion, in the second part of the twentieth century, has been a topic of *cinéma d'auteur*. This was the case for avant-garde Neorealist filmmakers, indebted to Marxist analysis of society, who in the process of becoming more overtly political, aimed to stir the audience's awareness of the murky practices of the authorities contributing to *status quo* and to convert viewers to new ways of envisioning the role of religion in their lives.

An effective definition of censorship can be found in the *Encyclopaedia of Censorship*: 'censorship takes the least flattering view of humanity' and is 'the governmental embodiment of the *status quo*' (Green and Karolides, 2005: Xviii). The author implies that censorship regulations appear to be implemented, above all other concerns, to protect the stability of the *status quo*. Along this line of reasoning, the Christian Churches may well appear as 'the most dominant cultural censors of all Europe; until the Reformation' when they passed their primacy to the secular authorities, remaining the closest supportive influences on the different forms of state censorship implemented in modern societies (Green and Karolides, 2005: Xix).

A large number of studies on cinema and state censorship have been published from the 1970s onwards, which attest to the huge impact that censorship has, and has had on, the cinema industry. From my secondary literature, ranging from Italian legislation and the social sciences, I gather information regarding the regulations which allow state censorship in its various phases, the last of which allows individual citizens, as well as state officers (policemen, magistrates, lawyers, and constitutionalists) to request the banning of a given film for alleged breaching of the criminal law. It is interesting to note that members of the clergy never appear in person in accusation procedures, but rather have representatives from the religious communities.

As I have anticipated, no academic study has yet examined the ideological, sociological, and political grounds that have created the cultural soil for the many legal actions by means of the Vatican's representatives through its ramified channels, which has placed moral pressure on the film industry to comply with the Catholic ethical tenets. For this reason, I develop a theoretical framework comprising sociological and historical analysis to carry out an inquiry into the ethical and legal responsibilities of the state and the Catholic Church in the issuing and implementation of censorship laws against the cinema industry.

I suggest that the Church's hunt of films accused of contempt of religion, heresy, and blasphemy may primarily be seen as a defence of its power structure. Christian theology has been used for this purpose for centuries. Following this line of inquiry, I examine the Roman Catholic Church's discourses pro and against the media's expressive freedom, to be found in Papal Encyclical letters.

In terms of its established authority in controlling government action, or in influencing voters, the Roman Catholic Church has never had too much to worry about when it came to competing with other power-related groups and ideologically constructed leaderships, with their peculiar discourses and doctrines. This power implies that wealthy and professional leading groups related to the Catholic Church's hegemony have become, by direct effect, dominant and influential not only on the lower classes, but also has the ability to affect government policies to their advantage.

Even today, it appears that the Vatican battles to fight against the advancing secularisation processes endangering its privileges. In fact, the long arm of the Vatican on the Italian cultural and political life has historically been both transversal and direct. The influence that the church has on Italian society proceeds through the practices of worship, which the Vatican administers nationwide, and through the means of state education, in which the Catholic Church participates.

The Church of Rome's methods of intervention in government affairs also have a constitutional and legal basis originating from the time of the fascist regime, which, as aforementioned, was when the Lateran Agreements conceded a special status to the Vatican. The causes and implications of the privileged status of Catholicism in Italy have been the subject of great debate in the legislative and constitutional arenas. In discussing Catholic dominance, I aim to acknowledge the various Popes' hegemonic interference in the film industry in the twentieth century from quotes extracted from Encyclical letters (6.4: *Appendix*), and I take into account

both socio-economic factors and the political/legislative reforms; which have made the transition from the old traditional forms of censorship to the new ones, possible.

Censorship by religion is not only a manifestation of intolerance deriving from the clergy. It is interesting to note that censorial action coming from the civil society may somewhat be determined by the religious background of common civilians, politicians, magistrates, chief executives, and police officers who may object to the public screening of a film they have heard of or watched, and whose themes and visual representations they disapprove of on moral grounds. Opposition to irreligious cinema may in fact originate from individuals or groups in the audience, who turn themselves into active agents of transversal, non-official censorship actions. Archival documents of censorship trials prove that individuals of liberal ideas may become intolerant against filmic subjects that threaten the prestige of their religion.

Censorship of any kind is either tolerated, or opposed, depending on a nation's social temperament and its forms of government. Politically committed Italian filmmakers have always been portrayed as belligerent against state censorship, but less so towards clerical censorship for the subtle effects and transversal influence that religion has on people's worldviews. As I will discuss in more detail in further chapters, in his films dealing with religious education and the civil society, Federico Fellini explained that such intrinsic compliance is somewhat rooted in people's sense of cultural identity. In *8½* (1963), Fellini suggested that Italians seem to accept almost passively what clerical authorities tell them regarding what they may and may not do, say, watch, believe in, support. This claim was restated forthrightly in Pasolini's documentary film, *Comizi d'amore* (1965), which focused on the Italians' narrow-mindedness in sexual matters, inculcated by the Catholic Church's moral indoctrination.

However, the most censored film in the history of film censorship, in Italy, is Pasolini's film, *La ricotta* (1963). Within the different phases of the censorship process, it was revised and reprinted in 4 different versions (a, b, c, d),<sup>9</sup> under the direct supervision of ideator Bini (*Ro.Go.Pa.G.*) and filmmaker Pasolini, to appease in the first place, the producer Amoroso's rage at perceiving the subject of the film he had financed as deeply offensive of his religious sentiment.<sup>10</sup> At the ideological level, and despite the authors' compliance with the

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9 The four versions (a, b, c, d) prove Bini's attempt at obtaining the cancellation of the seizure procedure against *La ricotta*.

10 'Il produttore Amoroso ha citato P.P. Pasolini', in *Momento sera*, 4 October 1962.



requirements, which were imposed to eliminate all elements perceived as offensive of religion, the last version (d) of the film did not deprive Pasolini's critique of his ideological strength (Ch. 7.3).

Compared to press and theatre, cinema reforms in censorship legislations have been more difficult to achieve. Aside from the usual issues of indecency and violence, defamation and vilification of people and values have been problematic points of debate. The boards for film revision have remained anachronistic in their concerns with moral issues affecting the nation's main religion. That is, until the year 2000 when the question of the unconstitutionality, protecting the Church of Rome, was raised specifically with regards to the crime known as 'offence of religion', which I discuss in my thesis. The indirect power (*potestas indirecta*) of the Popes has played an institutional and time-honoured role in such bureaucratic slowness. Their moralising public speeches on cinema matters have been accepted for obvious hegemonic reasons.<sup>11</sup> In Chapter 6, I discuss the recurrence of a situation under the fascist regime in which the signing of the Lateran Agreements, once again put the Italian liberal lay society under the interference of the church in civil matters; a situation which politicised religion. The papal attitude of mixing up the political with the spiritual remained uninterrupted until the turn of the third century.

The historical perspective allows censorship by religion to be framed as the method by which the Roman Curia has always exercised its restrictive powers, even of a violent kind, against any form of religious non-orthodoxy, specifically targeting religious dissident. Clerical censorship is implemented particularly when the Church's high ranks are hit by irreverence through books, representations, and public speeches.

As it is well known, the Church of Rome's persecution of its opponents started as early as the establishment of the Inquisition tribunal, intended to fight heresy in the '600 (dissident theologian Giordano Bruno, who lived between 1548 and 1600, as one of the Inquisition's most atrociously persecuted victim) and continued under disguised forms until the modern era. The Catholic portions of the Italian bourgeoisie, with its businessmen, intellectuals and artists,

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<sup>11</sup> The 'potestas indirecta', as a form of power that implements an interference significantly lower than other *potestas*, attempts to affect, influence, and direct the policy of the government and the behaviour of the people. In the contemporary world, the Church claims only the 'potestas indirecta', otherwise defined as 'potestas mediata'. It is useful to recall the distinction between 'spiritual' and 'temporal' power: the 'spiritual' refers to the Pope's authority within the religious sphere, the 'temporal' refers to the Pope's authority as head of state within the civil sphere. Problems arise when the supreme Papal office claims both powers (Terpstra, 2013: 133-151).

in old times, were used to accepting clerical intrusions and maintained a rather insincere compliant attitude towards religious dogma. This tendency implied that believers accepted the fact that the Catholic Church was involved in exercising some form of long-term hegemonic authoritarianism as suggested in *Catholicism and the Bourgeois Mind* (Dawson 1957).

I continue my inquiry with an analysis of the historical circumstances, which contributed to Pope Pius XI attaining the Lateran agreements between Mussolini's government and the Holy See (11 February 1929). The accords granted Catholicism with the official status as state religion, a privilege which had many consequences. One of them allowed the presence of clergy bureaucrats in the state's official boards of censorship. (Consoli 1957) Subsequently, I evaluate the evolution of state censorship before and after the Second World War in response to increasing criticism advanced by the film industry's professional associations, independent film critics, and constitutionalists; all of whom worked together to fight state and church censorship from the first decade of the Democratic Republic to the eighties.

In the twentieth century, dissent to such state of affairs has derived from both non-Catholic and Catholic intellectuals, inviting the Vatican to get involved in actions for the protection, and not the control of the civil society. The new quest is for a Church open to a dialogue with the arts and the sciences, as well as with the 'other-than-Catholic' portions of society (Green and Karolides, 2005: 353-354).

Foucault's ideas, which I gather from *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and *History of Sexuality. The Will to Knowledge* (V. 1, 1976), are helpful to support my argument on clerical censorship against the cinema industry in terms of the participation of the Church in the governmentalized cultural agencies which keep a rigorous and constant control over the media. Foucault's genealogy of power will also support my inspection of the veiled interventions of the Vatican's authorities in the Italian institutions and cultural areas. I plan to demonstrate how clerical influence imposes criteria for interpreting and judging cinema products, and how it implements techniques of control and discipline on society and cultural institutions.

I will deconstruct that peculiar Italian national trait which the Catholic Church has contributed towards maintaining (Gramsci 1949), and which can be understood as pervasive invisible religiosity. In particular, in my investigation into the political and artistic agenda of my elective filmmakers, I draw on the theories on the relationship between religion, media culture, politics, law, and society, especially advanced by cultural historians, media analysts and sociologists of religion such as Mario Verdone, Enzo Sallustro, Sabino Acquaviva, Enzo Pace, and Arnaldo

Nesti, to name but a few. Their different theoretical discourses and perspectives on religion, cinema, censorship, and education intersect within this thesis' structure

I would like to stress that it is not my intention to undermine the socio-cultural relevance of religion, since once freed from all dogmatic claims of moral supremacy, religion can indeed facilitate the advent of a more pluralistic society, as Vattimo and Habermas have recently underlined. It is therefore my intention to acknowledge with due respect the fact that, in Italy, Catholicism has remained for centuries a fundamental part of the nation's cultural identity, at times enduring radical alternations of different political forms of governments (feudalism, regal absolutism, fascism, republicanism), a constancy which in itself is also a merit.

Furthermore, I would like to assert that not all members of the clergy have been, or are prejudiced against cinema as Papal encyclical attest and as cinema activism in parish churches or Catholic cinema agencies prove (cfr. a detailed list of Catholic cinema associations and institutions in the Bibliography). From the Second World War onwards, the popularity of the cinema attracted Catholic viewers, eager to enjoy this art form, approaching it as a valuable medium of entertainment, information, and communication. I will discuss how some priests of socialist ideology challenged the tendency of the Vatican to censor the film as a medium, opening cinema clubs free viewing and open discussion. These contrasts will highlight the paradox between the constitutional principles, which guarantee the freedom of expression and the concern of the Church to condemn films that were perceived as attacking the institution of family and marriage, religion and tradition on moral grounds. Forms of direct and indirect involvement of clerical censorship against 'irreligious films' will specifically be addressed in Chapter 7 and 9.

I observe the types of changes that have affected censorship regulations in the sixties. In this respect, I assess the tendency of centre-right parties involved in governmental reforms, 'to hold' in principle, the conceptual structure and functionality of the old codes regulating film censorship. I discuss how such tendency was aimed at accommodating on the one hand, the claims of control over public decency coming from the conservative Catholic society, and on the other, at protecting film producers from the risk of witnessing their films being banned. I follow the evolution of Church censorship, moving from the earliest stages to the secularisation processes which have reached an apex in the third millennium with the recent resignation, in April 2013, of Ratzinger from his Papal throne, followed by the election of Pope Francis and his leftist progressivism. Despite this, the growing secularisation processes in Italy have not

completely overturned the Roman Catholic Church's hegemony, which still places cultural and economic burdens on the Italian state's home and foreign affairs.

I will try to reveal the main forms in which censorship works, from the centralised governing body of the 'Ministry of Culture' and its ramified system of local censorship boards, to the legal policies and practices which, from the Seventies onwards, encouraged production companies to apply self-censorship to their products.

The 'Italia Taglia' archive has conducted a detailed survey of the large number of films that through the decades have been subjected to cuts, substantial revisions, prohibition, and total confiscation. However, in recent years, due to changes in censorship regulations, films that had undergone banning have been released and shown on private TVs and in cinema theatres. The level of scandal that their contents once stirred, no longer has the same impact on people's sense of moral scorn. The new tolerance of irreligion possibly indicates the way that Italian society in the postmodernist age has transformed its relationship to the sacred, as well as to the moral standards on what is to be accepted or forbidden. (Acquaviva and Guizzardi, 1971) In relation to the above objectives, I set out to discuss the constitutional reforms, which in 1984 have abolished major privileges, which the Roman Catholic Church had long enjoyed as 'state religion'. I subsequently discuss another set of reforms which have legally and culturally modified film censorship in the year 2000 in relation to the crime, formally known as 'vilification of state religion', which has become non applicable.

The literature in this field demonstrates how changes to the system of censorship have occurred at a slower pace, compared to other institutional sectors, due to the impact that cinema has on society. In the contemporary Italian liberal democracy, the legal system has gradually come to terms with the demand of freedom, advanced by the public and by the film industry's corporations.

The cases of judicial harassment of filmmakers, based on the content of their films, are today less frequent than in the past. Liberal reforms in Italy tend to hold their line of progress so that the acquired rights of the cinema industry may be warranted against repressive forms of censorship. This is due to the intervention of PD's reformist politicians, lined up on the side of progressive cinema, which have entered the debate on censorship in the House of Parliament, and helped produce, negotiate and pass new bills to abolish the past restrictive permit system. The new reforms have indeed aided filmmakers, producers, and distributors to voice their

protest and opinion against censorship.

The existing regulations in matters of cinema censorship are, at present, less penalizing and restrictive to the filmmakers' creative and ideological freedoms. This is due to the decrease in availability of ministers and members of parliament with a Catholic background who are prepared to satisfy claims of control deriving from the Vatican. The new tendency appears to focus prevalently on the nation's financial interests and on ensuring that the state is not directly involved in damaging Italian profit-making cinema companies by banning films because of their moral contents. This is evident in the ways in which Film Festival committees, cinema-funding organisations, and media executives construct their criteria and policies. The concession of valid certificates (*Nihil Obstat*), within the political and cultural environment of the Second Republic, demonstrates that censorship codes and restrictions, setting red lines for filmmakers, producers, and distributors, are open to interest-based negotiations to provide the film industry with profitable investments.

While I highlight in almost every chapter of this thesis, the ideological resistance of the Catholic Church to issues of freethinking, I conclude by indicating the attempt of Pope Francis to overcome the Church's traditional resistance to the media industry's quest for autonomy. I engage in Vattimo's advice to the Church to enter a constructive dialogue with the lay, secular world and other religious and non-religious communities because I, like Vattimo, believe that censorship primarily results from, and is the expression of, centralised authority, prejudice, and insularity. Recent reforms in cinema censorship and institutionalised religion will potentially eliminate the interplay of the most obstructive and subtler forms of control which Catholic authorities have exercised over the arts and society, putting pressure on the government.

I conclude my thesis by discussing the constructive critique of contemporary sociologists of religion and the media, who are soliciting the Catholic Church to give up the temptation to ally it with the ruling powers, and rather direct its energy towards finding fresh contacts with the life and people of our modern society.

Finally, I do not claim that my critical synthesis of Church censorship will provide definite answers; rather, it is my hope that my interpretation will expand the horizons from which the church and state's interrelations over the cinema medium are interpreted.

*Exploring Italian cinema and censorship by religion: guide to chapters' structure and contents*

My research offers insight into the political, cultural and religious background of large segments of the twentieth-century Italian cinema. I follow the historical events and the laws that allowed the Church to become progressively involved in public and private film censorship, and to influence the industry to the point of affecting the broadcasters and the viewers' decisions on what *not* to show and what *not* to view.

In the following nine chapters, I argue that the history of Church censorship against cinema products coincides, to a considerable extent, with Italy's cultural history; thus offers important guidelines to reflect on the role of cinema in the critical construction and deconstruction of the nation's identity.

I present the socio-cultural milieu, which also allows self-appointed cinema censors to take legal action against filmmakers, producers, and distributors in terms of civil law or criminal law's procedures to deter public libel of people, ideas, and facts related to religion through the cinematic medium (Part 2: Chapters four, five, six).

In Chapters four, five and six, I construct the historical framework which demonstrates that from the early 1940s onwards, the Vatican authorities have authorised the editing of a film ratings system to express its concerns and publicise its recommendations over cinema matters in the magazine *Segnalazioni Cinematografiche*, which operated out of the inspirational influence of Pope Pius XI's 1936 encyclical letter, *Vigilanti Cura*. I provide details of how the Catholic Film Centre (Centro Cinematografico Cattolico) set an 'E' category ('excluded for all'), appropriate to film screening, which included 105 films banned in all cinema theatres within Catholic Institutes. Chapter 5 in particular, considers the first case study of vilification of religion in relation to Roberto Rossellini's *Il miracolo*. In Chapter 7, I investigate the themes of religious dissent in politically committed Italian filmmakers. I discuss the groundbreaking cultural program of the Italian Neorealist filmmakers and I conduct film analysis on a case of severe censorship against Pasolini's film, *La ricotta*, for the criminal code's infringements defined as 'vilification of religion'. In Chapter eight I begin with a discussion of the historical, legal, social, and cultural circumstances which have caused vast protest in Italy, following the public screenings of plots based on a re-staging of biblical symbols and narratives within profane settings, prompting the immediate involvement of political, judicial, and clerical censorship to restrict and ban their circulation in cinema theatres. In the second part of Chapter eight, I explore the impact of filmmakers Cipri and Maresco's cultural satire, and conduct a discussion on their sacrilegious use of religious symbols and codes within profane settings; a

treatment which was charged with and accused of defamation of religion. I endeavour to shed light on the role of dissident cinema, as one of the more effective agent provocateur at work to affect change within the secularisation processes, which, between 1984 and 1985, led to the abolition of the historical unconstitutional anomaly, which has awarded the Catholic Church a privileged position as ‘state religion’.

Finally, I present the partial abolition of some censorship restrictions, and examine how today censorship is mainly concerned with the protection of minors (Viriglio 2000). I then present a discussion on clerical censorship in the third millennium, whereby the old forms of control exercised by clerical censors have become more discernible and questioned, and also less permitted within Pope Francis’s new idea, in *XLVIII Giornata Mondiale delle Comunicazioni Sociali*, on the role of the media in society (Bergoglio 2014).

## CHAPTER 2: *Review of Literature*

### *Introduction*

Chapter 2, *Review of Literature* presents the groundwork of the Marxist (Antonio Gramsci) and post-structuralist approaches (Michel Foucault), which I employ for my analysis of cinema and clerical censorship. These theoretical grounds support the empirical analysis of plots, which have criticised the Catholic Church as a hierarchical, conservative organisation, participating in the nation's system of power relations.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony in *Quaderni dal carcere (Prison Notebooks 1929-1935)* is of specific importance to my exploration of allegedly offensive cinematic representations of religious values, figures, and creeds because of its focus on culture as ideology and power as dominion and its attention to the role of intellectuals in their problematic relations.

On the other hand, I draw on Foucault's analysis of power discourses, in *Discipline and Punish*, where he argues that in order to understand the power systems function in modern society, the historians must reconstruct the genealogy of its ritual forms, as he does in reconstructing the history of the Catholic 'confession'. I also consider Foucault's theory of 'governmentality' and place it side by side with Gramsci's notion of hegemony and historical blocks, directing them to a number of films, which were censored, at various degrees of severity for their unorthodox critique of the *status quo*.

I employ Gramsci's ideas on the roles of different types of intellectuals, to discuss the place of Neorealist cinema *engagée* in cultural emancipation from the Catholic hegemony. I draw on Gramsci specifically to clarify Pasolini's cinematic treatment of the sacred, and of various figures of Jesus as the Christ, presented as the ideal mass pedagogue and revolutionary dissident going against the ruling hegemonies' discourses and method of indoctrination.

Within a historicised cultural framework, I address Gramsci's idea of society's 'base' and 'superstructure', before linking his idea of 'hegemony' to Foucault's historical analysis of modern forms of power, drawing on several of his famous essays, which I cite throughout my thesis' chapters. My account of Church censorship is informed by 'Truth, Power, Self', *Technologies of the Self* (Foucault 1988), in which Foucault claims that religious practices are



imparted to individuals to attain control and vigilance over their lives (Foucault, 1988: 16).

When addressing cinema of dissent and Church censorship, Gramsci's writings on state censorship, in *Quaderni dal carcere*, provide a key perspective. As a militant communist intellectual, firstly critical of the fascist regime, and then of Stalinism itself, Gramsci argued that a division between the traditional power oligarchies and the population is maintained through the action of 'organic intellectuals'. (Gramsci, 1949: IV, 49) In my opinion, these considerations have logical relevance to the political action of engaged filmmakers, acting mediation between their spectatorship, the governmental and religious censorship apparatuses, and the film industry.

Foucault also looked at the problematic issues, which emerge from the relations between those institutions in the state power structure implementing surveillance (the state, the church and their agencies) and the individuals or groups, who are surveyed. In *Power Knowledge, Archaeology of Knowledge, On Governmentality*, he focussed his attention on the techniques by which individuals become subjected to forms of authority and institutionalised control over their freedoms. According to Foucault, power is judged incorrectly as solely in the hands of a centralised establishment. Power, he argued, is a reticular spread network of far-reaching relations of authority influence and 'do ut des', which penetrates all aspects of a nation's political and social life to the point that each 'individual is the product of power' (Foucault, 2000: 382).

In my view, Gramsci and Foucault's theories of religion create a remarkably speculative field of analysis for my theoretical framework. Indeed, Gramsci's writings on the role of Catholic intellectuals within the Italian society, while providing my research question with important suggestions on film censorship and church boycott, bring about a better understanding of censorial practices from the point of view of Foucault's theory of 'bio power'. Consequently, I connect Gramsci's idea of hegemony to Foucault's argument that power always justifies its systems and techniques of social control within political and historical contexts, where they seem pertinent and indispensable to a given community or society's well-being: so has the need of censorship been regularly justified by the Roman Curia, as I show in this thesis's Appendix, containing a variety of abstracts from Papal encyclicals on the 'ideal' film. I will endeavour to show how this argument – according to which, in the twentieth-century technological era of information capitalism, power is the effect of discourse-practices, exercising pressure on the individual - may be relevant to the development of my discussion on the relationship between

the dissident artist, cinema and the governmental / intellectual agencies, administering control on the film industry, in terms of preventive censorship, legal censorship, and cultural boycott.

### *2.1. Antonio Gramsci: the role of intellectuals as mass pedagogues*

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), is an important theorist for understanding the political and cultural struggles between state and church, which I discuss in this thesis. One of the most innovative contributions, which Gramsci gave to Marxism, was, in fact, his original definition of the relationships between structure and superstructure.

In *Quaderni dal carcere*, Gramsci questioned Marx's emphasis on the primacy of a nation's economic base over its superstructure. He accordingly described the base-superstructure interactions with their interrelated ideologies affecting the individuals and the civil society. Moreover, with the expression 'historical block', Gramsci implied the coming together of those normative actions that regulate civil society and are introduced by its intellectuals contributing to the formation of hegemony (Joseph, 2002: 20-21). Gramsci's historiographical description of the relationship between the Italian right wing bourgeoisie and the Roman Curia as the two structured socio-cultural forces taking part to the same historical block focussed specifically on the interplay of political and economic processes, which by creating the basis for consensus, made the church and state Lateran Agreements,<sup>12</sup> signed in 1929, strongly durable. (Gramsci 1949: V. 4, Ch. 15) I use the Gramscian term, 'historical bloc' to discuss the empirical material related to the Church and state' interrelated systems of control over the arts as a one of the outcomes of the historical bloc, to which they contribute.

In my analysis, I bear in mind Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis', which designates the rapport between 'human will' and the 'economical structure'. (Gramsci, 1949: V. VII, Ch. 18) He argued that the militant intellectuals' attention to society must translate into 'action'. He defined the 'philosophy of praxis' as that polemical and operational attitude whose aim is to

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12 After the First World War, in order to regularize the position of the church on the Italian territories, Pius XI concluded the negotiations with Benito Mussolini, Italian prime minister since 1922, known as the state and church's concordat (Lateran Pacts, 11 Feb. 1929). With the Treaty and Concordat, the state and church struggle was ended and the Vatican was recognised as an independent, neutral state. The Church's concordat with the fascist regime also implied financial agreements.

overcome wrong pre-existing ideologies, that is: the 'common sense'. (Gramsci, 1949: V. VIII Ch. 220) Praxis is equivalent to the entirety of human achievements in the world. It implies a commitment to the revolutionary transformation of reality. In Gramsci's philosophy of praxis, many militant intellectuals to come have seen a way to overturn the supremacy of the nation's bourgeois capitalist groups and give power to the subordinate classes.

The ruling political and economical classes of Western capitalist societies, Gramsci claimed, traditionally originated from the educated, ideologically and politically engaged bourgeoisie. The Italian bourgeoisie, rooted in the Catholic middle classes, constantly seeks privileges for themselves by means of implementing educational projects, both through public and private channels. (Gramsci, 1949: V. X, Ch. 61) The form of political and financial control achieved by the bourgeoisie, Gramsci argued, is imposed not only ideologically, but also through a comprehensive world-view, covering up for their agenda, which is aimed at attaining dominance. This is how the Catholic Church also implements hegemony. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 16, Ch. 11)

In order to see how hegemonic ideals of religious and moral superiority hide themselves in the three major censorship cases I discuss in the following chapters, it is first important to illustrate Gramsci's analysis of hegemony and explain how I will use this notion in my examination of clerical censorship. Indeed, in *Quaderni dal carcere*, Gramsci claimed that hegemonic supremacy does not manifest itself only through domination and power, but also by the ability of a leading group to fairly direct his allied and subordinate classes. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 4, Ch. 49) While dominion is always exercised and maintained through the apparatuses of coercion which are controlled by politics and law, intellectual leadership is implemented through the civil society's hegemonic apparatuses, which include the church, schools, parties, trade unions, the press, cinema theatres, etc. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 1, Ch. 153)

Gramsci accounted for the state/church liaisons as based upon an economic/political/cultural class struggle, where differences in ideology between the two power-fronts are constantly and dynamically constructed to achieve hegemony. Governmental politics and institutionalized religion are two conflicting, yet interconnected hegemonic forces, which attempt if not to neutralise each other, as well as their own internal oppositions. However, in order to reinforce the power of the dominant culture, the spheres, which challenge each other within its dominions, are intended to produce oppositions, rather than solve them. (Bullock and Trombley, 1977: 388).

In *Note sul Machiavelli*, Gramsci agreed with Machiavelli that hegemony is achieved by surpassing the notion of *civil ethos*. In his observations, he included the conservative bourgeoisie's hegemonic agenda: 'Hegemony is a form of dictatorship but its strength relies on 'consensus. The type of hegemony created by the Church of Rome, likewise, goes above politics, its direct aim being the preservation of the power to influence and control the Catholic followers.<sup>13</sup> Gramsci claimed that these hegemonic processes could be overthrown by revolution and by the work of dissident intellectuals, constructing counter-hegemony. In this and other sections of *Quaderni dal carcere*, the Catholic Church is presented as a form of hegemony, which contributes to the conditions for: 1. the preservation of the bourgeoisie's privilege by means of education; and 2. the subordination of the rural and urban proletariat by means of keeping a pastoral eye on their claims.<sup>14</sup> (Gramsci, 1949: V. 6, Ch. 10) To prove this liaison, Gramsci highlighted the high degree of contact between the Italian Capitalist lobbies and Catholic Action (*via*, for instance, the Catholic trade unions), and illustrated the processes whereby Catholic orthodoxy is incorporated into, and controlled by, the dominant elites' culture. Gramsci also discussed circumstances whereby religion incorporates the dominant elites and groups into its own culture, and takes control over their society. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 5, Ch.70) Hence, in Gramscian terms, Catholic 'hegemony' is not equivalent to 'domination'. It describes a higher sphere of interrelated actions by which the Church's organic intellectuals construct cultural and doctrinal unity.

My discussion of the cultural and political implications of clerical censorship of the cinema as a constituent field of actions that is implemented by the Catholic organic intellectuals, progresses from Gramsci's analysis of the Vatican's hegemonic involvement in the Italian state's power structure. Gramsci noted that the Vatican Church and the Fascist State, to maintain their privileges, collaborate to attain power, pre-eminence, and dominion over society

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13 Gramsci drew his theory of 'hegemony' on Marx's *The Capital*, where the state is defined as violence concentrated and organised within society through the relations inside the State's structure and superstructure (Marx, 1867/tr. 1887, V. 1, Ch. 31). He also drew on Hegel's theory of the predominance of ideas over material facts. However, the main source for Gramsci's theory of hegemony is Machiavelli's *Il Principe*.

14 In *Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo stato moderno* (Volume 4 of *Prison Notebooks*), Gramsci traces the Roman Catholic Church's hegemony back to the roots, from the Papal opposition to the Unification of Italy under the secular kingdom of Italy in 1861, up to the Holy See's post-Lateran Agreements opposition to Fascism when the consolidation of clerical hegemony had been achieved. As early as 1919, Gramsci described the Catholic 'Partito Popolare' founded in 1919 by Luigi Sturzo – the future DC founded in 1942 – as the result of the secularisation initiated by the Risorgimento: a party aimed at unifying the Italian proletariat under the Catholic Church social doctrine.

by means of their specific methods and discourses, governing the spiritual and economical conditions of the subaltern classes.

The Church's influence over the population, achieved through its activists – clergy intellectuals and lay militants implementing indoctrinating practices and rituals, Gramsci argued, should not be judged as acting only at the political level by constructing consensus for the elections. Therefore, understanding the church's role in the political arena is not a question of solely tracing the history of religion-oriented hegemonic processes between dominant groups, exploiting the church, and obtaining consensus from subordinate and insubordinate groups offering resistance to such processes.<sup>15</sup> He suggested that the Catholic influence should rather be understood as the resulting hegemonic activities of a powerful institution among other governmental institutions, unifying and shaping the national identity on values, dogmas, behaviours, and rituals commanded by the Pope's authority, thus contributing to the formation of the unity of conscience and world view of the civil society.<sup>16</sup> One of the effective ways in which the leftist intellectuals can oppose such influence, Gramsci argued, is to educate the people to acquire political awareness of the *status quo* by means of a critical pedagogy determining new ideological historical books.<sup>17</sup> In *Quaderno 6*, commenting on Pius XI's encyclical letter on education *Civiltà Cattolica*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1930, Gramsci argued: 'For the Catholic Church, what in Hegelian terms is named 'civil society' [...] is only a contingent, historical fact. From the Catholic viewpoint, the church is the sole legitimate state, the universal supernatural state: the medieval conception of power is perpetuated in this self-idea.'<sup>18</sup> (Gramsci, 1971: 24)

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15 The political Unification of Italy threatened the Roman Catholic Church' hegemony. The Vatican's hostility to the Unification reached a climax in the prohibition to Catholic believers to join the general State political elections in 1871 (Barrett 1999: 6).

16 Gramsci draws upon Marx's 'The German Ideology', which views religion as an abstract construct, or ideological phenomenon, determined by material causes. In *Note su Machiavelli, sulla Politica e sullo Stato Moderno, Il Vaticano e l'Italia*, he argued that the Church is a constant restraint to reforms. Its task is rather to construct a sense of unity for the 'social organisms' and this was already the case in the pre-Unification historical phase. Gramsci added that the Italian bourgeoisie secured its hegemony also through its affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church.

17 In this context, see also Henry Giroux, David Shumway, Paul Smith, and James Sosnoski, 'The Need for Cultural Studies: Resisting Intellectuals and Oppositional Public Spheres', in *Dalhousie Review* 64.2, 1984, 472-486.

18 'In these circumstances, the church itself can become the primary form of State. A conflict may then arise between the lay society and the state-church institution. This is the case especially in situations in which the church has become an integral part of the State, of the political society, or else turned into the exclusive territory of a privileged group, which associates itself with the church to share

Gramsci's analysis of religion as an ideological category particularly emerged in 'Analisi delle situazioni. Rapporti di forza', 'Il Moderno Principe'. Catholicism is here described as a self-defensive and integrative social category (as masonry and Judaism), maintained by the Church's bureaucrats and intellectuals, whose function is to mediate between a nation's civil society and find compromises to its internal tensions (Gramsci, 1949: V. 13, Ch. 17). Gramsci noted the presence in Italy of two parallel forms of religiosity, the official and the folk, accounting for class division yet cohabiting under the same structure. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 1, Ch. 89) He indicated the responsibility of the former in the cultural and economical underdevelopment of the latter. He then argued that the educational role of the Catholic organic intellectuals was to bridge the gulf between the church hierarchy and the way of thinking of the folk people, by means of coaching and vigilance. Whereas the division of powers is the result of the struggle between civil society and political hierarchies, regulated by law in given historical periods and circumstance, a more enduring struggle between opposing hegemonic blocks begins between church and state, whereby the church claims to represent people in a wider extra-temporal dimension and the state fights back to maintain the structure's equilibrium. Gramsci argued:

'Society hosts what Croce has named the "permanent conflict of state and church". It is a conflict in which the church holds the role of representing the civil society, in its entirety, while the state holds that of the agent that prevents the crystallisation of a certain progress or situation. In this sense, the church itself can become the state and the conflict can manifest itself between the lay society and the church-state. This is the case when the church becomes a fundamental component of the state, of a given class's political monopoly which aggregates with the church to consolidate its monopoly, with the support of that vast portion of society which identifies with the church' [...] Note the problem of religion taken not in the confessional sense but in the secular sense of a unity of faith between a conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct. But why call this unity of faith 'religion' and not 'ideology, or even frankly politics?' (Gramsci, 1971: 326)

Gramsci argued that the state and church liaisons prevent social progress and political change. Inspired by Marx's critique of religion, he noted that religion accepts the implicit pastoral role of covering up for the state's material failure towards the population's well being. In

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its monopoly, with the support of that part of the civil society represented by the church.' (Gramsci, 1971: 24)

‘Egemonia e divisione dei poteri’, Gramsci asserts that social change can be achieved when the civil society is given an opportunity to emancipate itself from its religious submissiveness, which also affects its relation to the state. Power, Gramsci stated in *Quaderni dal carcere*, is maintained and reinforced through clienteles, which operate at all levels within the structure (Gramsci, 1949: V. 6, Ch. 81).

Through *La questione meridionale*,<sup>19</sup> where Gramsci claimed that the role of the clergy is to be understood as an essential part of the bourgeois hegemony – ‘The priest is a priest at the altar: elsewhere he is a man like any other’ (Gramsci, 1971: 44) – I acknowledge the discrepancy between the church’s self-proclaimed spiritual mission and the concealed power-related goals of clergy cultural and social activism. I draw on *Egemonia (società civile) e divisione dei poteri* to address religion from a crucial angle and prove how Church censorship is constructed and maintained on a long-lasting system of privilege and influence which has made it possible for the clergy to put pressure on society and to take part by law in state’s institutions (Gramsci, 1949: V. IV, Ch. 5, 277-289).

I suggest, *via* Gramsci’s *Note sul Machiavelli*, the importance of civil objection to the Vatican’s hegemonic pressure, and take on Gramsci’s advice that the Holy See should avoid giving a religious cover-up to purely secular concerns with dominance (Gramsci, 1949: V. IV, Ch. V, 277). Under the term ‘hegemony’, Gramsci grouped all forms of ideological dominance, and defined ‘historical blocks’<sup>20</sup> as the union of social forces, which contribute to hegemony. Hegemony, while forming historical blocks, allows a miscellaneous of forces to converge, and holds them together by a unitary vision or task. The exercise of hegemony is characterised, therefore, by the combination of force and consent, which counterbalance each other, without force dominating over consent. Hegemony is essentially the result of these dialectical power forces, based on variable relations which are favourable and unfavourable to each other, and subjected to the changes imposed by both material and cultural historical processes (Gramsci,

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19 ‘Questione meridionale’ (Southern question), in Gramsci’s terms, is the situation of socio-economic unbalance, which emerged in early 20th century rural Italy, between the Catholic-administered, undeveloped South, and the industrialised wealthy North administered by bourgeois entrepreneurs. This unbalanced situation in the first part of the XXth century exacerbated social inequality, cultural division, and class struggle. In ‘Southern Question’, Gramsci delineated the history of peasant subalternity and expanded on concepts such as ‘hegemony’ and ‘passive revolution’.

20 Ne *Il moderno principe* (Gramsci 1949: V. 4, Ch. 1: 6-95), Gramsci described the interplay of relations between the structure (of production) and the superstructure (of the political, military, organisational, ideological, and religious spheres) in terms of ‘historical bloc’, made of social forces contributing to the nation’s dialectical oppositions.

1949: V. IV, Ch. 33).

It is thus important to look at hegemony as the interplay of influences and strategies by which state and church control the civil society. In my further discussion of clerical censorship, and building on Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of counter-discourse, I look at the Vatican State as a system, which, having acquired recognition and autonomy by means of the Lateran Agreements, has come to habitually support the ruling classes while opposing all forms of ideological anticlericalism. Thus the necessity to analyse the historical and genealogical roots of Church censorship draws on Gramsci's observations that the Church of Rome has maintained a Machiavellian participation in the nation's culture, becoming involved in the construction of political consensus.

In order to maintain its hegemonic influence – to rule, persuade, influence, and coerce – Gramsci argued that a hegemonic class must create a sort of breed of its intellectuals, which for this reason can be defined as 'organic'. The Vatican also creates its organic intellectuals, who are primarily concerned with preserving the cohesion between the Church and society to determine the civil society's consensus and conformity to the doctrine and values of the party or government, which supports the church's tenets as well as the interests of the ruling bourgeois classes' (Gramsci, 1971: 258). Indeed, as Marx stated, hegemony grows out of an amalgam of coercive and consensual mechanisms for reconciling human subjects to their difficult lives.<sup>21</sup> In Gramsci's understanding, intellectuals are thus the executive agents of guiding ideas, holding strategic positions in the various sectors of the state machine. These dynamics, which work at all levels within the state's structure, also regarded the role of the Vatican's intellectuals in negotiating the Concordat, a scheme which for a certain historical period, implied that the Church's support to Mussolini's governmental manoeuvres was a retribution for the material and political privileges acquired by the Vatican and the clergy. In *Culture subalterne*, Gramsci noted that since social classes tends to produce their own organic intellectuals as agents of their claims, and promoters of their world-view and mentality, one should pay attention to what values and actions Catholic activists negotiate to solicit

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21 On Gramsci's theory of religion, see Otto Maduro, *New Marxist Approaches to the Relative Autonomy of Religion*, in *Sociological Analysis*, n, 38, 4, 1977, 359-367, Gramsci argued that in the periods in which the Catholic factions are called on to support the strategies of the rising classes, the Church risks assuming a subsidiary role in a nation's infrastructure. In these periods, heresies and schismatic movements, expressing internal dissent may increase. In order to deal with internal opponents and control the declining significance of its value-codes, the church implements strategies to prevent dispersion.



‘spontaneous consensus’ from the subaltern social groups of Catholic background. (Gramsci 1949: V. 12, Ch. 1) This idea helps me to gain insight into what kind of power Catholic intellectuals engaged into cultural activism wish to attain for their political part. Gramsci especially criticised the Lateran Concordat, which allowed a direct intervention of the Vatican on the state. In this sense, he defined Catholicism as an international party, intervening in all of the Catholic nations’ Home and Foreign Affairs. Gramsci in particular, attacked the Vatican’s privileged financial settlements, supporting the endurance of its hegemony (Gramsci, 1949, V. IV, Ch. 5: 277-289).<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Gramsci defined ‘hegemony’ not only as a mode to exercise political power, but also as a the strategic ideological and cultural platform of those who rule over those who are ruled. The lobbies, which exercise economic power over the workers and the peasantry by means of the state’s apparatuses, also rely on the Church, contributing to education (in private and public schools), politics (through the constellation of moderate parties of Catholic tradition), trade unions, the press, the cinema, and so on. Hegemony is thus constructed and maintained by means of intellectual and cultural dominance. For this reason, the struggle of the working classes, in the process of creating its own hegemony, ought to be a cultural struggle. Gramsci believed that the communist party’s cultural and political revolution could overthrow the historical block comprising of the financially dominant bourgeoisie and the Catholic middle classes. Before attempting to attain governmental power by means of revolution, the communist activists and intellectuals had to acquire charismatic leadership. In fact, hegemony, as Gramsci posed it, is not only a matter of successful leaderships: it implies that, if the ruling classes, who exercise control and influence on politics and finance, lost the ground for maintaining their hegemony, their power could decline and be replaced by another hegemonic form (Gramsci 1949, V. IV, Ch. 1).

### *2.1. a Gramsci and Italian cinema*

Gramsci’s analysis of power in its hegemonic implications has penetrated the nation’s conscience, with the aid of the mediation of writers and filmmakers discussed in this thesis. Cinema and theatre, Gramsci argued, are at the core of popular culture. They play a crucial function in reaching the spectators’ conscience with representations of the mechanisms of

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<sup>22</sup> Gramsci accused philosopher Benedetto Croce of failing to address the effects of religion on society, and for isolating the historical process from its concrete foundation in economic-based class struggle (Gramsci 1949, V. 4, Ch. V: 314-318).

dominion, which they are subjected to within the state's system. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 1, Ch. 153) To understand how filmmakers and intellectuals in Italy have used the political ideas in Prison Notebook it is important to look at Gramsci's observations on the rapport between cultural production and educational mediation in the process leading to the acculturation of the popular masses to which also the Church contributes to. Innumerable Neorealist plots, for instance, were intended as forms of socio-political and cultural critique of the *status quo* in hegemonic terms. Gramsci's notion of hegemony was used also to identify elements of the traditional Catholic mentality and characterize the Italian nation's moral stereotypes. In *Quaderni dal carcere*, Gramsci classifies as 'common sense', the set of inculcated prejudices and conventions that pervade a given society to the point of shaping its national identity.

In particular, Gramsci's essays on the *Questione meridionale* have inspired many Italian filmmakers to account for themes, facts, and behaviours, which fall within left-wing social concern. Gramsci analysed the 'historical formation of the ruling groups and the subaltern groups' by discussing the multifaceted aspects relating to matters of 'hegemony' and 'counter-hegemony', and placing them against the techniques of gaining the indispensable 'consensus' from the population (Gramsci, 1949: V. 6, Ch. 89). Gramsci claimed that Fascism was not an 'irregularity', but actually the natural development of the political and cultural processes of constructing consensus. Gramsci prepared the theoretical and practical grounds for a socialist theory of the arts by which a non-bureaucratic relationship could be established between the led and the leaders, whose reciprocal involvement constructed the cultural counter-hegemony, enabling civil society to gain access to more participatory models of political contribution.

Ferdinando Rocco's analysis of Gramsci's 1916 article on the cinema industry, in which he makes an appraisal of theatre and cinema as competing forms of popular entertainment, underscores Gramsci's initial reductive assessment of the film industry as being more affordable than theatre, financially, from the point of view of the spectatorship.<sup>23</sup> Rocco's accounts, in *Gramsci e il cinema*, reminds us that because Gramsci was imprisoned in 1926, a year after the release of Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*, he most likely did not have opportunities to watch the films produced within the tread of the Soviet 'social realism'. Certainly not listed among the defenders of cinema as a means of information and

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23 Antonio Gramsci, 'Teatro e cinematografo', in *Drammaturgia.it*: 'La ragione della fortuna del cinematografo e dell'assorbimento che esso fa del pubblico, che prima frequentava i teatri, è puramente economica. ('The reason for the popularity of the cinema is purely economic and consists in its ability to attract the public which used to attend the theatres.')" (Turin, 26 August 1916) [drammaturgia.it/recensioni/recensione1.php?id=1404](http://drammaturgia.it/recensioni/recensione1.php?id=1404)

acculturation, in *Quaderni dal carcere*, Gramsci advanced a critique of the media as vehicles for broadcasting ideologically coercive discourses. As a major force for creating consensus, their goal is to secure the ruling hegemony's power apparatuses (Landy, 1986: 49).

Gramsci's opinion on cinema as a means to educate people, and on the role of filmmakers as mass pedagogues, was rather unfavourable, as he saw cinema as a subspecies of theatre, serving the aim of providing spectators with superficial forms of mass entertainment. He ascribed to the cinematic arts the capacity to portray from a critical point of view the aspects of the material culture, which justifies social behaviours, groupings and distinctions. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 9, Ch. 132) In 'Argomenti di cultura', Gramsci spoke about the cinema as a means to educate (or dis-educate) the masses, comprising strata of educated and uneducated people, the latter being more vulnerable and uncontrollable in their response to ideological influence. (Gramsci, 1949: 14, Ch. 132) Considering whether cinema could present a threat to society, he discussed the role of committed artists and intellectuals as mass pedagogues, working from within the historical materialistic processes to produce positive changes (Rocco 1954). Rocco comments on Gramsci's essay on the cinema industry included in *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950): 'There is, in embryo, an attempt to apprise, from a cultural point of view, the influence of cinema on the audience'. Gramsci however merely placed a positive emphasis on the influence of cinematic language over the viewers' ability to connect with the discourses of art (Rocco, 1954: 25). On the educating effect of cinema, Gramsci noted that cinema narratives, having at their core, stories of popular oppression, would promote political conscience. The new cultural standards brought about by the film industry would help to revolutionise folk customs, and subvert traditional middle-class values.

On the other hand, Gramsci expressed scepticism about cinema, as the films produced under Mussolini's government, which the regime often sponsored, resembled subspecies of political propaganda. However, despite the limits of his appraisal, Gramsci's relevance to Italian cinema has been, if not direct, certainly deep and ideologically structured, considering the lasting impact that his considerations on the role of politically committed art has had on filmmakers with social concern. In the writings in which the pedagogical role of the arts was addressed, Gramsci drew attention to cinema, albeit with some reservations, to demonstrate how it can transform the general audience's 'common sense' into 'good sense'. Gramsci believed that cinema can help to develop the audience's critical skills and promote 'change' by means of critical insight. His positive outlook on the educational role of the cinema has certainly brought

the ideology of realist representation into the history of filmmaking, directing the attention of filmmakers to the relationships between visual arts and society in which the audience could identify their own lives, worldviews, and hopes (Gramsci 1949: V. 14, Ch. 19; and V. 16, Ch. 21). However, on a more pessimistic note, Gramsci noted that theatre and cinema, while providing citizens with various forms of entertainment, might make easier to construct political consensus for the financial lobbies, which sponsor the film industry, strengthening the power of the ruling hegemonies. Following Gramsci's main conceptions, I will discuss in later Chapters how Pasolini followed a Gramscian line of criticism regarding the complicated relationships between the nation's power system, comprising of the Vatican Church, its organic intellectuals and the media industry. I will also give an idea of the application of Gramscian critique in Cipri and Maresco's film, *Totò che visse due volte*.

## 2.2 a Foucault's theory of power

It is interesting to note that in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), Foucault (1926-1984) discussed how dominant social groups, detaining power, define by discourse all that knowledge which individuals should accept as the right way to interpret facts. This is a valuable suggestion for my analysis of the ways in which religion supplies the dominant powers with techniques and discourses, apt to impose compliance with, and obedience to, their moral standards.<sup>24</sup> Foucault indeed highlights the involvement of Christian Churches, in setting techniques of 'confinement' of those who oppose these standards from those who accept their validity:

'The Christian pastoral — (or the Christian church insofar as it deployed an activity that was precisely and specifically pastoral) — developed this idea — unique, I believe, and completely foreign to ancient culture — that every individual, whatever his age or his status, from the beginning to the end of his life and down to the very details of his actions, ought to be governed and ought to let himself be governed. That is to say, be directed toward his salvation, by someone to whom he is bound in a total, and at the same time meticulous and detailed, relation of obedience' (Foucault, 1996: 382).

In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault has taken into consideration the development of new forms of oppression in Western societies as products of 'rationality', 'discourse' and 'knowledge: 'Knowledge is

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<sup>24</sup> In modern society, the dominant ideology can be identified with liberal constitutionalism (Abercombie, Hill and Turner 1980).

always contextualised in a framework which makes it intelligible, thus the humanising discourse of psychiatry is an expression of the tactics of oppression' (Foucault, 1977: 26-27). Foucault goes beyond the analysis of 'knowledge' translating into power-discourse for the functioning of power structures. He expands on the special methods, which the church has adopted throughout the centuries to maintain its role in society by means of pastorship, which still serves as a governmental model to keep control over people's socially unaligned behaviours (Smart, 1985:131).

I find particularly suitable to my analyses of the Church's relations to the arts and society Foucault's term, 'genealogy', describing the range of institutions, variety of knowledge and methods, which permits to a given structure the implementation of power over its target subjects. Foucault's expression 'genealogy' (of knowledge, power, etc.), coined in 1978 during the Collège de France lectures, constructs a powerful critical perspective on contemporary society. Foucault's genealogy of power is in fact widely adopted in the social sciences as it provides researchers with an effective model for their specific questions. I am going to draw on the genealogical approach to examine how the Vatican's forms of governmentalized power (recognized ecclesiastic institutions and related agencies) have operated through the historical period of my direct concern to maintain sovereignty. Genealogy will help to underline the ideas and actions related to the influence of the Catholic religion over Italy's artistic, social, legal ways of and political life, which are taken for granted, and consequently not often questioned as possible strategies that the Church adopts to consolidate its legitimacy.

All creeds and knowledge, Foucault argued, cover up facts with mere 'discourse models'. In consideration of Foucault's 'negative theology', Church censorship appears as a power discourse intervening in secular matters to have a say in the state's control institutions. *Via* Foucault, my thesis signals the interconnections between the 'juridical-discursive' aspects of power and institutionalised religion. Foucault introduced his critique of power for the first time at the inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, entitled *La Volonté de savoir* (1970-1971). In that occasion, he referred to the institution of religion as an imperialistic, authoritarian and patriarchal establishment. Following Foucault, in this thesis I thus interpret religion as part of the control system, operated by the power structures, which regulate the values and the behaviours of the individuals living in modern societies. Religion, I argue, helps to impose techniques of discipline and vigilance on the cinema industry. I plan to apply Foucault's genealogical method to frame the historical development of clerical censorship producing

compliance with and dissent (or ‘resistance’) against censorial regimes (Foucault, 1982: 211). The purpose of this is to facilitate a discussion of the interconnections of state power to the systems of surveillance enacted by pastorship. Foucault merged the archaeological method, by which the discontinuities of discourse are brought to light with the ‘genealogy’ method, which highlights their interconnections and proliferations inside the system. The different ‘discourses’ of the social sciences, law, religion, and health, he claimed in *The Subject and Power*, are constituents of ‘power’. Indeed, power, in whatever form, is ‘rooted in the system of social networks’ (Foucault, 1982: 224).

The sophisticated structure of the modern state, Foucault stressed, is particularly indebted to the organisation of the Christian churches: it ideologically replicates the Church’s concern for the totality which the individual Foucault, inspired by Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, traced back to certain branches of scientific knowledge through their triangulation with culture and religion. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), in deconstructing discourse and setting ‘free the history of thought from its subjugation to transcendence’ (203), he employs ‘archaeology’ as a method to isolate the objects of discourse and pose questions regarding the ways by which they function in society. The Social sciences, Foucault argued, produce discursive practices, which influence the institutions of power, and they in turn, are influenced by them. Foucault hence suggested to treat each discourse which originates in the social sciences as an ‘object-discourse’, whose sub-strata are to be ‘archeologically’ revealed (42). In *Discipline and Punish*, he explains that power is exercised only over *free* subjects and only insofar as they are ‘free’ inside their minds, despite living within a web of power relations. Again, in ‘What is Critique?’, he states that all power-related branches, such as those related to law and the social sciences, set out to govern the lives and values of people by subordinating them to discourse, norms, and statistics is integrated by adopting its idea and methods of pastoral care. (215) The state’s power structure develops throughout the social body, germinating institutions for collective and individualising pastoral strategies, which justify the branches of family, law, medicine, psychiatry, education and economy. This not only regulates the ways society and the individual function, but also provides them with their answers to questions relating to being alive.

Following Foucault, I intend to show how censorship occurring at any time, at any point in any power relationship, is a problem of ‘sovereignty’. It is important to reflect on how sovereignty, as that exercised by the Church, affects people’s daily lives, causing compliance or resistance

to it. Long lasting forms of sovereignty, Foucault argued, turn the individual into a 'subject' by means of linguistic, biology, and economic objectification. Thus, I shall not look solely on the ways power works, but rather to how individuals serve that power. Drawing on these assumptions, I discuss forms of conformity and dissent against cinema censorship, which is made up of multiple power relations that deeply affect the environment where they operate. Conformity and opposition, in fact, are not simple reflections of sovereignty over individuals, but the mobile and effective grounds to which power is anchored. They create the conditions and possibility for power to operate.

Foucault abandoned the Marxist idea that the source or point of accumulation of dominance is to be found in the state representing the interests of the ruling class and their material power relations. Individuals, Foucault stressed, are not mere reflections of the state. State and politics are not what ultimately determines (or over determines) power relations (Foucault, 1982: 208-209). For Foucault, this implies that not everything in power structures is political, bureaucratic, or legal. As with Gramsci, power relations are described as mechanisms that are more complex. This idea, within my thesis, helps to illustrate how Church censorship operates through various forms of religious or civil activism, progressing from the principle that faith alone can justify the battles of self-appointed censors and moral crusaders.

In *Discipline and Punish*, and *History of Sexuality*, Foucault challenged the idea of history as a coherent line of documentable facts. In 'The Subject and Power' (1982), he contradicted the linearity of the historical continuum, underpinning the unreliability and one-sidedness of all hegemonic self-accounts:

'A society without power relations can only be an abstraction. Which, be it said in passing, makes all the more politically necessary the analysis of power relations in a given society, their historical formation, the source of their strength or fragility, the conditions which are necessary to transform some or to abolish others' (Foucault, 1982: 208).

Foucault's model of power helps to consider Catholicism as an institution involved in constructing cultural and social standards, as well as administering forms of moral control over society and the individual. As I have argued, Foucault's theory of power, in stating that a nation's mode of production cannot be considered the exclusive and totalising centre of its governmental power mechanisms, shifts away from historical materialism and shows a responsiveness to Gramsci's emphasis on the extraordinary political impact of the state's

social, scientific, legal and cultural agencies.<sup>25</sup> Power, Foucault argues, which traditionally takes the form of sovereignty, acquires many different variations at every level of the social order in the modern secular societies.

Power extends its fields of action by means of mechanisms and technologies that operate outside sovereignty and are 'irreducible to the representation of law'. The forms of power that are adopted today are 'disciplinary, and imply oppression as well as the possibility of resistance. 'Resistance' itself takes many different forms, from active opposition to passive support, or disloyal compliance, and operates, and creates the ways by which the individuals fight back the power(s), which turn them into 'subjects' (Foucault 1982: 109). 'Sovereign power' (as under a monarchy) is the ultimate authority over other people's lives. It also functions in democracies when authorities (people or laws) punish people's behaviours. It proceeds by means of habitual domination. Its aim is to subjugate people to laws and coercive practices, and it operates periodically when needed and is highly and violently punitive (as for the Church in the Inquisition period). In democracies however, citizens learn methods of self-discipline. 'Disciplinary power', in this sense, is the control people exercise over themselves, which is derived from knowledge inculcated by means of pastoral care, which, in the absence of threats of punishment, teaches how to fit into society on the basis of normative and universal criteria of how citizens are supposed to behave. Power transcends its organisational forms, and becomes 'dominion', permeating society at all levels and affecting all individuals. 'Dominion', which forges the social body around relations of force, is not constructed on consensus, but on the materiality of the magistrature, the public health, and education as systems administering the individuals.

After Foucault, I look at the Church's censorial apparatus as the producer of the dissident subject, and the instigator of 'resistance'. Resistance, in Foucauldian terms, hence, does not always fight power as such, but is present in the peculiar forms, techniques, and laws, by which individuals and their freedoms are abused and negated in given socio-historical circumstances. Indeed, resistance, which manifests itself as anti-authoritarianism, dissent, and rebellion within structured forms of powers as its antagonist, allows a better confrontation of 'legality' with what is 'illegal' and the scrutiny of the discourses and the technologies by which power neutralises its opponents.

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<sup>25</sup> For an insightful contribution to the debates around ideology and power, from Marx to post-Marxism, see Michèle Barrett, *The politics of truth: from Marx to Foucault* (1991).



## *2.2 a Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' and 'technologies of the self'*

Foucault has associated the success of modern liberal democracies with the notion of 'bio-politics', which connects power to life, and biology to politics, that is, to the state's 'administration' of that which is 'biologically alive' (see Ch. 7. footnote 32). Instead, 'governmentality', a Foucauldian expression, comprises the spiritual, the political, and the ethical. The idea of governmentality, finally, provides this thesis with a model for the political, legal, and religious forms of media control. These forms of control, Foucault argued, are implemented by three orders of powers; through direct and indirect intervention of the state, the Social Sciences, and the church in the life of society. In a later volume, *The Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault discussed how the State's governmental/legal apparatus, the Social Sciences agencies of health and mental care, and the church's religious institutions of education and pastoral care, compose a network whose aim is to reduce individuals to subjects of power and knowledge (See. 2.3) In this respect, the neologism 'bio-power' describes a peculiar mode of power in modern democracies regarding the ways in which citizens govern their lives with the values and knowledge imparted to them in relation to class, gender, race, age, and financial status (Foucault, 1978: 139). The production of particular kinds of knowledge and discourses – which operate at 'pastoral' level, as in the field of the human sciences (nutrition, health, psychology) – regulates disciplinary techniques of self-governance. These disciplines, which assume to help the functionality of the subject in society, in fact create individuals who are dependent on these knowledge and discourses' guiding principles in terms of responsibility and liability. In the same line of argument, he also stressed the role of religion in the implementation of disciplinary power, imparted to the subject by means of learned mechanisms of self-control and self-discipline. 'Disciplinary power' employs organisation training and surveillance to make its object (the body of the individual and of the population) more practical and productive ('bio-power'). This causes the correlation of the Church's pastoral care with various modes of cultural and social censorship.

In *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France* (Foucault, 1977-1978: 4), Foucault argued that censorship is implemented through many different methods, the most powerful being those which individuals internalise as ethical responsibility and self-censorship. He suggested a 'remapping' of the ways religion, social sciences, and politics interconnect to control the subject and society. Firstly, religion, as a constituent part of the ruling system, ought to be discussed as a material field. He charged Christianity with the political and cultural

ambition to manage society in order to maintain spiritual/pastoral care over politics, law, education, medicine, and health care. ‘Clerical censorship’ and ethical censorship, which both rely on the individual’s ‘self-censorship’ go hand in hand; moreover, their combination represents the historic methods for the covering up of conditions of unequal distribution of power. Foucault argues that censorship, whether by state or religion, does not contribute to remedial or educational functions, but to the implementation of oppressive techniques for the governmentalisation, regulation and penalisation of the individual’s self-determination.

In his preface to *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, Jeremy Carrette informs that Foucault’s engagement with religion as power, in the 1980s, is already patent in the essays included in *History of Sexuality* (1976-1984). In these essays, Foucault confronted the crucial role of Christianity in contributing to the fashioning disciplinary discourses on sexuality: ‘The transition from Christian themes of sexuality to the technologies of self in 1980 occurred through a series of intermediary concerns with ‘governmentality’ (Carrette, 1999: 135-153). Foucault’s theory of ‘governmentality’, generating a critique of the Church as the place for the ‘governance of the self’ and the ‘governance of others’, may be applied to institutionalised Catholicism as ‘spiritual government’. In the *History of Sexuality*, while theorising on knowledge, power, and subjectivity as principles of the foundation of western cultures, Foucault discussed the role of the Church in creating codes of normativity, which are also applied by law. In Vol. 1, he demonstrated that individuals, when posited as ‘subjects’, depend on power systems which exercise control over all aspects of their lives within a ‘logic of discourse’, imposing on them disciplinary ‘technologies of the Self’ (Kelly, 2013: 32).

In modern societies, Foucault explains, the executive powers of the old monocentric legislative/political/religious system (absolute monarchy) is distributed to various agencies and institutions in charge of health, family, profession, and sexuality. Such disciplinary networks today create the conditions for a particular ‘technology of the Self’, based on self-scrutiny. As Foucault noted in the seminar text, *Technologies of the Self*, all small and large-scale forms of state and church’s suppression of the individuals’ civil freedoms (or ‘rights’) are implemented by techniques of renunciation of the Self and renunciation of knowledge (Foucault, in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983: 245-254). In this respect, the church appears as a system that teaches techniques of self-censorship. In confessional states, the ruling system often relies on its institutionalised religion to attain public order. Thus, religion adapts its ethical discourse, in part, with the intention of contributing toward dispensing normative codes and elaborating

forms of control and reprimand.

### *Conclusions*

As I have noted, in *Quaderni dal carcere*, there is a sincere belief that the communist party's organic intellectuals could contribute to creating the revolutionary conditions for the establishment of a more equal socialist state and enforce the bonds of people's sense of national identity by engaging in class struggle and fighting dominion by means of dialectical dissent. Contrarily, Foucault, critical of Marxism, yet admittedly indebted to historical materialism, constructed a theory of dominion, in which ramified power discourses and methodologies are put into effect by the state and its agencies to keep individuals under their direct and constant control. Hence – as I will discuss on the basis of a couple of essays written by Foucault on religion as power – rather than enforcing the individual's sense of liberty and development, the church set out to exercise oppression over society. (Mark Ollsen, 2004: 454) It is worth adding that the different perspectives derived from Gramsci and Foucault, albeit reaching different conclusions about the outcomes that artists and intellectuals can attain in opposing the church institution, finally complement each other, at least in respect to the three case studies of cinema censorship I intend to analyse.

***Importance of the study***

I deal with Church censorship as a culturally and ethically dissatisfying phenomenon, which originates from power relations, against which various manifestations, cinema artists, critics, and producers have raised their protests. These manifestations are both obvious (when they occur in the centralised bureaux, appropriate to their implementation), and concealed (in governmental and social relations where clerical censorship should not be allowed to advance claims). Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini described censorship as ‘an act of intellectual and moral defeat’, which buries into secret archives the films about people and subjects, which the *status quo* wishes to obscure from the public sphere:

‘Censorship is a way to state one’s weakness and intellectual inadequacy. Censorship is always a political weapon; certainly, it is not an intellectual method. Critique is the intellectual method, which presupposes knowledge of what is appraised and fought against. To criticise is not to destroy, but to place a certain subject in its correct opposition to other subjects. To censor on the other hand is to destroy, or, at least, to contrast the course of reality.’ (Fellini, 1958: 23)

My study is important because it aims to break, as other contemporary scholars have recently done, a long cultural subjection that we, Catholic or secular citizens of Catholic education, have felt towards the Roman curia. This subalternity has caused Italian citizens to feel refrained from criticism of the Vatican’s power influence, of which clerical censorship against the media, here addressed, has been one of the most anachronistic expressions.

***Research scheme***

The research scheme that I have chosen to construct is interdisciplinary. I use critical theory and film analysis in combination with empirical research at institutes of culture and film archives. My choice of the supporting theoretical background of Marxist and postmodern theories on art, religion and society has indeed the aim to explore the impact of intellectual discourse on the church's discourse and practices. This comprehensive framework will help to pull together ideas and disciplines pertinent to my main methods, which include film analysis

and the review of cinema history. My research fields, which span through the interrelated areas of ‘film studies’, ‘history’, ‘law’, and ‘religious studies’, require that I take into account different types of methods to connect distinct sectors of the literature available. This allows disentangling the complicated liaisons between church, state, law, society, and the media.

I develop my argument on most recent trends in critical theory, film analysis, and the sociology of religion. Cultural critique will help to draw attention to the governmental institutions, which establish codes, administer techniques, endorse values of identity and belonging, and impose discipline on the people. The existing literature in this area provides this thesis with a wide theoretical framework in the social sciences. It supports my investigations in past and current intellectual debates regarding various aspect of censorship by religion and cinema. I examine not only the ideological, but also the socio-cultural foundations of clerical censorship as a product of an inclination to pose moral judgement on the arts. The Church is posed as a traditional instigator of varied forms of censorship, constructed across the various eras according to what the religious authorities believe is, or is not, of moral worth.

In tracing a methodological framework to meet the main questions posed by the current thesis on the complicated relationship between cinema and religion via the state, and the church’s joined system of censorship, I develop a line of argument, which may contribute to, and expand on, existing studies on cinema, religion, and censorship. I work with a combination of approaches involving cultural critique, social sciences, and film analyses. The pragmatic method I aim to match with speculative reasoning is film analysis, and film critique. As Bordwell highlights in *Film History*, films as ‘artefacts’ (or ‘formal systems’), made up of discourse, style, and narrative unity, prompt questions of how these functions affect the viewers’ sensibility and reasoning, while engaging their sense of aesthetics (Bordwell and Thompson 2010). Below is an outline of the research methods and related analytical procedures that I adopt.

I have divided films into two main generational blocks. In each group, I introduce political, sociological and cultural perspectives that facilitate an understanding of the attitudes towards the *status quo*, which have been put forward by the filmmakers, whose work I am going to investigate.

### ***Objectives***

Does the Catholic leadership have the right to suppress cinema people's freedoms of speech, opinion and representation in any direct or transversal way? The aim of my thesis is to show the anachronism of such attitudes. I base my criticism of the empirical evidence provided by data related to the revision processes and censorship procedures of films containing allusions to values and facts vital for the Church.

The other aim is to verify if these films were penalised for having advanced unorthodox representations and discourses on religion, religious values, and symbols, or for having undermined the prestige of the clergy.

### *Main methods*

Foucauldian genealogy: I plan to develop my empirical approach to Church censorship on the model provided by Foucault's genealogical method (Wickham and Kendall 1999). At the side of the existing literature in the field of cinema and censorship, I draw on the following types of archival documents: official declarations, legal briefs and court records, letters, constitutional decrees on freedom of expression and its related limitations, constitutional agreements on the church-state relations, and archival film censorship materials issued at the varying stages of the censorial process. I will focus my perspective on the ways by which the Church has established institutionalised forms for the administration of value-bound discourses and practices, by means of corporative management, rituals, and education; thus neglecting its role as promoter of deeper cultural and social bonds. Foucault's genealogical method will help to disentangle the ways by which state and church produce interrelated governmental practices of censorship to control the media sector and its effects on society. The genealogical method will help to identify how power develops and produces its ramified disciplinary systems.

The main idea supporting clerical censorship is that religious non-orthodoxy as much as a film's deviation from the church's tenets might have harmful effects on impressionable minds. In evaluating the social impact of religious dissidence through the cinema of dissent, I draw on Foucault's theories of governmentality to answer two main sets of questions:

1. By what means are the Catholic Church's censorial control and influence exercised? What happens at legal, administrative, and cultural level when individuals related to the Church exert censorial control on the cinema industry by means of indirect condemnation (shaming, boycott and banning), or official indictment (bureaucratic and financial boycott and/or police and

magistrate denunciation)?

2. From what channels and in view of what counter-discourse have the film industry and individual filmmakers reacted to clerical censorship to defend freedom of expression, representation and satire? In what ways, and at what times have the old regulations for film censorship changed, as a result of the film industry, the dissident producers, the filmmakers, and the cinema scholars' fights in defence of freedom of expression? What is the part played by court judges in reforming the old censorship codes?

Related questions will ask whether censorship by religion can anachronistically affect the authors and the audience's constitutional freedoms to inform and be informed, and conversely, whether cinema can in turn, affect the religious and governmental organisations.

I will examine several films which stand out as examples of the relationship between cinema and history of censorship, focusing on three key issues: the film as agent of dissidence, the film as a source for the historian, and the film as a method to rethinking the past. For this reason, I have chosen to adopt Foucault's genealogical method since being historiographic in nature it is more compatible with my personal outlook, while also offering the chance of being merged with other methods, such as genre theory and film hermeneutics (Wickham and Kendall 1999).

Foucault's genealogical method questions the tendency of modern societies to construct individuals whom are turned into the subject of power, to address the role of the Church as the supplier of allegedly infallible interpretation of truth, annihilating all other truths: an intellectual supremacy, which in itself contains the seeds of censorship. The genealogical method supports my empirical enquiry into the ramified ways in which state and church contribute to the construction and implementation of forms of cultural and governmental oppression. Foucault's genealogy not only helps to distinguish the differing forms of governmental controls that the Church has supported in the twentieth century in matters of censorship against the media, but in line with Nietzsche's genealogy, shows the 'errors' in history; all that is unacknowledged, and which has allowed the power of censorship to grow and proliferate.

Genealogy, Foucault argued, allows 'to identify accidents, the minute deviations - or conversely, the complete reversal - the error, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us' (Foucault, 1971: 146). Foucault's 'archaeology of knowledge', implanted on the analysis of discourse, turned to

genealogy when the author began to focus his analysis on all that affects, limits, and institutionalises discursive formations. As Foucault argues in *Verité et pouvoir*, the genealogical method expands discourse analysis by moving to ‘discursive regimes’, that is, by offering data on the effects of power. I conduct discourse analysis in Chapter 6 and related *Appendix* (6.4.a.b.) to show the strategic influence of Papal’s encyclicals on the governmental and cultural censorship of the film industry’s cinematographic products. Foucault’s method requires that the researcher has at his or her disposal archival data for discourse analysis, based on empirical examinations. Archival data has helped to identify factors and changes, relevant for my analysis of the specific rights, legally acquired by the Church of Rome to take part in state censorship. I have placed data against the background of significant socio-historical events (id est, wars, papal elections, changes in the government, terrorism, and social clashes). I have selected socio-cultural factors (such as the ones suggested by Cipriani’s idea of ‘diffuse religion’) on which the Catholic hegemony survives, despite the growing marginality of religions in the world’s high-capitalist societies. My qualitative analysis and subsequent discussion will be based on secondary existing quantitative data that contains the number and types of censorship cases against films accused of irreligion, and activated by the transversal intervention of the Vatican and Church's activists in the civil society.

As I will discussed at length in my thesis, in the majority of Western countries, and in Italy too, the law prescribes that films (feature films, short films, news-reels, adverts) are presented to a revision committee before receiving clearance for public screening. The Italian Ministry’s General Cinema Directorate and Database has carried out a complete mapping of the films, which underwent censorship, beginning from September 1944. Files of censored Italian/foreign films are available, supplemented by detailed documentations allowing a reconstruction of the history of film censorship in post-war Italy. This list of banned films compliments a summary of the decrees, regulations, prohibitions, condemnations, and type of penalties issued under the Italian Criminal code by the legal authorities in charge of the cinema and theatre sectors. Data which I have drawn from key film databases and censorship archives, suggest that following the censorship authorities’ official requests for changes, *Nihil Obstat* permissions were granted in the majority of cases, provided that producers and directors agreed to make amendments. Arranged and imposed amendments concerned the ‘preventive censorship’ stage (stage 1. amendment of scripts) during the production phase (stage 2. editing and revision of audio-visual material). The audio-visual corrections generally include the amendment of sound tracks, dialogues, music, costumes, sets, etc, or the elimination from the film’s structure, of



entire scenes and sequences believed to be offensive to the principle of decency; thus deemed dangerous for the public order, blasphemous, or offensive of human dignity.

I acknowledge the importance of previous projects in the field of cinema and state censorship that are valuable for my analysis, such as 'Italia Taglia', accomplished in 1999. I have based my research-plan on secondary data analyses, and data which has been collected by cinema researchers, such as Tatti Sanguineti, and Mino Argentieri, who have explored issues of film censorship and who have obtained empirical based statistics on films revised or banned, according to their 'unacceptable contents', from the point of view of the governmental regulations in matters of cinema censorship, alongside the sense of moral worth established by censors. The existing archives contain documents issued in censorship revision procedures. I elaborate on this statistical information with regard to films revised in terms of metres/minutes of cuts and audio/visual amendments, imposed on the films structure by the censors for 'offence of religion'. I also take a closer look at correspondence between filmmakers or producers and the censorship boards' executives, to obtain valid certificates. I look in detail at particular cases of films struck by censorship either directly (through the legal system) or indirectly (by religious and /or political boycott). I take into consideration the content of major court trials and tribunal hearings, in state prosecution against cinema production companies and/or filmmakers, for the violation of people's 'religious sentiment'. I consider these existing data reliable and suitable to answering my research question. Accordingly, I aim to give priority to case-research on films selected from my secondary database, in order to conduct in-depth investigations of the correlated legal, cultural, social, and so on, which affect censorship trials. (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 73-103). I discuss a number of major real-life cinema trials, taking into account internal and external documents such as interpretative observations, interviews, critical reviews, trial documentations, and photographic archives, on which I build and test my theory. I will test my hypothesis not only over a variety of existing archival materials but relate them to a variety of factors, which potentially generate clerical censorship as a socio-political and cultural phenomenon.

In contextualising these factors, basing my considerations on something more complex than the textual evidence provided by Papal encyclical letters on the Church's theorised relations with the film industry, I plan to avoid generalisations of 'clerical censorship'. Indeed, the Church's intrusions resists straightforward categorisation especially because they are often concealed collateral phenomena, coming together as a result of subtle, transverse control actions. These

actions are more effective than some of the clergy's other upfront interventions of moral control implemented through the Church's official media, agencies and institutions. In my view, the very nature of 'clerical censorship' tries to prevent observers to explore with scientific evidence the hegemonic interference of the church in censorial governmental action; thus, an insight into this phenomenon can be better generated by argumentation and the conceptualisation of a wide variety of materials.

In my socio-historical outlook on Church censorship, I approach the 'history of ideas' which have affected the relationship between religion and free-thinking, as the concept is understood in Foucault's genealogical method (Foucault, 1969: 138). I plan to conduct a detailed research on the historiography of censorship and compare it to sociological and political perspectives on free speech, freedom of expression, issues of power, and cultural hegemony. In order to understand Church censorship, I will approach religion as a historical and socio-cultural phenomenon, which developed its structure, and changed its original ideology, creating branches, alliances, and enemies. In relation to cinema censorship, knowledge of the laws, and facts and ideas of the past is crucial (Bruce, 2000: 5). Accordingly, I conduct an evaluation of the class conflict' in post-Catholic Italy, which presupposes discourse analyses (Chapter 8). The socio-historical perspective can facilitate my approach to religion as an institution with significant social implications.

Given that my filmography deals prevalently with plots censored for alleged 'offence of values, ideas and people (often of some public importance and stature), involved in religious matters, I aim to conduct discourse analysis. 'Critical analysis is indispensable to the inductive study of narration in film history' (Bordwell, 1985: XIII). The discussion of plots according to their ideological message will imply that theoretical observations are linked to practical criticism. Questions supporting my film analysis are: 1. How art (cinema) and religion (Catholic Church) maintain their influence on the public opinion-formation processes; and 2. In what ways viewers, who are exposed to a cinematic critique of the Church, of its values, figures, and institution, are affected by such critique to the point of experiencing a change in their relations to the church's authority and in their belief? In film analyses, I also question the ways in which the authors, the film producers, and the public respond to censorship. In this sense, film analysis and discourse analysis become merged in part 2.

## PART 2

### *CHAPTER 4 – The Church of Rome’s hegemonic settlement through the Twentieth Century*

#### *Introduction*

In my *Review of Literature* Chapter, I have outlined the Gramscian and Foucauldian theories that support my analysis of the different and complex forms of control coming from the Catholic establishment as a traditional hegemonic force of cultural and political impact over society and the arts. As I have stated in the *Introduction*, in my analysis of the Italian juridical-political discourses, which on the one hand touch on the problem of freedom of speech and representation, and on the other, the church and state's need to control the cinema industry, I draw on Foucault's attention to the disciplinary techniques of governmentality, as exposed in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' has in fact a central place in my analysis of the genealogy of political/clerical censorship. I pay attention to the technologies of censorial power to support my discussion of the links between the old punitive system of censorship (preventive censorship) and the contemporary new system, which places emphasis on authorial liability with the authors and producers allowed to establish the ratings of their own productions. As will become evident, the media industry, in Italy, has assimilated the legal system's concerns and developed strategies of ethical responsibility (self-regulation and self-censorship). In dealing with the relations between the media, the state and the church, it will be useful for me to draw on Foucault's idea of 'governmentality', as a notion which can be applied not only to political power, but also to religion, medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, law, the media, and so on. Governmentality helps me to underline how power is not only a question of violence and control, coercion and consensus, since in modern liberal societies, the individual and the state co-determine each other within a system of self-generating power relations (Foucault 1982: 219-222). I will analyse the dialectical opposition of the forces involved in cinema and censorship and how they converge in what Foucault sees as the juridical mechanism legitimating forms of compliance and resistance, which are constructed and inbuilt in the ruling powers' different discourses.

Accordingly, in Chapter 4 I pose questions on the historical, governmental incidence of the Holy See inside the Vatican state, a 'kingdom' in its own right, situated at the core of the

capital city of Italy, Rome. I aim to offer an insight into key factors related to the state and the church's historical accords during three particular political stages – the fascist era, and the first and the second Republic, hence covering a large historical period, an essential landscape of my analyses.

In what follows, I set the ground for discussions, in Chapters five, six and seven, of more circumstantiated examples of censorship by religion against the cinema industry. The goal is to determine to what degree the Holy See has influenced and may still have power over Italy's cultural and political debates, which has the potential to affect the nation's socio-cultural identity in years to come; as suggested by Italian progressive filmmakers, who in their plots have offered representations, sometimes of great social relevance, of the role of Catholicism and of the Vatican from often anticlerical angles. I explore the historical and political processes that turned Catholicism into an enduring cultural hegemony with established governmental roles, affecting all sectors of the public sphere (Gramsci 1971). The task is to clarify the role of Catholic traditional and organic intellectuals in the history of clerical censorship, and eventually highlight their relations with the secular world' intelligentsia. I examine the historical negotiations between state and church, which determined the 'hegemonic block', in Gramsci's definition, ruling over the civil society and the arts from 1929 to the Revision of the Lateran agreements in 1984, and the following decriminalisation of 'offence of state religion', which was constitutionally de-legitimised at the turn of the Century.

#### *4.1. Religion as mass phenomenon versus the Church's intellectual discourse*

It is often the case that the church becomes a component of the 'superstructure'. The superstructure, Gramsci argues, is made up of institutions and intellectuals, administering power in the coming together of those socio-political relations, which make a structure coherent and meaningful (Gramsci 1949). The superstructure comprises cultural institutions, power structures, roles, and rituals, which embody ideologies and policies designed on the 'will to power' of the ruling upper class. From this angle, religion can be seen as a sociological and political mass phenomenon. Parish priests, bishops, and Church's activists, as figures hierarchically involved in the Vatican network of agencies, are in this sense, part of a power establishment maintaining hegemonic cultural positions in society. Furthermore, following the Pope's predicaments, Catholic activists – politicians, professionals, capitalist entrepreneurs, and 'organic' intellectuals – can without a doubt, play a relevant role in targeting the Church's

opponents, according to the Vatican's established agenda. Thus, the history of clerical censorship as a manifestation of the Church's enduring privileged status, from 1929 onwards up to the Revision of the concordats in 1984, is also the history of its cultural politics and governmental activities.

Clerical censorship of the film should therefore be followed from the time when the Vatican was granted by Mussolini's fascist government an established political sovereignty as state religion, continuing throughout the first and second republic, when the Vatican would regularly receive support for its political agenda, and offer support to the nation's power lobbies.

The involvement of the Church in cinema matters, as Viganò explains in *La chiesa e il cinema* (2002) has been one of mutual attraction and interdiction. These diplomatic inferences began during the fascist regime, when the 'ideological blocks' of the state and the church came to a momentous settlement in the occasion of the Papal diplomacy's manoeuvres in 1929. The signed pact between Church and state, also known as the Lateran Agreement, continued unaltered until 1984, when the Lateran Pacts were revised.

Limitations of clerical interventions have been set by the changes introduced with the revision of the Lateran accords (established in Article 7, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic), regulating the relations between the state and the Catholic Church. These rapports were modified by the mutual consent of the state and church without recourse to any constitutional revision. Thus, only in the post-Revision era, from the turn of the millennium onwards, have Catholic censors been placed in the legal situation of not harming the cinema people's freedoms with issues of clerical censorship. Thus making more possible the ideological premises set by the Second Vatican Council to open a dialogue between the Church and the secular society in matters of religious freedom, and freedom of expression.

The ample historical phase I focus on, which starts from the 1930s through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s until the year 2000, is characterised by the alternating success of centre-right parties (DC, PSDI, PL, MSI) and leftist parties (PC, PSI, PD), during which the clergy has managed to find ways to construct consensus for, and drive support to, the centre-right parties affiliated with the Catholic strata of society, fighting for power in the nation's political elections.

I divide this vast time-span of my inquiry into three phases with the purpose of defining the conditions of the 'pre-war' period (Fascist cinema), the 'post-war' years (cinema of the New Republic) and 'New Millennium phase (cinema of the Second Republic). Each of these three

groups bring together decades of crucial historical changes. Data derived from film archives suggest a cultural continuum, which is relevant to the analysis of the development of cinema and censorship regulations. Censorship regulations, in fact, have remained somewhat behind the evolution of cinema in contemporary Italy with the evident intervention of the church's conservative establishments.

As is the case, from the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Italian Republic, to date, the alternating governments have been characterised by the regular rotation of coalitions of political parties with the prevalence on the seats of the Italian Parliament, of the Christian Democrats and Socialists.

No less remarkable are the changes that occurred in the Vatican governmental policies, at the succession of Papacies as different as those held by Pope John XXIII, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. Their doctrinal opinions and political strategies have led to important changes in the practices of the Catholic Church over society and the arts. This is evident from the encyclical letters on the subject of cinema, which are discussed in the *Appendix*.

After unravelling the political and historical circumstances, which endorse the moralising, educational role of the church in the Italian society, the Vatican's cultural politics by which clerical censorship is endorsed and practiced on the grounds of legal material conditions will become clearer.

The historiography of the state and the church's governmental and cultural connections to the Italian national life and politics since Mussolini's regime prove the powerful impact of such relations on the cinema industry. However, the Lateran Agreements between Pius XI and the Duce Benito Mussolini in 1929, protracted throughout the first, and part of the second Republic up until the official revision of the Lateran Agreements in 1984 (Mugnaini 2003) has not slowed down the contribution of Italian cinema to the secularisation processes, despite the nation's long state of endorsed confessionalism.

The diachronic changes that occurred in the censorial system through negotiations with legislative, political and clerical agencies are illustrated by the extensive literature available on the argument. The reorganisations of the state's cinema legislation, constantly discussed in interviews with filmmakers, producers, cinema and governmental authorities in the 'Ministry of Culture', presents underlying complex phenomena, which have allowed not only direct interventions, but also collateral forms of infiltration, exercising pressure and influence on the

state cinema censorship apparatus.

The chronological framework described here explains the struggles between dissident anti-establishment cinema and state censorship, which fostered juridical reforms in matters of freedom of speech and representation. These observations support the notion of state and cinema censorship as joined corrective agencies, implementing the hegemonic classes' discourses through dominant forms of governance. In particular, in observing Church censorship, one can see that power is obtained through consensus rather than imposition. Moreover, one can infer that other-than-political forms of power operate in non-vertical and non-linear ways, maintaining dominion through their ramified agencies. Both Gramsci and Foucault have indeed discussed power as the coming into force of forms of self-legitimizing practices through hegemonic constructed consensus, and forms and methods of governmentalisation fashioned on power discourses.

Beckford and Luckmann, in *The Changing Face of Religion* (1989), have noted that today, despite the crisis worldwide in the Christian churches' institutional apparatus, due to the emergence of new forms of civil religions ('self-fulfilment', 'familism' and 'mobility ethos'), institutionalised religions still claim a key-role in secularised nation's governmental home and foreign affairs.

#### *4.2 Vilification of state religion according to the Italian criminal law*

'Contempt of religion' ('vilipendio della religione') was introduced into the Italian legal system in 1889 ('Zanardelli Criminal Code'). It merely covered the crime of blasphemy, and protected religious freedom either individually or collectively, without discrimination among the different existing cults. Under fascism, the 1930 revision of the Criminal Code ('Rocco Criminal Code') restored the preferential treatment for the Catholic religion by defining it as *state* religion, thus discriminating against other religions.

'Contempt of *state* religion' ('vilipendio della religione *di stato*') used to protect the Catholic religion primarily as an institution. The Constitutional Court in 1997 (n. 329) declared the unconstitutionality of Article 404, in relation to Article 406. In 2000, with sentence n. 508, the Constitutional Court also abolished Article 402, deleting the definition of state religion, as the principle was no longer applicable following the Revision of the state and church Concordat in 1984-85. The decree established the equality of all religions before the state, the protection of

which is now in force.

In July 2002, Article 405, in the section dictating the punishment of serious disruption of religious services of the Catholic worship, was also declared unconstitutional. With sentence n. 168, April 2005, the Constitutional Court declared the unconstitutionality of Article 403, regulating crimes of offence against Catholic ministers. (Paragraphs 1 and 2. *Penal Code*). The matter was further accommodated with Law 85/2006 by which Art.s 403 and 404 were totally replaced, Art. 405 modified, and Art. 406 abrogated.

‘Contempt of religion’ has been, and remains, a threat to freedom of thought, expression and political opinion, with atheist and freethinking voices being its key targets. The fact that a crime such as blasphemy, which is typically a crime of opinion, is still present in the legal system indicates how the Catholic Church affects the Italian legislation. It is not merely coincidental that complaints against blasphemy generally strike non-Catholic authors. Despite the recent reforms of the Penal Code relating to blasphemy, the crime persists, although it has lost its former reference to the Catholic religion.

On the one hand, non-religious and atheist filmmakers have been persecuted for alleged insults to religion, and on the other, for expressing concern over freedom of expression and implicitly speaking against censorship laws. In 2007, the European nation’s council emanated a Resolution, asserting that blasphemy should no longer be considered a crime. The following historical and legislative discussion of ‘vilification of religion’ will help to demonstrate how the persecution of those filmmakers who have addressed religion from a critical angle, and transversally criticised the principles and authorities which protect its privileges, has been conducive to reaching the recent stage, whereby the parliamentary declaration of the Italian state's supreme laicity was made possible.

#### *4.3 The Vatican Church as a component of the Italian state’s power structure*

The task of targeting dissidence by law has never been a trouble-free and non-violent one. In order to validate their moral responsibility to intervene on dissidence, all power institutions, whether religious or civil, consolidate standards of conformity by creating codes, laws, and tribunals. They elect authorities and executives, establish censorial boards, nominate committees, target groups of individuals and define their associated problems. They issue mandates, conduct investigations and produce reports and indexes. Documented evidence of



the Vatican church's comparable control procedures against heresy, blasphemy, sacrilege and unorthodoxy, in the name of a 'persistent false belief', is widely available by scholarly examination of its practices, as I will discuss hereafter (Dawkins, 2006: 22). The aim of this section is to compare some aspects of Gramsci's political thought with the history of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>26</sup> in the first half of twentieth century Italy. It focuses on Gramsci's concepts of social-historical block and 'hegemony' in relation to the rise of fascism and the consolidation of the Vatican's status in the historical period that saw the rise to political power of the Italian bourgeoisie and the dominance of its 'world view'.

The Roman Curia (now the Vatican State) has been intertwined with Italy's political life for centuries. Its agencies have been embedded in Italian history dictating what basic human behaviours guide the way citizens relate to one another. Italy used to have no history of religious pluralism. This implies that the varied sectors of society have held values whose ideas were determined by a rather homogeneous political and moral discourse, which were endorsed by the nation's Catholic intelligentsia and elites. As Gramsci argued, Catholicism has pervaded the nation's public life long enough to become the basis of the national society and merge people and official ceremonies into its rituals and principles. For these historical and socio-cultural reasons, Italy's identity is unquestionably Catholic, despite the fact that a portion of the population may not see 'religious affiliation' as necessarily equivalent to 'religious belief'. Therefore, despite the idea that confessional state does not apply to the current globalised era, Catholicism, for Italian citizens, does not really constitute a secondary identity as such, but is rather perceived by the majority of them as a component of their unified country towards which 'citizens have obligations' (Weithmann, 2002: 157).

Italy has remained an almost entirely 'confessional state' throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, Italians have shown the tendency to maintain life-long affiliations fashioned on the model of secular Catholicism, even when proved defective. Party affiliation too may assume the form of civil religions with structured ethical and normative patterns, making supporters compliant with, or opposed to, rules and doctrines imposed by the ruling hegemony. It is thus important to present a brief history of the Holy See and Italy's related confessional status. I consider it useful to mention at this point the historical circumstances, set by the 11<sup>th</sup> February

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26 The concept 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' first appeared in Karl Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850, Works of Karl Marx*, 1850. Passages first published in English in the journal *The Marxian*, New York, 1921, V. 1, No. 2. It was published as a separate edition by Labour News Company, New York, 1924.

1929 Agreements (also known as the ‘Treaty’) between the Italian Fascist state and the Holy See, which allowed the latter to cover once again a dominant position as a state within the state.<sup>27</sup>

During the nineteenth century territorial and political Unification of Italy, the Vatican was gradually dis-empowered by the Italian Savoia monarchy. Consequently, in 1870, it lost a great percentage of its territories and related powers. In order to survive its subjugation, the Holy See saw in the rise of Mussolini’s Fascism an occasion to regain its status and territories.

#### *4.4 The Vatican during the fascist ‘Ventennio’: a competitive equilibrium*

Gramsci’s ideas of the presence of historical blocks within the fascist regime’s political agenda and related hegemony elucidate the period between the two World Wars. Gramsci also included the Church of Rome in the Italian system of alliances and oppositions to the point of having a constant word in political matters. In February 1929, coming to an agreement after sixty years of open conflict between church and Monarchy, a treaty was signed.<sup>28</sup> With the 1929 Lateran Agreements, Mussolini conceded to the Vatican City becoming a state in its own right (Falco 1935: 18). Vatican diplomacy during the Lateran Concordat secured privileges to the church institutions and agencies, especially to the lay organisation, Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action), whose propaganda mission was to encourage direct Catholic influence over society (Thompson, 1991: 44).

With the Lateran treaty, the Pope acquired sovereignty as Head of the Vatican State, with the immediate consequence of Pius XI becoming somewhat Mussolini’s equal, at power level, at least symbolically. It is interesting to note that Mussolini was anticlerical in principle and advocated fascism as a religion-substitute, but came to the Lateran Treaties, when it became

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<sup>27</sup> As Pollard argues in *The Vatican and Italian Fascism*: ‘Croce was especially critical of the Concordat and the many concessions to the church it contained, and he warned of the danger of an anticlerical backlash, signs of which he had already detected among the supporters of the Government.’ (Pollard, 1985: 67)

<sup>28</sup> The 1929 Concordat, undersigned by Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri, established the creation of the Vatican as an independent State. It granted a huge economic retribution to the Vatican as compensation for giving up all claims on its lost territories, possessed from 756 AC onwards and regained by the Savoia monarchy in 1870. However, Roman Catholicism gained, in reverse, the unique position as State region, turning Italy into a ‘confessional state’. These agreements limited Mussolini’s regime from expressing coherent values of laicity and democracy. See Agreement between the Italian Republic and the Holy See reproduced in *International Legal Materials* V. 24 n. 6, *The American Society of International Law*, November 1985, 1589. ‘Article 1.

evident that he could not safely secure his political powers without the Vatican's support (Pollard 1983). A second phase of the agreements, called the 'concordat', recognised Roman Catholicism as the official state religion of Italy, giving the church predominance over marriage law (with the consequence of making state divorce unattainable), and restoring Catholic religious teaching in all schools. In return, the clergy would not participate in politics, however that was simply untrue. A third phase established that the state provided financial compensation to the Vatican for the loss of the Papal territories. Thus, ironically, despite the fact that Mussolini had always proclaimed his atheism, anticlericalism and absolutism, the Vatican managed to gain back from the fascist regime what it had lost during the Mazzini-Cavour-Garibaldi's unification war (Donovan, 2003: 112).

However, the 'Conciliazione' did not appease the tensions between Mussolini and the Vatican. The relations between the Vatican and the fascist regime, in fact, deteriorated during 1929–32 soon after the 'Concordat' (third part of the Lateral Treaties).<sup>29</sup>



(In the photo: Benito Mussolini undersigns the Church and State Lateran Agreements. 1929)

After three years, between the spring and summer of 1931, a diplomatic crisis exploded, which continued throughout the fascist 'Ventennio'. Due to the knot of historical and political strategies mentioned above, involving the Vatican's economic interests, the church has always

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<sup>29</sup> The first and second parts were the Conciliation Agreements, granting the Vatican sovereignty as an independent state, and the Financial Convention, agreeing with the payment of an indemnity to allow the Vatican to regain the possessions lost during the unification of Italy, in 1870.

rejected all conditions of political marginalisation. Pius XI – defined by Gramsci as the ‘Pope of the Jesuits’ – addressed the relationship between church and state in his *encyclical letter Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* (1922):

61. There is a sort of moral, legal, and social modernism, which we condemn, no less determinedly of the way by which we condemn theological modernism.

65. The church does not wish, and should not wish, to mix up, without a just cause, in civil affairs. On the other hand, the Church cannot permit or tolerate that the state uses the pretext of certain laws of unjust regulations to do injury to the rights of an order superior to that of the state, to interfere with its constitution, designed by the Christ, or to violate the rights of God Himself over the civil society.<sup>30</sup>

From Pius XI’s words, one can infer that the church had struggled to maintain an exclusive role in the moral management of society.<sup>31</sup> During Fascism, in fact, Pius XI needed to restate the spiritual primacy of the Vatican Church in dictating the ethical principles that the state had to follow.

It is now clearer why to understand the constitutional interventions that the Catholic Church has exercised in many spheres of the Italian political, cultural, and social life, one has to speak of how the Catholic religion came to be institutionalised, and acquired legal relevance and constitutional recognition as a state within the state, and as ‘state religion’, from the settlement of the Lateran Pacts onwards, going through phases of peace and conflict.

It is relevant to quote here some considerations on institutionalised Catholicism. Gramsci argued that the Roman Curia had the responsibility of having supported undemocratic regimes over the centuries. He suggested that Catholicism was used to imposing subjection to the civil society via its theological doctrine. Catholic culture, Gramsci asserted, contributed to cover up the intrigues of the Italian socio-economical classes with dogmas and prejudices preventing class struggle. He witnessed the Vatican’s politics become an ally of the fascist growing hegemony which helped it to challenge those who opposed its *status quo* (Gramsci 1949).

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30 See Pius XI, Encyclical letter, *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* (1922), notes 61-65 and in the *Appendix*.  
[vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_23121922\\_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio\\_en.html](http://vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_23121922_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio_en.html)

31 For the church and fascist state liaisons see Doug Thompson’s monograph *State control in fascist Italy: culture and conformity, 1925-43* (1991) and, more recently, John Pollard’s *The Vatican and Italian Fascism 1929-32, A Study in Conflict* (2005).

In his 1949 volume, *The Vatican in World politics*, American political critic Avro Manhattan, after Gramsci, claimed that the paradigm offered by the structure of the Catholic Church helped Mussolini to gain a greater authority over his supporters. Manhattan, comparing the Vatican state to an authoritarian regime, argues that Pius XI and his bishops conducted a diplomatic fight to obtain from Mussolini an official recognition of the Vatican as an independent state within the state, making use of every means to ingratiate the Duce's favours, which included a public speech at the Milan University, praising Mussolini as 'a man of God'. Pope Pius XI's attitude toward Mussolini and the fascist doctrine, in this speech, is one of seeking to secure the church's secular power, as he advocates God's involvement in settling the political empowerment of the Catholic religion within the Italian state.

In turn, Mussolini, a radical atheist and anticlerical activist, reached an agreement to secure his regime with the Vatican's support. It was Mussolini in fact, the reluctant 'man of God', who finally solved the Roman Question, settling the 1929 Lateran Pacts between the monarchy and the Holy See. This allowed the creation of the Vatican state within the city of Rome (Soave and Zunino, 1977: 66). The concordat, as the exact expression of a relationship of forces fighting for dominance, satisfied the Roman Catholic Church expectations, recognising as it did, Catholicism as Italy's 'state religion'. Pio XI's addressed the issue with the following statement:

'Thus the conditions of religion in Italy could not be adjusted without prior agreement of the two powers, agreeing on the position of the church in Italy. [...] It took a man (Mussolini) perhaps sent by the Providence to meet such requirements [...] And by the grace of God, with much patience and a lot of work [...], we came to a Concordat; [...] it is with profound happiness that through it, we believe to have given back God to Italy and Italy to God.'<sup>32</sup>

The Pope's words clarify the nature of the Treaty between Fascism and Catholicism as a strategic pact between two systems fighting to impose their hegemonic influence on society (Manhattan, *Vatican Imperialism in the Twentieth Century* 1965). Pio XI's 'programma concordatario' (agreement agenda) supported a restoration of Catholic influence not only for the 'usual aspects of public morality, such as the anti-blasphemy campaign and the crusades

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<sup>32</sup> Speech of Pope Pius XI at the 'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore', Milan, 13th February 1929. 'The place of religion in Italy could not be adjusted without prior agreement between the two powers [the Vatican and the fascist regime] [...] Maybe we needed to meet such man of Providence (Mussolini) to attain our goal. [...] By the grace of God, with much patience and a lot of work [...] we have given back the seat of God to Italy and Italy to God '.

against immoral films, plays, and books, but also a battle against Protestant propaganda and proselytise' (Pollard, 1985: 104). Essential clauses in the pact included the establishment of the decree criminalising 'contempt of the state religion' and 'satire against religion' prosecutable under Art. 402 of the Criminal Code, which regulates the ways 'contempt of religion' crimes are judged and punished (Soave and Zunino, 1977:72).

In the decade following the Concordat, for which Mussolini made concessions that, according to Pollard, no other liberal regime would have granted, the antagonism between Catholicism and fascism continued, despite the fact that the Papacy was an essential contributor of the 'block of consensus' which the fascist regime relied on during its 21 years of government.<sup>33</sup> Within Mussolini's *Partito nazionale fascista*, anticlerical factions within the 'Gioventù fascista' ('Fascist Youth'), particularly adverse to the Catholic Action, violently contested the juridical status acquired by the Catholic Youth organisations. This was achieved thanks to Art. 43 of the Concordat, which expanded the range of the Holy See's political interventions (Pollard, 1985: 103).

Talking about the coming together of clerical fascism, Pollard argues: 'In the politically and economically unstable, and not to mention the socially 'disordered' Europe of the 1920s and 1930s, fascist ideas and movements were extremely attractive to many Christians' (Pollard 2007: 433-446). By joining Mussolini's hegemonic manoeuvres, the right-wing factions of Catholicism, which shared Mussolini's aversion to communism, would support opportunistic and provisional alliances between politicians of Christian inspiration and fascist activists (Soave and Zunino 1977). This was an alliance which finally determined a political and cultural 'synthesis of fascist ideology and Christian theology' affecting many spheres of the Italian ways of life, ranging from political affairs and warfare, to art and society.

It should be noted that Gramsci and the Communist party were the first to criticise the Vatican collaborationist behaviours during Fascism, aimed at sharing the mass consensus gained by Mussolini (Soave and Zunino 1977). In *Fascism in Italy*, Edward Tannenbaum stressed that

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33 Pollard claimed that this strong legacy was due to the fact that branches of the institutional church had turned into a kind of 'clerical fascism'. As proof of this, he quoted the attitude of Franciscan friar Agostino Gemelli, rector of the Catholic University of Milan. Gemelli, in 1938, supported the endorsement of the Racial Laws, and Father Brucculeri supported fascist policies in the Jesuit review, *La Civiltà Cattolica*. Pollard continues 'The term 'clerical fascist' may be attached as a label to individuals, members of the clergy or laicity, who were 'fellow travellers', or in Italy, 'flankers', of Fascism. Some became fully paid up members of fascist movements. Others remained outside, or belonged to separate movements that gave support to fascism' (Pollard 2007).

‘all the prelates praised the anti-Communism of the fascist regime with varying degrees of enthusiasm, but most of them persisted in seeing Fascism as authoritarian and pro-clerical, rather than totalitarian and anti-clerical’ (Tannenbaum, 1972: 231). Tensions arose again between the Vatican and the fascist regime during 1929-32. In 1931, the political clash between the Catholic Youth and the ‘fascist Youth’ determined a coalition, defined as ‘Alleanza’ (‘Alliance’) between antifascist leftist Catholic university students and monarchist Catholic students joining forces against Mussolini’s ‘Fasci della gioventù’ (Youth association). In order to oppose Mussolini’s anti-clerical attitude, up until his death, Pius XI supported the anti-fascist political strategies of ‘Azione Cattolica’ (Catholic Action), and encouraged its activists to exercise a stronger influence on the civil society: ‘Pius XI was critical of fascist corporatism in his 1931 encyclical letters, rightly perceiving that Mussolini’s corporative institutions [...] involved rigid regimentation of the work force and their exclusive ideological dependence upon the state.’ (Pollard, 1985: 172-173) Hence, the state and church’s reciprocal compliance evolved once more into open ideological battle when the Azione cattolica activist youth front came face to face once again with the Fascist Youth Movements (Klinkenhammer, 2004: 202-3).

In the meanwhile, in order to diffuse its hegemonic ideology, Fascist Italy, as like Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, mobilised social forces and cultural institutions. Cultural institutions featured on Mussolini’s state budgets as much as the production of cultural products. As Gramsci had theorised early in the twentieth century, such policies provided the state with its symbolic infrastructure in the service of ideology. In 1930, the fascist regime launched the state financed production company, Cines, which fitted the Duce’s idea of a state monopoly over the film industry and managed to compete with Titanus, Lux, and Caesar film productions in the following years.

The growing popularity of cinema as mass entertainment was made urgent in 1934, with the emanation of Law 5 February 1934, by which a governmental Cinema corporation was established, forerunner of the distribution company, E.N.I.C (Lonero and Anziano, 2004: 19). Such political and cultural turmoil worried the Vatican. Pius XI’s relations with Mussolini became even tenser after the Duce imposed the suppression of the ‘Catholic Youth’ movements. In *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931), Pope Pius XI signalled the potential dangers for human freedom and dignity arising from the clash between capitalism, the media world, and the world dictatorships.

In the encyclical letter, *Non abbiamo bisogno* (29 June 1931), Pius XI criticised Mussolini for his political disregard towards the church, and expressed strong opinions against totalitarian regimes. Two years later, in the encyclical letter *Dilectissima Nobis* (1933), the Pope proclaimed that the church was not 'bound to one form of government more than to another, provided that the Divine rights of God and that of the Christian conscience were safe'. Moreover, in his public discourse to cinema professionals, Pius XI expressed his dismay of the negative effects of immoral film plots on the church's flock of souls.

#### *4.5. The Vatican, from the pre-war broken alliance with Mussolini to the 1947 Italian Republic's Constitution*

Pius XII, elected at the death of Pius XI on 2nd March 1939, adopted an initial line of non-convergence between the Vatican and the Italian state, restraining his interventions to the anti-communist debates. Catholic 'organic' intellectual, Alcide De Gaspari, the *to be* DC leader, who was employed in the Vatican library during the 1930s, and who wrote a regular column for the review *L'Illustrazione Vaticana*, became the main defender of the Pontifical interests and promoter of these anti-Communist strategies. Political commentator Paul Ginsborg has highlighted Pope Pius XII's failure to unambiguously break away from the Nazi-fascist alliance, particularly on the issue of the implementation of racial laws between 1938 and 1940, and the deportation of Italian Jewish citizens to Germany (Ginsborg, 1995: 250).<sup>34</sup> However, Pius XII felt entitled to intervene against the participation of Italy in World War II and made full use of the Vatican's international diplomatic relations to reach the world's political leaders by means of public speeches and radio broadcasting. Once the war had begun, he chose a rigorous line of neutrality throughout the years of the conflict, but allowed parish churches and convents to provide shelter for the persecuted Jews citizens, making the Vatican a organized centre of aid for the oppressed population.

Ginsborg claims that the support of the Vatican to the 'lotta partigiana', from the liberation of Rome in the summer of 1944 onwards, transformed the DC group into a mass party. 'The interplay of force and strategy between Allies, Communists and Christian Democrats had a number of critical consequences for the thirteen months between the return of Togliatti in

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<sup>34</sup> Despite his popularity, Pope Pius XII was also criticized for staying silent on the issue of the Holocaust. Critics believe that the horrors of the Nazi-fascist alliance, and the inability of Pope Pius XII to stand against the holocaust, during the years of Second World War, have created the basis for the future criticism of the church and helped to determine its declining role. (Bax 1987).



March 1944 and the final liberation of the whole peninsula on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945.’ (Ginsborg, 1990: 50-51) In the new democratic Republic, the socialist and communist parties’ post-war programs of political engagement attempted to oppose Catholic monopoly over issues of national reconstruction. While Pius XII was struggling to secure the Vatican political stability in view of a continuation of the conditions set by the Lateran Agreements, in June 1944, PC leader and PM Togliatti (‘Ministro senza Portafoglio’) addressed the ‘Catholic question’, facing the issue of whether the Lateran Pacts ought to be abolished like other fascist institutions (Zunino 1977). Togliatti resorted to establishing an antifascist/democratic front by seeking coalition with Socialists and the Christian Democrats (centre-left). Togliatti’s political block incorporated the agenda of the trade unions, the youth federations, the women’s organisations, as well as the claims of the former armed resistance (the ‘partigiani’), into one national government). As for the centre-right parties, they resisted unification under Togliatti’s leaderships, keeping diplomatic contacts only with the trade unions. (Spriano 1990)

The end of the Second World War in Italy and Europe inaugurated a process that marked the return to being Catholic in ways that, after the eclipse of totalitarian politics, restated the tradition of social Catholicism inaugurated by Leo XIII. It is no coincidence that the Catholic party, under the leadership of anti-fascist De Gasperi, founder in 1919 of the Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI), inspired to Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical ‘Rerum Novarum’, was named ‘Christian Democrats’. Christian Democrat leader, Ciriaco De Mita, in an interview on the history of his Party, noted how De Gasperi’s death in 1954 ended a historic phase.<sup>35</sup> Torn between powerless spiritualism and moralistic voluntarism, the Catholic militancy of those years slowly dissolved, together with the idea of the church as an unavoidable political influence over civil society. In the new democratic Republic, the socialist and communist parties’ post-war agenda of political engagement persistently attempted to oppose Catholic monopoly over issues of national reconstruction. In consideration of this, Alfredo Pieroni, in *Chi comanda in Italia?*, asked to what extent were the Italians ruled by the Vatican: ‘It is an unavoidable law the one by which state and church collide threatening each other, especially when the church is a position to affirm itself as an electoral power’ (Pieroni, 1959: 22).<sup>36</sup> This

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35 DC’s leader, Ciriaco De Mita argued in an interview: ‘The turning point, or if you want the beginning of the DC crisis in the late sixties and early seventies, is in the gradual emergence, after De Gasperi, of a conception of politics which finds in institutions the point of connection between the party and the citizens. The DC becomes increasingly "closed" in self-sufficiency.’ (De Mita 1986: 105)

36 ‘È una legge inevitabile che, a livello di governo, Stato e Chiesa si urtino, e minaccino conflitti, soprattutto se la Chiesa può affermare di essere una forza elettorale. [...] Il lamento dei ministri della

situation of governmental open opposition lasted until the 1970s, when Catholics and communists reached a ‘historical compromise’ under Berlinguer’s governmental leadership in what is known as the ‘historical compromise’ (‘Compromesso storico’) (Barbagallo, 2004: 939-949).

It is now clearer the reason why, with the establishment of the new Italian republic, following the coming into force of the Constitution, the church made no recognition of having compromised its spiritual integrity by glorifying the regime and of having remained silent on the Holocaust (Soave and Zunino 1977). It simply began to adapt its discourse and collaborative practices to the new Republic. The Vatican attempted to regain authority of charisma by portraying Pope Pius XII through the media in a documentary film such as *Pastor Angelicus* (1942) (Gundle, 2007: 253).

Barbagallo argues that from the time when Italy chose to be a Republic by popular referendum, the relationship between the Church and the state continued almost unchanged. However, changes were made to the relationship between the state and the individuals in the civil society by the new republican constitution, warranting the citizens’ fundamental freedoms and constitutional rights (Barbagallo 1995). Art. 3. of the Italian Constitution recites: ‘All citizens have equal social status and are equal before the law, without regard to their sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social conditions.’<sup>37</sup>

It is useful to recall that in 1947, at the point when the Italian republic’s constitution was written, ideological oppositions within the Parliamentary constituents made possible for Art. 7 to eventually evolve in respect of the points made in Art. 8, which states that all religions have equal right to organise their rituals according to their own statutes in Italy. Before the amendment of the Lateran Agreements in 1984, Art. 7. and 8. Recited:

Art. 7. Lo Stato e la Chiesa cattolica sono, ciascuno nel proprio ordine, indipendenti e sovrani. / *State and Catholic Church are, each within their own order, independent and sovereign.* / I loro rapporti sono regolati dai Patti Lateranensi. Le modificazioni dei Patti, accettate dalle due parti, non richiedono procedimento di revisione costituzionale. / *Their relations are regulated by the Lateran pacts. Amendments to the pact accepted by both parties do not require any*

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Chiesa è di essere usati come ‘galoppini elettorali’, senza averne, più tardi, adeguati riconoscimenti’ (Pieroni, 1959: 22).

37 In *Stato nazionale, Costituzione, democrazia in Italia*, we read: ‘Tutti i cittadini hanno pari dignità sociale e sono eguali davanti alla legge, senza distinzione di sesso, di razza, di lingua, di religione, di opinioni politiche, di condizioni personali e sociali.’ (Barbagallo 1995)

*procedure of constitutional revision.*

Art. 8. Tutte le confessioni religiose sono egualmente libere davanti alla legge. / *All religious denominations are equally free before the law.* / Le confessioni religiose diverse dalla cattolica hanno diritto di organizzarsi secondo i propri statuti, in quanto non contrastino con l'ordinamento giuridico italiano. / *Denominations other than Catholicism have the right to organise themselves according to their own by-laws, provided they do not conflict with the Italian legal system.* / I loro rapporti con lo Stato sono regolati per legge sulla base di intese con le relative rappresentanze. / *Their relationship with the state is regulated by law, based on agreements with their representatives.*

Andrea Piola, a scholar in 'Diritto Ecclesiastico', intervening on the Catholic Church's legal and political privilege confirmed by Art 7 has argued that the decree merely acknowledged the fact that Italy is historically and culturally prevalently Catholic. In *Variazioni sul tema della religione dello Stato e del vilipendio della medesima*, in *Diritto ecclesiastico*, Piola has noted that the existence of contradictory principles in Art. 7 and Art. 8 prove the unwillingness of the 1947 Constitutional Assembly to contest the Lateran Agreements. This allowed the principle of 'state religion' to become 'factual' in 1948, when the Constitution came into force. The settlement made it constitutionally possible for the Lateran Agreements to persist *ex facto* (Piola, 1968, I: 233). Furthermore, although the definition of 'state religion', set by Mussolini, is not specified in Art. 7, 'vilification of Catholicism as the *state* religion' appeared as a punishable crime in the Italian Criminal Code and remained there until the year 2000. This is an important factor to bear in mind since 'offence of religion' is the crime I deal with in regards to the issues of political and clerical censorship against the cinema's products and authors.

During the first post-war decade (1945-1955), when Italy's mass society entered an era marked by more rapid offers and consummation of cultural products, cinema and its critics felt the urge to offer their own versions of historical facts by selecting, emphasising, or amending certain official endorsed interpretations (Cavallo 1990). For this reason, studies on the history of Italian cinema, commenting on the Fascist and post-fascist years, are crucial to develop an understanding of how media contributed to shifting the landscape out of the Duce's totalitarian hands. For the reasons quoted above, cinema directors, engaged in historical and social concern, often exploited the slogan 'In Italia comandano i preti' ('In Italy priests rule') as in *I nuovi mostri* (1977), by Dino Risi, and Mario Monicelli and Ettore Scola's episode *Tantum*

*Ergo*, in which a communist priest, Don Paolo Arnoldi, is caught by a high prelate while teaching class awareness to his working-class community of believers. In next to no time the flock is seduced back to order by the charismatic authority of the bishop. As I have discussed, the Vatican skilfully adapted its claims of influence and theological discourses to the new political scenario. Following the victory of the Christian democrats in 1948, the church sought alliance with the Christian Democratic Party to regain a centrality in power relations and remain involved in agencies of public education, media control, and censorship (Gundle, 2007: 254). An analysis of power relations and their related 'discursive practices' is indeed very important to evaluate how the Catholic Church has tailored its diplomatic strategies to the new situation to continue its dominion. Foucault states that discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. The 'Discourse' (or 'utterance') is a complex machinery that excludes all that it is unable to assimilate. In order to belong to a discipline, a proposition must meet certain conditions, must be able to subscribe to a certain theoretical horizon, and must use certain conceptual and theoretical foundations - which take the value of rule: it must become an element of the discursive practices which 'form' the object(s) of which they speak. For the diplomatic schemes mentioned so far, it is no surprise then that the Roman Catholic Church has maintained constant levels of institutional involvement in politics and civil matters, regardless of the different Popes' ideological perspectives on the alternating forms of government in Italy. Indeed, the encyclical letters in Chapter 6 will aptly illustrate how Popes have adapted their decrees to the most remarkable cultural and social transformations that occurred between 1945 and 1985.<sup>38</sup>

#### *4.6. State and the church's claims over the cinema industry*

Cinema popularity as a legitimate art form conveying both high aesthetic and ideological messages grew rapidly in the first decades of the Twentieth century. Before the Great War, the opinions of intellectuals on cinema were divided, as some denied that this new technique could produce art in the strictest sense. It was in the first post-war period that silent cinema was increasingly seen as art, due to the production of the French and German avant-garde movements, whose legacy developed into social realism. Following the Socialist Revolution, the Soviet government acknowledged the power of cinema as a tool of propaganda (see the

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<sup>38</sup> For the process whereby the fascist regime used cultural institutions to implement its political agenda, see Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State* (1978).

creation of the Kino-Glas producing truth-films based on documentaries to obtain political consensus). Since the first decades of the Twentieth century, Italian cinema has had a close relationship with the state, somewhat playing a role within Mussolini's system of propaganda.<sup>39</sup> The use of cinema for state propaganda or as a medium for imposing on the masses second post-warset values and behaviours was widespread and systematic. State propaganda resorted to media as vehicles of a modern representation of Italy before the world. During the twenty years of fascism, if a film approached unauthorised political issues, it would not be allowed for public screening. However, films restricted for breaking public decency regulations were very few, as filmmakers and producers would rather comply with the laws than jeopardise their chances to gain state funding.

Fascist Duce Benito Mussolini firmly believed that cinema was a great medium for the diffusion of the fascist ideology. While on the one hand the regime established interventional policies in support of national cinema productions, on the other, filmmakers were entrusted to convey a positive image of the nation and its administration, leaving the blame for representing social, moral, and sexual negativity to Hollywood's productions. Response to his calls for films and documentaries on the fascist way of life was enthusiastic as well as being in compliance with the government requirements. Consequently, the Board of censorship was rarely involved in altering the content of films produced during the regime.

Archival materials on the relationship between state and artists suggest that between 1922 and 1940 Mussolini implemented 'a policy of state paternalism' towards cinema scriptwriters and production companies. In turn, under the conditions of state licence and to avoid censorship, filmmakers and producers were compelled to include the fascist cultural nationalisation agenda in their topics. Behind the facade of mass-education, consensus was in fact the Duce's main objective (Mazzatosta 1978).

The cinema industry in the Fascist years has thus covered a distinctive role in the construction of the national public sphere. However, despite the state's interventions in cultural affairs and the presence of institutional structures regulating film production (Istituto L.U.C.E)<sup>40</sup> and

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39 See Pier Giorgio Zunino's insightful studies, *Interpretazione e memoria del fascismo: gli anni del regime* (1991) and *La questione cattolica nella sinistra italiana, 1940-1945* (1977).

40 The Istituto L.U.C.E, founded in 1924, and its related agencies, 'Giornale Luce', 'Settimana Incom', and 'Ciac', broadcasting documentaries, historical films, newsreels of celebrations and events in the daily political, social, and cultural life of the nation, offer invaluable archival resources. See the 'Istituto L.U.C.E Archives', observing documents from 1924 onwards: [archivioluce.com/archivio/](http://archivioluce.com/archivio/)

reception (Boards of censorship) for the interests of the autarchic regime, cinema under fascism was nevertheless ‘infused with subversive tendencies’ (Ricci 2008). This resulted in a close connection between fascist cinema and the national identity under the one political and cultural mandate. As attested by the ‘Istituto L.U.C.E’ archived films and news reels, the film industry, as all other patronised social and art fields which provided testimony of the actions undertaken in the public sector to promote the economy and facilitate social integration, was expected to contribute to a wide variety of governmental schemes.

As one of the major scholars on cinema, censorship, and fascism, Gian Piero Brunetta, points out, Mussolini was the political leader who ultimately authorised the Vatican to share control over the media: ‘The church [...] by means of the Centro (CCC), acquired effective powers of control over production, distribution and exhibition. Its influence over the auditoria of its own circuits and over those Catholic managers in the normal exhibitions sector, since they faced no antagonistic organised political forces, became an almost hegemonic force at certain level’ (Brunetta, 1979: 339).

The situation described above remained unchanged until the end of the Second World War, when Mussolini’s past concern for spreading a modernised idea of Italy was no longer an important topic for the post-war Neorealist filmmakers. Committed filmmakers in fact started to bring on the screens representations of the enormity of the war catastrophe, and the temporary deteriorations in private and public morals brought about by wartime emergencies, which had exacerbated civil and economic divisions, between north and south, and between city and country.

With the 1945 Republic, while radically moving from a totalitarian regime to a democratic one, the country retained its Catholic political core, epitomized by one of its two most influential party, the DC. As for the Vatican, in order to maintain its institutional connections with the secular state In 1945, it had to accept the reform introduced in the Italian constitution, protecting people’s ‘freedom to worship and belief’. However, despite having kept the status of state religion, Catholicism has undergone a substantial decline<sup>41</sup> from 1945 onwards, throughout the ‘First Republic’, as argued in others sections of this Chapter, regardless of the prevalence of Catholic parties in the succession of governments.<sup>42</sup> Because the nation had

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41 For statistics on the decline of State churches in Europe, see John TS Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi (Eds), *Church and State in Contemporary Europe. The Chimera of Neutrality*, London: Frank Cass, 2003, 112.

42 The status of the Catholic Church at institutional level has regained some credit in the ‘Second

adopted a democratic system based on democratic political elections, the clergy was immediately singled out as a resource to provide support to the DC.<sup>43</sup> A substantial percentage of the Catholic voters, whether from the centre-left, centre, or centre-right, in post war Italy, proved ready to express their political vote 'secondo coscienza'. That is, according to their religious conscience, following the indications of the Catholic activist movements: the main preoccupation of the Catholic activists being, fighting the imminent risks of communism.

In the 1948 elections, the anti-communist campaign led by the Vatican through the network of Catholic parish churches and youth centres caused left wing supporters to heavily criticize the clergy, and, in some regions, some priests who had boycotted the PC were even beaten. (Jenness, 1949: 345) On the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1948, the DC won the elections aided by the massive activism run nationwide by Azione Cattolica, whose youth sections and 'comitati civici' were functioning in every Italian city to prevent the raise of communism, and to preserve the Catholic spirit of the nation. Thus, without being a political Party, as dictated by Art. 43 of the state and church agreements, the Catholic Action structured an 'indomitable' mobilisation, supporting the DC political campaigns at regional level (Pieroni, 1959: 152). Besides, the state and church's joined ideological battle against communism reinforced political clericalism (Pieroni, 1959: 109-11). The direct correlation between democratic elections and DC's electorate, controlled by the clergy, had as its political consequence the inference of the church into the DC political controversies and ideological debates. As Jacques Maritain (1936) argues in *Integral Humanism* this was more so at the time when the latter opened to a dialogue with the left.<sup>44</sup>

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Republic', with the emergence of the New Right's liberal nationalists parties and coalitions, AN, FI, PdL. AN and FI, stand for the parties Alleanza Nazionale and Forza Italia, while PDL for the political coalition, Popolo della Libertà, UdC stands for Unione di Centro, which many ex DC political activists have merged into.

43 Among the Christian Democrats, young Catholic anti-fascist Pietro Malvestiti, Ado Moro and Giulio Andreotti became major political and governmental figures of the Republic. '(De Gasperi) rapidly became the undisputed leader of the Christian Democrats. Aloof, dignified and statesmanlike he was able to steer a judicious middle course for the DC, resisting both conservative Vatican pressure and the more radical Christians on the left of his party' (Ginsborg 1990: 48-50).

44 Maritain argued that Christianity should maintain relationships with politics and society as Jesus' humanitarian ideology, and foster social concern. Maritain's social doctrine, embraced by Pope Francis, suggests a dialogue of the Catholic parties with the socialist ones. In the late 1950s, Christian Democratic Prime Minister, Amintore Fanfani, applied Maritain's theory to his government (Pieroni, 1959: 10).

#### 4.7. *Cinema, society and politics in the first Republic*

The role of cinema in the public sphere in the second half of the 1940s, and throughout the 1950s, stirred debate between the Italian leftist and Christian democratic intellectuals, fighting to lead the process of redefining the Italian national identity in a number of areas of public policy. Thus, cinema functioned at an ideological plane. The new models of life imported from the USA through Hollywood cinema no longer required passing the approval of the E.N.I.C (the absolute State Monopoly Office, which regulated the importation and acquisition of all foreign films in Italy between 1938 and 1945). The economic strategies of USA film corporations, such as Metro-Goldwyn-Majer, Warner Brothers, Twenty Century-Fox, Columbia, Universal, and Paramount, had in fact managed to create cinematic stories which would appeal to Italian film industry (producers, distributors and exhibitors) alongside pleasing the Italian audience eager to access new forms of leisure (Brunetta, 1982: 50). In 1948, despite the Italian film industry announced that it could absorb no more than 300 foreign products, the highly competitive Hollywood industry sent across to the Italian cinema market more than 600 films. (Jenness, 1949: 349)

Among post-war legislators active in the field of popular culture, Christian Democratic leader, Andreotti – a fervent Catholic activist and high ranking Italian politician, closely connected to the Vatican and particularly appreciated by Pius XII – was the first MP who unblocked American productions from the restrictions established by the fascist regime, thus opening up new possibilities of co-productions for the Italian film-industry.

In his capacity as Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Entertainment between 1947 and 1953, Andreotti ‘supervised cinema legislation, while also overseeing policy areas such as censorship of national and international films, and funding of national productions’ (Treveri, 2009: 43). Andreotti, acting obliquely in the name of Pope XII’s, on the one hand faced the need to help the Italian cineastes to expand their professional and economic opportunities, and on the other the Vatican’s need to restate the moral significance of religion on the motion picture as a medium of new life models and values.

The Vatican’s opposition to Hollywood’s movies represented a strong guiding principle among Catholic film critics.<sup>45</sup> Nazareno Taddei, for instance, writing film reviews from 1953-1959, in

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<sup>45</sup> For a Catholic oriented critique of American films, see Sergio Sollima, *Il cinema in USA*, Rome: AVE, 1947 where matters such as sex, marriage, and child care are addressed to evaluate the way that USA cinema addressed these subjects in those years.



his reviews of *Some Like it Hot*, *The Long Hot Summer*, *Lust for Life*, *The Black Orchid*, *God's Little Acre*, attacked American films for their alleged detrimental effect on the morality of viewers, showing disagreement with 'happy endings' and cultural stereotypes, 'disconnected from reality'.<sup>46</sup> The aversion toward American/Italian co-productions persisted within the Communist Party, as Togliatti disagreed at having the Italian audience targeted by the Hollywood skilled media-market policies.

During the period defined as the 'reconstruction', previously acknowledged art movements, relevant to the Regime's hegemony, such as Futurism and Cubism, were replaced by the less grandiose 'social realism', imported from the USSR, attentive to history, memory and society. Anti-fascist socialist artists and filmmakers called upon to make their contributions to free the nation from the Regime legacy gradually assisted the creation of a new mentality for the Italian Republican. Popular in the plots of leftist film directors, De Sica, Rossellini, Pasolini and Fellini, the camera lens was fixed on the suffering of the population, on issues of social justice and labour exploitation, advancing discourses, which stood between critical historiography and social evangelism (Cavallo 1999). Engaging films, documentaries, *memoires*, and essays with a socialist perspective endeavoured to reveal the pressure of church and state on the media and society. Despite the fact that Gramsci's *Quaderni dal carcere* presented cinema as a subspecies of theatre, which would mainly provide citizens with visual entertainment, and aid committed filmmakers to achieve both a political documentation of the nation's disastrous past and an educational action on viewers regarding the risk of cultural compliance with the logics of the oppressors (Iaccio, 1996: 135-159).

In 1956, under Pius XII's pontificate, the most conservative lobby group in the Vatican, led by Cardinal Montini, attacked Maritain's theological progressivism in *Civiltà Cattolica*. This action caused DC Prime Minister, Amintore Fanfani, not to succeed in his reformist strategies during the short-lived January/February DC/PSI governmental coalition (Pieroni, 1959: 129). The Vatican's right-wing lobbies succeeded in boycotting the left-wing Catholics, displaying a willingness to open up a dialogue with the Marxist parties, pressing to introduce divorce and to reform public school education towards a non-confessional model. For the complexity of facts and reasons, the aforementioned Italian society proved slow to unclench from opportunistic political 'transformismo' (*id est*, the politically convenient change of front and flag), prejudice

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46 Nazareno Taddei's film reviews appeared in the periodicals *Letture*, and *La civiltà cattolica between 1953 and 1959*. Details are given in Treveri / Bibliography / 'Journal Articles', 167.

and bigotry, discussed by Bertolucci in his 1970 film, *Il conformista*.

In the 1960s, in the period known as the ‘economic miracle’ – which was marked by a shift of power away from the traditional ‘structure of dominance’ (that is, the regionalist bourgeoisie and intellectual classes) towards the emergent technocrats (Restivo, 2002: 8) – popular cinema relentlessly challenged the hegemonic claims of the nation’s political and religious authorities, and fought the restrictions imposed onto the film industry to keep pace with the cinema’s growing cultural internationalism (Cavallo, 2002: 3). As in the cinema industry of most European liberal democracies entering a new phase of economic and cultural audacity, Italian cinema too helped new ideas and forms of lifestyles circulate, slowly changing people’s perception of what was now culturally, economically, politically, socially and even sexually desirable and acceptable. By opening up to foreign models, tastes and life-styles, the cinema industry endeavoured to offer Italianate versions of Hollywood cinema. Unlike during the fascist ‘governmentalisation’ of the nation’s cultural programme, when, in Foucauldian terms, Mussolini’s disciplinary power functioned as a promoter of allowed activities, which had to convey values that the citizens had little freedom to disregard. The new Republic established a double-bond relation with artists and filmmakers, offering sponsors, and at the same time, imposing limitations and surveillance on their film productions. Restrictions to the scripts were mostly imposed at the pre-production stage and the industry suffered a decrease in the amount of state financial support. The implicit aim was emancipating viewers from the ideological influence of the three main mass- movements, which had ruled the country: Fascism, Communism, and the Azione Cattolica. Attention was given to emerging agendas, such as the Board of censorship and Azione Cattolica Leagues of Decency.<sup>47</sup> From the mid-1960s onward, Andrea Piola, Pietro Agostino Avalack, Giuseppe Dalla Torre, and Salvatore Berlingò introduced a scholarly focus on the Church’s privileges from a critical angle and emphasised the unconstitutionality of the definition ‘state religion’. Stressing that the Constitution guarantees equality between all the religious faiths active on the Italian territories, constitutionalist Berlingò, in *Libertà di religione e diritto di vilipendio* (1975), contested the protection reserved to the citizens professing the Catholic faith. It is important to finally note

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<sup>47</sup> A comparison between the ‘League of Decency’ and the spirit of religious crusades was passed on by the Pope himself, along with the notion of clerical ‘vigilance’. The concept brings to mind Foucault’s argument in *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*: ‘An unceasing and universal vigilance must, on the contrary, convince the producers that the ‘Legion of Decency’ has not been started as a crusade of short duration, soon to be neglected and forgotten, but that the Bishops of the United States are determined, at all times and at all costs, to safeguard the recreation of the people whatever form that recreation may take.’ (Foucault 1975)

that in the media world, the secularisation processes started with the first effective decline of the Roman Catholic Church, recorded between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, throughout the phase known as ‘Anni di Piombo’ (‘The Lead years’), a time when the Vatican’s parable proceeded in the opposite direction of the DC’s disengagement in ethical matters and social concern. The Catholic religion found itself gradually confined to a humanistic ideology for civil ethics. In 1974, divorce was approved, despite the DC maintaining an opposition to them. In 1981, the referendum for the de-penalization of abortion was also victorious, marking a phase in cultural history now considered to have given a great blow to the DC/Catholic hegemony (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

### *Conclusions*

The historical circumstances and ideological discourses, which have emerged, are useful to shed light on the 20 years of the Berlusconi’s hegemonic media monopoly, constantly seeking alliances also with the Catholic world to perpetrate the old pact of mutual interest between state and church (Ricci 2008). However, to observe effective changes in the state and church relations (‘regime concordatario’), one has to look at what has happened in the mid-1980s, when important revisions (‘Revision of the Lateran Agreements’, Additional protocol, Decree n. 1203/1989 of the ‘Corte Costituzionale’) amended the unconstitutional privileged relations of the Vatican, with the Italian nation as its ‘state religion’.

Italian constitutional revisionists, to reaffirm the principles of equality and freedom of all religions in front of the state, have managed to alter the discriminatory situation among religious faiths in Italy. This is thanks to Point 2 of Article n. 7 of the Constitution, suggesting the occasion to amend the contradiction. Amendment of Art. 7 of the Italian Constitution, which I discuss hereafter, has been a reform that the left-wing politicians have long recommended, in light of the principle that the form of the lay state is preferable to the confessional one.<sup>48</sup> The turn of the century has also helped the secularisation processes to take place at the constitutional and legislative level. In fact, in 2000, Art. 8 made it possible for the privileged relationship of the Catholic religion with the Italian state, asserted in Art. 7, to be challenged by Art. 3. Art. 3 in fact recognises that all citizens are equal and free before the

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<sup>48</sup> In *Il reato di vilipendio della religione cattolica*, Consoli argues: ‘Democracy has a high cost and serious collateral effects, such as the construction of consensus and the necessity of consolidate the nation’s finances.’ (Consoli, 1957:163)

state.

Thus, although the Italian Constitution had implicitly acknowledged the existence ex-facto of the Lateran Agreements, the warranting of religious freedom and equality of all religions brought the legislators to finally exclude any official idea of Italy as a confessional state (Lariccia 1975). However, regardless of the Vatican's 'internal secularisation' (Norman, 2003: ix) and despite the decline of its authority in Italy, due to the success of the civic campaigns and referendums on abortion and divorce, the church of the third Millennium still receives support to its institutions and agencies from the Italian government at political and financial level.<sup>49</sup>

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49 On the occasion of his official visit to the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano at the Quirinale Palace, on the 4th October 2008, Pope Benedict XVI stressed that 'the Quirinale and the Vatican are [...] places symbolizing mutual respect for the sovereignty of the state and of the church.' Secular governments', he added, have 'no reason to fear the social teachings of the church, whose intention is not amassing power, but *serv*ing society.' *Online Catholic Culture News*: 6 October 2008. Mine the italics. catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=670&repos=4&subrepos=2&searchid=634615

## *CHAPTER 5 – Governmental and ethical modes of cinema censorship*

‘Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only.’ (*The Republic*, Plato)

### *Introduction*

In Chapter 5, I present the history of censorship in Italy from the pre-fascist period to the fascist phases in order to emphasise the legislative and cultural changes, which I will deal with in later chapters, affecting the institution of censorship through the mid-1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, until the 1980s. The aim of this chapter is to draw a historical line of inquiry, providing a review of key issues involved in the developments that have occurred in cinema censorship regulations. I attempt to identify turning points in the history of Italian cinema in its ideological clashes against the censorial system.

In this chapter, the presentation of the bureaucratic character of the Italian state’s official boards of cinema censorship prepares my discussion of the three main cases of films censored by direct or transversal clerical pressure, against cinematic representations that are considered harmful for religion and offensive to people’s ‘religious sentiment’. This helps to clarify the complicated governmentalized procedures, which filmmakers and producers must comply with in order to obtain valid certificates by the boards of film censorship, and positive ratings by Catholic cinema associations, like the CUCE, the CCC and the CCE.

I adopt a perspective that combines the ideas of Gramsci and Foucault on the relations, which occur among the fields of religion, culture and power, as discussed in Chapter 2.

### *5.1 Art and morality. A definition of censorship*

The showing of films considered immoral, corrupting, and improper is forbidden everywhere, as is the public display of corruptive, obscene, repulsive and immoral materials by means of posters, leaflets, advertising, and cinema screenings, and so on. Every nation establishes censorship laws that regulate the activities of the cinema and media markets. In most countries,

films believed to be morally offensive are censored, restricted, or banned according to a 'Rating system'. These criteria for film production and distribution within the film industry are established to classify cinema products according to established criteria of suitability for the audiences. 'Rating systems' are set to facilitate a classification of cinema products according to criteria of suitability for the different age groups in the audience. A film's classification is made public by the issuing of an appropriate certificate, which reflects agreed governmental standards but which can be contested by national, regional, and local jurisdictions.<sup>50</sup>

In the Einaudi *Encyclopaedia*, 'Censorship' is given a philosophical definition: 'La verità della censura non è una verità qualunque [...] è la "verità del potere."' ('The truth of censorship is not a general *truth*: it is the *truth* of power'). Its office and practices regard the suppression, by law, of ideas, books, images, performances, and of all that which is considered inappropriate, offensive or dangerous for the public order. Accordingly, in most legal systems, censorship is considered as the ultimate impediment to the broadcasting of offensive material. In Italy, Art. 21 of the new republican 1948 Constitution recognised the citizen's right to freedom of thought and representation ('libertà di pensiero e di manifestazione'), with the exception of those instances prosecutable as contrary to public decency, civic order, state secrecy, and international security.

As in most countries, also in Italy the office holders at boards of film revision, implement codes for public broadcasting established by law.<sup>51</sup> Their role is to grant permissions, recommend amendments, issue official prohibition, restrict ideas and verbal expressions, etc in relation to what is considered allowed or prohibited. However, censorship imposed at local or national governmental level also relies in its various forms, as the Foucauldian genealogy of power suggests, on the actions of groups of influential professionals associated with a nation's reticular power system (Foucault 1977).

Determining the ways censorship boards function within governmental systems implies reconstructing, in Foucauldian terms, their 'genealogy'. The underlying principle depends on the fact that institutions are created in particular moments in history and thus develop their

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<sup>50</sup> In the United States, certificates are issued by industry committees with less official government status (De Grazia and Newman 1982).

<sup>51</sup> In order to present a broader survey of Church censorship, I draw comparisons from countries whose film industries maintain close relations with Italy, namely the United Kingdom and the United States, where censorship receptions of Italian films banned for offence of religion appear to support the specific points I make to the Italian case.

*raison d'être* in the factual circumstances in which they were created. Foucault's genealogical method is useful to recall how 'the subject' is formed under the influence of a number of bodies, whose functions are neither clear nor linear: 'Genesis, continuity, totalitarianism: these are the great themes of the history of ideas, and by which it is attached to a certain, now traditional form of historical analysis' (Foucault, 1969: 138).

As a rule, films, which contain problematic representations of sex, drug abuse, violence, profanity, and indecency cannot be allowed public screening, unless they obtain an X certificate by the office of censorship. The government censorship boards, deciding on film ratings, may affect film production already at the production stage applying what is defined as 'preventive censorship' (Baldi, 1992: 35). Films are sometimes produced with a specific rating in mind, therefore, in the instances when the board refuses to grant the requested certificate, a request can be suggested by the board or advanced by the filmmakers/publisher to re-edit the problematic film contents and produce a new adequate version.

In the post-production stage, when films reach the cinema theatres, the spectators who perceive a film's contents as offensive or corruptive, therefore inappropriate for public screening, may request the Police's intervention. In these circumstances, a film can be suspended and confiscated especially if the story is judged as encouraging serious offence, as racism, sexual discrimination, blasphemy, cruelty to people or animals, etc. Filmmakers, producers, and distributors, however, can appeal against radical censorship measures and witness their appeals accepted, dealt with, or rejected in proper court trials.

I now argues that some basic practices and notions of film censorship, adopted by the official state organism which classifies films for public screening, have elements in common and factual connections with 'censorship by religion', and its claim of 'educational surveillance' against cinema's immorality, pornography, and so on and so forth.

Censorship can have political, cultural, or religious grounds. It may reflect the struggle of opposing sectors of the population (id est, the religious and the secular, fighting within a broad spectrum of ideas, beliefs, outlooks on life, politics, culture, and life style). It is put into practice in times of war and peacetime, whenever a menace to the public order is expected, or when new ideas and undertakings are believed to be capable of undermining the establishment (Thierstein and Kamalipour, 2000: 68). Moreover, censorial practices are enacted under autocratic governments, as well as in liberal democracies. Censorship puts into action certain groups of peoples' ideological repression against another group of peoples' ideological

expression, made public through the press, the theatre, the cinema, and internet, etc. Censorial actions, repressing an individual, a group, or an institution's freedoms (of opinion, representation, satire, etc.) may follow 'preventive' or 'punitive' routes. The censors, supporting the course of their actions, believe in the utility of censorship to correct abuse of such freedoms.

When applied to the cinema field, the modes of censorship are indeed multiple. They can be implemented in three main ways:

1. By external ways, imposed by law and by techniques of pressure on the film's director and producer;
2. By agreement, as (pre-)/conditions arranged in the form of cooperation between the government bodies and/or other bodies and the cinema people (authors, producers, distributors);
3. By self-restrictions and self-rating, which are internal to the cinema and media sectors involved in film production, distribution and advertising (Thierstein and Kamalipour, 2000: 68).

Of the three methods, internal censorship is put into operation especially in contemporary liberal and democratic states. It signifies that the media have accepted models of governmental social responsibility followings codes of self-monitoring. Internal censorship, in fact, may occur when a journalist, radio, cinema, TV broadcaster, author, co-author, or a producer or distributor internalises the institutional and organisational norms, and -as Foucault argued - in this role, begins to act appropriately with other existing control mechanisms (see case study Chapter 9.2).

The censorial system's main objectives are to target offenders and abuses, issue mandates, carry out investigations, produce reports and indexes, decide upon appropriate corrections and punishments. In order to establish why, when, and how to treat physical, verbal and visual offences, and punish the offenders, censorial systems set codes and standards of conformity for the ruled, creating laws, tribunals and institutes of confinement. Appointed members of the censorial system's committees and boards are generally chosen either among the members of the oligarchy or within the spheres of related professional expertise. In order to justify the existence of censorial methods in its system, a state must counterbalance their harshness with oppositional concepts such as 'order/subversion', 'surveillance/dissidence' and treat all forms



of unaligned behaviours and ideas as threats. Elizabeth Grace and Colin Leys argue that this dialectic relation has developed alongside the growth of the modern state. These dialectical forces function both ‘for the state surveillance of citizens opposed to the *status quo*, and for varying degrees of repression of their political activities’ (Grace and Leys, 1989: 71).

In order to restrain subversion, both the liberal democracies and the authoritarian regimes must implement policies to mark the limits of the citizens’ noncompliance. The criminal code defines, what in civil dissidence, is legal, and what is to be considered illegal and potentially treacherous for the state’s well being. Censorship as a result, inevitably violates the rights of certain groups, whether authors, audience, or reader, becoming one of the innumerable issues in which the Country contributes to the battle between the progressive factions and the conservative ones.<sup>52</sup>

### ***5.2. Scheme 1. The three stages of film censorship***

There is a list of hundreds of film-scripts and films revised, blocked, and outlawed at one or more of the three different stages of the censorial procedure, summarised hereafter.

**Stage 1.** Also known as ‘preventive censorship’, asking authors to amend selected parts of the scripts under revision, or rejecting them completely before or during the production stages, according to the set regulations;

**Stage 2.** Bureaucratic, financial censorship, involving studio managers and film producers who may react by surrendering their products to the censors demands to avoid the costs of cuts and unwanted delays, or to obtain state funds. Cinema studios often readily comply with the censors’ requests to avoid delays in the film’s release;

**Stage 3.** Legal (moral) censorship, occurring after production, involving directors and producers, who are requested by law to remove offensive and /or illicit contents from a film submitted to revision, because considered legally responsible for their choices and actions before the official boards of censorship (\* Scheme designed © by E. Passannanti)

Stages 1 and 2 have no juridical implications on filmmakers and producers. On the contrary, legal censorship can be called into force at a third stage, should the authorities judge a film

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<sup>52</sup> Leftist filmmaker, Carlo Lizzani noted: ‘Preventive censorship was never official: if anything, it resorted to private communications to the producer made in such a way as to cast doubt on whether the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro would grant the loan.’ (Petricelli, 2004: 38)

already circulating to be unfit for public screening, as is the case when a film is judged to be treacherous for the state's national and /or international security. Legal shunning is also inflicted to films containing elements, which have potentials to deprave and corrupt spectators (Thomas, 2001: 4-5). With the protection of children as their main concern, today censorship boards mainly decide on the suitability of films in relation to age-related concerns. They grant or refuse 'certificates,' and advise on the film's aptness for young spectators.

On the opposite side of the self-appointed censor's, one finds the self-censored artist, film studio, and film producer or distributor, influenced into producing films which keep in line with the regulations to prevent the withdrawal of their specific circulating product for political, legal, or contractual quarrels (Argentieri 1957).

Between the 1930s and the 1960s, films were generally censored during the script stage, with studios removing content that could be a focus for the censors.

### 5.3. *Cinema censorship: twentieth-century historical and legislative background*

In *Cinema e censura in Italia*, Gambetti provides extensive information on censorship and the visual arts from the onset of the cinema industry onwards to the 1970s, while Alfredo Baldi and Tatti Sanguineti continue their detailed survey up to the end of the 1980s. Gambetti explains how film censorship in Italy dates back to the last period of its Kingdom under the Giolitti's IV Government, during which the 'Ministry of Home Affairs' ('Ministero dell'Interno'), endorsed evaluative committees in order to prohibit the production and screening of films; which were considered offensive and thus detrimental to public morality (Law n. 785 of 1913).<sup>53</sup>

Historically, MP Facta, the Italian Ministry of Finance, was the very political agent who issued the first project for film revision on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1913, during Giolitti's government ('Esercizio della vigilanza sulle produzioni cinematografiche e relativa tassa'). The bill was approved on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1913, giving birth to the institution of 'censorship'<sup>54</sup> (Gambetti, 1972: 24). The

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53 Gambetti argues: 'In 1907, a circular from Minister Giolitti drew the authorities' attention to the fact that films can inspire revulsion in the general public, have harmful influence on particularly emotional and instable viewers, or offend people's sense of modesty by shameless exposed nudity'. In 1910, the Minister Luzzati reminded the authorities that 'cinematic representations, for their vividness and suggestiveness, may have more deleterious corrupting influence than other visual arts and press.'

54 In the 'Legge Facta', the official definition of this new type of censorial measure was 'controllo'.

law dictated that the 'revision of films – Art. 6 Reg. – should be carried out by 'first rank officers, who belong to the Police, that is, by Police Commissioners' (Gambetti, 1972: 26). While the law called in to force the intervention from a highly police officer, and expelled from the process of the film's revision authors and producers, other points in the law established the members of the 'Commissione di appello' and the criteria for the appeal against the circulation of a given released film in the public cinemas. These were the general criteria for act out censorship measures:

- Films offensive to the morality and decency of citizens;
- Films against the nation's reputation and decorum and against public order, or anything else that can compromise the good of international affairs;
- Films that offend the decorum and the prestige of the Italian institutions and public authorities, the Army and the Police;
- Films that display acts of violence and cruelty against people or animals; horrid crimes and suicides, *id est*, films displaying all the perverse actions that can be detrimental for the education of young people, and incite evil (Gambetti, 1972: 26).

As Roger Thomas argues in *Media and Censorship*, 'the political arena is one of the most significant areas in which censorship and other forms of information control are put to use, and never more so than during times of war' (Thomas, 2001: 38). The First World War provided a fertile ground within the government policy for the implementation and functioning of censorship on information, particularly on the press. During the war, the censors felt responsible for preventing the publications of news prejudicial or injurious to the prestige of the military forces of the Reign, causing alarm among the civil population or altering the political relationships with foreign nations or allies.

The laws on censorship that followed WW1, in Italy, merely amended the existing corpus of criteria and altered the composition of the committees, adding new elements such as the granting of a *Nihil Obstat*. Gambetti explains: 'Cinema is less and less considered a form of expression of free thinking and artistic skill, with an eye on art, commitment and quality, and it is priced more and more as a medium of propaganda, a way to divulge ideas didactically, or at his best, to give away instructive reports.' (Gambetti, 1972: 26)

A decree, imposing the revision of scripts before an official committee was passed on 9<sup>t</sup> October 1919 (R.D. n. 1953, Art. 2). It established the foundation for preventive censorship: 'Il

Ministero dell'Interno è autorizzato a sottoporre a revisione i copioni o scenari di soggetti destinati ad essere tradotti in pellicole cinematografiche per la rappresentazione pubblica.' ('The Home Secretary is authorised to impose revisions to scripts and subjects destined to be translated into films for public viewing').<sup>55</sup> Decrees of this kind obviously aimed at establishing a state monopoly on national film production and distribution as well as on the nation's culture, as grounds for its political and economical convenience. On 24 September 1923, Prime Minister Benito Mussolini replaced previous censorship with a new and revised decree (R.D., n. 3287, 'Regolamento per la Vigilanza Governativa sulle Pellicole Cinematografiche'), expanding the Censorship Board's refusal of *Nihil Obstat* to films, 'instigating hatred among the social classes' (Gambetti, 1972: 27).

Before the March on Rome, the 'national directive on the cinema', established in 1913, would still enforce the provincial police headquarters to 1. Block films that turned 'representatives of the police' into odious characters, and criminals into kind-hearted'; 2. Forbid ignoble excitations towards sensuality, provoked by episodes in which the vividness of the representations directly feeds the most vulgar passions; 3. Prohibit films containing incitement towards hatred between the different social classes, or offence against the national decorum' (Ricci, 1998: 48).<sup>56</sup> When Mussolini's fascist party gained power in 1922, the cinema industry was in a state of economical and institutional downturn.<sup>57</sup> Under Mussolini's first government, regional Police Prefects would still administer censorship according to the criteria set by what is known as the 'Crispi's Law', which would suspend and prohibit public performances containing 1. 'A promotion of moral vices or crimes,' and 'instigations to class hatred', 2. 'Vilification of the King, the Pope, the Head of State, the Ministers, and the state institutions', 3. 'Public instigations against the law, disparagement of the national and religious sentiment, and threats to international affairs' (Ferrara, 2004: 19).

After the March on Rome, the office of preventive censorship was confirmed and substantiated. The *Direzione Generale per il Cinema*, the state funded and controlled censor board established in 1934, commenced the responsibility to read and modify scripts, but also

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<sup>55</sup>The law was published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* on the 31st October 1919, N. 259.

<sup>56</sup> For issues related to the Italian cinema censorship and self-censorship, along with the quoted Argentero, *La censura nel cinema italiano*, 1974, see also R. Brancati, *La porpora e il nero*, Milan: Edizioni Bianco e Nero, 1961.

<sup>57</sup> Benito Mussolini (self-appointed Italian 'Duce' from 1925 onwards) ruling the country from 1922 to his ousting in 1943, was the leader of the National fascist Party.

awarded prizes to filmmakers who supported the fascist cause (Brunetta, 1972: 49).<sup>58</sup> The task of this censor board was therefore not so much banning films produced by the Italian film industry, but intervening on them especially to alter all forms of dissidence that may incite the population against the regime. Numerous American films of the period were suppressed by the Fascist State's censorship boards, because of being judged as potentially negative for the Italian spectator's sense of national identity and cultural pride.



Photos: 1. Pius XI (right); 2. Benito Mussolini (left).

Following an initial phase of ideological opposition, Mussolini found support for his cultural programme and political leadership in the Catholic strata of society, indicating how the Pope himself, as a role model of high ideological headship, endorsed the Duce's project to create also in his *persona* a parallel form of charismatic mass leader. In fact, while spreading the new fascist ideology by means of media propaganda through the channels of the cultural and entertainment industries, Mussolini solicited its supporters to a belief metaphorically as strong as religious orthodoxy. A comparison between fascism and religion was indeed unambiguously expressed in *Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti* by Italian philosopher Gentile, where the Fascist party's policy is presented as advocating freedom and rights for all men so to make them feel alive in Italy as their ideal 'motherland.' 'Hence the religious character of Fascism.'

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<sup>58</sup> Brunetta argues that scripts with pro-fascist messages could receive up to 100% funding by the Banco di Lavoro, a state controlled 'previdenza'. The 'Direzione Generale per il Cinema,' in addition, could grant approved scripts funding towards production up to 60%.

(Gentile 1925) Mussolini, who soon came to face the task of suppressing dissent while securing national consensus to his personal rise, started to neutralise opposition by means of several forms of human rights violations. Hammering propaganda strategies ensured consensus, while media censorship neutralised all forms of opposition. The fascist regime implemented a networking of censorial measures against all unauthorised forms of free speech and civil gathering in the public arena to prevent subversion. The same criteria applied to film censorship in the pre and post-production phases and as well as in the distribution ones. Aside the freely available declaration of political affiliation, of the kind authored by Gentile's in *Manifesto*), free-thinkers, such as Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Amendola, authors of *Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti* (1 May 1925), could no longer seek, receive and impart unrestricted information or perform public action against the regime. The state organizations imposing civil coercion, and political discrimination could not be denounced by the ordinary civilians, without fear of severe repercussions on one's freedom. The frontiers were closed and the circulation of information was circumspectly monitored; private writing was checked systematically, and press and cinema underwent regular restrictions (Albertina, 1982: 923).

Cinema and radio's projects were approved only when they contained political propaganda for the Regime. Limitation of freedoms and various forms of social and civil confinement ('confino politico') were imposed on opponents suspected of being potentially dangerous to public order. The police forces were used to removing from their social and work positions all dissidents who they believed to oppose the fascist establishment; as was the case for communist leader Antonio Gramsci. Conversely, propaganda activists in the media sector who supported the government were permitted to work and were provided with training for professional development. During the long fascist era, restrictions would be applied to public speeches and representations as measures capable of influencing people's opinion on what the state considered cultural subversive attacks to the *status quo* (Sorlin 2007).

The Duce justified the use of censorship in conjunction with his government's anti-communist tactics, and, from the 1938 introduction of anti-Judaic laws onwards, with the need to maintain control over the Jewish commercial activities. (Sale 2009) Censorship was in fact applied to all areas of the national life, more so to the mass media. The 'Ministry of Popular Culture' ('Ministero della Cultura Popolare') had the authority to revise, and eventually censor, radio programmes, newspaper articles, book contents, theatre performances, and cinema plots, to prevent infiltration of conflicting ideologies, particularly Marxism and Anarchy. This would

even take place by means of public bonfires, as in the 1938 censorial cleansing and elimination from public libraries or archives of books related to communism, socialism, Judaism, and freemasonry, with exile imposed on free thinkers suspected of having authored and spread anti-fascist propaganda. However, under such dictatorial conditions, court trials for contravention of the set rules rarely occurred. However, as one can infer from Vittoria Albertina's essay 'Totalitarismo e intellettuali: L'Istituto nazionale fascista di cultura dal 1925 al 1937',

Mussolini's state adopted conflicting methods of cinema censorship, consisting of supportive and punitive forms of control on the nation's artists and intellectuals. The regime, in fact, offered state financing to film directors', thus imposing on their work a strict ideological control. However, they also financed their cinematic projects so that instances of consensual partnership between the artists sponsored by the regime and the state often occurred (Albertina, 1982: 891). For all the aspects quoted above, it may sound like a contradiction that Benito Mussolini, the founder of Italian social-nationalism, who promoted public progress and national syndicalism, would implement drastic cinema restrictions against the modern medium, which he mostly admired, used, and supported. The reason for this, is that he supported the establishment of a national cinema on two interactive planes: one idealistic, where cinema was presented as the most ground-breaking art form of the nation's cultural progress, and the other instrumental, where cinema was exploited as a means of the regime's political propaganda. It is thus important to consider the historical and ideological situation in which Italian fiction films began to be produced during the fascist era. The fascist state's cinema censorship regulations were explicitly set down: the system implied the state's total control over the national film industry. If such materials infiltrated through the press or media, the police and the magistrates would promptly suppress and persecute their producers.

#### ***5.4. Mussolini as cinema promoter***

The role of Mussolini in the promotion of cinema and in the recognition of its cultural and artistic significance has also been at the centre of many studies in recent times. Sorlin, for instance, in *A Mirror for Fascism. How Mussolini Used Cinema to Advertise his Person and Regime*, conveys insightful considerations on both the Duce's self-promotion and the censorial attitudes of his dictatorship in suppressing flights of information and 'misrepresentations' (Sorlin, 2007: 111-117). Along with political power, cinema was Mussolini's other passion. He offered an immense contribution to the development of the cinema industry, not only

financially, but also by turning himself into a fervent cinema advocator. Mussolini's trust in the cultural power of cinema contributed in making his public persona a universal icon for mass identification. The Duce believed that a rationalisation of the arts under his charismatic leadership would have the effect of appeasing class struggles by establishing a positive entertainment routine for the public.<sup>59</sup> Cinema theatres were an essential structural part of this new social and architectural order; their function was intended to improve the relationship between state and citizens. The rationalisation of art under Mussolini's ideology implied an emphasis on power, courage, and a sense of political commitment that was understood as a duty towards the nation. The filmmakers, who were ready to follow the Duce's indications making their films reflect on history while embodying the ideology of the regime, acquired a kind of 'organic' intellectual role. The creation of a 'national cinema' implied a process of homogenisation, involving viewers beyond their class, regional, and sexual differences. Fascist artists were also expected to participate in the construction of the new era national identity, liberating cinema from the machinery of blunt mass production and consumption.

Angela Delle Vacche, in *The Body in the Mirror. Shapes of History in Italian Cinema*, informs that the fascist culture industry, which had elicited support from well-established art forms since its establishment, in exploiting the cinematic medium, particularly by experimenting with new 'representational solutions appealing to the masses', kept it under strict control (Delle Vacche, 1992: 24). Likewise, Sorlin in *Gli italiani al cinema. Immaginario ed identità sociale di una nazione* has stressed how Mussolini's utopian view of national cinema as an invigilated space of social aggregation, attempted to oppose the growing phenomena of mass society and mass culture (Sorlin 2009).<sup>60</sup>

John Davis, in *The war for the public mind: political censorship in nineteenth-century Europe*, has drawn attention to the peculiarity of a political situation completely regulated by Mussolini's monopoly over the public supply of information and entertainment:

'The fact that political censorship did not give way to more informal types of censorship, exercised by and within civil society, indicates that the consensus between the state and liberal Italy's elites was relatively weak. This, in turn, suggests that public opinion continued to be

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<sup>59</sup> See Paul Mattick's discussion on Le Corbusiere, in the essay 'The Rationalization of Art', included in *Art in its Time. Theories and Practices of Modern Aesthetics* (2003, 74-86).

<sup>60</sup> Cavallo, in *Viva l'Italia. Storia, cinema e identità nazionale* (1932-1962), dedicates a chapter to the nationalisation of cinema under fascism, and its inherent ambivalence, merging the authorities' enthusiasm for the new medium to a diffidence towards its subversive potentials (Cavallo 2009).



relatively dis-informed, or, at least, divided, long after Italy's political Unification. However, whereas political censorship was a fact, in Giolittian Italy, it was nothing of the kind which characterised Mussolini's regime' (Davis, 'Italy', 2000: 119-120).

However, despite the government's direct suppression of every form of cinematic dissidence, the film industry had little to worry about under Mussolini's regime (Cesari 1978). Mussolini never attempted to artistically silence cinema talents. As aforementioned, he regularly funded their projects by assigning state-financed sponsorships. Furthermore, whenever censorship struck the film industry, the 'Commissione Centrale di Revisione', instituted in 1926, offered cinema artists the possibility to appeal to the 'Ministry of Home Affairs' against decisions taken by local prefects in matter of theatre and cinema censorship (art. 72, 6.1.1926, n. 1849).<sup>61</sup>

While maintaining the office of film revision, Mussolini also supported the national cinema industry, by founding the 'Istituto L.U.C.E' (L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa) in 1926, for the production of non-fiction films, the production company Cines (which in 1930 fitted the Duce's idea of a state monopoly over the film industry and managed to compete with Titanus, Lux, and Caesar film productions), the cinema studios Cinecittà, and the distribution circuit E.N.I.C. (Lonero and Anziano, 2004: 19). The Istituto L.U.C.E secured a cultural monopoly over documentary films and newsreel to the fascist state, promoting the making and distribution of documentaries and educational films.<sup>62</sup>

The fascist twenty years' time-span was therefore marked by a situation of visible contradiction in the relationship between cinema and state. As cinema critic Ricci argues, the state's general propositions about the role of cinema as a means for divulging a new culture,

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61 List of the Italian and foreign films banned during the fascist regime (1922-1943). *All'ovest niente di nuovo*, by Lewis Milestone; *Addio alle armi*, by Frank Borzage, 1956; *Emilio Zola*, by William Dieterle, 1946; *Il club dei trentanove*, by Alfred Hitchcock; *Il grande dittatore*, by Charlie Chaplin; *Montagne in fiamme*, by Luis Trenker, 1951; *Le avventure di Marco Polo*, by Archie Mayo, distributed in 1939 with the altered title, *Uno scozzese alla corte del Gran Khan*; *Le vie della città*, by Edward Ludwig; *L'ultimo gangster*, by Edward Ludwig; *Nemico pubblico*, by William A. Wellman; *Nozze di rivoluzione*, by Hans Zerlett; *Ossessione*, by Luchino Visconti, released in 1945; *Piccolo Cesare*, by Mervyn LeRoy; *Shanghai*, by Georg Wilhelm Pabst; *Westfront*, by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, distributed only in 1962; *Rasputin e l'imperatrice*, by Richard Boleslawski, distributed in 1960; *Scarface - Lo sfregiato*, by Howard Hawks, distributed in 1947, forbidden to -16; *Strada sbarrata*, by William Wyler, distributed in 1948; *Verdi pascoli*, by William Keighley.

62 Newsreels, shown in movie theatres before the main full-length feature films, used to convey unmasked fascist propaganda. They obtained sponsorship for such functions and were granted a small percentage on the screenings' overall profits. Ricci reports Mussolini's words: 'The fascist revolution intends to bring back the spirit of our race to its authentic origins, freeing it from any pollution.' (Ricci, 1998: 48)

corroborated by the support given to commercial cinema' and the censorship regulations, determined a 'continuous asymmetry' (Ricci, 2008: 6). In 1923, the Fascist regime's official censorship committee for film revision added the presence of a housewife ('madre di famiglia') to the board's professional members. The following decree, issued on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1924 (RD, n. 1682), allowed the addition of a professional expert in arts and communication' (Gambetti, 1972: 27).

With thanks to Mussolini's idea of cinema as an essential cultural educator, Ricci underlines how during the fascist governance, the films produced in Italy were neither simply propagandistic nor grossly 'fascistic' (Ricci, 1998: 48). With Law 16 June 1927, n. 1121, the Regime granted censorship committees the power to decide whether a film possessed minimum criteria as an artistic product ('dignità artistica e buona esecuzione tecnica'), or whether its content was educational and thus suitable for minors.

As Mussolini's idealistic view of the Italian state was one of national civil and military strength, the nationalized system of censorship had control of particular cinematic representations of moral corruption and civil decadence coming from outside the borders of the nation's film industry. Ricci argues: 'The fascist regime's aspiration to purify the national cultural landscape, implied a defence of a unified Italian language. The Institute of National Culture, along with a number of other agencies, sought to protect the national idiom going as far as banning words of foreign derivation' (Ricci, 1998: 62-63).

Between 1930 and 1935, the Istituto L.U.C.E, producing documentaries and newsreels, followed strict censorship procedures, editing out from poorly conceived and produced scripts all that sounded offensive for the Regime. In fact, the main task of the Istituto L.U.C.E was to shoot and broadcast public events, which contributed to the prestige of Fascism (Benedetti 2002). The fascist censors ignored many issues, which the law had declared as impermissible (Mancini 1985). Gambetti informs that the new law 18<sup>th</sup> June 1931 n. 857, which remained in force until 1945, abruptly excluded from the censorship committee, all the cultural, educational and artistic experts, which would officially represent the 'Ministero dell'Educazione Nazionale'.

Cultural historian Pasquale Iaccio claims that, during the years in which Mussolini was consolidating his dictatorship, Italians had at their disposal structured opportunities of creative/expressive character; such as the O.N.D (Opera Nazionale Dopo-lavoro), whose activities and publications were sponsored by the 'Ministry of Popular Culture'. In building up

popular consensus through culture institutions, Mussolini's 'fascism made a skilful use of the media to influence the masses' (Iaccio, 1981: 5).

The values that such cultural products were allowed to convey under Fascism, whether or not openly intended for the state's propaganda, offered Italians the corpus of knowledge they already possessed.' (Iaccio, 1981: 11). Umberto Eco has also claimed in *Apocalittici e Integrati*, that these media products would intrigue and amuse the masses by doing nothing more than exploiting national myths and standards (Eco, 1977: 278).

As Steven Ricci argues in *Cinema and Fascism. Italian Film and Society 1922-1943*, 'As a single-party totalitarian regime, with a seemingly unlimited political discretion over cultural affairs, Italian Fascism provides a revelatory and unobstructed view of particular national response to the larger, global processes of modernisation' (Ricci, 2008: 13-27). Between 1931 and 1943, the fascist government appointed Leopoldo Zurlo<sup>63</sup> as the Head of the Censorship Board ('Ufficio di Censura'). He would play the complex role of making the Catholic principles and the fascist ideas respected in all public performances. Media had to pedagogically suggest ways to improve society (Fiori 2005).

In 1933, new cinema regulations were created by the regime for the film industry with the aim to promote abroad the national film industry. Dubbing into foreign languages was forbidden in the interest of the fascist aesthetic dimension and imperialistic myth. However, foreign production companies on the other hand, not only had to pay a tax to the Italian state, but were also required to accept the routine of dubbing into Italian.

The limits posed to freedom of opinion and representation used to be so strictly guarded that cinema censorship managed to block several American films, 'but it did so primarily in cases where it was felt that the national reputation could be damaged. Because both *Scarface* (1932) and *Little Caesar* (1930) represented American gangsters as having Italian origins, neither were permitted entry' (Ricci, 1998: 75). Italian filmmaker Damiano Damiani argued that the Board for Film Revision had censored *Little Caesar* because it conveyed an insulting parody of Mussolini (Ricci, 1998: 75-76). However, as critic Luigi Salvatorelli has argued, between the 1914 Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria*, with Maciste as its main character, and Carmine Gallone's 1937 historic film, *Scipio*, there were thematic similarities, proving the remarkable continuity in mentality between pre-fascist and fascist Italian cinematography.

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<sup>63</sup> For a comprehensive outlook on fascist cinema and state censorship, cfr. L. Zurlo, *Memorie Inutile: La censura teatrale nel ventennio*, 1952.

Delle Vacche discusses the popularity of these two productions: ‘both *Cabiria* and *Scipio Africanus* express the rampant nationalism of their times. Both convey the delirious atmosphere of a pre-war climate.’ As historical films, they ‘fulfilled ideological functions in Italian culture’, illustrating the mobilisation of the masses in popular consensus. *Kitsch* is the style of cinema where fiction comes closest to propaganda’. (Delle Vacche, 1992: 29) In addition, *Kitsch* – as in *Scipio* – became Fascism’s pseudo-democratic answer, ‘an anti-democratic ideology, using a popular form of address, while simulating the authority of high Art’ (Delle Vacche, 1992: 25). Mussolini was assimilated to *Scipio* on the cinema screens presenting both heroes as a revolutionary force capable of overpowering the course of history with their natural power.<sup>64</sup>

As I have said, the fascist government’s financial support to mainstream film productions had the intent to nationalise the cinema industry, and concomitantly affect the popularity of foreign film-productions, asking film critics appointed by the regime to produce negative reviews in daily news, such as *Il Popolo d’Italia*, cinema reels, and radio broadcasts. Hollywood cinema and jazz music were compared to harmful phenomena affecting the integrity of the Italian cinema (Iaccio, 1981: 47). Moreover, in the years before the Second World War, the Ministero della Cultura Popolare (MCP) began to issue laws limiting the infiltration of foreign products, especially from the USA, into the Italian culture market (Poulantzas 1980).

Cinema was by this time a fertile industry and market, profitable enough to not be left to the monopoly of Hollywood producers.<sup>65</sup> The Duce was fully aware of this and conveyed to his son, Vittorio, his love of supporting the national cinematography, coherent with his belief in its political and cultural worth. Vittorio became involved in the film community, as co-founder of the journal *Cinema* (Landy, 1986: 13).

In 1934, the regime nominated Luigi Freddi as head of the General Directorate of Cinematography, the Fascist organisation, controlling cinema. Freddi founded and directed Cinecittà cinema studios with the aim of emulating the commercial Hollywood entertainment cinema, and of opposing the Soviet cinema propaganda model (Piovano 1985).

In 1935, Mussolini authorised Freddi to establish the government financed ‘Centro

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<sup>64</sup> For an insightful analysis of the historical period between 1930 and 1940, see Renzo De Felice, *Interpretation of Fascism*, first published in Italy in 1969.

<sup>65</sup> See also Mario Gromo, *Davanti allo schermo*, in *Cinema italiano 1931-43*, Gianni Rondolino (1992).

sperimentale di cinematografia', co-directed by Umberto Barbaro and Luigi Chairini. The CSC was aimed at improving the quality and techniques of film productions and audio-visual art as a cultural resource, of which the National Film School and the National Film Archive were annexed sectors. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1938, on the opening day when Mussolini inaugurated the *Centro sperimentale di cinematografia*, a photo of the Duce behind a film camera was shown with the quote – 'Film is our most powerful weapon' ('La cinematografia è l'arma più forte'). In the second half of the Thirties, the Centre also opened up to neo-realism filmmakers, with plots of a nationalistic type. *Passaporto rosso*, for instance, echoed 'Mussolini's plan to call back to their homeland, Italy's lost sons, who had mainly emigrated to America. Film historian Mancini claims: 'In these first steps towards developing propaganda in the commercial cinema, *Passaporto rosso* was a success because it proved popular at the box office and encouraged the industry to make other feature films which depicted governmental policy' (Mancini, 1985: 164).<sup>66</sup>

Brunetta, in *Storia del cinema italiano*, exposes Chairini's objectives: 'According to Chiarini, the aims of the Centro were to raise the technical and cultural level of filmmaking through experimentation in film production methods and the development of appropriate film theory and criticism' (Brunetta, 1979: 317-319). In 1935, Freddi approved also the E.n.i.c (the *Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche*), the nationalised film-theatre chain, and in 1938 established an additional censorship board to control the type and number of imported films produced in foreign countries.

The E.n.i.c. state's monopoly secured by the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1938, n. 1389 decree, also known as the 'Alfieri law' (after the Minister of Popular Culture), introduced, among other measures, strict regulations for the purchase, importation and distribution of foreign feature films; thus imposing a distribution autarky. As Jean Gili argues in *Stato fascista e cinematografia. Repressione e promozione*, the effects of the Italian cinema's autarkic phase, creating a 'monopoly lock', were immediate. Twenty Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount and Warner Bros all announced the withdrawn of their productions from the Italian market

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66 The 1935 plot of *Passaporto rosso* spans between 1890 and 1915 and tells the story of the son of a couple of Italian immigrants living in South America who finally return to Italy to join the army and serve the fatherland in WW1. The mother is a model of female virtue as she resists seduction by a Spaniard landowner, and remains 'pure' even after being seduced. Mussolini saw the film and liked it, but imposed censorship on a single scene where the rebels recover their hidden weapons. 'Mussolini argued that to leave the scene uncut would have made the Duce and the cinema industry seem like promoters of insurrection.' (Mancini, 1985: 164)

from 1 January 1939.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, only a few films produced by the four major Hollywood corporations reached the Italian cinema theatres during the war (Gili 1981).

The fascist propaganda commissioned plots, which incorporated Mussolini's political and socio-cultural agenda. Historical films and 'costume dramas', such as *Nero* (1930), *Palio* (1931), *The Birth of Salome* (1940), and *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (1940), on history and tradition, war and combat, expanded their scope to serve not only the interests of the regime's political propaganda, but also those of the nation's cultural institutes. Film stories were expected to fight provincialism and class conflicts, as well as to discourage the use of dialects, to satisfy Mussolini's project of modern citizenship and national identity with 'one language and one people before the Duce'. The promotion of historical topics and plots in fascist cinema is thus, a form of rationalisation of art, intended to complement the everyday life of the masses. It served the purpose of both standardising certain modes of behaviours, and identifying and censoring subversive subjects. Other films of that period dealt with the wars in Ethiopia and Spain, such as the two films that Augusto Genina shot in 1936, *Lo squadrone bianco* and 1940, *L'assedio dell' Alcazar*, offering a more direct perspective on international conflicts (Landy 1986: 258) Antonioni, in a review of the film *Alcazar* (*Cinema* 1940), stressed that the film won Mussolini's Award, as the plot both encouraged anti-Communist attitudes and 'followed the Catholic hierarchies' official support of fascism' (Landy 1986: 222). This was apparent in films and narratives set in public places where social classes integrate and interact with each other within the civic boundaries set by the regime (Gambetti, 1972: 27). However, although the fascist government controlled the film industry through many institutions and agencies, programs, laws, and policies, it never managed to force dissident artists to comply entirely with the government's directives.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while the government encouraged conformism, the film industry appeared to preserve areas for individualism, as proven by filmmaker Carmine Gallone, who, after shooting *Scipione l'Africano*, 'never again performed a propaganda service for the regime' (Mancini, 1985: 1971-72). Once again, aside from the instances of censorship that were applied to foreign products, the films produced

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67 'Italia Taglia' project: 'Autarky'. The number of imported American movies, which accounted for 73.5% of total profit of the Italian cinema market, dropped from 162 in 1938 to 64 in 1939 to just 36 in 1940, and then disappear almost entirely the following year, with evident negative economic impact in 1938. [italiataglia.it/indice\\_sonoro\\_fascismo/autarchia](http://italiataglia.it/indice_sonoro_fascismo/autarchia)

68 For the intellectual and cultural initiatives and activities promoted by the 'Istituto nazionale fascista di cultura' (Italian fascist Institute of Culture), see Albertina Vittoria, 'Totalitarismo e intellettuali: L'Istituto nazionale fascista di cultura dal 1925 al 1937', in *Studi Storici*, by 'Fondazione Istituto Gramsci', Year 23, N. 4, Oct. - Dec., 1982: 897-918.

under Mussolini's regime, between 1922 and late 1930s, were rarely censored, with a few exceptions.<sup>69</sup> However, although censorship under Mussolini had the main objective to control dissidence, some space was left to artists to develop their aesthetics on the condition that they achieved the goal by championing the fascist ideology and cause. Data suggests that, unlike in Russia or Germany, the fascist government was tolerant toward artists so long as they did not use their works, ideas and popularity against the regime (Iaccio, 1998: 218-219). As Cesari notes in *La censura nel periodo fascista*, sanctions and shuns of foreign films conveying criticism of Fascism occurred in its declining phase. As was the case with films produced in the USSR and especially with Charlie Chaplin's 1940 *The Great Dictator*. Bodies of censors, chosen in the state's political, religious, military, and corporate spheres, implemented official censorship, which remained active until the 1960s (Cesari, 1978: 45).

### *5.5. Ideological indoctrination and censorship*

#### ***Power and media censorship from the Fascist 'Ventennio' to the establishment of the first Republic***

As I have explained, during the fascist 'ventennio', a relatively small number of films underwent severe censorship, due to Mussolini's pervasive control/endorsement of cinematic productions. Cinema censorship, as a result, gradually took the form of 'preventive censorship, sided by the Vatican's first Catholic cinema associations, such as the CUCE Consorzio Utenti Cinematografi Educativi, established in 1926; the CCE (Consorzio cinema educativo), set in 1936, and the CCC, created in 1942. This implied that the preliminary submission of film contents to an appointed Board of professional people, including members of the clergy, would decide against potential inappropriate themes and visual messages (Viganò, 2002: 28). Under such systems, artists and intellectual were forced to stand between inactivity and compliance with the Duce's request for cinematic subjects, supporting a comparison of the present with the Roman Empire's glorifying past.

Between 1935 and 1938, Mino Argentieri argues, political and economic forces came together to control and promote state cinema at the expense of foreign productions (Argentieri, 1974: 40-41). The Government would generously offer contributions to filmmakers through the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro with the understanding that the acceptance of State financial

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<sup>69</sup> One instance was Mario Camerini's *Il cappello a tre punte* (1934), whose scenes of popular insurgence against governmental taxation were censored by Mussolini.

support implied compliance with the censorial requirements of the Ufficio di Censura Preventiva, institutionalised back in 1913 by the Italian 'Ministry of Home Affairs' (Gili, 1981: 163). In order to obtain funding from Mussolini's government, the film industry banned all subjects allegedly dangerous or offensive to the nation's reputation, for instance, mafia, common criminality, sexual crime, and public revolt, and bypassed the problem of censorship by ensuring the board of preventive censorship that no politically hazardous film would be produced with public money. The success of the accords was notified by the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1939 document of the 'Federazione Nazionale Fascista degli Industriali dello Spettacolo' (Gili, 1981: 167).

An example of the powerful influence of private film production companies' over state funding can be found in Luigi Freddi's case. During the twenty years of Mussolini's authoritarian regime, Freddi, as General Director of the Cinema, from 1934 to 1939, and the Regime censor, exercised total control over the film industry. No Board for the 'preproduction censorship' of scripts existed yet. In setting the codes for the 'Ufficio di censura preventiva', Freddi accounted for the cinema state of affairs under Mussolini, underlying the need to turn state censorship into something constructive and inspiring for the film industry. He assigned the 'revision of scripts' bureau the responsibility to adjust and reshape films according to criteria set against 'morally and artistically damaging contents' before their official submission to the Board of Censorship (Freddi, 1949, 1: 46).

Freddi had to resign his role, having failed to make the government pass a law (Testo Unico), which would nationalise the film industry. This was intended to be achieved by placing the cinema market under the direct management of the state. Whereas Freddi linked censorship to a wider educational project on the role of cinema in the fascist regime, his successor, Vezio Orazi, considered preventive censorship a bureaucratic way to smoothly accommodate a film with the censorship boards' requirements (Gili, 1981: 57). Likewise, Alessandro Pavolini as Minister of Popular Culture from September 1939, in his congress paper 'Rapporto sul cinema', stated: 'The straightforward notion of censorship is no longer applicable. The preventive certificate should signify both a moral/political reassurance, and a checker for the efficiency of the system, in terms of the film production's schedule and professionalism' (Carabba, 1974: 144).

Despite the huge prevalence of state censorship, administered by the 'Comitato per i film di Guerra e propaganda', the Vatican maintained a definite influence in 'preventive censorship'



over film scripts when it came to plots suggesting the ‘moral sins’, such as adultery, blasphemy, or suicide, often managing to block the productions ‘unworthy’ plots (Argentieri, 1974: 57).<sup>70</sup> For instance, the Board for Film Revision rejected scripts by Lattuada, Monicelli, Visconti, Antonioni, and De Santis for presenting potentially corruptive stories.

State regulations on cinema censorship changed considerably in 1941, when Antonio Riccio, appointed chief executive of the ‘Direzione della Cinematografia’, began to provide funds to the film industry through the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. The political climate had also changed, when opposition to Mussolini’s regime started increasing, due to the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1939 ‘Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy’, undersigned by Mussolini and Hitler (Gili, 1981: 68). However, despite the state’s invasive ideological control, the regime’s cinema corporations did finance the work of filmmakers De Sica and Visconti, displaying their socio-political alarm. The bond Fascist regime/cinematic propaganda forced Mussolini to smile at Visconti’s scandalous 1942 film *Ossessione* (‘Dichiarazione di Visconti’, *Il Tempo*, Rome, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1976) while the Vatican rose up with open public discredit of the film’s moral status.<sup>71</sup>

The cultural trend of Neorealism between the mid 1940s and the mid-1950s, which covered the latter 5 years of Mussolini’s era, offered unprecedented expressive and critical freedom to filmmakers, writers, and intellectuals (see Ch. 7). The new fashion, which emerged during a phase of growing secularisation, deeply affected the nation, albeit slowly. Neorealist films are believed to have produced changes in society, making citizens question their national identity from more self-conscious angles. Nevertheless, in this phase, Italian cinema was still subjected to the censorial pressure of Catholic activists intervening in the Vatican’s official press organs, news, and periodicals, deferential towards the Vatican’s requirements – such as *L’Osservatore Romano*, *La Civiltà cattolica*, *Il Quotidiano*, *L’Italia*, and *L’Avvenire d’Italia* – with the intention to set cultural boycott against leftist reformist cinema

The fall of the regime and the consequent establishment of the democratic Republic in 1945

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<sup>70</sup> Mino Argentieri, in *La censura nel cinema italiano* (1974), provides a list of censored films, from the regime up to the mid 1970s with details of audio-visual materials cut and revised.

<sup>71</sup> Visconti’s much censored film was *Ossessione*, based on the American novelist James M. Cain’s *The postman always rings twice* (1934), previewed in 1943; immediate censorial action was taken on the allegation of perversion and indecency. The plot, criticised for screening adultery, provoked immediate complaints. The religious authorities were effective in persuading the prefects of various provinces to withdraw the film from public cinemas and to spread prejudice against its content in local newspapers, as it was the case in the Bologna *Avvenire d’Italia* (Forgacs and Gungl, 2009: 223). The film was hitherto relieved in the immediate post-war period when censorship was suspended.

mark a turn in the history of Italian society and culture. From that time, the official censorship board become part of the 'Presidenza del consiglio' and in 1959 was then included to the 'Ministero del turismo e dello spettacolo'. From this year onwards, film scripts had to be submitted to the office 'Revisione cinematografica' of the 'Direzione generale dello spettacolo. Divisione cinema' of the 'Ministero del turismo e dello spettacolo' (Quargnolo 1982: 134).

## CHAPTER 6 - *Censorship by religion*

### *Introduction*

In Chapter 6, I discuss the particular state and church liaisons, which exercise power over the management of public morality and the media. I focus specifically on the specific kind of censorship that is recommended by the church, and implemented by the state. It is to be hoped that the state and church's censorship procedures, which manage to affect most cinematic products, in one form or another, particularly films with anti-establishment contents, will become progressively clearer. The examination of 'Clerical censorship', as the power of influence exercised by the Roman Catholic Church on the cinematic arts in Italy and worldwide, will require that I advance hereafter a genealogical, structural analysis of its system of control.

It is important to start this chapter by mentioning certain essential facts and regulations: films are subject to both official and unofficial forms of censorship: the latter may be carried out by various public and private organisations and committees with very different purposes and consequences from those provided for by the national state legislation of film revision; the Catholic world has its own private censorial channels which adapt the state codes, ascertaining that films have adequate cultural or artistic qualities (Article 5, law 4 November 1965 n. 1213).

In Catholic committees, such as the OCIC involved in important film competitions, like the 'Festival del Cinema di Venezia', the jury is composed of seven people who take into account the presence of human and Christian values in the films, and how these aspects are ennobled by the good artistic and cultural value of the cinematic work.

Modern societies, Foucault argued, are religious at heart, as is evident by the establishment of pastorship, with clergymen exercising the responsibility of guiding individuals and communities (Carrette 2002). In England, as in Italy too, state and church have worked together for centuries as interactive institutions administering discipline and control. Sociologists of religion have emphasised the active participation of institutionalised churches in the maintenance of civil order through the integration of their participants in civil society (Durkheim 1965; Parsons 1964; Wilson 1982).

As stressed by Italian cinema historian, Viganò, in *Cinema e Chiesa*, moralising interventions tend to multiply at critical moments in Italian history. This is evident within articles in *Civiltà*

Cattolica, which from the first half of the Twentieth Century placed emphasis on the filmmakers' accountability and duty of self-censorship. Catholic critics of cinema products would at the same time discourage Catholic followers from cinema consumption, and at times could go so far as to direct their money to nobler deeds, such as helping the Red Cross, or the Catholic charity agencies (Viganò, 2002: 23).

My following question will illustrate the types of channels through which censorial actions, particularly at stage 2 and 3 of the cinema censorship, can be activated against certain films. As I have shown, *Nihil Obstat*, being granted or refused by official censorship boards, represents only the first step of the censorial process. It is important to follow these stages to gain insight into how the reputation of certain authors, and the success/failure of given films, are affected by moral boycott (stage 3).

It is further important to locate which kind of people in the Catholic community, both nationwide and locally, find it appropriate to present accusations against the cinema industry in front of the police authorities and magistrates, who reprimand the audiences request for cinema entertainment.

### *6.1. Clerical censorship and the Catholic society*

In order to understand the tradition of clerical intrusion before, and after the year 2000, in cinema censorship, some considerations are required of how the legal procedures, previously endorsed against blasphemy and vilification of religion, have changed in the Italian legislation. Indeed, a discussion of the adjustments that have been introduced after the 1980s will shed light on the status of cinema censorship at the turn of the third millennium.

Answering questions relating to the Vatican's influence over the arts requires an analysis of the construction of vetoes and prejudice, as well as of techniques of control and moral reprimand the Church regularly implements as key issues for measuring clerical censorship as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The ideological, doctrinal, and ritual influence of the clergy over the popular masses in Italy is still noticeable, despite the 2000 proclaiming of the 'supreme laicity of the state' to put an end to a centenary situation of disequilibrium among the different perspectives on religion; which divide the lay society on issues which range from the perception/definition of the nation's identity, to matters of civil reforms.

At the level of the censorial action peripheral to the Church, it is important to note that, usually,

protest against cinema's immorality and irreligion, at least in Italy, tend to come from viewers and critics of Catholic affiliation, who turn themselves into self-appointed classifiers and censors, within their community. These may be individuals, who participate voluntarily in the church's control over the Catholic audience. As religious activists, they help to ban the films the Church authorities disapprove of, by taking legal action against filmmakers and producers. It will be interesting to discuss how filmmakers and film producers, at the receiving end of these legal actions, can take action and defend their work against such moral crusaders.

Foucauldian and Gramscian understandings of hegemony and governmentalisation are once more helpful here when considering the Church of Rome as the power system implementing power relations and practices to protect its doctrine and institutions while accepting the civil society's mandate to invigilate on the nation's morality. The Vatican's ideological sovereignty, resulting in cultural hegemony permeating many strata of the Italian secular society, has always been concerned with the counter-discourses threatening its apparatus with methods which have the ability to strike by law products considered harmful for its position. In particular, with reference to Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, film censorship appears as the institution, which monitors and punishes free representation and free thinking *via* the clergy's claim of a moral control of cinematic products. As a field of wide-ranging actions, 'clerical censorship' can be thus understood as both the bureaucratic techniques, and the less official forms through which the church attempts to confine and interdict all that which seems to vilify its organisation. From this perspective, clerical censorship comes to be a kind of transversal and non-official assembly of control techniques, which influences not only the community of viewers, but also the industry, and in some cases, the filmmakers themselves.

The Italian government, like in most countries, retains the right to control the production, distribution, and screening of films. For these reasons, filmmakers and producers requiring the censor's stamp to produce and circulate their products, and routinely submit the contents of their works to the scrutiny of official boards of censorship. At the bureaucratic level, Boards of Film Revision, monitoring issue of public morality have appointed committees among which Church representatives have been officially welcomed. As aforementioned, the revision and approval processes are put into effect by a networking of relationships and actions, which involve governmentalized and non-official forces. It is now important to explain why cinema censorship in Italy can be understood better by taking into consideration these collateral forms of participation, which are shaped by sociocultural pressure, or at times by financial boycott.

I consider the Church of Rome as a power system, where the Pope, like a political leader, influences the individuals and the communities over which he exercises pastoral influence. Compliance with the mind-set imparted by the Catholic education, represent for individuals as well as for institutions, an encounter with a disciplinary order of power, which dictates techniques of self-formation and self-control (or self-censorship). Indeed, beside the official constitutional and legislative censorial practices which the Church of Rome has participated in by law, the clergy and its connected agencies have routinely implemented cinema boycott to act disapprovingly of particular films and affect public screening.

This method involves the circulation of the church's initiatives, spreading clear indications on its moral judgements against certain films by means of sermons, leaflets, posters, lists of banned films, and cinema club's discussion, etc., to prevent catholic followers from watching the film. These types of cultural censure also bring about aspects of financial boycott, which affect a film's success at box office. An additional method of clerical censorship is recognisable in the phenomenon of the self-appointed censors, seeking the intervention of the Police officers and Court Magistrates to protect their faith and religious sentiment against the contempt of religion brought about by certain cinematic topics. However, it should be noted that there are critics like Franchi, in *Non censurare ma educare! L'esercizio cinematografico cattolico e il suo progetto culturale*, who have rightly underlined how the Church is also a keen promoter of cinema activities for its communities; as I will discuss in the course of my argument (Fanchi, 2002: 103-113). With this ambition, the clergy has also been prepared to meet with Catholic and lay cinema people in secular cultural organisations such as film festivals.

### ***6.1. a. Censorship in action***

When one considers the phenomenon of Church censorship in its multifaceted aspects, one can see how reticular its effects are on the film industry. These include forms of influence on the availability of governmental financing for filmmakers and production companies according to their ideological reputation or affiliation. It is made possible by the presence of church affiliates in strategic power positions within the legal bureaucratic system granting concessions. Financial censorship can in fact instigate self-censoring strategies by film producers and filmmakers. It is important to note that now as in the past the Roman Curia suffers the idea that the edifice of the papal temporal power may crumble and so the clergy's

role in the formation of civil society. The origin of the principles justifying the practices of clerical censorship become clearer when one looks at the chronology of the Church's reticular socio-political and cultural organisations under which religious agencies access and take part in disciplinary forms of control over the citizens' freedoms. The modern expanded forms of clerical censorship, accusing the Church's opponents of heresy, blasphemy and vilification of religion, have their ground roots in the system of Inquisition Tribunals' condemnations, prohibition and punishment of all forms of counter-discourse. In the twentieth century, as for most conservative states, the Vatican's most feared opponent was recognised in the communist ideology, often addressed as an opponent 'doctrine'. (Figures 1 and 2)

It is worth mentioning how negatively the Vatican's influence over the film industry was perceived in the USA by Court Judges, as discussed in section 7.2. In 1949, Paul Blanshard, talking about clerical censorship in the USA and connecting its arrogance to the Canon law, noted:

'The censorship system of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is neither a spasmodic nor an intermittent phenomenon. It is a highly organised system of cultural and moral controls that applies not only to books, plays, magazines and motion pictures, but to persons and places...[The Church] holds the power of economic life and death over many authors, publishers and producers who must rely upon American Catholics for patronage and support. [...] Catholics are taught that the Roman Catholic Church is the supreme guardian and purveyor of truth, that the Pope has infallible judgment in moral matters, and that 'union of minds requires not only a perfect accord in the one Faith, but complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself.' As a matter of fact, Papal encyclical teach that cinema may be dangerous and "immoral" if it is opposed to Catholic standards' (Blanshard, 1950: 260).

The Pope is here described as the instigator of censorial anti-corruption campaigns of boycott against those cinema products, which may present a defence of heresy or schism, or attempt in any way to undermine the foundations of religion. Blanshard's remarks bring to mind Gramsci's remarks on Catholic theologians, as the Church's *traditional* intellectuals instructing bishops, priests, and activists on how to serve the role as *organic* intellectuals, mediating the relationship of the Vatican's high spheres with the various strata of society to prevent the decline in membership and the emergence of a 'civil religion'. (Gramsci, 1949 V. IV, Ch. I:

104-115).<sup>72</sup> Before the 80s, when some progressive ideas started to infiltrate through the intervention of leftist Catholic thinkers, for the most part, the Church has put the blame on film narratives, accused of attacking and ridiculing Catholic dogmas, the infallibility of the Pope, and the respectability of the clergy (Blanshard 1950). Active agents of such forms of control, presented to the folks as the Church's salvation mission, have been Catholic film critics, expected to contribute to forbid the viewing of films in which, for instance, communist ideas were presented, divorce was permissible, adultery instigated, birth control contemplated, and so on and so forth.

From the end of Second World War onwards into the transformed political and legal climate of the new Republic, the changed socio-economic realities and the emergence of new cultural factors brought to power the Catholic party DC. Rather than create a positive terrain for the Church, the situation gradually undermined its prestige, by linking the problems of the DC style of government, prone to clienteles and corporatism with the Catholic mentality. Furthermore, the perception that Italians had of their identity changed, in such a way, that their lifestyles and social values could increasingly be less dictated from the pulpits (Carabba 1974). In the post-war years, cinema observers began to address cinema censorship more freely, as the office was thought to be in open contradiction with the new constitutional laws on freedom of speech. Critics argued that in the case of artistic works, blasphemy and sacrilege could no longer be persecuted by law straightforwardly on the grounds that Italy has an organised official cult in which people recognise their cultural and spiritual heritage. Crisafulli and Berlingò claimed that the censors could no longer associate belief with political power, so that irreverence towards the institution of the church would become a threat to the filmmakers' freedom of speech. Censorship legislators on the other hand, claimed and still do, that the nation has the duty to be vigilant of public morality, prohibiting and/or restricting actions and expressions judged on questions of obscenity and corruption. Given these new debates, while the state censorship agency started to gradually negotiate with filmmakers and producers new drafts for the regulations which were finally put into operation in 1962, the Vatican's implementation of clerical control had to resort to methods different from the ones utilised before, when it appealed to the believers' sense of obedience: in sum, it started to create new forms of socio-cultural intervention to achieve political influence without the normal

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72 In times of crisis, 'civil religion' in secularized societies designates the mission of political leaders to reform the values of society (Bellah, 1967: 1-21).



instruments of political power. For instance, the 'Centro Cattolico Cinematografico' published *Quaderni della Rivista del Cinematografo*, founded in 1951 by the 'Ente dello Spettacolo'. From the mid-1950s onwards, the Vatican strengthened its censorship policies concerning the effects on the Italian society of the Italian-American film industry relations. By explicating its views on cinema *via* the traditional medium of the Pope's encyclical letters and the Vatican's new media agencies, the Roman Curia thus continued to dictate its conditions for trouble-free circulation in Italy and abroad, of its approved lists of decent films, conveying honourable values, as Monsignor Galletto argued in *La chiesa e il cinema* (1955). In this scenario, the clergy's pastoral involvement in bureaucratic decision-making was prioritised over the freedom of the Catholic communities to take charge of their favourite forms of entertainment in terms of consumer choice, and self-governance. Catholic cultural moderators became extremely active in the 'Reconstruction' years. *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, founded in 1927 in Milan, was moved to the CCC in Rome, and became the main cinema magazine of Catholic Action. Indeed, while the Pope's feelings towards the film industry were made public through the CCC's film reviews, and also voiced by Catholic critics such as Nino Ghelli, in *Bianco e Nero*, Gian Luigi Rondi, in *Il Tempo*, and Padre Baragli in *La civiltà cattolica* (Iaccio, 1962: 139), the Vatican encouraged people to follow the opinion of Catholic cinema critics in cinema magazines, cinema-clubs, and theatres administered by the clergy. The role of parish churches in the transmission of Catholic indictments of undesirable cultural facts and values was incremented along with the Vatican's anti-Communism agenda (Morlion 1954). The Vatican continued to broadcast its criticism of national and Hollywood productions through cinema magazines throughout the 'economic miracle' period, with the intention of informing the Catholic spectators of the potential unsuitability of certain film topics. The Catholic central bureaucracies of the period developed techniques of boycotting films, which the Church did not approve of. This included programs of censorial crusades for priests and laymen. Priests were in fact regularly instructed to make statements from their pulpits to boycott a certain author or genre. Moreover, beside the Church press and media, the platforms of censorial actions included attacks by means of public letters sent to magazines, newspaper, periodicals, cinema theatres, and TVs and radios; thus exercising pressure on the editorial departments to refrain from advertising or showing films which were believed to degrade religion and religious values. The aim of these unofficial actions was to suppress information and discussion on films considered unworthy, alongside boycotting their circulation. Such intimidating machinery that the Church used to enforce censorship was evidently very effective

and had the potential to reach producers who may in turn consider if the risk of clerical boycott is worth it.

***6.1. b. Clerical censorship and political censorship vis-a-vis***

As I have anticipated, the banning of religious unorthodoxy in cinema was not a main concern of Mussolini's regime, and was therefore generally practiced in terms of clerical boycott. Religious dissent, on the contrary, became somewhat of a target of state censorship during the post-war first democratic Republic, and thus paired up with the church's old forms of non-governmental control. Following the history of clerical censorship against the cinema in the second half of the twentieth century, for this reason, requires tracing back the ways in which the church has partnered with the implementation, by law, the Rocco Codes of existing schemes and policies of state censorship.

CURIA VESCOVILE DI PIACENZA

AVVISO

DOPO IL DECRETO DEL SANTO UFFIZIO

**E' peccato grave:**

- 1° Iscrivarsi al Partito Comunista.
- 2° Favorirlo in qualsiasi modo, specie col voto.
- 3° Leggere la stampa comunista.
- 4° Propagare la stampa comunista.

**Quindi non si può ricevere l'assoluzione se non si è pentiti e fermamente disposti a non commetterlo più.**

Chi, iscritto o no al Partito Comunista, ne ammette la dottrina marxista, atea ed anticristiana e ne fa propaganda, è

**APOSTATA DALLA FEDE E SCOMUNICATO**

e non può essere assolto che dalla Santa Sede.

**Quanto si è detto per il Partito Comunista deve estendersi agli altri Partiti che fanno causa comune con esso.**

Il Signore illumini e conceda ai colpevoli in materia tanto grave, il pieno ravvedimento, poiché è in pericolo la stessa salvezza dell'eternità.

Piacenza, li 15 Luglio 1947

**Figure 1.** Summary: The Holy See officially commands that it must be considered serious sinning: 1. taking a communist membership, 2. making political propaganda in favour of the communist/Marxist ideology and support its actions, especially by means of electoral vote, 3. reading communist press, 4. publicising communist books. The Vatican threatens excommunication for those who do not respect the Vatican's vetoes. Forgiveness can be granted exclusively by the Catholic Church itself. City of Piacenza, 15 July 1947.



**Figure 2.** Summary: Public excommunication of communist people. The Holy See officially commands that it must be considered serious sinning 1. Taking a communist membership, 2. Publishing, circulating, reading and writing communist publications and leaflets that advertise the communist doctrine or the communist praxis. Banning from religious cults and practices is imposed on 3. The Catholic believers who are culpable of the heresy described above. Excommunication for heresy will be inflicted to: 4. Catholic followers, who adhere to the communist materialist and anti-Christian doctrine, especially to those who will make propaganda in support of Communism and defend its ideas. Canonical law is invoked to inflict

official and public excommunication to the sinners as a punishment intended to have the effect of a medicine. Heresy implies the desertion of the Catholic faith. Catholic believers have the duty to spread the contents of the Santo Uffizio's decree.

The history of Church censorship against the film industry proves the power of influence of the clergy in civil and political matters, reaching a peak in the first thirty years of the Italian liberal democracy whereby the interplay of forces between DC and other lay parties managed to affect the regulations related to freedom of opinion and representation. The cinema critics and cultural theorists, whose contributions I quote hereafter, have argued that the regulations, which have remained active until the 1980s, have close bearings with Catholic ethics.

A brief revision of the political relations of the Vatican with the fascist regime aptly clarifies the ideological opposition of Pope XI to Mussolini's National Socialism, which was temporarily solved by the Lateran Agreements in 1929. This was a political and economic pact, in which the Roman Catholic Church acquired the official position as 'state religion'. The settlement brought with it innumerable legal and institutional privileges, which the Vatican managed to retain long after the overturning of the Fascist dictatorship, and the post-war establishment of the (first) democratic republic. The interrelated clashes between secularism and confessionalism are explained hereafter together with the principle of 'state religion'. These historical facts are essential to an understanding of how the Italian legislation dealt with cinema censorship with regards to the criminal offence known as 'vilification of religion'.

It is important in what follows to outline the methods and criteria of the catholic authorities when determining what cinematic content should and should not be seen or censored. The implied contention is that, beside what is established by law for the protection of minors and other defenceless categories of people or animals, no censorship boards should determine what is appropriate for the public. The matter demands that I examine the socio-political modernisation which Italy has experienced in the second half of the twentieth century, and compare it to the moral hammer of clerical censorship on many civil and artistic manifestations of protest and discontent over issues relating to sexuality, divorce, abortion, the coming into effect of non-nuclear family, and assisted suicide, and so on.

### ***6.1. c. Censorship by religion: definitions against facts***

As constitutive of all social interaction, power, in whatever form, can instil both obedience and rebellion. Persecuting disobedience by law is not so much a non-violent task, as much as it is the act of placing moral blame onto individuals and institutions. Indeed, in the history of the Vatican's Inquisition Tribunals, beginning from the middle Ages, sanctions such as persecution, interdiction, shaming, excommunication, infliction of penance, and refusal of absolution, were regular forms of moral punishment.

In order to validate their moral responsibility to intervene on dissidence, all power institutions, whether religious or civil, consolidate standards of conformity by creating codes, laws, and tribunals. They elect authorities and executives, establish censorial boards, nominate committees, target groups of individuals, and define their associated problems. Additionally, they issue mandates, conduct investigations, and produce reports and indexes. Documented evidence of the Vatican church's comparable control procedures against heresy, blasphemy, sacrilege and unorthodoxy, in the name of a 'persistent false belief', is widely provided by scholarly examination of its practices, as discussed hereafter (Dawkins, 2006: 22).

Censorship by religion defines the practices by which ecclesiastic authorities exercise direct and indirect control over religious orthodoxy, either through their own tribunals, or through state's civil/legal institutions. Censorship by religion aims at adjusting or suppressing ideas circulated within society that are believed to be dangerous (seditious or treasonous) and offensive to the church (unorthodox, heretical or blasphemous) and the public morality (indecent or obscene) (see Ch. 4). In Italy, censorship by religion, has been a wholly functional penal structure within the state system up until the Revision of the state and church Concordat. Today, however, censorship by religion is exercised transversally, by reaching out for sources of public information, communication, and entertainment in both religious and non-religious contexts to influence the population through press, television, radio, and cinema (Roger, 2001: 38).

Even before *cinema d'auteur*, a director's acclaimed fame did not go far to help prevent clerical censorship against films considered unfit for exhibition. The 'Italian Taglia' archival data suggest that clerical concern for a filmmaker breaching the ethics of public decency of a film screening themes of travesty, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and contraception, is more likely to impact on the Boards of Film Censors than plots of juvenile delinquency, general criminality, and terrorism. Conversely, in contemporary cinema, screened violence is less

likely to create scandal than heresy and blasphemy.<sup>73</sup>

The belief that arts can damn the soul has rested at the core of Catholic censorship for centuries: it is enough to recall the logic behind the Inquisition to understand the nature of its criteria and practices. Clerical censorship began to radiate its internal codes outwards through Papal encyclicals, covering all forms of social interaction and entertainment. In papal texts, the legitimacy of cinema soon began to be questioned at the ethical and aesthetic level. The church has had a particularly obstructive moral concern regarding the effects of cinema attendance on society throughout the Twentieth century.

The effects of the moralistic pressure of the clerical authorities, allowed the boards of film revision into the system, thanks to the new 1962 regulation. This often influenced the issuing of decrees, in addition to establishing the allowed boundaries of filmmaking. Burnett, an early Christian critic, vehemently campaigned against cinema as an evil influence on public morality. Co-writer of the 1932 volume, *The Devil's Camera*, Burnett saw cinema as a carrier of 'sordid and unhealthy' representations of mankind (*The cinema for Christ*): 'These catch-penny devices have blatantly carried the poisonous influence of bad films on to the public streets so that not even children have been able to escape their evil suggestiveness and pernicious flaunting of immorality' (Burnetta, 1932: 15-16).

Political, moral, and clerical censorship affects all cinematic products, in one form or another, as is evident from data in film archives. Following the Lateran agreements between state and church, the Vatican had no real need of pressing for censorship of the cinema. This was because under Mussolini's regime, film productions fell directly under the state's control, and under art councils, and various other forms of state financing. However, with the establishment of the democratic republic, religious unorthodoxy in cinema required strict monitoring, to the point that it became one of the main targets of new, subtler forms of censorship.

With the Republic, political and military censorship increased the state's control on anti-establishment film subjects. With the dominance of the DC party, the Catholic Church managed to have its tenets voiced directly by Catholic representatives in the seats of the Italian

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<sup>73</sup> *America oggi*, 30 July 2009. In 1985, Pope Ratzinger issued a series of prohibitions and bans against the broadcasting of news concerning the actions and creeds of the Franciscan priest, Tomislav Vlasic, who, in 1981, initiated a mystical phenomenon in Medjugorje, a village in Erzegovina, promoting himself as the spiritual father of six children who suddenly began to report daily visions of the Holy Virgin. Ratzinger has recently threatened Tomislav Vlasic with excommunication, heresy, religious manipulation, and sexual paedophilia.

Parliament. As I have mentioned in previous discussions, the Vatican's influence extended on all forms of public entertainment through fervent Catholic activist, MP Giulio Andreotti.

The Vatican's directives were made public in parish churches' Sunday sermons, and by the Vatican's activist groups, editing lists of decent films for parish churches and Catholic cinema clubs (cineforums), which were invigilated by self-appointed censors. The efficiency of the Vatican's influence in issues of cinema censorship has increased with the Catholic Church's direct involvement in state education, as well as from the Catholic communities' (Laura, 1996: 77-89).

From my observations of the documented cases of film revisions, I suggest that when a film plot was perceived hideous and immoral from the angle of pastoral care, the church felt compelled to take public action against it. The opposition has generally occurred either officially, through the Vatican media organs and in the Parliament, or by means of private acts of denunciation against the screening of films in public cinema theatres, advanced by self-appointed lay Catholic censors directly to the police or Magistrate authorities. The main reason behind the Catholic Church's aversion to given plots is often the presence in the film narrative of controversial representations of the church's authorities in all their hierarchical ranks.

As mentioned, the Catholic film critique is voiced through all available means of diffusion (parish churches, cinema clubs, and associations) by which the clergy and the Catholic observers point the finger at allegedly indecent and blasphemous cinematic representations. The action of flagging questionable contents to the community is systematically used by the clergy as a preliminary approach to the possible subsequent calling in to force of official censorship 'deletionist' procedures. The documented court trials of cinema censorship, which I have accessed, suggest that in the control over cinematic products for public screening, Catholic citizens believe themselves to be reliable censors interpreting the interest of society as a whole, in terms of dignity and respectability.

In the most severe cases, the Vatican tends to intervene through its official press, internet channels, radio/television stations, and affiliated information agencies that are linked to the Holy See.<sup>74</sup> Papal encyclicals on the moving image, listed in the Appendix to Chapter 6. 4. are

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74 The Vatican's media centres include the Tipografia Vaticana (Pontifical Press), the Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Pontifical bookshop), the *Annuario Pontificio* (Pontifical Yearbook), the *Osservatore Romano* (Pontifical Newspaper), the Centro Televisivo Vaticano (CTV), the Radio Vaticano (RV), the Vatican Internet ([youtube.com/vatican](https://www.youtube.com/vatican)), and the weekly magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana*. A recent addition to the Catholic network of information agencies is YouTube/Vatican: [youtube.com/Vatican](https://www.youtube.com/Vatican)



eloquent documents as they are intended as pedagogic guidelines for cinema people and Catholic viewers. Through periodicals, magazines, and daily news, such as *L'Osservatore Romano*, *Famiglia Cristiana* and *La civiltà cattolica*, the Vatican's media cohesively make regular campaigns to undervalue as morally repugnant the media product, which the Church disapproves of, thus spreading the Vatican's ideology and discourse. The routes of Church censorship unravel by means of actions, which starting from the practice of value judgement on a given film, may instigate self-appointed Catholic censors to indicate to the magistrate or the police that certain contents should be considered for modification or banning by an administrative board of censorship. Sermons, lists of prohibited films, and admonitory posters, have in fact been used by parish churches' cine-clubs to solicit the community's attention on the negative factors pertaining to the representations of allegedly scandalous plots.

### *6.2. Catholic partnership in political and financial state censorship from the post-war years to the Revision of the Lateran Agreements in the 1980s*

Ever since cinema became a flourishing industry, hundreds of legal appeals against producers and filmmakers have come from Catholic citizens and Vatican advocates taking action to protect their religion and religious sentiment (Pastore 1980).

At the end of the Second World War, a new decree (5<sup>th</sup> October 1945 n. 678) was issued to set norms for film production. Point 1 of the decree stated: 'L'esercizio dell'attività di produzione del film è libero' ('the activity of film production is free'). The new law prescribed authors to submit their cinema scripts to a first grade committee for preventive examination. This implied the involvement of military censorship, preventing subjects that could potentially trigger international political tensions or conflicts. However, the new decree revalidated the basic structure of censorship set by Mussolini's RD 24<sup>th</sup> September 1923 n. 3287, allowing police action against illicit cinema contents. In front of the civil and political catastrophe of World War II, the Vatican's *Osservatore Romano*, *Radio Vaticano*, and the CCC's film reviews once again felt entitled to raise their voices against cinema as a potential moral corruptor (Sorgi 1971).

Elaborating on the principles of the Italian Constitution in 1946, MPs Dossetti e Cevolotto proposed a revision of 'liberty of speech' and 'liberty of faith' to the first sub-committee of the Parliamentary Committee. The consultations, led by the communist MP, Palmiro Togliatti,

ensured that ‘the right to freely express one’s opinions through the press and media channels’ was constitutionally guaranteed.<sup>75</sup>

In 1947 (Decree 16<sup>th</sup> May, n. 379), the government officially established the ‘Ufficio Centrale per la Cinematografia’ directly dependent on the ‘Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri’. It required producers to submit scripts for the approval of the committee (Gambetti, 1972: 31). In 1949, the ‘Sottosegretario per lo Spettacolo’, Andreotti, endorsed Art. 6 Law n. 958 (29<sup>th</sup> December 1949), and D.P.R. 20<sup>th</sup> October 1949, n. 1071, introducing additional regulations against pornography.

However, as Bruce points out, ‘censorship is just one of the devices used by the authorities to control cultural activities they consider potentially dangerous’ (Bruce, 1997: 27). In reality, two years after the Constitution, the first law on cinematography - n. 958, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1949 - achieved nothing more than issuing a validation of the old fascist law - Decreto Regio 24<sup>th</sup> September 1923 (Gambetti, 1972: 41).<sup>76</sup>

Fellini, who maintained a strong opposition to cinema censorship in the article ‘Appunti sulla censura’ appeared in *La Tribuna del Cinema*, n. 2, August 1958. ‘Censurare significa distruggere’ (‘To censor is to destroy’), described censorship, beyond its political aspects, as embedded in the Italian mentality. He argued that opposition to cinema derived from the social classes, intolerance of reforms, and their protectiveness of privileges; among these, he also included the Catholics. Neorealist cinema represented a threat to their status, a progressivist battleground promoting social change.

In *Vie nuove* (17<sup>th</sup> December 1960), when discussing cinema censorship, Pasolini attempted to analyse the mechanics behind that sensation, or group of sensations, which prompt a person to feel scandalised. He suggested that the censor’s anger and anguish is transformed immediately

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<sup>75</sup> The Constitution of the Italian Republic came officially in to force on the 1st January 1948. Article 21, Part 1, Title 1 (‘Rapporti civili’), ‘Diritti e doveri dei cittadini’ recites: ‘Everyone has the right to freely express their thoughts in speech, writing or any other means of communication’; ‘Freedom of the press cannot be subjected to authorisation or censorship. Only the law may limit the expression of thought in the press for the protection of public morality, especially for the protection of minors. The confiscation may be ordered by the legal authorities’. ‘Point 6:’ Publications, performances and events contrary to public morality are prohibited. The law established appropriate measures for the prevention and suppression of all violations’.

<sup>76</sup> ‘The Royal Decree – previously called in to force by former Prime Minister Benito Mussolini – reaffirmed that banning may be imposed against scenes, events and parties inciting hatred among the various social classes; ‘censorship may be imposed to contents 1. Contrary to the nation’s reputation and dignity, 2. Endangering public order, 3. Jeopardizing international relations, 4. Offensive of the dignity and prestige of the nation’s institutions and public authorities’ (Gambetti, 1972: 41).

into conformist indignation. He then added that common sense acts as the container for those peculiar irrational emotions, which provoke the censor's interventions. Received ideas on morality construct the censor's arguments, by which the person who feels outraged defends himself/ herself from the temptation of doing the things that he or she detests. Pasolini argued:

'The true reason for censorial action is not moral, but political. All moralistic concern about sexual indecency is only a shameless avoidance of this truth, a shielding... Censorship intimidates, threatens, poses a false target, and thus distorts completely the audience's ability to understand the problem... It throws discredit, denigration, and blame on the author, with the result that he or she loses respectability and reliability. And this is the worst evil of censorship.'

(Pasolini 1960: 8) Indeed, as Foucault discussed, censorial practices, as much as knowledge and discourse, are transitory and interconnected with the intellectual formations of the alternating power relations. In *Discourse and Truth: the Problematisation of Parrhesia* (1983), Foucault explains that *parrhesia* (a Greek term signifying 'speaking the truth for the common good' even at personal risk) is a real threat to discourses, for the state and church, and thus an obstacle to maintaining the *status quo*. With Law 161, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1962, the newly introduced scheme, 'Revisione dei film e dei lavori teatrali', helped authors and producers to avoid the risk of not receiving the required *Nihil Obstat* after completion of film shooting and editing.<sup>77</sup>

When a film was imposed audio-visual revisions, it meant that it had been subjected to censorship before incurring legal procedures (Ivory, 1997: 5). With the establishment of a national Office of Film Revision political censorship, financial censorship and clerical censorship (represented by the CCC) were connected by law and made it possible for sectors with different agendas to work in moral partnership. In 1971, Gianmatteo Matteotti, 'Secretary of Public Entertainment', advanced a project reform for the abolition of censorship, leaving the task of evaluating the legal suitability of the films for the minors in the audience to the existing committee, for the revision of cinematic works (to be divided in sections). The two societies of cinema authors, AACI and ANAC, and the one of actors, SAI, rejected the request of a consultation with Matteotti, on the project- reform on the abolition of censorship as they claimed that the reform had been produced without previous negotiation and dialogue with the professional people involved in the cinema world. The SCCI held a neat opposition to preventive censorship even in the protection of minors, considering it as an inadmissible

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<sup>77</sup> 'The composition of the committees is strictly administrative: it does not require the presence of non-national officials. The chairman of second-degree committee may be a representative of the government. Censorship is defined as 'revision' or 'prior approval' (Gambetti 1992)

intrusion in the communication between cinema authors and their audience.

#### *d. Social ground of censorship by religion*

The Vatican's censorial methods have always held a strong spectrum of interventions on public institutions and civil communities. The church traditionally spreads its influence over Catholic citizens, through its both media, and *vis-à-vis* from the pulpits. In this line of action, Catholic professionals and public authorities honour the mission to influence large areas of the state's administration in the spirit of their Church.<sup>78</sup>

In 1942, the Vatican established the institute CCC (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico), conceived of by Luigi Gedda with the support of the Jesuits. The CCC had the aim of financing films shot in the spirit of Christianity and employing them as a medium for moral indoctrination. Parish churches were expected to affix on public boards weekly reviews of the films being screened in public cinema theatres to influence the Catholic audience (Bernardini, 1981: 68). On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1944, the Catholic Film Corporation 'Orbis' was also established. One of the first films produced by 'Orbis' during the Nazi occupation and under the financial umbrella of the Vatican, was De Sica's, *La Porta del Cielo* (1944), co-written with Cesare Zavattini and Diego Fabbri, narrating a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Holy Virgin in Loreto, yet setting the plot within a secular framework. The film represents a first example of Neorealist filmmaking.<sup>79</sup> Other 'Orbis-Universalialia' films, which followed *La porta del cielo*, included Pietro Germi's *Il testimone*, Alessandro Blasetti, *Prima Comunione* and *Un giorno nella vita*. Furthermore, between 1948 and 1951, 'Universalialia' co-produced Rossellini's film, *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (Lonero and Anziano, 2004: 14).

The Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's role in the approval of plots substantially increased to the point that a representative of the CCC would be unofficially admitted to take part in the Censorship Board's meetings, proving the enormous impact of the 'Pontificia Commissione per lo Spettacolo' in influencing the concession, or rejection, of valid certificates to the film

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<sup>78</sup> See in this respect Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967. In his book, Berger defines 'plausibility structures' those communities that inform and sustain the church's value-influence. The value-influence process can occur through sermons, informal discussion, and even less direct modes of communication.

<sup>79</sup> De Sica's quasi-religious film was positively reviewed in December 1944 in the Catholic newspaper, *Il Popolo*, and later on in its weekly insert, *Azione Femminile*, official organ of the 'Movimento Femminile Democrazia Cristiana'.

scripts under scrutiny. In the 1950s, the Catholic influence over cinema proceeded side by side with the establishment of parish church cinema theatres, which in 1953 cover almost a third of all cinema theatres on the nation's territory. Offence against the religious sentiment was typically called in to force by Catholic 'benpensanti' (self-righteous), who without necessarily appealing to law n. 161, or articles n. 528 and n. 529 of the Criminal Law, felt entitled to contrast, on legal terms, films that were thought to offend the believers' religious sentiment. This was certainly the case for Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960), whose censorship marked 'the most rigid point of intervention of the Catholic and conservatives parties against Fellini's cinema, and against those Catholic affiliates who helped him to overcome impediments.' (Gambetti, 1972: 20).<sup>80</sup> The film opens with a scene in which a plaster statue of Jesus is carried by helicopter across Rome's sky.

Pasolini, in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964) and Rossellini, in *Messia* (1975), both revealed with their politically militant filmmaking, that the truth behind the logics and procedures of clerical censorship hides power-related schemes. Pasolini especially embodied the notion of *parrhesia* (artistic freedom). In an interview with Furio Colombo, he discussed freedom of expression in his own terms:

'Negation has always been a radical gesture of Saints, Hermits but also of intellectuals. The few that have contributed to history are those who have said 'No', certainly not the courtesans and the bishops' subordinates. Negation, to be effective, must be massive, not small; it must be total, not partial; it must be 'absurd', not trying to make sense.' (Pasolini 1975)

Pasolini was aware of acting both from within and out with the Catholic *milieu*. As the designer of revolutionary cinematic versions of folk religiosity, he knew that society punishes those who oppose its symbolic spheres. Pasolini was not only critical of society and power: he showed that those who rebel against the *status quo*, struggling to point the finger at what is wrong to indicate the changes required to achieve liberation and redemption, may be drawn into the dual role as symbol makers, as well as iconoclasts, like the Jesus in his *Gospel*, or the mysterious 'barbaro' in *Teorema*, who 'comes to disrupt the established order' (Peterson, 2012: 121).

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<sup>80</sup> Gambetti argues: 'La dolce vita, in particolare – che oggi si proietta anche nei collegi e nei seminari – segnò il punto culminante dell'intervento degli ambienti cattolici ed ecclesiastici più ufficiali e tradizionali contro un cinema non certamente rivoluzionario, ma adulto, e contro gli stessi religiosi che – agendo per vie interne – avevano aiutato il regista a superare gli ostacoli censori' (Gambetti, 1992: 21).

Church censorship struck Liliana Cavani's documentary film, *Francesco d'Assisi* (1966), as she troubled the Catholic viewers by representing the Franciscan movement as one made of rebels against the Church's establishment. (Alonge, 1997:202) Cavani's rendering of Italy's patron saint, which she fashioned somewhat on the mood of Roberto Rossellini's Franciscan monks, in *Francesco Giullare di Dio* (1950),<sup>81</sup> suffered religious boycott certainly for portraying St Francis as the leader of men like Frate Ginepro e Giovanni Il Semplice, who behaved on the film set more like crazy outsiders than religious people.

In 1968, another of Pasolini's films, *Teorema*, which featured a main character of a disquieting young seducer suggestive of Christ, was charged for obscenity. Despite the film receiving the OCIS prize, on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1968, the Catholic *L'Osservatore Romano* inflamed the controversy, by stating that *Teorema* had an immoral plot and should be denied public exhibition. The CCC committee attributed an 'E' certificate (excluded to all) to *Teorema* for being 'negative and even dangerous'. As a result, as soon as the film was screened in public cinema theatres, it obtained massive criticism from cultural policy-makers. *Teorema* was sequestered by the Rome Attorney's office under the charge of 'obscenity'.<sup>82</sup> The Catholic lawyer, Biamonti, who had advanced the claim, sarcastically declared in the trial that 'the staging of a long sequence of moral perversions is not aimed at having a spiritual intent' (Betti, 1977: 171). Despite of this, Pasolini was finally cleared of all charges.

Proof of the endurance of the Catholic censorial mentality is Mons. Dell'Acqua's 1971 public appeal in the newspaper, *Il tempo*, against erotic films (*Un appello del Cardinale vicario di Roma Mons. Dell'Acqua contro i film erotici*, Rome, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1971), and Bishop Giovanni Villot's letter, published in the same year in the Vatican's newspaper *L'Osservatore romano*, soliciting protection of Catholic followers' decorum against pornography (*Per la dignità dell'uomo lotta contro la pornografia*, Vatican City, 10 November 1971). To fight such attitudes, in November 1971, the Executive Committee of the newly approved 'Sindacato Critici Cinematografici Italiani' rejected the institution of censorship as a whole and expressed

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81 Rossellini's film *Il Giullare di Dio*, on St Francis suffered no banning or cuts and obtained a valid certificate on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1950 by the State Vice Secretary (Sottosegretario di Stato) Nicola De Pirro ('Italia Taglia Archives').

82 Gambetti quotes a passage from Law N. 528, incriminating and penalizing also at the financial level authors of films which contain pornography: 'Tale pena – da tre anni a tre mesi più multa – si applica inoltre a chi dà pubblici spettacoli teatrali e cinematografici, ovvero audizioni o recitazioni pubbliche che abbiano carattere di oscenità.' He also quotes point 2 of Law 529: 'Non si considera oscena l'opera d'arte o l'opera di scienza, salvo che, per motivo diverso da quello di studio, sia offerta in vendita, veduta o comunque procurata a persona minore degli anni diciotto.' (Gambetti, 1992: 21).

its 'total aversion' to any law or reform concerning censorship (Gambetti, 1972: 16). The Vatican empowered film production companies to pursue the delivery of quality products through entrepreneurial forms of corporate management to strengthen the social wellbeing of the catholic communities. Catholic cinema associations, monitoring film production and distribution, have contributed remarkably to cinema diffusion and development at social level. It is worth quoting a few of them: 1. ACEC ('Associazione Cattolica Esercenti Cinema'), established in 1949, still acts in the moral interests of cinema theatre investors and administrators, and works in conjunction with state cinema boards and cinema trade unions. It has connections with the Ancci ('Associazione Nazionale dei Circoli Cinematografici Italiani') 2. The 'Datafilm' is a film archive containing all the documents issued by the 'Commissione Nazionale Valutazione Film' of the CEI. It keeps a record of film plots and the related 'moral' classifications as pastoral care programs. 3. The Catholic 'Centro Culturale San Fedele', in Milan, runs a cinema theatre (cineforum), where conferences and public film discussions are held every year. It also runs the 'Premio San Fedele per il cinema'. 4. The CSC ('Centro studi cinematografici'), in Rome, is one of the Catholic national cinema association, recognised by the Italian 'Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. Dipartimento dello Spettacolo.' It focuses its activities on programs of moral education and fruition of cinema people and spectators. It runs a film Library and Archive, in addition to organised annual cinema conferences and public events. 5. The 'Centro Orientamento Educativo' is an association of Catholic activists committed to cinema culture and promotion. The COE has a large film archive of other-than-Italian filmmakers.

### *6.3. Censorship by religion: legal aspects*

As Chapter 6 focuses on the cultural, political and socio-economic clashes between institutionalised religion and society, which power relations I am going to discuss in relation to the selected censored films, some preliminary information is essential on cinema censorship as a board controlling the contents of films to prevent them to become the target of legal action.

It is important to include a few considerations on Foucault's theory of power, which he describes as '*actions performed on others*' actions', and whose effects are the 'power relations' deep-rooted in the social bond. Foucault adds that society could not exist without these power relationships, and adds that they are in fact not super-structural, but structural. Power relations put in place differentiations determined by law, culture, processes of production, and linguistic

and cultural differences, etc. Every relation of power determines ‘differentiations’, which are its conditions and its effects. In *The Subject and Power*, Foucault maintains that the exercise of power aims at attaining certain goals of dominance, for which those who exercise actions of control over the actions of others must design and establish not only relations of power, but methods and strategies for its implementation (Foucault, in *Dreyfus and Rabinow*, 1983: 245-254).

From this angle, it is easier to understand the dynamic regulating censorship action within society. In fact, within the state’s power structure, official boards decide the norms regulating public broadcasting of cinematic representations. These consist of appointed committees, censorship trials involving several fields of the constitutional law, and the penal system (High Court of Justice), and can be initiated by any citizen. The official bodies, supervising film revision, ideate, emanate, and implement decrees and practices to place parts or whole performance judged unfit for public screening under scrutiny. Measures may include limited alterations, considerable revision, or total suppression.

Alongside the chronological analysis of the history of religious censorship within the historical, cultural, and economical circumstances that allowed its implementation, an examination is necessary of old and current laws protecting the ‘religious sentiment’ under the Italian Criminal Code. As I have argued, ‘contempt of religion’ has been part of state censorship for three quarters of the twentieth century, due to the constitutional agreements enforced by the Lateran Pact. Cinematic representations of any genre involving religious values and beliefs, have often stirred fierce ideological debate on two main colliding freedoms: the right to criticism, and the shielding of the religion sentiment. Clashes have at times resulted in trials following acts of censorship imposed on a given film accompanied by criminal persecution of its author.

The list of films that have been partially or totally banned, or have been subjected to cuts and censorial revisions of their form and thematic contents is long and varied (Liggeri 1997). Committees regulating the legality of cinema products have successfully intervened in innumerable films by resorting to the principles established by the Constitution and the Criminal Law. Before the revision of the Lateran Concordat in 1984, and the abolition of Art. 402 of the Criminal Code (Decree 13, n. 508, 20, 11, 2000), the law allowed judges to determine what was ‘contempt of state religion’, and how to punish it, at their own discretion. Such discretion over the decree placed power into the hands of judges as an anachronistic



privilege for the Catholics, which the Vatican can no longer assert. The punishment implied immediate banning and confiscation of the film, which would remain in force until the case was settled. Settlements involved, as in Pasolini's case, jail time, severe fines, or other retribution. In fact, 'civil contempt' was the immediate proceedings used to terminate only when the trial was resolved. This clause caused numerous films to remain banned until the abolition of Art. 402 from the Criminal Code, in 2000. Before the abolition of Art. 402, this juridical/constitutional knot caused Italian filmmakers to suffer various forms of discrimination according to their political ideas or religious beliefs. However, despite 'contempt of state religion' no longer counting today as an offence under the civil or criminal code, as verbal or visual offence to religion(s), now falls within the main field of 'freedom of speech'. I discuss how censorship by religion is still capable of affecting the artists' freedom of speech and public reputation.

Cinema sociology and historiography have predominantly addressed the issue of censorship, considering the control system of censorial committees and boards as a whole. This system, which applies cuts and bans to certain images, themes and plots, and disallows and punishes them by law, firmly claims to be based on justice and egalitarianism. However, in *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality* (1989), Annette Kuhn argues that the concept of censorship should not be considered a monolithic one with firm objectives, but rather, a network of interchangeable structures and powers whose objective is to continuously renegotiate its regulating principles (Kuhn, 1989: 127). It is, in brief, a constitutive process, sharing the type of culture and propaganda created by law-making sets of bureaucrats. Despite this structural duality, Kuhn stresses, the features common to the systems regulating public morality and order in fact have fixed parameters whose rigid conception determines corruption, class favouritism, and inequality. These traits are common to most forms of disciplinary surveillance, from the legal/administrative, to the religious/educational, allowing instances of abuse in the very systems and institutions, which promulgate the laws (Foucault 1977). However, the public act of censoring a film itself, Kuhn argues, may paradoxically contribute to its fame.

The approach to cinema censorship may vary from country to country, depending on its legal system. Vetoes are often placed on contents that may jeopardise the good morals of the nation or community; endanger the nation's relations with foreign nations; put public order in danger, and vilify religion, etc. In this respect, Gregory Black's analysis of censorship by religion, in

*The Catholic Crusade against the Movies* (1997) is a useful source of information on the debates between religion, high and popular culture, which have effects on the cinema industry.

In Italy, the relationship among cinema, the church, and the censors, has always been a problematic one.<sup>83</sup> Clashes may be caused by films addressing devotional practices, religious figures in contexts of self-indulgence, self-ridiculing, abuse, or sexual vice, as was the case during the first republican government (1947-1953).<sup>84</sup> Ideological friction between cinema and the church censors may be created by the representation of sacred figures, such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints in unorthodox renderings of the Sacred Scriptures in what are classified as 'Bible films'. Italian cinema directors who expressed in their films unconformity towards the church, and worked in a period, in which the law conceded the Holy See constitutional rights, endured severe forms of discrimination. Censorial decisions, taken at various degrees of severity by the various Boards of Film Revision before 1984 have thus included filmic stories vilifying the Italian state's official religion' (Jemolo, 1950: II). Censorial actions shielding religion involve the examining of scripts, scenes, sequences, dialogues, ideas, attitudes, and styles of performance suspected of blasphemy and contempt.

Cuts, revisions, and confiscation place legal limits on the circulation of films, and also penalise the spectators' rights to access their chosen forms of entertainment and information. The different measures which individual filmmakers and the film industry can resort to, to respond to film censorship, is a correlated issue which allows juxtaposing the legitimacy of censorial laws to the artists' rights to freedom of speech, representation, criticism, and satire, protected under Article 21 of the Italian Constitution.

The first to be censored by Catholic critics for contributing to the nation's cultural decline and thus accused of moral disengagement, were the 'Telefoni Bianchi'<sup>85</sup> films, produced in the historical phase opening up to mass-culture entertainments and box-office high profits. In the same way, critics of mass culture, particularly if aligned with Marxist critique, used to look

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83 A famous instance of censorship, protecting the Church's prestige, is that against the horror film, *La Chiesa*, co-authored by Dario Argento and Franco Ferrini and directed by Michele Soavi (1989, censorship case: 84503 del 10-03-1989), set in the Middle Ages, exploiting the allegory of the 'plague' to bring a village to moral cataclysm.

84 Cfr. *Appendix: 'Il Sottosegretariato per lo Spettacolo della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri e il cinema italiano durante la I legislatura (1947-1953)'*

85 The definition 'white telephones films' ('film dei telefoni bianchi') now defines a typology of mild entertaining plots, the majority of which are based on bourgeois wealth, moral decency, romance, war, etc. Intended to fashion a sense of national identity, these films were produced, commissioned, and regulated within the boundaries established by the regime (Mida 1980).

down to popular cinema as not fit to react to the social decline instigated by high capitalism.

Tensions between the church and the film industry on the topic of Catholic prestige arise whenever traditional religious customs, values, figures, dogmas, and so on, are portrayed in decline under the pressure of mass consumerism. Clerical censorship has unquestionably attached De Sica, Pasolini and Fellini and Bellocchio's films, who I refer to as notable examples of victims of clerical censorship. Between the 1930s and 1960s, religious activists tirelessly campaigned against cinema's indecency and blasphemy worldwide, interceding with the legislative authorities to offer advice on the issuing of cinema regulations, influencing Catholic followers on cinema consumption, or dictating to cinema producers the amount of sex and violence that was allowed on the screens and which had to be removed by cuts and revisions. In those decades, in the USA as much as in Italy, the Catholic Church would put pressure on producers and filmmakers to submit every script and film to Catholic reviewers. The amount of control, which these Catholic censorial boards enjoyed in those decades, in their role as the public's moral guardians, has not totally diminished. The only way producers and filmmakers could avoid censorship and condemnation was to come to terms with the requests of Catholic reviewers, taking for granted their claims of authority over the mass media in matters of public decency (Black, 1977: 1). On the other hand, Black argues, the Catholic Church was reluctant to admit this kind of censorial interventions, attributing to the 'Legion of Decency' the mere function of classifying films for the sake of public fruition.

In a word, open clerical censorship was concealed and passed by a rating board, classifying film plots according to their moral worth. The worth of a cinematic product was established because of the absence from its plot and scenes of both explicit and allusive representations of condemnable sex-related subjects, such as abortion, adultery, intercourse, orgasm, sodomy, and homosexuality. Adding to this list of banning the representation of the pleasures of the flesh was the use of blasphemous and/or vulgar language, criminal actions, and all other instances of immoral self-indulgence. The Legion of Decency demanded that before the Board issued a valid certificate, films containing fornication, obscenity, and criminality, should be altered in respect of the Catholic morality. The Catholic militants, at this end, would organise boycotts of films judged inappropriate and offensive to the public decorum, and transmit to the Catholic audience the Holy See's opinion on the risks of cinema attendance, especially in consideration of what Pope Pius XI's had sated in his 1930 encyclical letter, *Casti Connubii*. Whenever appointed members disapproved of given contents in a censorship board, the producer would

receive a letter requesting alterations against the indignity of certain scenes or themes, and would be also instructed on how to apply changes and cuts so as to avoid public scandal.

Black offers a clear-cut evaluation of the Catholic Legion of Decency Legion, moving away from its role of moral arbitrator to that of censor. The organization worked closely with the industry, and the State Censorship Committees to find mutual on of what could be considered acceptable in films. The collaboration between Catholic watchdogs and film producers would even negotiate with cinema studios what scenes had to be cut, re-shoot, re-recorded, what texts, words, dialogues, prologue or epilogue had to be changed, added or eliminated to a film to make it acceptable to the Catholic Church. (Black, 1994, and 1997)

*e. Censorship as social crusade: the self-appointed Catholic censor*

In *Censorship: an International Encyclopaedia*, Derek Jones points out that the application of censorship implies ‘a variety of processes [...] formal and informal, overt and covert, conscious and unconscious, by which restrictions are imposed on the collection, display, dissemination, and exchange of information, opinions, ideas, and imaginative expression’ (Jones, 2001: xi, v. 1). Likewise, censorship by religion strikes whenever the church’s dogmas are believed to be endangered. The first step, which the church takes to shelter its interests, is to lay public blame on dissent. The second is to call believers to a personal crusade against cinema evils as becomes evident in the quoted Papal *encyclical letters*’ calls for the faith’s paladins. One task of the prejudiced self-appointed censors is to oppose progressive criticisms of the official church, whether it originates from within or out with its system, be it a product of high independent intellectual research, academic scholarship or popular culture.

Despite the current reforms, policies and measures that safeguard cinema’s liberty, civil censorship remains a threat to the artist’s rights to express dissent against religion and its related culture, without the fear of punitive restrictions (Agel 1962). This joined partnership in cultural censorship is made possible by the church’s double ground of influence, which I have already discussed in this thesis – the power over the believers and the power over the state with control of behaviours and norms, affecting both the individuals and the popular masses. The clergy in fact appear to determine the endurance of the catholic doctrine on the continuance of a homogeneously supportive religious community, which is still envisaged in terms of ‘flock of sheep’, and ‘crusaders’. Indeed, on the one hand, the Vatican presents itself as a counter-power

of the lay secular forces, and, on the other, it aims at maintaining its sovereignty because of its traditional, self-perceived spiritual superiority.<sup>86</sup> Coherent with such hegemonic attitude, the Italian mentality considers the Catholic religion as an almost guiding vessel in all aspects of the communal life, even when data provides evidence of a weakening of people's church attendance and faith.

Intolerance towards any critique of religion, and the consequent choice of appointing oneself as censor, may progress from public institutions' representatives and individual citizens, who may take the church's call for involvement in censorship crusades as the good Catholic's duty. Data from the 'Cineteca Nazionale' and 'Italia Taglia' Film Archives show that a large number of censorial actions are initiated by Catholic viewers, as self-appointed censors, filing complaints against films known as being disapproved of by the Vatican spokesmen. The Catholic viewers' sense of prevalence, over the lay and non-Christian communities, Moore argues in *The Body in Context. Sex and Catholicism*, generally comes from a cultural overconfidence about what is socially desirable and what is deplorable (Moore 1992). Such initiatives move from a religiously acquired moral sense of right and wrong (Jelen and Wilcox, 1990: 69-81). Censorship is, in fact, prevalently a question of mentality and does not stop with the coming into force of legal and constitutional impediments to its implementation and legitimacy. A culture of civil censorship can often manifest itself through people from the professional strata, lawyers, police officers, university professors, critics, and journalists of Catholic background, fighting to shield their church. From the above reasons and circumstances, the non-religious artist, who with his or her work shows the two-faced side of the nation's religious identity, and the relativity of the values which the clergy promulgates as inviolable, often creates opposition and scandal. With the attitude of moral crusader in mind, several Catholic critics have made a blunder. They failed to see, for instance, that Pasolini was a post-Catholic filmmaker with huge involvements in the Catholic language and poetic worldview. They undervalued the fact that he had conceived the *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, with deep respect for Jesus and Christianity. In fact, Pasolini often suggested that the Vatican's censors obsessed with hunting for offence, significantly disregard Christ's message. In the 1960s, the *Vangelo secondo Matteo* certainly contributed to the emerging atmosphere of political and civil street protest ('cultura della contestazione giovanile'). In turn, Fellini, in *8 ½*, conveyed a sour critique of ecclesiastic

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<sup>86</sup> Quite contradictory, despite being the 'other' power, the Roman Catholic Church constantly criticises the greed for power in its opponents. While maintaining such paradox, the church does not seem particularly embarrassed by its pyramidal hierarchy and censorial treatment of its opponents.

pastorship, imposed by means of religious education in religious colleges and state-maintained Catholic schools. The film stirred debate on how individuals are manipulated by the church's educational influence. A sarcastic critique of the nation's bigotry returned in Fellini's *Boccaccio '70* (1962), in which censorship in all its acquired official and non-official manifestations is itself satirised. The film was imposed only 2 cuts x 16 metres of film.

#### *6.4. Catholic Truth and its order of discourse*

The Papal encyclicals, as discussed in this section's *Appendix*, face issues concerning the cinema as a tool to impart moral education, but also to endanger it (Mosconi, 2006: 145-171). I will demonstrate how the encyclical letters tend to place the problems of film productions less in relation to their artistic achievement, but rather to their actual social reception. This *Appendix* connects with Foucault's discourse theory (see Ch. 2. 2), which I refer to, in order to make sense of the empirical material here discussed.

The Papal encyclicals discussed in this chapter have in fact a tendency to raise moral objections to the indiscriminate consumption of cinema, alongside a tendency to put in brackets the effectiveness of educational films outside the Church's moral supervision. No Pope has renounced the task to highlight the inherent moral dangers associated with the cinema medium as it will be apparent in the quoted Encyclical letters in this chapter's *Appendix* which are central to an understanding of how cinema have stirred clerical censorship, and how they have reacted to it. Papal encyclicals can be interpreted as the Vatican's claim to be entitled to discipline the relationship between the film industry and society (Viganò 2002: 61-62). In *Inter Mirifica* and *Vigilanti Cura*, Pius XI recognises the huge educational potentials of the cinema as a medium of public education and commands the Vatican to monitor the Catholic community's attitude in film viewing (Gori and Pivato 1981). However, in *Vigilanti Cura*, the Pope makes clear that the Catholic Church's organised cultural associations can exercise control over the production and distribution of films. He argues that parish churches' cinema theatres can become 'good clients for the film industry' and that for this reason, the Church can 'demand' that producers adapt their policies to the Church's principles (Pius XI, 1936:62-63). The church has continued to emphasise the right to examine the moral contents of the cinematic representations to assess their educational worth, and in the end, such well-intended concerns appear to be the root of clerical cinema censorship.

### *f. Cinema and public decorum: the 1995 Vatican list of 'Decent films'*

The Church of Rome has traditionally applied to cultural products – literature, theatre, and cinema especially - its techniques of moral reprisal to cover with preoccupations of public decorum issues that are concerned with preservation of dominion. For instance, from the notion that sexuality should be part of those techniques of self-control also imparted by the church (Foucault), clerical censorship may decide to condemn cinematic sexual conducts unaligned with the Church's religious teachings. This implies that people's choice of sexuality is the focus of, but also a threat to, the Church's status as acknowledged mass pedagogue.

From the Neorealist trend onwards, the tendency of Italian leftist script writers and filmmakers has been of portraying the kind of sexual ethics imposed by the church on the societies of believers, as a mystifying way of controlling private and civil relationships between individuals. Christianity defines lust as one of the seven deadly sins.<sup>87</sup> The clergy has constantly intervened to condemn public screening of mainstream commercial films for mass consumption, criticising its moneymaking aspects. However, the underlying censure of these films arises from the belief that they contravene the basic principles of morality.

In 1995, the Vatican provided a top-list of 45 films, recipients of ecclesiastical approval in the same year. The list, titled 'Some Important Films', contains films, which have been produced during the first hundred years of cinema. The selection of films was made by a committee of twelve international film scholars appointed by Archbishop John Foley, head of the pontifical committee.<sup>88</sup> It is worth highlighting that the pontifical was happy to include Rossellini's, *I fioretti di San Francesco*, Liliana Cavani's *Francesco*, and Pasolini's Marxist rendering of the life of Jesus in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), for their religious significance.

Pope John Paul II's watchfulness towards cinema is nevertheless palpable in his words against morally unworthy productions: 'The church's overall judgement of this art form, as of all genuine art, is positive and hopeful. We have seen that masterpieces of the art of film-making

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<sup>87</sup> See Catholic Church's sexual ethics, discussed in Gareth Moore, *The Body in Context. Sex and Catholicism*, London: SCM Press, 1992.

<sup>88</sup> Movies from the Vatican database are enlisted in the online film database, *Decent Films* ([www.decentfilms.com](http://www.decentfilms.com)). The list is composed of three categories, 'Religion', 'Values', and 'Art', with 15 films in each of the three categories. It comprises movies of moral, spiritual and /or artistic significance as diverse as Fred Zinnemann's *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1976) and *The Sacrifice* (1986) or Fellini's *La Strada* and *8½* (1963).

can be moving challenges to the human spirit, capable of dealing in depth with subjects of great meaning and importance from an ethical and spiritual point of view. [...] Unfortunately, though, some cinema productions merit criticism and disapproval, even severe criticism and disapproval. This is the case when films distort the truth, oppress genuine freedom, or show scenes of sex and violence offensive to human dignity' (John Paul II).

Alleged offence of decency was ascribed to Bernardo Bertolucci's 1972 scandal film, *Last Tango in Paris*. At the time when the notorious 'butter' episode in *Ultimo Tango* appeared on the screens in public cinema theatres, the reactions of Catholic spectators provided immediate indication that the representation had a particular insulting resonance for them for reasons other than explicit sex. Debates in Catholic reviews suggest that clerical censorship struck Bertolucci's film for the theme of adultery, depression, and suicide, resulting in the story being judged as harmful for the decorum of the institution of family, sanctified by the Church in Italy, as in France.

#### *g. The Church and the reformist debates in Italy*

It is worth stressing that from the 1970s onwards, the emergence of public disagreement coming from the lay sectors of the nation regarding the Vatican's opposition to civil issues and reforms in matters of divorce, abortion, contraception, gender diversity, priests' celibacy, and assisted suicide, signified a more rapid decline in the Catholic's ability to impose their recommendations on individual people. Cinema has played a major role in gradually undermining the Vatican's traditional role as moral watchdog. The divorce (1974) and abortion popular referendums (1981), which in the 1970s prompted the direct yet ineffectual intervention of the Vatican on voters, proved that people in Catholic Italy were ready for a radical change in conscience autonomy, and thus more likely to support reforms coming from the lay parties as the 'Partito Radicale'.<sup>89</sup>

Data of electoral polls confirmed that Catholic voters shifted between conservative and liberal

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<sup>89</sup> The occurring changes were dramatic for the Vatican's conservative prelates as it can be inferred by the sudden death of Bishop Bartoletti, appointed General Secretary of the Italian Episcopal Conference in 1972 under the pontificate of Paul VI, who had a severe heart attack in the course of a very heated argument with the Pope himself on the subject of the Partito Radicale's campaign to change the existing regulation on abortion (Law 194). (Roy 1976: 776)



positions. The political fluctuations that are observable within the Catholic strata of society on themes and reforms of public interests have introduced doubts that the Catholic Church keeps its old authority unaltered to inculcate life-orienting values to society. These fluctuations suggest that these values are not absolute, but rather, are relative. Several films in recent decades have challenged the legitimacy of the religious monopoly over ethics and advocated change. Political cinema in particular has had a definite influence on the opinion-formation processes.

#### *h. Cinema's counter-influence on society*

It is appropriate to quote Muller's remarks on the quasi-religious nature of all ideologies: 'Ideologies are forms of integrated belief systems which provide explanations for political reality and establish the collective goals of a class or a group' (Muller, 1973: 101-102). In this sense, cinema artists too, have contributed to ideological debate on issues of identity, family, sexuality, religion, and civil rights. As a fundamental area of critical theory, and a world within the world, Italian filmmakers are recognised as both independent and participating contributors to change. Now as ever before, the best Italian cineastes situate their actions within a complex network of local and global agenda, to observe how society functions within the interrelated spheres of economics, politics, culture, civil ethics, and religion. They join in practical partnership, the local and the global, activating their collaboration within groups, movements, and progressive discourses.

Currently, filmmakers like Nanni Moretti, Marco Bellocchio, Marco Tullio Giordana, Francesca Archibugi, Giuseppe Tornatore, Ermanno Olmi, and Cristina Comencini, are endeavouring to situate at the core of their stories, the examination of a reality similar to the Neorealist trend. However, they do so with more humour and less adherence to their own underlying political agenda. It summons transversal forms of communication and interconnects distinct disciplines: historiography, and the sociology of the media, aesthetics, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and politics, merging imagination with actuality, and subjectivity with objectivity. The disciplinary areas that make cinema a cauldron of information are varied and multifaceted, travelling across time and space. The church and states' mentoring of the cinema freedoms is a well-known control strategy, which has often acted at the expense of the artist's freedom of expression and ideological, political, and financial autonomy.

Since the Lateran Revision, the involvement of cinema intellectuals in criticising the Vatican's conservative ideas on the culture industry has gone through alternating waves in Italian and foreign cinema. To fight back Papal bias, stirring moral reserves against the motion picture, a growing commitment is noticeable from the time of the legislative abolition of the crime of 'vilification of religion' onwards, not only in Italy but also in other nations of the Western world.<sup>90</sup>

In Chapter 7 I set out to investigate the impact of the artists' ideological battles on parliamentary reforms on the basis of what I have hypothesised thus far regarding matters of clerical censorship. I focus specifically on those decrees that have made possible the modification or abolition of laws which used to be called in to force to penalise the artists whose subjects dealt with religion and society from non-orthodox viewpoints, and whose viewpoints were perceived of as offensive to religion.

#### *Appendix to Chapter 6.4: A review of historical papal encyclical letters on cinema*

In view of the considerations made so far, it is now important to illustrate some pivotal Papal encyclical letters addressing the cinema industry, before I engage in a discussion on the films banned in Italy, and in other nations, due to the Catholic censors' intervention against plots judged as corruptive or offensive against religion. The *Appendix to Chapter 6.4* expands on specific censorial issues contained within historical papal encyclicals on the cinema.

In relation to my use of Encyclicals letters, Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* offers a theoretical framework to the discussion of papal texts' ideological contents. Foucault argues that the discourses of power are always built around truths which are provisional, and which emerge gradually during the slow overlapping of ideological perspectives and eras. I consider papal encyclicals from Foucault's *Archaeology*, as stating the rules of formation of a group of statements (the church's views and dogmas). In this way it is possible to observe how groups of historical events (wars, reforms, and scientific discoveries) may become objects of theoretical discourse to be 'recorded, described, and explained' (Foucault, 1969: 184-185). In this respect, one can examine the slow changes occurring in the church's attitudes towards the inflexibility

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<sup>90</sup> Commitment to stirring change in institutionalised religion characterises Moretti *La messa è finita* (1984) and Bellocchio's *L'ora di religione* (2002). Elsewhere Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Il nome della rosa* (1986), Jean-Christophe Grangé's *I fiumi di porpora* (2000), Pedro Almodovar's *La mala educación* (2004), Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008), Ron Howard's *The Da Vinci's Code* (2006), *Angels and Demons* (2009) and Alejandro Amenábar's *Agorà* (2009) are equally critical of religion imperialism.

of religion's dogma to fight or adapt to its opponent's counter-discourse, whose aim is to introduce change. Hegemonies in fact, tend to resist internal and external dissent by either reinforcing the logic of their discourses, or by modifying them to prevent their doctrines from being subjected to external modifications. The church's vigilance on dissidence may target both, preventing change or administering the steps that require changes.

#### **6.4. a) Pius XI: 'Vigilanti cura' and other encyclical letters on the cinema industry**

Cultural historians and cinema sociologists do not ignore the constant confrontation of the film industry with the ruling ideologies and forms of state governance. Brunetta, in *Il cinema del regime 1929*, included in *Storia del cinema italiano* (V. II, 1945), and *Cent'anni di cinema italiano, Cinema italiano tra le due guerre* has discussed how the Catholic *entourage* criticised propaganda reels and feature films for their political influence over the audience. The aversion was clear in Pope Pius XI's speeches on the dangers of cinematography.

Pius XI, who is remembered for having gained recognition of the sovereign independence of the Holy See, managed to end the long breach between the papacy and the Italian government by signing the *Lateran Agreements* in 1929, and for settling the Holy See's legal position in terms of its political power and autonomy. On the cultural ground, during his pontificate, the Vatican fought the negative aspects of the regime and the media on its own grounds by means of prescriptive pastorship. However, Pius XI established 'Radio Vaticana', through which the church's evangelic mission began to broadcast its message to the outer world. An admirer of cinema as an art form, he himself started a crusade against corruption by forbidding the Catholic audience to go to public cinema theatres to watch films suspected of heresy, profanity and atheism. The Catholic audience, in Pius XI's *Encyclical letters Divini illius Magistri* (31<sup>st</sup> December 1929) and *Casti Connubi* (31<sup>st</sup> December 1931) was expected to watch only virtuous films and deplore the evil of the wicked ones (Freddi, 1994: 43). *Casti Connubi* in particular, called for a campaign against cinematic immorality.<sup>91</sup> In another letter, *Divini illius Magistri*, the Pope argued: 'The cinema's powerful technical means, which are in theory of great advantage for education if properly directed by healthy principles, unfortunately may also work

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91. 'To counter the influence of immoral movies corrupting the moral values of Americans, Father Daniel Lord wrote a movie code that prohibited films from glorifying criminals, gangsters, adulterers, and prostitutes. Lord's code, which soon became the Bible of film production, banned nudity, excessive violence, white slavery, illegal drugs, miscegenation, lustful kissing, suggestive postures, and profanity from the screen' (Black 1994).

as incentives to evil passions. They are often subordinated to sordid gain' (Pope Pius XI, *Divini illius Magistri*, A.A.S., 1930, V. XXII: 82.).

In August 1934, speaking to the International Federation of the Motion Picture Press's delegations, Pope XI acknowledged the importance which the motion picture had acquired in the modern world. He warned cinema directors against the likely negative influence of evil plots on the 'passive masses', and recommended that they honour 'the promotion of what is good against the insinuation of what is evil'. In drawing attention to the significance of the role of cinema in modern societies, Pope XI, in *Vigilanti cura* (29<sup>th</sup> June 1936), highlighted the desire to turn the motion picture into a mass *educator*: 'The essential purpose of art, its *raison d'être*, is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality, which is man, and for this reason it must itself be moral.'<sup>92</sup> Upon reading the texts of Pius XI's encyclicals, the Pope's criticism of the evils of cinema appear initially to go in the interest of the church, followed by the interest of the family, the state, and then the nation<sup>93</sup> (Freddi, 1994: 44). In short, the Pope solicited cinema producers to adapt film scripts to the church's 'supreme rule' so as to avoid conflict with the Christian morality.

Where on the one hand, Pope XI had undoubtedly shown a readiness to admit that the motion picture had achieved a position of 'universal importance' among popular means of diversion, he did not trust producers to foster 'morally healthy' standards in recreational cinema. The Pope's exhortation to all 'men of goodwill' to take a moral stance before the potential evils of the motion picture was repeatedly urged, not only in the name of religion, but also to the nation's moral and civil welfare. Following the Pope's indictments, mass culture began to displease the tastes of old-style Catholic democrats, conservatives and traditionalists, who attached pejorative connotations to cinema, television, music recording, advertising, and the popular press (During, 1993: 65). For these reasons, mass society came to be considered as the instigator of bad cultural products. Its indiscriminate use of its bad taste had a negative effect on the civil society's socio-cultural and moral decline in taste. The quality of the mass-media contents already in the 30s, began to be frowned upon, and criticised for, making people the unaware consumers of commercially driven products of the culture industry (Bullock and Trombley, 1977: 506). The Pope believed that the 'pernicious' influence of cinema was

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<sup>92</sup> In *Sequenze. Quaderni di cinema, Cinema e Cattolicesimo*, I, 1950, Year II, N. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Pius XI's first discourse on cinema was held at Castel Gandolfo on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1934 in front of the 'Federazione Internazionale della Stampa Cinematografica, and the second on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1936 before the delegates of the 'Congresso Internazionale della Stampa Cinematografica' in Rome),

proportionate to its progress as an industry. *Vigilanti Cura*, in fact, expressively asked the Hollywood film industry's executives to contribute to the implementation of the church's set morality.<sup>94</sup> Pope XI's spoke of his project to establish a 'Legion of Decency', whose mission was the restoration of artistic and moral 'wise standards' for the world of cinema:

'Because of your *vigilance*<sup>95</sup> and because of the pressure of the public opinion, the motion picture has shown some moral improvement. Crime and vice are portrayed less frequently; sin is no longer so openly approved and acclaimed; false ideals of life are no longer presented in so flagrant a manner to the impressionable minds of youth. [...] It is showing more conformity with the task of the Christian conscience to save man from depraving actions' (Pius XI).

The style of speech by which Pius XI addressed his interlocutors is authoritative and managerial. The Pope's appeals to Catholics, executives, directors, authors, and actors, involved in the film industry, requesting forthright that they agree to use their artistic skills for the promotion of Christian morality for future film production. Elsewhere, within the same document, the Pope indicates the need for film revision. He unequivocally assigns to the Catholic Action the task of implementing clerical censorship and serving the church in parish churches and other Catholic agencies. The following two paragraphs from *Vigilanti Cura* elucidate the process whereby clerical censorship was reclaimed and activated. It is thus worth quoting them at length:

'Therefore, it is absolutely urgent that all the Bishops worldwide set a permanent national board for film revision in order to promote good motion pictures, classify the films' distinctive qualities and make the outcomes known to parish priests. It will be appropriate to assign such task to the Catholic Action's central organisation, and make them liable to the Bishops. It is worth stressing that this project, in order to function organically and with efficiency, must be implemented on a national basis to serve information. Should serious reasons really require it, the Bishops, in their own dioceses and through their diocesan reviewing committees, will create a list of allowed films to adapt the same standards to the whole nation and eventually

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94 Vatican web-site: vatican.va; Pius XI's *Vigilanti Cura* is here compared with Pius XXII *Miranda Prorsus*, Rome: Ente dello Spettacolo, 1957.

95 It may be worth to add that from Pope Pius XII's point of view, a film is ideal 'if the church emerges radiant' from its plots as the 'Holy Mother Church' in whom he (the 'believer') trusts, to whom he clings, in whom he lives, from whom his soul and innermost being draw human perfection and eternal happiness.' of hyperbole on the duty of cinema people to serve the cause of the Mother Church 'with honesty, passion and faithfulness' appear that of a charismatic political leader indicating forthrightly the correct conduct to his followers.' Mine the Italic.

cancel films which are not admitted to the list.’ (Pius XI)

The Pope’s speech poses the apostolic imperative to safeguard morality less as a choice than as a real obligation to join the Bishops’ crusade in the defence of the decorum and morality of the institutions of the family, the church and the state, a crusade which had to be inspired principally by the Vatican’s directives. Censorship committees, on the one side, had the task of acting as watchdogs of existing cinema halls, run by parish churches and Catholic associations so to assure the screening of films reviewed and approved by Catholic critics and observers. On the other, they had to influence the cinema industry to produce motion pictures, in conformity with standards dictated by the Pope: ‘A mutual exchange of ideas, advice and information between the Boards of the various countries will produce a greater efficiency and harmony in the task of reviewing films. [...] It will thus be possible to achieve unity of outlook, judgement and communication for the World Catholic Press.’ (Pius XI) *Vigilanti cura* stressed the hazardous relationship between cinema and public morality. Aimed at imparting moral standards to filmmakers and producers, Pius XI’s recommendations served the task of setting the Catholic Church in unambiguous opposition to the cinema industry’s financial opportunism. In the letter, film banning was presented as a technique to persuade filmmakers to monitor their films’ offensive contents. Frezzi himself, as the state’s Cinema General Director between 1934 and 1939 and afterwards as Chief Director of Cinecittà Studios, used to monitor and implement censorship legislation throughout the films’ production processes to avoid plots that might offend the state and church’s prestige.

Pius XI, who had unambiguous views on how the fascist state had to administer its power through information and propaganda, firmly believed that the Vatican had a say in establishing the nation’s ethical principles on matters concerning economics, social order and Art. In *Banned Films* it is noted that the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency joined forces with other governmental bodies to oppose the risk of public corruption: ‘Unless the censors considered a given film to be morally ‘safe’, Catholic people were discouraged from watching on the film screens what was actually happening around them’ (De Grazia and Newman, 1982: xvi). Upon giving his unconditional approval to the creation of the first Board of Censorship, Pius XI claimed: ‘Il cinematografo non sia più scuola di corruzione [...] ma si trasformi in prezioso strumento di educazione.’ (‘Cinema must give up its role as public corruptor [...] and become a precious educational tool.’)

Thus, during Pius XI’s papacy, the church found new ways to theorise the potential positive

role of cinema and the media over society in the light of their use for ‘good ends’. In 1934, the Vatican approved the CCC (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico). The CCC attracted many ideologically committed filmmakers of Catholic affiliation. It promoted films depicting religion through the cinema medium. It warned against the evil of capitalism and materialism, and financed the production of story-lines depicting the deterioration of the life of godless people. The organisation’s aim was to watch films and advise the community on their moral suitability, as we shall see in a following section of this chapter. The CCC films often featured clergymen and women preaching Catholic principles, or stories based on the Old and New Testament (religious cinema). They solicited the legal authorities to allow representatives of the Vatican to take part in censorship committees.

#### ***6.4. b) Pio XII on the ideal film. Cinema and religious values***

Talking about the Church’s political attitude, Mart Bax has argued: ‘Religious regimes and states have much in common, but also remarkable differences’ (Bax, 1987: 1). In looking at the history of World War II, there appears to be much truth in such a thought-provoking statement. Pius XII was perceived of as a moderate and open-minded Pope. His *Magisterium* includes 41 papal encyclicals, and over 1000 lectures and radio broadcasts, addressing the representatives of the Cinema World in the Apostolic Exhortation of the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1955 – two years before he promulgated the *Miranda Prorsus* (8 September 1957) on cinema, radio and television. Pope XII stated that the church was ready to hold a positive attitude towards cinema as long as the Vatican was allowed to create concrete opportunities to ‘morally influence’ the cinema’s artists, directors, and producers. Clerical censorship could not be stated in a clearer way than this. The Pope then began dictating unambiguous criteria for the writing and shooting of the ‘ideal film’. Pius XII, like his predecessor, acknowledged that cinema, as an industry for mass distraction, is inspired by rampant Capitalism.

To oppose such opportunism, which was viewed as the cause of civil society’s moral decline, the ideal film had to respect the community of spectators, upon which cinema may exercise its dangerous influence:

‘We will call *ideal* only that film [...] which strengthens and uplifts man in the consciousness of his dignity, that which increases his knowledge and love of the lofty natural position conferred on him by his Creator’ (Pope XII).

The Pope's suggestion to film directors was to re-create the 'spirit' of the real, and thus satisfy the expectations of those viewers who, 'in the dryness of their own life', take refuge in the cinema, driven by the hope of finding there the contentment of their inner longings and secret desires. The Pope continued:

'But a general understanding of man is not enough, when the film is intended for a given profession or class; a more special understanding of the particular conditions of various classes of society is also needed. The moving picture must give to him who sees and hears a sense of reality, but of a reality seen through the eyes of one who knows more than he, and handled with the will of one who stands beside the spectator to help and comfort him, if necessary.' (Pope XII)

The ideal film, Pius XI reckoned, had to know how to respond to the audience's positive desires, and remain unresponsive to their illicit amoral expectations:

'The ideal film, for the spectator's sake, will have a lofty and positive mission to accomplish the high office of putting the great possibilities and power of influence, which we already recognise in the craft of the Cinema, at the service of man. It has to be an aid to him in maintaining and rendering effective his self-expression in the path of right and goodness. [...] [The ideal film] should not make an empty show of moralising intention, but instruct, delight, spread genuine and noble joy and pleasure.' (Pius XII)

From Pope Pius XII's message, in *The ideal film*, one may infer that films should be banned whenever the plot reveals a propensity to evil for the sake of wrongdoing. The reason being that this would stimulate wickedness in individuals considered to be passive spectators, incapable of resisting corruption by means of moral reasoning. Contrarily, a film dealing with iniquity and corruption should not be banned in those instances when the struggle against evil serves to a 'deeper understanding of life and its proper ordering, of self-control, of enlightenment, and strengthening of judgement and action' (Pope XII). Pius XII's suggestions for the production of the ideal film placed emphasis specifically on the idea of the 'common good' in defence of the family or nation's decorum. By arguing that even the Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments include stories, accounting for the influence of evil in the lives of individuals, families, and nations (as with Judas, Caiphas, Pilate, Peter, Saul, the Patriarchs, Jacob, Joseph, King Saul, David, or Absalom), the Pope expressed trust in the capacity of the responsible viewer's to remain clear-sighted. Films with problematic plots can in fact elevate



the audience's moral awareness.

#### **6.4. c) Pope XII's *Miranda Prorsus***

Following Pope Pius XI's advice in *Vigilanti Cura*, also Pope XII's *Miranda Prorsus* (1955), confirming the didactic significance and cultural power of cinema, provided coherent reasons for the church and state's vigilance over the cinematic arts (Scarvaglieri 1977). Pius XII, by focussing his attention on the activities of cinema people in the new capitalist societies, demonstrated a readiness to recognise 'the tremendous dynamic activity to which the Cinema has given life, whether in the strictly artistic field, or in the economic and technical sphere.' The Pope summoned all the cinema workers of good will to show respect for 'the life of the countries where it develops its power'. At the same time, he touched on the need for critical and scholarly analysis of cinema as an art in its own right 'to be directed to the improvement of man and the glory of God' (Pius XII 1955). The Pope's concern for the potential competitiveness of cinema over public morality was unambiguous. However, he still spoke of the evil effects of the cinema on public morality, thus restated the church's old mistrust of human nature as wicked and fragile, requiring the guidance of religion (Grace 1957). *Miranda Prorsus* in fact, blamed the negative effects, which a film may force on the spectators, turning them into 'prisoner' of the fake world of the cinematic fiction. Despite his pessimism, he provided an insight into the modern cinema viewers' changing attitudes to religious ethics (Kebler 1980). While expressing concern for the potential loss of influence that the growing popularity of cinema was causing to the church, Pius XII posed the following dilemma:

'What is the source of the fascination of this new art, which, sixty years after its first appearance, has arrived at the almost magical power of summoning into the darkness of its halls, and not gratuitously, crowds that are numbered by the billions? [...] What is the secret of the spell, which makes these same crowds its constant devotees?'<sup>96</sup>

Pius XII, remarking on the enchanting effects of cinema on the spectators' sensibility, compared the cinema's visual effects to those of a 'performed miracle'. The Pope readily admitted that a film's fascination derives from its artistic, and technical features and languages, contributing to its 'magic spell':

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<sup>96</sup> On the role of the arts in society, see Pope Pius XII, 'The Function of Art', in *The Irish Monthly*, V, 81, N. 958, Jun, 1953: 234.

‘[Cinema] performs the *prodigy* of transferring the spectator into an imaginary world or, in a documentary film, of bringing reality, distant in space and time, right before his eyes. [...] Spurred on by desire to transport the spectator into the unreal world, the film has asked technical skill for Nature’s colours, then the three dimensions of space, and now is striving with daring ingenuity to place the spectator amidst the scene itself.’ (1955)

*Miranda Prorsus* pressed upon the spectators’ dangers before the ‘darkness and depravation’ represented in corruptive films, which may leave the mind ‘at the mercy of powerful and uncontrolled instincts’:

‘Human nature is such that not always the spectators possess the spiritual energy, the interior detachment, and the strength of will to resist a captivating suggestion. They may lack the capacity to control and direct their responses’ (1955).

Thus in the Pope’s view, a film can be a medium of knowledge and entertainment, and also a vehicle of mass depravity. The letter continues: ‘In truth, how could an instrument, in itself most noble, but so apt to uplift or degrade men, and so quick to produce good or spread evil, be left completely alone, or made dependent on purely economic interests?’ (1955). The moral authorities that Pius XII had in mind were the clerical censors, ‘fully justified by law to defend the common civil and moral heritage’. Pius XII, thus, advocated vigilance on the illegal aspects of the cinema industry.

The church’s paladins who agreed ‘on banning corrupt films wherever they are shown, and to combat them with the legal and moral weapons at their disposal’ (1955),<sup>97</sup> followed the Pope’s invitation, and began intervening to call for the implementation of censorship laws and regulations existing in the Criminal code against potentially corruptive and offensive cultural products. These self-appointed censors would systematically call for the intervention of the police and the magistrates, and side with Catholic representatives employed by the state boards of cinema censorship (Salvemini 1957): ‘The state is of natural origin, no less than the family; this means that in its essence it is an institution willed and given by the Creator. The same holds for its necessary elements, such as power and authority, which flow from nature and from God’ (Pope Pius II). The Pope’s statement suggests that society needs the state and the church’s joined vigilance, as without them citizens would lack a clear guidance for moral

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<sup>97</sup> For an early yet insightful study on clerical censorship, see Gaetano Salvemini, *Clericali e laici: cattolicesimo e democrazia, diritto canonico e diritto civile, censura ecclesiastica, totalitarismo vaticano, libertà religiosa, clerocrazia e liquidazione del laicismo. Saggi e polemiche*, 1957.

reasoning. Pius XII expected Catholic flowers to recognise the state's authority as the earthly warrantor of the 'common good', acting under the direct guidance of the Vatican, as vicar of God. The *Miranda Prorsus* was zealously rigid in the analysis of the relations between cinema and the sacred. The Pope posed the dilemma as to whether plot-films on religious topics should be permitted. It presented the terms and conditions under which religious subjects had to be treated. Furthermore, it warned that no religious topic could be confidently transferred to the screen without the risk of blasphemy and heresy (Salvemini 1957). Pope XII advised that limitations had to be imposed on historical or Biblical films. It is worth remembering that at the time of the *Miranda Prorsus*, the church was still enjoying a large consensus. Cinema people were also expected to contribute to the church's legitimate claims over social morality by adapting their plots to the church's demands. They were asked to team up with the state's institutions of justice, issuing codes to implement the respect of the law, and had to follow the moral standards following the norms indicated by the higher authority of all, namely, the church:

'Without renouncing its own characteristics or suffering any loss, and for the benefit of viewers, the cinema can fulfil the role of strengthening people's sense of loyalty to the state, and promote progress. Such ideal film would not need to be political; it would be a film fit for everyone, because it would serve the fundamental needs of every state.' (Pius XXII)

#### **6.4. d) From Pope John XXIII – Vatican Council II, to the 1960s and onwards**

John XXIII's Papacy proved ready to acknowledge the emerging crisis in Catholicism, and incorporated the discourse of human rights into the church's doctrine, as proved by the ideological message of 'Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II' (Casanova, 20001: 432). It is important to acknowledge the Pope's readiness of cultural dialogue in *Boni Pastoris* (22nd February 1959). Pope Roncalli declared that the church was prepared to emancipate itself and meet the new demands of modernity and globalisation, opening up a dialogue with all the forces involved in the political debate.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, Pope Roncalli captained the wave of Catholic

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<sup>98</sup> Giovanni Roncalli's letter, *Pacem in Terris, on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty*, published on the 11 April 1963, at paragraph 12 on the Rights Pertaining to Moral and Cultural Values, recites: 'Man [...] has a right to freedom in investigating the truth, and — within the limits of the moral order and the common good — to freedom of speech and publication, and to freedom to pursue whatever profession he may choose. He has the right also, to be accurately informed about public events.' Online site of the Holy See: [vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem\\_en.html](http://vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html)

‘progressivism’, promoted by a minority of Catholic leftist intellectuals, as Cuminetti argues in *Il dissenso cattolico in Italia* (Cuminetti, 1993: 75). Pope Roncalli’s encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, showed a rare willingness to acknowledge the people’s right to freedom of speech and expression. Such openness was the direct consequence of his progressive views on the media: ‘He (the citizen) has the right, also, to be accurately informed about public events’ (Pope Roncalli). The pope demonstrates a deep awareness of the complex socio-cultural phenomena connected to the processes of industrialisation and secularisation, causing mass migration of workers from the South to the North, and from rural areas to industrial cities during the Sixties’ ‘economic miracle’, affecting radical changes in the composition of the Italian social strata and classes (De Mauro 1980).

After the death of Pope Roncalli, the Second Ecumenical Council continued with Paul V’s Papacy. The new Pope, elected on 21 June 1963, authored *Lumen Gentium* (1964), a progressive document stating the dogmatic constitution of the church as the ‘light of the nations’, stressing the church’s duty to spread Christ’s message worldwide as in Chapter V ‘Universal call to holiness’: ‘All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society.’ (Pope Paul VI 1964: V) Pope Paul VI’s 1964 document presented the church of Jesus as ‘a broader entity than the Roman Catholic Church’.<sup>99</sup>

Paul VI also opened up a new constructive dialogue with the media. It gave rise to what has been labelled as the ‘Catholic cinema’, whose production and promotion of the Vatican contributed both directly and indirectly, by founding and supporting the existing Catholic inspired production companies, such as the ‘Orbis’, ‘Universalialia’ and ‘Film Costellazione’, all founded between 1945 and 1946. Catholic cinema stimulated scriptwriters to produce ‘honourable’ plots. It also supported the creation of the cinema review *La Rivista del Cinematografo* (Treveri-Gennari, 20009: 62-65). Given that the Vatican had already established the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (CCC), which functioned as a production company for the realisation of religious films – such as *Tra gli incanti del Pacifico* (1938), *Pastor Angelicus* (1942) and *La porta del cielo* (1945) – the Second Vatican Council’s ‘Decree on Communications Media’ could confidently proclaim the value of cinema in mass

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<sup>99</sup> Cardinal Ratzinger restated this theological principle in the declaration *Domine Jesus*, issued by the ‘Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith’, in 2000. Cfr. also Cardinal Ratzinger’s interview in *L’Osservatore Romano*, Nov-Dec. 2000)

education.<sup>100</sup>

While Vatican Council II valued all the different media as means to evangelise Christ's message in the modern public fields of debate, where ideas are shared, and attitudes and values are formed, it also stressed the urge to exercise control over them, in close collaboration with state censorial authorities (Salvemini 1957). Vatican Council II's *Inter Mirifica*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI (4<sup>th</sup> December 1963), stated that, if the media were to be correctly employed, it was essential that all those who administered communication learned how to follow by law the principles of the moral order,<sup>101</sup> as stated in Pius XI in *Vigilanti Cura*. When it came to the artists and producers' freedoms, Ecumenical Vatican Council II continued to stress the moral duty of the media industry to secure the ethicality of their products. 'Not merely to serve the interests of those who commission and finance their work, but also to respect and uphold the rights and interests of their audiences as well as to serve the common good' (*Inter Mirifica*). Once again, the Pope argued that the responsibility of people engaged in the cinema industry was to accept the church's guidance on their products. Vatican Council II, however, ready to start a dialogue with other religions, restated the church's educational mission, formulated by John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra*, in 1961. What is more, *Inter Mirifica*, expanding on the Vatican's moral mission and attributing to the media the edifying task of contributing to such a project, restated the church's aversion to open up to a polycentric globalised world threatening the church's stability:

'The church recognises that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to spreading and supporting the Kingdom of God. The church recognises, in addition, that men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss. Indeed, the church experiences maternal grief at the harm all too often done to society by their evil use. Hence, this sacred Synod, attentive to the watchful concern manifested by the Supreme Pope and Bishops in a matter of such great importance, judges it to be its duty to treat of the principal questions linked with the media of social communication. It trusts, moreover, that the

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100 *Second Vatican Council's Decree on Communications Media*, nos. 12, 13 and 14: A.A.S. 56, 1964. 'The church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and moulding men, such as the media of communication, various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.'

101 'Decree on the Media of Social Communications *Inter Mirifica*, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4th, 1963, parts 7, and 8'.

teaching and regulations it thus sets forth will serve to promote, not only the eternal welfare of Christians, but also the progress of all mankind.’ (Pope Paul VI)

American Cardinal John Patrick Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, argues that the question of the media’s role and responsibilities has been more moderately addressed in recent years. Foley claims that since the Second Vatican Council the church has increasingly acknowledged the power of the media as pervasive means of social communication, a gathering of forces shaping ideas and behaviours. The good filmmaker was expected to prove a ‘sensitive conscience’, embedded with ‘high ethical standards’ and a ‘strong sense of responsibility’. He or she had to resist the ‘external pressures’ of commissioning producers and competing environments’, seen as instigators of ‘powerful inducements to unethical behaviour’ (Foley, 1977: V, 18).<sup>102</sup> Vatican Council II manipulated media artists and producers toward self-censorship, so to ensure ‘ethically responsible practices in their profession’ (Foley, 1977: V, 3).

The notion of the church’s universal moral primacy was restated by Karol Wojtyla (1978) in *The Pope Teaches* (July 1980).<sup>103</sup> In Loreto, on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1985, the pope addressed the participants at the Conference of the Italian church, pointing out once again that the Christian people’s priority was to endorse ecclesiastic communion by means of apostolic mission over the new emerging social realities (Wojtyla 1985).<sup>104</sup> John Paul II’s following claim in 1988, that national unity ought to be achieved on spiritual grounds, once again placed the Vatican

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102 Foley notes: ‘The church stresses the responsibility of media to contribute to the authentic, integral development of persons and to foster the well being of society. The information provided by the media is at the service of the common good. Society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, justice and solidarity. [...] It is in this spirit that the church enters into dialogue with communicators. At the same time, she also calls attention to moral principles and norms relevant to social communications, as to other forms of human endeavours, while criticizing policies and practices that offend against these standards.’ (Foley 22.2. 1997).

103 For Pope John Paul II’s political aversion to Communism, see Josef Kalvoda, ‘Karol Wojtyla, Marxism and the Marxist-Leninists’, in *Nationalities Papers*, Volume 10, Issue 2, Autumn 1982: 203-219.

104 Pope John Paul II, ‘Visita Pastorale a Loreto’, *Convegno della Chiesa Italiana, Palazzetto dello Sport*, Loreto, 11th April 1985. Pope John Paul II auspicated the dialogue and participation of all citizens to the Christian doctrine. ‘Se un risultato è lecito auspicare da questo Convegno, esso può ben essere indicato in una rinnovata coscienza di Chiesa grazie alla quale, nella partecipazione all’unico dono e nella collaborazione all’unica missione, tutti imparino a comprendersi ed a stimarsi fraternamente, ad aspettarsi ed a prevenirsi reciprocamente, ad ascoltarsi e ad istruirsi instancabilmente, affinché la casa di Dio, cioè la Chiesa, sia edificata dall’apporto di ciascuno e perché il mondo veda e creda.’ (cf. Gv 17, 21). [vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/speeches/1985/april/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19850411\\_convegno-loreto\\_it.html](http://vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1985/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19850411_convegno-loreto_it.html)

above the principle of the state's 'supreme' laicity.<sup>105</sup> In line with Vatican Council II, John Paul II, in the encyclical letter, *The Rapid Development. To Media people*, confirmed the church's moral idealism looking for a way 'to integrate the Gospel's message into the new culture of 'formation, participation and dialogue', created by the modern means of mass communications'. John Paul II advocated a stricter control of the way legal regulations were applied to the cinema industry to ensure public morality. In his discourse against a politically inspired culture, touching the evil of capitalist economics, the Pope also warned about the gross misuse of media acting against social progress, democracy and social justice.<sup>106</sup> John Paul II argued:

'Especially because these influence the consciences of individuals, form their mentality and determine their view of things, it is important to stress in a forceful and clear way that the mass media constitute a patrimony to safeguard and promote. The communications media must enter into the framework of organically structured rights and duties, be it from the point of view of formation and ethical responsibility, or from reference to laws and institutional codes. [...] The world of mass media also has need of Christ's redemption. To analyse with the eyes of faith the processes and value of communications, the deeper appreciation of Sacred Scripture can undoubtedly help as a 'great code' of communication of a message which is not ephemeral, but fundamental for its saving value. [...] Because of sin, this capacity for dialogue at both the personal and social level has been altered, and humanity has had to suffer, and will continue to suffer, the bitter experience of incomprehension and separation.' (John Paul II)

John Paul II's 1990 *Encyclical letter, Redemptoris Missio*, suggested that the mass media ought to be incorporated into the church's pastoral programs, with the collaboration of both state and Catholic schools (Foley, 1977: V, 19). The church's ethical call in fact, was and still is, upon cinema and TV professionals involved in the process of commissioning and disseminating products, to eliminate the risks of 'socially harmful' media products, and to 'observe high ethical standards with regard to truthfulness, human dignity, and social responsibility' (Foley, 1977: 23).

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 1995, on the occasion of the centenary of the motion picture, Pope John Paul II

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105 See Pope John Paul II's speech on Human Rights and the dignity of individuals to a Parliamentary Council of Europe in 1988.

106 *Vatican online Archives*, 24.1.2005: 'vatican.va/holy\_father/john\_paul\_ii/apost\_letters/documents/hf\_jp-ii\_apl\_20050124\_il-rapido-sviluppo\_en.html

addressed a plenary assembly of the Pontifical committee for Social Communications to reward cinema as a 'positive factor in the development of individuals and a stimulus for the conscience of society as a whole' (Pope John Paul II). The pope stated: 'The film industry has become a universal medium exercising a profound influence on the development of people's attitudes and choices, and possessing a remarkable ability to influence public opinion and culture across all social and political frontiers' (Pope John Paul II). The Pontifical Council for social Communication<sup>107</sup> sent a package of media education material to every Catholic bishop worldwide. Cinema, from the point of view of a catholic cinema lover, can indeed become a form of 'secular religion', and treated the 'artistic process and artefact with a similar degree of respect as palliatives for the human condition' (Pally 1998).

The Pope's program of social commitment linked to a cultural Catholic revival stressed the church's urgency of giving up direct political relevance to regain its cultural authority. In 2004, in a public speech addressed to the Ambassador of Italy at the Vatican, old John Paul II clarified that the non-governmental task of the church's *mission* was aimed at 'filling the gap between the Gospel and society'. During such reformist phase, the huge impact of John Paul II's attempts to oppose the rampant model of high capitalism should not be forgotten.

While contributing to the fall of Russian communism, he also tried to control the consequences, in Italy, of the defeat of the DC, collapsing under the weight of its corruption. The Pope also travelled to Africa, South America and to former Eastern European communist nations. He solicited believers to resist consumerism and go back to an idea of Christianity closer to Christ's message.

With the innovative contribution of the to-be future Pope, Joseph Ratzinger, Woityla placed a greater emphasis on religious pluralism and trans-cultural dialogue. Relying on the media, John Paul II broadcasted to the world his critical approach to the Church's past errors as well as his new ideas on secularism meeting half way with the theories of Liberation theology. However, one of the weak points of Woityla's papacy was his ambition to restate internally, as in *Lettera ai vescovi su alcuni aspetti della Chiesa intesa come comunione*, as well as at international level, as in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, written for the 2000 Giubileo, the leading role of the Catholic Church, especially in the sphere of Human Rights. Catholic intellectuals of

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107 See P. Malone, 'Media Education and the Vatican, in *Metro Education No 8*, 1996, 23-35. See also *Screening the sacred: religion, myth, and ideology in popular American film*, Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt Boulder (eds.), Oxford: Westview Press, 1995.



conservative orientation, such as Cardinal Marcel François Lefebvre and the followers of the ‘Congregazione dello Spirito Santo’, did not straightforwardly accept Woytila’s contradictory political manoeuvres. (Zizola, 2000: 88-94)

#### ***6.4. e) Pope Ratzinger’s intervention on contemporary media culture***

The participation of activist clergy critics and Catholic militants to cinema and TV events through the new-media channels has been a distinctive feature of Pope Benedict XVI’s idea of the leading role of the church in mass communication. One instance of the Vatican’s control over cinema was the news that the Roman Curia had rejected the requests of the film producers of Dan Brown’s novels, *The Da Vinci Code*, and *Angels and Demons*, to shoot scenes at various locations in the Vatican. The Pope’s diatribe against the new media began abruptly in 2003 when Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, at the time Prefect of the ‘Sant’ Ufficio’, addressed two personal letters to the German critic, Gabriele Kuby on the evil of the anti-Christian influence of *Harry Potter* on young viewers. The letters answered a message sent to Ratzinger by his co-national’s newly published volume, *Harry Potter - Gut oder Boese?*, investigating the educational worth of J. K. Rowling’s fantasy Saga.<sup>108</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009, at the annual celebration of Mary the Immaculate in Rome, Pope Ratzinger instructed the audience on the ‘evil’ (‘il male’) of the media, summoning up believers to join the church’s evangelic Army.<sup>109</sup> Ratzinger’s public call for evangelic action was possibly a reaction to the growing circulated public opinion of the Vatican as part of the nation’s enduring problems, which started in the event of emerging media news regarding the Vatican’s tax exemption privileges.<sup>110</sup> On another occasion, at the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Communication Day, in his speech ‘New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship’ (24<sup>th</sup> May 2009), Ratzinger formally convened the Catholic Youth to

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108 Cardinal Josef Ratzinger to Gabriele Kuby: ‘We appreciate that you have opened up people’s eyes on Harry Potter as it presents iniquitous seduction which acts at a deep level to distort the Christian soul before its natural development.’ The anti-*Harry Potter* book has been accepted in the Catalogues at the library of the ‘Consiglio Pontificio per la Cultura’.

109 Pope Ratzinger’s speech against the media: ‘The Immacolata Day’, Rome: 8th December 2009. Youtube.com/watch?v=nzg70xOrX2E: ‘Ogni giorno, attraverso i giornali, la televisione, la radio, il male viene raccontato, ripetuto, amplificato, abituandoci alle cose più orribili, e, in qualche maniera, intossicandoci.’ (‘Every day, evil is reported through the press, TV and radio news repeated, and amplified, making us accustomed to the most horrible crimes. To some extent, media intoxicates us.’)

110 See the 2011 public debate around the Vatican City’s ICI tax exemption also discussed on the most popular social networks in Italy, Twitter and Facebook.

contribute to the spreading of the Gospel through the web (Ratzinger).<sup>111</sup> Ratzinger directed the Catholic youth to use morally the new means of communication, and take on the responsibility for the evangelization of this *digital continent*.’

The following year, at the same occasion, Ratzinger’s message ‘The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word’ (16<sup>th</sup> May 2010) stated: ‘Using new communication technologies, priests can introduce people to the life of the church and help our contemporaries to discover the face of Christ. [...]. To my dear brother priests, then, I renew the invitation to make astute use of the unique possibilities offered by modern communications. May the Lord make all of you enthusiastic heralds of the Gospel in the new *agora*, which the current media are opening up’ (Ratzinger).

### ***Pope Francis: for a constructive dialogue with the media***

In the contemporary multicultural, multiracial Italian society, the coexistence of different religions under the supreme principle of the state’s laicity will hopefully help communication flow, no longer subjecting Reason to lurking forms of moralising censorship. Addressing the media people in the occasion of the ‘Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media’ (16th March 2013), Pope Francis exhorted the convenors for a more intense reciprocal commitment to dialogue:

‘To try to understand more fully the true nature of the church, as well as her journey in this world, with her virtues and her sins, and to know the spiritual concerns which guide her and are the most genuine way to understand her. Be assured that the church, for her part, highly esteems your important work. At your disposal you have the means to hear and to give voice to people’s expectations and demands, and to provide for an analysis and interpretation of current events. Your work calls for careful preparation, sensitivity and experience, like so many other professions, but it also demands a particular concern for what is true, good and beautiful. This is something that we have in common, since the church exists to communicate precisely this: Truth, Goodness and Beauty “in person”. It should be apparent that all of us are called not to communicate ourselves, but this existential triad made up of truth, beauty and goodness.’

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111. *Vatican online Archives*, 24th January 2009, Feast of Saint Francis de Sales:

[vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20090124\\_43rd-world-communications-day\\_en.html](http://vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20090124_43rd-world-communications-day_en.html)

(Francis I)<sup>112</sup>

It seems that the newly elected Pope Francis is masking all diplomatic efforts to oppose the Vatican's authoritarian schemes and re-establish its spiritual relevance at global level. The new encyclical letter, *Lumen Fidei* (2013), undersigned by Pope Ratzinger and Pope Bergoglio, is intended to introduce new hypothesis of cooperation and dialogue between secularism, religion, and the media. Bergoglio, in particular, is speaking words of disapproval against the church's self-preferentiality, and words of hope for the church to enter a more meaningful exchange of ideas with the secular society free of church censorship.

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<sup>112</sup>Vatican online Archives:

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130316\\_rappresentanti-media\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130316_rappresentanti-media_en.html)

## PART 3

### *CHAPTER 7 – From Neorealism to Pier Paolo Pasolini's counter-discourse on the nation's Catholic identity*

#### *Introduction*

‘Censorship is a monstrous act of dis-education as it uses power rather than persuasion, compulsion rather than collaboration.’ (Pier Paolo Pasolini)

Having clarified the premises which allow the Holy See to control the political and socio-cultural identity and ways of life of the Italian nation, as suggested in films such as Fellini's *Roma*, which reveals the influence of institutionalised Catholicism from sometimes very critical, or anticlerical angles; in Chapter 7 I discuss examples of censorship by religion, and its impact on the cinema industry. Following this line of argument, I discuss how in spite of the fact that censorship of theatre and dance had been abolished by the 1950s, film censorship, particularly against offence to religion, persisted throughout the 20th century. This remained almost unaltered from its fascist legacy in the 1962 reform, and endured the turn of the century, causing cinema people greater restrictions than those working in other media fields. This is the reason why issues of political and cultural censorship are found as overt or concealed themes in a great number of ideological films from the post-war period onwards.

At the theoretical level, I draw on Gramsci's notions of hegemony and historical block to clarify the historical, social, and cultural circumstances by which Catholicism came to gain its central role in media and cinema censorship. I then focus on the role of dissident filmmakers within the super-structure and discuss the films of those artists who were able to produce counter-discourse to break down the historical block made by the Catholic-DC hegemony. More specifically, I will look at Gramsci's critique of the role of institutionalised Catholicism in the formation of the Italian nation's cultural bourgeois hegemonies in *Quaderni dal carcere* (V. 1, 12, 20, 21, 1929-1935).

I also conduct a discussion based on the historical survey of censored and/or banned films, whose plots have addressed Catholicism as theo-politics. discussing Pasolini's dissident

filmmaking, I present what specific issues started to be raised by the following generation of filmmakers of his generation, that positioned their cinematic protest at the heart of the censorship agenda in Italy.

*a. Mainstream cinema and the need to oppose state and clerical censorship*

Film directors like De Sica, Rossellini, Pasolini, Risi, and Comencini, telling stories of the lower classes' economic conditions, enthused by Gramsci's attention to folk-culture, represent a huge critique to institutionalised Catholicism.

In his *Preface to Prison Notebooks* (his translation of *Quaderni dal carcere*), Nowell-Smith argues that Gramsci's concern for the 'Southern question' aptly underlined the division between the workers in the North, and the peasants, the former more rapidly assimilated into capitalism on both an economic and cultural plane than the latter (Gramsci, 1971: 5). For this chapter's film analysis section (7.3), I address in particular Pasolini's cinematic rethinking of Catholicism and underline his heretical representations of the sacred in the Italian progressively secularised society.

Acknowledging the fact that certain customs and life-styles came to be understood as 'normal' in Italian society, due to the endorsement of set socio-cultural and religious standards through the mainstream stories of the 'Telefoni Bianchi' trend, I recall the direct legacy of Neorealism to the 1960s creative dissidence intended to politically influence the popular masses against the Catholic hegemonic discourses.<sup>113</sup> I subsequently trace back the ways by which, between the mid Fifties and early Sixties, cinema authors intervened in the intellectual debate over the quest for a renewed national identity in the post-war years of economic and political 'reconstruction'.

As I have argued, the success of cinema in the post WWII period prompted an increment in the boards of censorship revision practices and criteria for the monitoring of the content of films to be distributed throughout Europe and the Western World. In fact, whereas censorship was inherent to the fascist state, to the point of prompting self-censorship, and also due to its

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Bennett implies that mainstream cinema is instrumentally used as a means to attain dominion and profit: 'The basic idea that the arts might have harmful effects on impressionable minds, and the notion that contact with an artistic representation might instigate emulation is far from having disappeared altogether. We have already seen how the concern over the potentially dangerous and harmful effects of films is the very *raison d'être* of bodies such as the British Board for Film Classification' (Bennett, 2008: 64).

sponsoring scheme, in the new republic, the state's Board for Film Revision incremented cinema censorship on the one side, to protect public morality and please the Vatican's censors, and on the other, to shield the film industry's financial system against possible failure at box-office. (See *Appendix 6.4*)

The 'Italia Taglia' archives provide detailed lists of films subjected to cuts, or banned between 1944 and 1954, when the republican government implemented stricter regulations. The new situation in film censorship prompted film directors and producers to make films free from possible censorial issues, thus to pass the first stage of the revision process without any major problem. Such increased care in preparing the scripts to be submitted to the censorship board, and in shooting the footage, helped them to reduce the risks of fiascos at box office. This became a sort of 'authenticating apparatus', from which certain markers referring to gender, religious, class, and linguistics were standardised in national and international contexts to avoid offence. The situation described once applied to the national mainstream cinema. However, the increase in censorship practices inspired nonconformist authors to fight back such restrictive apparatuses. The tense debate which dissenting filmmakers encouraged between politics, religion, law, and society, through the years caused the gradual revision of cinema censorship regulations in Italy, as discussed in Chapter 9, with an explanation of how Church censorship, lacking the support of the old decrees, is finding new techniques and channels to intervene and influence the film industry.

A famous case of clerical censorship, which I have found on the communist newspaper *L'Unità*, regarded the boycott of the 1954 fiction film *La romana*, directed by Luigi Zampa and based on a novel by Alberto Moravia. The title of the criticism reads: 'La censura clericale non vuole che si denunci l'OVRA'. 'Incredibili intromissioni del ministero della difesa nella realizzazione di un'opera sul Risorgimento'. 'Tagli gravissimi' – Un attacco di tipo maccartista contro la migliore cinematografia.' / 'Inadmissible intrusions of the Ministry of Defence in the production of a film on the Italian Risorgimento. Incredibly serious cuts - An attack in the style of McCarthyism against the best cinematography' (*L'Unità*, 4 April 1954: 3).

Taking action against filmmakers non-compliant with the standards and codes set by law, the Italian Boards of Film Revision did not consider the act of interfering with the audience's rights to freely use unrestricted cinema as a means of social debate and emancipation as abuse. Among filmmakers, whose works underwent revisions and cuts, the following list of films stand out:

*Il bandito*, by Alberto Lattuada (1946), *Senza pietà*, by Alberto Lattuada (1948), *Campane a martello*, by Luigi Zampa (1949), *Cronaca di un amore*, by Michelangelo Antonioni (1950), *Guardie e ladri* by Mario Monicelli (1951), *Totò e i Re di Roma*, by Mario Monicelli (1952), *I sette peccati capitali*, by Edoardo De Filippo (1952), *Moglie per una notte*, by Mario Camerini (1952), *L'eterna catena*, by Anton Giulio Majano (1952), *La tratta delle bianche*, by Luigi Comencini (1952), *La peccatrice dell'isola*, by Sergio Corbucci (1952), *La lupa*, by Alberto Lattuada (1953), *Le infedeli*, by Mario Monicelli (1953), *I vinti*, by Michelangelo Antonioni (1953), *La provinciale*, by Mario Soldati (1953), *Il viale della speranza*, by Dino Risi (1953), and *Totò e Carolina*, by Mario Monicelli (1954), *Oro di Napoli*, by Vittorio De Sica (1954).

Serious censorship outcomes, related to certificates denied, not only sanctions film productions financially, but at times may also attempt at tainting the artistic status of filmmakers. This was the case for left-wing film directors Pasolini, Fellini, Monicelli, and Lattuada, who fell under the censor's scissor, almost systematically, for their plots allegedly disrespectful of the Church's status.

What is unquestionable, is that their stories were aimed at criticising all levels of the hegemonic pressure of the church on the DC's political and cultural lobbies believed to have effects on the population's ways of living and thinking. (Gramsci 1949: V. 9, Ch. 101) The cinema's critique of society in the Neorealist period in fact aimed to be educational, and opposed the Church of Rome's prejudice that cinema can have a negative influence over individual's conscience, and society's sense of public decorum. Baldi argues this in *Lo sguardo punito. Film censurati 1947-1962* (Baldi 1994), where he supports the significance of films that touch on topics such as family rebellion, sexual deviance, work insubordination, political disenchantment, and religious disengagement.

### *7.1. Post-trauma historical remembrance in Neorealism: when dissidence takes the form of art.*

The political and governmental clashes between the Catholic sectors of society and the secular lay reformists comment on the role of cinema, as a space for public debate, that encourages insight into the traditional Italian bi-partisan socio-cultural debates over politics and culture.

In a country such as Italy, with a dominant, official religion, individuals are educated to offer their consent to the power system under which they live by means of compliance to the values, beliefs and rules, which they are expected to be obedient to. Even in countries where religious

orthodoxy and obedience is obtained by means of 'spontaneous' consent, religion will affect the state and act as a censor of dissidence because heretics, dissidents, non-conformist thinkers, and artists are often vehicles of rebellion and change (Bobbio 1969).

Neorealism involving other art forms, literature in particular, introduced some degree of social change by means of political denunciation. This was achieved through a civil programme which addressed the pre and post-WW2 general collapse of the nation's stability, and which involved many aspects of its identity, even the religious ones. It particularly placed emphasis on the historical legitimacy of class struggle, and the discrepancies between the urban and rural landscapes.

Studies on Neorealist cinema and its relation to politics and society between 1945 and the mid 50s tend to start from Rossellini's 1945 *Roma città aperta*; critics agree to distinguish the end of this trend in Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia*, produced in 1954, which Andre Bazin described as aesthetically neorealist (Bazin 1962). In this time gap, Rossellini's cinematography accomplished the most effective critique of the nation's social and historical crisis. However some critics recognise as instances of the Neorealist tendency films such as *Bellissima* (1951), *Germania Anno Zero* (1948), *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948), *Ossessione* (1943), *Paisà* (1946), *Riso Amaro* (1949), *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), *Roma città aperta* (1945), *Sciuscià* (1946), *Umberto D* (1952). The leading filmmakers of the Neorealist movement were Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, and Giuseppe De Santis.

Before the end of the war in 1944, politically engaged script-writers and filmmakers continued the Neorealist quest, but with an eye to innovation, gravitated around the magazine *Cinema*. Some of its editors, such as Cesare Zavattini, Luchino Visconti, Gianni Puccini, Giuseppe De Santis, and Pietro Ingrao, had worked in close collaboration with Mussolini's son, Vittorio, editor in chief.

While drawing on Gramsci's idea of the pedagogical role of the performative arts, Neorealist plots, would often advance a critique of the kind of moralities imposed on the population by the government, on one side, and by the Roman church, on the other. It thus addressed a wide range audience. For instance, Rossellini's *Paisà* and *Roma città aperta*, both embedded in social realism, put into practice the moral engagement preached by Gramsci's educational program.

The impact of Neorealist cinema, along with its fight for expressive freedom, cannot be wholly



understood outside the context of its regular representation of socio-economical class clashes. Its plots used to screen uncomfortable historical and social truths: political and war intrigues, betrayals, compromises, institutional dishonesty, financial corruption, social lies, domestic violence, power manipulations, civil persecution, censorship, bowdlerisation of dissent, mass massacre, and other forms of infringements and abuse of human rights.

In the early wave of Neorealist cinema, De Sica, Visconti, and Rossellini screened social inequality, poverty, criminality, unemployment, class struggle and revolt against class privilege, as well as the population's dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. However, it became actively involved in serving as a contrast to the wave of Italian popular films, revisiting Hollywood genres and clichés, thus contributing to sheltering the nation's film industry (Micciché 1975).

As an ideological movement involved with deep social concerns, Neorealist filmmaking inspired the following generation of cinema directors, which in the 'reconstruction' era, contributed to the consolidation of the national cinema industry. The filmmakers who continued the agenda of the Neorealist movement's initiators, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini, and despite adopting some features of Neorealism, freed their works from the rather inflexible paradigms set by the cinema engagée's political programme, made public in the lively related literature produced at the time.

In brief, Neorealist cinema interpreted and spread the ideas of the Italian left-wing antifascist intellectuals. By employing themes and values borrowed from partisan militancy, Neorealist filmmakers soon appeared to be activists at heart towards the leftist political agenda. Flourishing also due to the support of the PCI and its affiliated press, *L'Unità*, *Paese Sera*, *Vie Nuove*, *Noi Donne*, and *Il Calendario del Popolo*, Neorealist cinema aimed, in Gramscian terms, to reconstruct the nation's crumbled identity (Forgacs and Gundle, 2009: 261). The political climate that inspired Neorealism drew directly upon Gramsci's trust in the role of intellectuals as mass pedagogues.<sup>114</sup> Gramsci described and prefigured that the dynamics of conflict between state, religion and society would resist change, and reminded intellectuals of

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114 Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948) was conceived via a Gramscian critique of social injustice and political corruption. Likewise, De Sica and Rossellini both achieved effective Marxist representations of the economic and social claims coming from the Italian rural and urban proletariat. As with Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946), De Sica's socio-political attention to the lower classes, in *Sciuscià* (1946), *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948), and *Umberto D* (1952), highlighted the implications of Gramsci's theories in 'La questione meridionale', which made it possible for the official Catholic authorities to extend their influence on the popular masses and affect their conformity to their hegemony.

their responsibility to intervene in public debate to emancipate the nation. Gramsci's emphasis on the political significance of the nation's popular culture ('cultura nazionale-popolare') was another essential point which inspired Neorealist *stories*.

In cinema, Neorealism began primarily as a response to popular mainstream films of the 'Telefoni Bianchi' trend. In this sense, Neorealist filmmakers were innovators, who proved to be capable of facing the challenges posed by Hollywood cinema in the Italian post-war cultural and economic modernisation processes (Lizzani 1979).<sup>115</sup> Neorealist 'truth-films', which were characterised by a narrative style built on historical records, tended to investigate facts, people, and situations, from the viewpoint of the distressed people. Plots, which characteristically presented realistic versions of the Second World War's tragic outcomes, inspired politically engaged producers to engage in human rights, history, and society. Numerous studies have been conducted on leftist moderate Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1946, censorship case: 4836 del 22-11-1948), whereby socio-historical objectivity, counterbalances the main characters' proletarian adventures in the crime of 'thieving', humanly understood as the consequence of poverty. The Neorealist trend acted, in brief, as promoter of political dissident against the *status quo*.<sup>116</sup>

Neorealist filmmakers did more than renegotiate the legitimacy of their dissent against set values in front of bourgeois ruling classes. Their agenda of socio-political commitment helped to construct a new phase in the history of Italian culture, filtered by a socialist outlook on Fascism and its outcomes in the Second World War. Along this critical line, the nation's history of geographical separation and economical unbalance was dissected thoroughly, alongside the ambiguous relationship of the Italian conservative bourgeoisie with the Holy See.

Neorealism inspired the following generation of politically committed filmmakers. The same crudeness seen in De Sica returns in Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960, censorship case: 32811 del 26-09-1960), which narrates the breaking down of the family unit, triggered by emigration, fornication, jealousy, crime, mistrust, poverty, and pride.

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115 Italian critic and filmmaker, Carlo Lizzani (*Attraverso il Novecento*, 1998) has discussed Neorealism in terms of its stylistic hybridization, a technique assembling multiple narrative structures and *genres*. He himself, who authored documentary films for the PC film production company, Libertas Film, was very much censored by the commissions of censorship on the charge of creating threats for the public order, in the period in which Leading Christian Democrat politician, Giulio Andreotti, was Secretary of 'Presidenza del Consiglio', in charge of 'Public Entertainment'.

116 On 'Neorealism' and its political agenda, see Giuseppe De Sanctis, *Nelle origini del neorealismo: Giuseppe De Santis a colloquio con Jean A. Gili*, Jean A. Gili and Marco Grossi (Eds), Rome: Bulzoni, 2008.

In brief, Neorealist stories aspired to speak about social injustice. Stylistically, Neorealist filmmakers made it a point to employ overall, non-professional actors, on-location shooting in urban and natural settings as well as to adopt a cruder use of photography capable of rendering the dejected conditions of the proletariat, and the ruthlessness of urban criminality. At times resorting to the rough styles employed in documentary filmmaking, Neorealist filmmakers displayed a tendency to reconstruct, by means of a strikingly innovative new style, degrading and painful historical and social realities without subordinating their expressive freedoms to any edifying message dictated from above by the state or the church. The conflict which followed the sudden change of alliances, on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1943, was brought to the cinema screens for what it was: a summoning up of defenceless soldiers and civilians to oppose and kill their nation's changed enemies under the state and church's impunity. The aim was to rewrite the official history's lies for the sake of the cinema viewers (Sorlin 2007).

As I have mentioned, in the difficult years that followed the end of World War II, the church saw an opportunity to become a moral international force. With the help of the democratic parties, Pius XII sided against the communist party, also in reaction to the persecution of the Catholic Church in Russia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and China. The Holy See started to condemn overtly all forms of collaboration with communism and, thus, also the work of leftist cinema directors.

The Vatican has traditionally maintained a firm standpoint against any form of internal or external dissent against its *status quo*. The church's words against religious non-orthodoxy always 'fall from above', even the most factual. To adopt Pasolini's point of view, speaking from the pulpits is always speaking *ex cathedra*, even when the words are covered with the mask of morality and justice. Film scripts in Italy, which were denied valid certificates, are innumerable. In order to avoid Church censorship, film producers generally attempt to conceal their interests with the rules of the Italian rating system set by the Motion Picture Producers Associations. Filmmakers for their part are generally less prepared than producers to limit their expressive freedoms, more so when they perceive the pressure and power of clerical censorship. Religious dissidence among cinema artists has often stirred fertile debate and created counter-discourse.

Open clerical aversion to Neorealist pessimistic themes by CCC observers began in 1943, when De Sica's drama, *I bambini ci guardano* was criticized by the Catholic audience and by the official Board of Film Revision for screening a plot of adultery and suicide, along with the

problematiation of parenthood (Russo 1999). The story stirred scandal as it presented the child's subjective viewpoint, as Pricò witnesses first his mother's marital infidelity and then his father's suicide. Between 1945 and 1953, less than a third of 822 films (produced in Italy and imported from Hollywood film industry) were authored by filmmakers who had adopted the Neorealist style. Such percentage was due to both the scarcity of profit they would make at box office, and by the intervention of clerical censorship against leftist *stories* (Landy, 2000: 149). Producers were well aware of the potential risks of Neorealist *stories* conveying crude insight on the human condition. Along with the harshness of class struggle, the hopelessness of the poor proletariat was the main theme which Catholic censors would object to. This is evident by the controversial reception of De Sica's socialist outlook on society in relation to power. De Sica used to screen stories of working class protagonists in existential, legal, family, and labour difficulties, whose distressed lives could no longer comply with the moral standards endorsed by the Vatican church and by Fascism.<sup>117</sup>

### ***b. From Rossellini's cinema vérité to Pasolini's violent allegories of power***

It is important to remember that the principles of the Neorealist movement have been identified in the representational style of intellectually daring cineaste Roberto Rossellini, who from the mid 1940s, endeavoured to screen stories of war and civil struggle (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010: 33). Rossellini's *Roma Città aperta*, showing the socio-political drama of the Rome population to resist the Nazi occupation (1945, censorship case: 91 - 02-10-1945) and *Paisà* (six episodes 1946, censorship case: 1307 - 05-12-1946)<sup>118</sup> in particular addressed issues of moral degradation, persecution, destruction and dehumanisation 'from the perspective of the oppressed population in a godforsaken country' (Cavallo, 2009: 175-176). Resorting to tragic accounts of the war's errors and their consequences on civilians, Rossellini constructed *stories* evolving around protagonists whose lives could no longer conform with traditional values and standards endorsed by Fascism and Catholicism (Cavallo, 2009: 175-176). *Roma Città aperta* (1945) and *Paisà* (1946), in fact, presented stories of persecutions, destruction and

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117 Emilio Lonero and Aldo Anziano, in *La storia della Orbis-Universalis* (2004) have underlined the need to explore the relationship between the Catholic production company Orbis-Universalis and Neorealism.

118 Gian Luigi Rondi, 'Paisà di Roberto Rossellini', in *Il Tempo*, 9 March 1967: 'Perché mandare all'estero simili ritratti delle donne italiane? Non basta quello che diranno i soldati che tornano?' ('What is the need to broadcast such degrading portraits of Italian women? Is it not enough all the things that foreign soldiers will say about them upon returning back to their homes?')

dehumanisation, and even sexual degradation, from the perspective of the oppressed masses, which fascism and Catholicism had indoctrinated and then failed.<sup>119</sup>

Rossellini's filmography implicitly recognised people's declining confidence in divine providence, in the post-war civic wasteland deprived of God and Reason.<sup>120</sup> For instance, in a powerful scene of *Roma Città aperta*, one of the film characters, the middle-aged priest Don Pietro, kneels with a prisoner under the very eyes of Nazi officers (Malgeri 1980). Rossellini claimed: 'For me it is extraordinarily important to be born in such civilization. I believe we are rescued from war disasters and other equally terrible catastrophes just because of this conception of life we hold, which is peculiarly catholic' (Rossellini, 1987: 94).<sup>121</sup> Rossellini advocated 'cinema *engagée*' as a means to disseminate ideas about how to defeat the oppressors. Equally committed to the denunciation of social injustice and historical devastation was Rossellini's 'solitude' trilogy, composed by *Stromboli terra di Dio* (1951), *Europa '51* (1953) e *Viaggio in Italia* (1954). Rossellini's crude and dramatic style of treating historical facts worried the Vatican.

*Roma città aperta* and *Europe '51* both received unfavourable censorship certificates from the official Board of Censorship for screening scratchy themes such as war crimes, revolt, bourgeois decadence, and institutional abuse of power, fraud, child suicide, and assembling real and symbolic violence. The films were imposed the labels 'For adults' the former, for the presence of 'certain scenes degrading its artistic worth'; 'For Adults with Appropriate Changes', the latter, judged as unsuitable for young viewers for the story's inability to 'resolve social problems with the application of Evangelic principles'. Critiques of Rossellini and Neorealism appeared in Catholic journals between 1947 and 1948, accusing the filmmaker of a *misuse* of the cinema as an educational resource (Di Giorgi, 1995: 17).

With the establishment of the Italian Republic, cinema people hoped to gain some freedom

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119 For instance, Rossellini's films on war and resistance, *Roma città aperta* (1945) *Paisà* (1946) and *Il generale Della Rovere* (1959) had a huge impact on the films produced by the following generations of Italian filmmakers, among which Nanni Loy (*Le quattro giornate di Napoli*, 1962), Luigi Comencini (*Tutti a casa*, 1960), Carlo Lizzani (*Mussolini: ultimo atto*, 1974) Paolo e Vittorio Taviani (*La notte di San Lorenzo*, 1982), Daniele Lucchetti (*I piccoli maestri*, 1998), Guido Chiesa (*Il partigiano Johnny*, 2000) and Giorgio Diritti (*L'uomo che verrà*, 2009).

120 For an insightful account of the way in which the Vatican church faced war times, see also Francesco Malgeri, *La Chiesa italiana e la Guerra*, Rome: Stadium, 1980.

121 Rossellini: 'Per me è straordinariamente importante essere nato in siffatta civiltà. Ritengo che siamo salvati dai disastri della Guerra, e da sciagure non meno terribili, proprio per questa nostra concezione della vita, che è prettamente cattolica.'

from government censorship and self-censorship suffered under the fascist regime, but expected clerical censorship to persist. As Vitaliano Brancati argued, state censorship remained unchanged, mostly deriving from the ‘Testo unico’ of Laws P.S. 18 July 1931, n. 773 and the ‘Regolamento per l’esecuzione del T.U.’, (n. 635/1940). Both laws imposed that authors would submit to the ‘Sottosegretariato per la stampa e le informazioni’ at the ‘Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri’, two samples of the written script to obtain the certificate (‘visto della censura’) issued by the first committee. However, official certification to screen a film did not stop the Public Security’s authorities to eventually suspend public viewings if individual citizens asked for a given film’s immediate banning on alleged crimes, which also included offence of people’s religious sentiment.

CCC’s film reviewers became aware that Neorealist filmmaking was a political and cultural challenge, and a way of undermining the Catholic establishment. For this reason, Leading Christian Democrat politician, Giulio Andreotti, issued the cited 1949 decree to generate censorial sanctions against films and cineastes presenting to the World spectatorship ‘prejudicial accounts of the Italian social life, labour, and politics’ (Baransky and Lumley 1990). The censorial decree concerned films already produced, and aimed at their correction or total suppression. Fearing that the Neorealist filmmakers’ leftist discourses would prompt censorial procedures, the institutions in control of the economic means of production, distribution and certificate procedures imposed pressure on the film producers to strictly follow the limitations set by Andreotti’s law. Consequently, the Italian ‘cinema engagée’ resulted in waves of counterculture to fight back political, ideological, and financial censorship. One of the results was the coming into force of independent trends of cinematic authorship (*cinema d’auteur*) and self-governing filmmaking. The risk that Neorealist films had the potential to change the viewers’ perception about historical and social values, by revealing truths about the people in power and their socio-economical intrigues, motivated the censors’ actions. However, in reviewing the number of revisions and cuts imposed on these films, one infers that Neorealist cineastes did not take up issues of violent radicalism against the *status quo*, as Pasolini, Bertolucci and Bellocchio did in years to come, but remained within the limit of a tolerable intellectual and artistic protest.<sup>122</sup>

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122 In *Cinema and Fascism. Italian Film and Society, 1922-1943*, Ricci has underlined the fact that only 30 per cent of the films produced between 1945 and 1953, and, among them, certainly *La terra trema*, *Germania anno zero*, *Paisà*, *Sciuscià*, *Ladri di biciclette*, were Neorealist in spirit. *La terra trema* was indeed conceived as a political condemnation of Fascism from the point of view of a PCI’s supporter (Ricci, 2008: 165).

As paradoxical as it may appear, films produced after the Liberation were subjected to a stricter censorial apparatus. This was due to the new Republic's authorities need to create a cultural environment in sharp contrast with the Fascist regime. The *Ufficio centrale per la cinematografia*, established at the 'Presidenza del Consiglio', was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the motion picture industry, setting, regulating and enforcing policies to increase government control over matters of public decency (Art. 528. Penal Code), defamation of person (Art. 595 Penal Code), defamation of the state, and vilification of the church (Art.6 law n. 958 29/12/1949).

Towards the end of the Cold War, Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) gave a new slant to his papacy, favouring a new and less rigid *modus vivendi*. As a result Holy See's relations with European communism government and parties improved, as is clear from his encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963). John XXIII, on 25 January 25, announced the opening of the Second Ecumenical Council whose objectives were renewing the church, and finding spiritual unity with other churches. The council, which started on 11 October 1962, was continued by Paul VI, since John XXIII died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1963.

With the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (25 July 1968) facing also the issue of contraception, Paul VI created the possibility for the sciences to disagree with the Papal authority without determining any fraction. A gradual desacralization, de-clericalization, demystification of the Catholic world started to take place, which facilitated, at least until the death of Paul VI, new possibilities of dialogue with the secular world. In those years, new theologies of liberation started to operate especially in Latin America. At national level, the Council created new structures and ways of contact between the Vatican, the priests and the community of the faithful. The number of Christians who voted socialist grew without falling in contradiction with their religious sentiment.

And indeed, despite the political reinforcement of cinema censorship during the postwar Neorealist phase, in *Industria cinematografica italiana*, Bizzarri argues that between the '50s and the '60s a fertile decade for the Italian film industry started, since the growing opportunities to obtain state funding as proved by the success of national film productions, such as Novella Film, Lux, Titanus, Cinecittà, Cines, Scalera, Tirrenia, Dino De Laurentis, and the Carlo Ponti's film productions (Bizzarri 1958).

From the 1960s onwards, official censorship committees would hide the nation's main concern with irreligion and blasphemy under a preoccupation for the growing market of films

containing explicit sex. Catholic official representatives in the censorship boards' committees would in fact connect the growing phenomenon with the demise of the nation's religiosity. This should be unsurprising if one considers the huge relevance of Catholicism in the Italian society's networks of faith-related beliefs, social habits, and taboos, etc. (Baldi, 2000: 22). Revisions and cuts were also required by the state's set regulations to make films available for screenings on state TVs (Channel 1, 2, 3). 'Resubmissions' to official censorship boards became a praxis to revise contents and make them 'proper' and suitable to a wider general public.

The mechanism related to the resubmissions and revisions of prohibited visual/audio contents generally resulted in the elimination of existing bans. It is, thus, extremely important to take a look at the history of banned films, in addition to their authorised passage from the cinema theatre to domestic TV channels, in the form of revised editions, as is expressed in the following request of availability of 'revised' film products in church halls and Catholic film clubs (Italia Taglia Film Archive). From the above quoted administrative practices, one can infer that state censorial repressive measures against, say, 'sexual' unpermitted contents, were likely to be generated by capitalist interests, while clerical censorship found its logic in the hegemonic preoccupations to maintain moral control over society.<sup>123</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, some Catholic cinema experts, including Father Carlo Messori, Father Nazareno Taddei, Father Enrico Baragli, and Father Antonio Covi, engaged themselves in passionate debates over cinema matters, intervening in the Catholic magazine *Civiltà Cattolica*. Taddei, Baragli, e Covi, three Jesuits experts in cinema theory, would chair meetings in Milan and Padova cineforums to discuss the ethical and aesthetical implications of film. Through actions like these, the clergy kept its traditional role to influence the audience.

This was a historical phase in which Italian film producers invested their money in 'auteurs' films, despite the likelihood that their plots may stir scandal and indignation. The new trend proved successful by Mario Monicelli, *La grande Guerra* (1959), Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), Antonioni's *L'avventura* (1962) and *Blow Up* (1966), Marco Ferreri's *Una storia moderna: L'ape Regina* (1963), *La donna scimmia* (1964), and Taviani Brothers' *I*

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123 In Italy, the 'Commissione di revisione cinematografica', established in April 1962 (Law 161) has been since then, the only authoritative voice in the field of TV 'censorship'. The legislation is still in force and prevents the airing of films 'unsuitable for children under 18' in any given time slot and channel. It may grant permission for TV airing to films forbidden to under14, transmittable only at the end of the prime time (roughly from 22:30 to 7am).



*Sovversivi* (1967). Regardless of their scandalous storylines, – films such as Lattuada's *La mandragola* (1965), or Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) – were attacked by the CCC to stir public disapproval, yet proved highly profitable at box office.

In the second half of the 1960s, while the Neorealist model's legacy slowly lost its artistic appeal before the new generation of cinema viewers, in an interview with Tommaso Chiaretti, Cesare Zavattini suggested that even the freest authors were responding to the pressure of political and religious censorship. Zavattini noted: 'The damage done by censorship is not to be found principally in the highly visible veto or in confiscation of works but in the more hidden intimidations and secret pressures to which authors are subjected' (Zavattini and T. Chiaretti, 1961: 214). Likewise, cinema producers and filmmakers were looking for transversal ways to avoid censorial measures, on the example of Fellini's diplomacy in making a direct appeal to Vatican authorities to facilitate the production of his 1957 *Le notti di Cabiria* (Sallustro, 2007: 78).<sup>124</sup>

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1947, the state 'Ufficio di revisione cinematografica'<sup>125</sup> for Italian and foreign films issued an unfavourable decision (protocol n. 2524) in response to the Eagle Lion Films Productions, requesting a dubbing into Italian the film *The Black Narcissus* (*Narciso nero*) directed by Michael Powell.<sup>126</sup> The film did not receive a valid certificate as it presented 'unfavourably and within an immoral plot' five Catholic missionary nuns of the 'Ordine delle Serve di Maria'. Calvino, Head of the 'Ufficio Centrale della Cinematografia', claimed: 'the moral representation of these religious women is disgraceful as they desert their mission and become insanely attracted by material goods'.<sup>127</sup>

Only following this, the production company Eagle Lion made considerable adjustments to the

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124 Long after the demur of Neorealism, when imagination regained centrality at the expense of crude reality, Fellini's *Roma* (1972) indicated the church's frivolous ambition to join in partnership with the artistic elites.

125 In the 'Sottosegretariato per lo Spettacolo della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri' online archives/ Italian cinema under the first government (1947-1953). The Archives offer a catalogue of several issued 'nulla osta'.

126 Luigi Freddi (1949), 'Storia della Censura', *Il Cinema: il governo dell'immagine*, Rome: Centro sperimentale di cinematografia, Gremese, 1994. The definition 'Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica' was, according to Freddi, a euphemism to rename the Office of Censorship, issuing or rejecting certificates ('nulla osta') to filmmakers and producers. The 'Ufficio di Revisione cinematografica' preserves documents related to films either approved or conditioned to revisions.

127 On the censor's stress on the public audience's culpability, see Alfredo Baldi, *Lo sguardo punito. Film censurati 1947-1962*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1994.

original dialogues that required dubbing into Italian for the Italian Catholic audience, a new decision was reached, finally issuing the film with a 'valid certificate of approval'. The amended verdict recited:

'Given that the cited production company has now 1. submitted [to the Board of revision] new dialogues in Italian language – dialogues which have been appropriately amended and cleared to avoid offence to the Catholic Church and to people's religious sentiment; 2. Changed the dubbing and received the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's approval: we trust that a valid certificate can be issued, provided that the film, once finished, will be submitted once more to this 'Commissione di Censura' before public screening' (29.7.1947).<sup>128</sup>

The new version of protocol n. 2524 included a document undersigned by the 'Consulente Ecclesiastico', Mons. Ferdinando Prosperini, of the 'Centro Cattolico Cinematografico' making the following considerations:

'We have reviewed the Italian edition of the film 'The Black Narcissus', whose scenes and dialogues have been suitably modified as requested. In consideration of the delicate subject matter, and acknowledging the evident care by which the scene and the dialogues have been altered to meet the needs of the Italian spectatorship, we confirm that the Italian edition of the aforementioned film can be approved on the basis of the way scenes and dialogues have been modifies as the submitted copy of the film attests.' (16.7.1947)<sup>129</sup>

State and church in turn, pressurised the film industry by mean of first grade or second grade censorship. The Vatican's concern regarding the influence of films screening 'unsuitable' subjects included extramarital affairs, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and of course religious non-orthodoxy.

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128 Ibidem. 'Poiché la Società sopra citata ha, ora, presentati nuovi dialoghi in lingua italiana, debitamente corretti e purgati, così da non risultare più offensivi per la Chiesa Cattolica e per il senso religioso, con i quali dovrebbe essere effettuato il doppiaggio del film in questione, e poiché anche lo stesso Centro Cattolico Cinematografico afferma (...) che 'la edizione italiana dell'opera cinematografica *The Black Narcissus* sulla base del fotografico visionato e dei nuovi dialoghi convenuti, risponde alle peculiari esigenze del pubblico italiano', si ritiene di poter concedere la richiesta autorizzazione, purché il film, una volta approntato e prima della sua programmazione in pubblico, sia ancora revisionato dalla Commissione di Censura.'(29.7.1947)

129 Ibidem: 'Si è presa visione del fotografico e del dialogato appositamente approntati per l'edizione italiana del film *The Black Narcissus*. Poiché si riscontra sia nell'uno che nell'altro, tenendo conto della delicatezza dell'argomento trattato, la cura evidente di adattare la visione ed il parlato alle peculiari esigenze del pubblico italiano, si conferma che la edizione italiana del film stesso sulla base del fotografico visionato e de dialoghi convenuti come da copia in atti, può essere autorizzata.' (16.7.1947)

The Vatican's pressure for the suppression and banning of scandalous films on the grounds of their moral inadmissibility was proof of the Catholic anxiety of loathing, thus motivated preventive censorship. Giaime Pintor, in *Il sangue d'Europa, Scritti politici e letterari* (1977), has argued that cinema has helped to shape and modify 'the history and geography of our brains', making *change* possible (Pintor, 1975: 156-157).

Numerous are the films in pre- and post-war Italian cinema in which the influence and interference of clergy authorities in Italian political and social affairs is denounced. I hereafter present cases of clerical censorship against films accused of offending the Catholic religion. My aim is to investigate what procedures and prohibitions the Vatican has urged the state legislation to implement in order to shelter its prestige.

### 7.2 Case study 1. *Il miracolo*, by Roberto Rossellini, and other irreligious plots

As I have anticipated in the *Introduction*, in exploring archival cases involving Italian as well as foreign film directors, such as Buñuel, Ingmar Berman, and Pedro Almodovar, troubling the Roman Catholic Church's authorities and followers with their anti-Catholic or a-Catholic plots, I came across Roberto Rossellini's fight against clerical censorship. A noticeable instance of the Vatican's clerical intervention on the film industry, with far reaching effects, is indeed Rossellini's *Il miracolo*, one of the two episodes of the film *Amore*. I am going to briefly illustrate how this film was the first to prove the difficult interactions between the Roman Catholic Church and cinema and how the arts won their first battle against censorship by religion, thanks to the New York Appeals Court overturning of the Board of Regents' initial banning. This Italian-born case of clerical censorship, following the enraged Catholic reception of *Amore* on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1950 at New York's Paris Theatre, is important, as it ended in a court trial against the distributor of the film in the United States, which became highly charged at an ideological and political level. Here are the facts: released in 1948, *Il miracolo* was exported by Joseph Burstyn to the USA in 1949, despite the opposition of the Catholic Church, and translated for the American audience as *Ways of Love*. The story, which the USA Roman Catholic archdioceses accused of conveying blasphemy, at first lost its license, due to the pressure of the Catholic authorities on the Boards of Regents.

Based on Federico Fellini's script, the plot transfers to modern Italy the relationship between

Mary, mother of Jesus, and Joseph, and restages their love in a wholly profane folk setting.<sup>130</sup> The narrative revolves around Nannina, a naive homeless woman, who one day meets a handsome tramp, believing him to be St Joseph, he takes advantage of her sexually before leaving the village. When Nannina realises that she is expecting a child, she starts telling people that her pregnancy is a miracle. But let's now expand on the film misadventures: *Amore*, inclusive of *Il miracolo*, featured at the Venezia Film Festival on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1948, obtained a valid general certificate for public screening ('Visto  *censura*: 4472'). The film was first shown in Paris, where Catholic activists immediately protested in front of the cinema theatre, shouting slogans toward the filmmaker's 'vile, harmful and blasphemous' allusions to the Incarnation. The remonstrations moved to Italy and prompted the Catholic establishment's moral outrage. Some Vatican affiliates advised the Catholic audience to boycott the film. To avoid failure at box office, the producer amended some scenes containing sexual allusions and submitted again the episode to the Censorship board to obtain a valid certificate. As Baxter has argued, the Italian film industry managed to obtain a positive review which managed to persuade the spectators that the plot was not blasphemous:

'The charge of blasphemy didn't take root in Europe, because Pius XII, unexpectedly, was reported in October as having found 'marvellous' this 'modern version of a miracle of the Virgin directed by a Communist'. Since it's hardly likely the Pope saw the film, the announcement probably came from the Church's censors, heartened to see even so vaguely spiritual a subject embraced by the godless Rossellini.'

As a result, and despite the uproar, in 1949 the film was released and imported to the United States by a Polish-Jewish film distributor, Joseph Burstyn. *Il miracolo*, translated as *The Miracle*, with English subtitles, as one part of a trilogy translated as the *Ways of Love*, passed the borders unnoticed and obtained a valid certificate from the New York Board of censorship. However, things did not go as smoothly in the USA as in Italy. In December of the same year, Cardinal Spellmann, considering the film's plot blasphemous, started an anti-film campaign with the support of the League of Decency to boycott all screenings. The 'League of Catholic Men', appealed *The Miracle* and asked for its immediate banning. Following the church's official pressure, the USA state censorship board revoked the film's license on the grounds of 'sacrilege'. In fact, in the USA as in Italy, the director of the motion picture division of the

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<sup>130</sup> The first episode in *Amore* is entitled *La voce umana*. It is a filmic transposition of Jean Cocteau's theatre drama *La voix humaine* (Parigi, 1930).

education department (but also, when authorised, the officers of local offices or bureaux) can promptly revoke the licence to a motion picture *in toto*, or reject part of the film on charges of obscene, indecent, immoral, inhumane, and sacrilegious contents, or for exhibiting characters that may corrupt morals or incite crime. As a result, Joseph Burstyn, as the representative of a corporation engaged in the business of distributing motion pictures, lost the license since the New York Education Law, in the 1950s, would forbid the commercial showing of any motion picture film without a licence, and would authorise denial of a licence on a censor's conclusion that a film is sacrilegious (Censorship case: *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson*, 343 U.S. 495, 1952).

*Il Miracolo (Am ore)*. Scene of the encounter between the female protagonist Nannina and the man who she believes to be Saint Joseph.

The appellant brought the action to the 'New York Court of Appeals', and asked for the review of the determination of the Regents. Among the claims there were the following objections: 1. the statute imposing censorship violated the Fourteenth Amendment as a prior restraint upon freedom of speech and of the press; 2. that the censorial measure was invalid under the same Amendment as a violation of the guaranty of separate church and state and as a prohibition of the free exercise of religion; and 3. that the term 'sacrilegious' was 'so vague and indefinite as to offend due process'. The Appellate Division rejected all of the appellant's contentions and upheld the Regents' determination (278 App. Div. 253, 104 NYS. 2d 740). Burstyn then brought the case before the U.S. Supreme Court, and asked that it consider the contention that the New York statute was an unconstitutional abridgment of free speech and a free press. On 26<sup>th</sup> May 1952 he announced that the initial decision was overturned for the unconstitutionality of the initial ban. The Court Judge accepted the defenders' claim that: 'Under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, a state may not place a prior restraint on the showing of a motion picture film on the basis of a censor's conclusion that it is *sacrilegious*' (*Findlaw: USA Online Legal Archive for Legal Professionals*). With a landmark decision, stating that 'a prior restraint as that involved here is a form of infringement upon freedom of expression to be especially condemned', the Court rejected the ban, declaring, that 1. the expression of an individual's free opinions on religion by means of a film is included within the free speech and free press guaranty of the First and Fourteenth Amendments. 2. Motion pictures are undoubtedly a

significant medium for the communication of ideas, and are valid organs of public opinion. 3. the production, distribution and exhibition of motion pictures as a large-scale business conducted for private profit, does not prevent motion pictures from being a form of expression whose liberty is safeguarded by the First Amendment. 4. even if it be assumed that motion pictures possess a greater capacity for evil, particularly among the youth of a community, than other modes of expression, it does not follow that they are not entitled to the protection of the First Amendment, or may be subjected to substantially unbridled censorship' (*Findlaw*).

The U.S. Supreme Court verdict added: 'From the standpoint of freedom of speech and the press, a state has no legitimate interest in protecting any or all religions from views distasteful to them which is sufficient to justify prior restraint upon the expression of those views. It is not the business of government to suppress real or imagined attacks upon a religious doctrine, whether they appear in publications, speeches or motion pictures' (*Findlaw*). The initial censorship decision was thus overturned due to the unconstitutionality of the clerical interference under the First Amendment. The Judge, recognising the impact of the clerical pressure on the film's banning procedures, wished to stress that the involvement of the Church in the film censorial case violated the concept of separation between state and church (Green and Karolidis, 2005: 354).

At the end of the controversy, the American Supreme Court's crucial action to strike down the ban on *The Miracle*, attained a ground-breaking result on free speech by declaring for the first time, that the First Amendment barred government from banning any film as sacrilegious (Bruce-Johnson 2008: 8-10). The legal complications gained popularity as the 'Miracle Decision'. Finally, the Supreme Court declared that Rossellini's film was a form of artistic expression to be protected by the freedom of speech guarantee of First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which no clerical censorship could silence.

However, clerical censors tend to find transversal ways for the implementation of their vetoes. Consequently, despite the Supreme Court's decision, Catholics followers were told to stay away from Rossellini's film and to protest directly with cinema theatres' managers who screened it. The history of Rossellini's court trials suggests that censorship by religion against the cinema industry, as any other form of indirect and non-official censorship, is practiced by the Catholic censors by means of confidential advice, attempts at dissuading the defenders of embarrassing films, and threatening toward possible diplomatic frictions with the public sector at the end of the production phase. Cinema critic Randall argues: 'The entire Miracle

controversy in USA indicated that the task of safeguarding and augmenting free speech in motion pictures is more complicated than that of restricting the censors by law' (Randall, 1968: 32).

As Argentieri also argues, Church censorship manifests its power to alert the Committee for film credit (1974). Rossellini, when discussing film censorship in *Il mio metodo. Scritti ed interviste*, himself argued: 'The entire human history is decided by the conflicts between the men who decide for the future, the very few rebels, and the many conservative men who have a nostalgia for the past, and who wish things to stay unaltered' (1987: 369). Rossellini could not have gone closer than this to the truth of clerical censorship.

Another instance of clerical censorship is provided by the 1949 American film, *Red Danube*, by George Sidney (*Danubio Rosso*, protocol n. 7240, 20 April 1950), to which the producer of the 'Ufficio di Revisione cinematografica' was imposed extensive cuts and deletions of scenes and dialogues under the charge of 'contempt of religion'.<sup>131</sup> Again, on the front of foreign productions imported in Italy, Luis Buñuel and Ingmar Bergman's films were strictly monitored by the Boards of censorship. In particular, Bergman's *Det sjunde inseglet* (*The Seventh Seal* 1957) suffered drastic cuts due to the disquieting references made to a passage of the *Book of Revelation* (8:1) conveying the notion of God's absence (Bragg, 1998: 45). In the same period, MP Andreotti, who had direct governmental control over the media during PM Alcide De Gasperi's government, ensured that the appointed authorities for film censorship implemented stricter policies on the filmmakers' freedom of expression. Likewise on films unfavourably depicting national values, public institutions, and authorities. In a film review published in the DC's magazine *Libertà*, Andreotti took the liberty of attacking De Sica's film, *Umberto D* (Baldi, 2002: 8). In his appraisal, he blamed the plot for presenting a denigrating representation of Italian society as merciless and unequal towards the old and the poor:

'Umberto D. lives in a world, which is totally deprived of any religious principle, let alone of human solidarity. [...] De Sica has aimed at representing a social plague and has achieved its aims with artistry, but in the film, he does not offer any edifying and pedagogical clue to help

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131 Ibidem. *Danubio rosso*, 7240, 20/04/1950. 'The film's plot is set in Vienna, and partly in Rome during the Allies occupation. Already reviewed on the 4th March 1950 in its integral version, the film [*Red Danube*] was issued a valid certificate, provided the total elimination in the film's dialogues of all the references offensive towards the Italian population, the Catholic religion and the Pope. The verdict was: 'In spite of having passionate anti-communist hints, the committee has not found other faults for banning the film. Our advice to the distributor is to modify the dialogues in the indicated scenes. No further objection. Certificate is issued N. 7400, 20/04/1950.'

those who consume themselves, suffer and die in the real world. [...] It was in fact that ‘divine’ sun beam the thing that made the poor protagonist of his previous film about Milan tramps find the strength to smile.’ (Andreotti, 1951: 6)

As an authority, holding high governmental influence over the state’s monopoly on the media, Andreotti, who was a fervent Catholic activist throughout his life, initiated a form of intellectual ‘censorship by religion’. However, his negative appraisal against leftist filmmaker De Sica’s opinion produced a counter effect, increasing his fame somewhat as an *agent provocateur*. Other films subjected to Church censorship in the same year, were Julien Duvivier’s *Don Camillo* (1952) and Raffaello Matarazzo’s *Chi è senza peccato* (1952), passing judgements on the clergy and on the hypocritical Catholic mentality (Baldi, 2002: 9).

In *Clericali e laici* (1957), Gaetano Salvemini claimed, ‘Preventive censorship is a religious conception.’ He argued, the Italian law, regulating preventive censorship, tended to make sure that the various members of the censorial boards committees were susceptible to the Catholic values (Salvemini, 1957: 51). Much later in time, Timothy Mitchell, in *Betrayal of the Innocents. Desire, Power and the Catholic Church*, argued: ‘In every country, the Catholic Church reviews films and assigns to them a moral *grade*’ (Mitchell 1998: 104-131).

Often the political reason for censorship action is hidden behind issues of public decency. However, Luigi Chiarini, in *Cinema quinto potere*, and Mino Argentieri e Ivano Cipriani, *Censura e autocensura*, have both argued that leftist filmmakers were mainly criticised for their civil progressivism upsetting the Church’s tenets. In 1956, Dino Risi’s comedy film, *Poveri ma belli*, containing elements of political and social critique, prompted the direct intervention of Pius XII to solicit the authorities against the public display of the film’s poster, allegedly offensive of social decorum.

The new cinematic trend, which developed in the late 1950s, resulted in a new phase of censorial mania. In 1958 and 1959, two films by Mario Bolognini, based on Pasolini’s scripts, *Giovani mariti* and *La notte brava*, were heavily censored, along with his following films, *La giornata balorda* and *Il Bell’Antonio* (1960), and judged as subversive to the family and marriage’s ethical values. Conservative prejudice particularly targeted Pasolini’s *Accattone* (1961), and *Mamma Roma* (1962), considered immoral representations of violent and deviant juvenile behaviours. However, during his career, Pasolini did not plan to simply provoke public scandal. Neither as a militant Marxist did he wish to merely express the lower classes’ bitter outcry against poverty and social injustice. His intention was to convey, in the first place, a



harsh critique of capitalism in its interconnection with Italy's stagnant civil and religious institutions, acting in a punitive manner towards the nation's degraded social realities, rather than coming to their aid. Then, he organized a ramified filmic analysis of the religious experience for the different individuals and social classes, which did not necessarily deny the validity of its different aspects. In a word, in shaping his characters' psychology and behaviours, Pasolini attempted to make sense (or nonsense) of the religious experience as well as of the socio-political and anthropological function of religious belief and custom.

From the decade of the 'economic boom' ('sudden economic wealth', my translation) onwards, the cinema became a leading economical industry attracting the interests of people at various levels of engagement. In *Making Waves* (2008), Nowell-Smith argues that in the Taviani brothers, Bellocchio and Bertolucci's plots, Italy is portrayed as a country 'recalcitrant to world progress, beyond reform, yet not ripe for revolution.' In 1959, for instance, the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico had already banned Bianchi's film comedy, *Il moralista*, on the allegation that the main character's role, personifying hypocritical double moral standards, was offensive to the dignity of the common Roman Catholic man. Talking about 'political censorship' in the 1960s, Baldi notes: 'On 5<sup>th</sup> February 1960, Fellini's *La dolce vita*, co-written with Ennio Flaiano e Tullio Pinelli, was premiered in a Milan cinema theatre (Prohibited to - 16) (Kezich 1959). The screening was interrupted by the protests of some viewers, who continued to insult Fellini on leaving the hall. Conservative newspapers, as well as the Vatican's organs of the press, attempted to demolish the worth of Fellini's film on moral grounds.

In the 1960s, the censorial control over films, containing direct or transversal criticisms of state and religious institutions, increased proportionately with the growing popularity of cinema as a form of mass entertainment' (Baldi 2002: 23). Church censorship became more sensible to the alternating governments' power struggles between the left, centre, and right party coalitions, and interest groups. The merging of the sacred with the secular and the profane in film plots continued to scandalise the Catholic establishment, whose intellectuals began reacting to the growing risk of a de-Christianisation of the Italian society, under the hammer of the secularisation processes, making the Weberian 'eclipse of the sacred' in the industrial civilisation appear dangerously close (Acquaviva 1971).

Innumerable films underwent script alterations and footage cuts in the pre- and post-production revision phases, or following public screening, due to the prompt intervention of authorities in

charge of setting censorial proceedings against improper use of cinematic materials, accused of conveying vilification of the republic, the state, the army and the church's authorities under Art. 290 of the Penal Code, offence of public decorum, or of the 'religious sentiment' (Arts. 403-406 Penal Code) (Barile, 1961: 1479-1500).

It should be noted that the Catholic critics' public acts of indignation somewhat favoured, rather than hindered the popularity of films such as Fellini's *La dolce vita*. Utter success at box office prevented Minister Umberto Tupini to call for the intervention of official censorship, despite the film portraying religious characters in ridiculing settings (Fornara 2001). However, on the 4<sup>th</sup> October of the same year, censorship was called in to force by the state Attorney (Procuratore della Repubblica), Carmelo Spagnuolo, against *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, by Luchino Visconti, whose incestuous 'rape scene' had already been partly obscured at the 1960 Venice Film Festival (Baldi 2002: 23).<sup>132</sup>

On 13 June 1960, Minister Tupini, as the Head of the 'Ministero dello Spettacolo', sent a warning letter to the A.N.I.C.A.'s president: 'Such system constantly looking for scandalous narratives subjects must be stopped. There is too clear a speculation behind the producers' interest in financing such stories. [...] I want the producers to know that from now on I will be extremely strict in censorial procedure' (Baldi, 2002: 24).<sup>133</sup> Under the pressure of the Vatican authorities and magistrates of Christian Democrat affiliation, Court Judge Spagnuolo censored for indecency Alberto Lattuada's *Dolci inganni*, and confiscated Mauro Bolognini's *La giornata balorda* (1960), charged with outraging public decency, starting from the film's storyline written by Alberto Moravia and scene adaptation by Pier Paolo Pasolini (Acquaviva 1971). Moravia, in an article appearing in the weekly magazine, *L'Espresso*, protested against the censorial procedures:

'I have been denounced by the Public Prosecutor of Milan Together with Mauro Bolognini and Pier Paolo Pasolini, for the content of the film. This is the second time I have been denounced on the basis of Article 528 of the Criminal Code – 'Divulcation of publications and events

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132 The obscured scene showed Rocco (Renato Salvatori) raping a prostitute (Annie Girardot), witnessed by his youngest brother (Alain Delon). The film's dramatic plot also presented violent sequences of fighting and hatred between the two brothers, Simone and Rocco, the rape of the female protagonist Nadia, and her murder. *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* was blamed for screening actions and intentions incompatible with family decorum.

133 'Questo sistema alla ricerca di soggetti malsani e scandalosi deve cessare: è chiara la speculazione di questi produttori che si accingono a realizzare film di questo genere. [...] Voglia rendere noto all'ambiente dei produttori che a partire da questo momento sarò severissimo in materia di censura.'

contrary to public morality' ('Divulgazione di pubblicazioni e spettacoli contrari alla pubblica morale'). The censorship, which hides behind these motivations, is consciously (or worse) mischievously politically motivated. Italy is not the country of Calvin, but that of Machiavelli. Italian moralists always hide their political hassle. The Church, by a singular process of historical evolution, is fixed on sexual sin and closes its eyes to other more serious and widespread sins [...] it is also true that Catholic sexual phobia, precisely because of its obsessive character, may very well serve as a weapon in political struggle [...] So, here we find our political opponent disguised as a moralist who pretends to be scandalised by the represented sexual romance while in reality he or she is interested to stir social polemic against us. What was our fault, in my opinion? First, to have concentrated in a single film three of the main scourges of modern Italy. Second, to have given a realistic controversial background to the sentimental comedy.' (Moravia 27 November 1960) What is of relevance in Moravia's remarks is not *who* is to decide *what* is appropriate to show on the screens and *who* should see it, but rather *why* censors decide what filmmakers and the film industry should do. The answer provided is that cinema censors' aim to 1. Protect the political interests of special groups, and 2. Constrain the problematic 'truth-contents', which filmmakers attempt to set free.

Despite such censorial turmoil, filmmakers increased their involvement in cultural debates over religion, and between the 1960s and 1970s gained a reputable role as intellectual political and public opinion-makers. Cinematic ridiculing of the clergy was systematic – as in Luigi Fulci's *Imbroglione* (1963) and Tinto Brass's *Disco Volante* (1964) – along with satirical representations of religious rites, bonds, and values, screened across the decade. It is understood that these plots were systematically criticised by the CCC according to set classification charts.<sup>134</sup>

In 1961, *Totò, Peppino e la... Dolce Vita*, featuring comedian Totò in the role of a parish priest, underwent heavy modifications (10 cuts X 106 metres of film), as the plot made allusions to male homosexuality, and made sexual sin attractive. From 1962 onwards, the 'Ufficio di Revisione cinematografica' had to comply with Law n. 161, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1962 'Revision of films and theatre plays', endorsed by DPR. 11<sup>th</sup> November 1963, n. 2029 / Regulation for the execution of law 21<sup>st</sup> April 1962, n. 161 / Revision of films and theatre plays.

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134 The CCC charts divided the films in 'Ammessi per le sale di istituzioni cattoliche' ('approved for viewing in Catholic institutions') and 'Non ammessi per le sale di istituzioni cattoliche' ('not approved for viewing in Catholic institutions'). A 'D' certificate established the film as being unsuitable for minors, while an 'E' certificate signified 'Excluded to all'.

According to Art.21 of the Italian Constitution, the intent of Law n. 161 was the ‘limitation and banning exclusively of films, scenes and sequences in which there is a patent violation of public decency’ (‘esclusivamente ove ravvisi nei film, sia nel complesso, sia in singole scene o sequenze, offesa al buon costume’). The film revision procedures concerned all films produced in Italy and destined for public screening by means of distribution on the national territory and overseas, however, the system also affected the films imported to Italy from foreign countries (Baldi, 2002: 189). Gallone’s *La monaca di Monza* (1962) suffered only two cuts x 13 metres of film, despite staging the sexual adventures of a nun. The Board’s restraint in censoring the film was supposedly due to the fact that the plot was based on a character from Alessandro Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi*, who stands as the most artistically qualified author in Italian Literature.

The form of censorship at work in the ‘Ufficio di revisione cinematografica’ against films such as Bergman’s, *The Seventh Seal*, had most likely followed the indications of Vatican’s affiliates. For similar reasons, Bergman’s *L’occhio del diavolo* (1960) suffered 7 cuts X 211 metres of film.<sup>135</sup> Likewise, Julien Duvivier’s *Le Diable et les dix commandements* (1962), apparently criticised for its ‘swear language’, was censored for showing that each of the ten commandments, covered up by social hypocrisy, could be easily broken. This was also the case with *Les Hommes veulent vivre* (*Gli uomini vogliono vivere* 1961) by Léonide Moguy, accused of contempt of religion and François Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim* (1961), ‘disrespecting the moral principles of the Catholic Church’ (Baldi, 2002: 27). Luico Fulci’s *Gli imbroglioni* was imposed 9 cuts x 131 metres for ridiculing a priest attending a religious rite (people following a funeral pretend to pray and listen instead to their portable radio broadcasting a football match). Likewise, for contempt of religion, Sergio Corbucci’s *Il monaco di Monza*, starring Totò, underwent 12 metres film cuts for parodying Christian prayers. Among foreign films, in 1963, Buñuel’s *Viridiana* narrating the story of a nun who is at risk of being raped by her uncle, sequestered and trialled under the charge of ‘vilification of state religion’, was cleared of all charges.<sup>136</sup> (Decree 12 February 1963, Rome: ‘Vilipendio della religione dello Stato e opere

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135 Other foreign filmmakers, whose films have been censored are, Françoise Truffaut, Joseph Losey, Donald Siegel, and Samuel Wilder.

136 In 1967, another imported film by Buñuel, *Belle de jour*, screening a bourgeois woman’s marital betrayal and prostitution, was submitted to cuts and then public viewing limited for alleged obscenity (vietato ai minori di 18).

cinematografiche').<sup>137</sup>

Because of their leftist agenda, Pasolini and Mauro Bolognini became systematic targets of the 'Ufficio di revisione cinematografica', both as script-writers and filmmakers. The discrimination towards foreign films reached a peak with Buñuel and Bergman, whose films produced in Mexico and Sweden between 1946 and 1960, were allowed in the Italian cinema theatres years later and decades after their actual *premiere*.

In 1971, Pasolini's *Decameron* was censored for obscenity, in the Trento district where it had first been screened. However, the investigating Magistrate of the Trento Court decided for the overturning of the denunciation. Several other Italian Civil Law Notaries received formal denunciations against Pasolini's film, yet only the Court Judge of the Bari district endorsed immediate restrictions on Pasolini's film. Following this first censorial action, another Magistrate in the Ancona district, sequestered both Ken Russell's *The Devils*, and Pasolini's *Decamerone*, for obscenity and vilification of religion. In the same year, in different cities of the Italian peninsula, Magistrates prevented the broadcasting of newly produced, as well as old films, circulating in cinema theatres, such as Bergman's *The Touch*, translated as *L'adultera*, *The Seventh Seal* (1956), Ken Russell's *Women in Love* (1969), and Louis Malle's *Le Souffle au Coeur* (1971).

### ***c. The 1963 Rating System***

In 1963, a rating system for the film industry was introduced for the first time in Italy. It classified films according to the following scheme:

T (*Tutti* – All): All ages admitted. The sign was a circle with a *T* inside against a green background;

V.M.14 (*Vietato ai minori di 14 anni - Restricted to 14 and over*): Nobody under the age of 14 years is allowed; parental guidance is strongly advised. The film is likely to contain sexual content, violence and some drug use. The sign was a circle with a *14* inside on an orange

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<sup>137</sup> <http://www.olir.it/areetematiche/97/index.php?documento=5225> The trial verdict concluded: 'Sostanzandosi il delitto di pubblico vilipendio della religione dello Stato nell'attacco alle credenze fondamentali della religione medesima (idea di Dio, dogmi, sacramenti, riti e simboli della Chiesa), non ne ricorrono gli estremi nell'opera cinematografica nella quale si esprime, sia pure mediante un simbolismo di discutibile gusto, la polemica del regista contro manifestazioni di pratica religiosa alternantisi con episodi di vera e propria superstizione.'

background;

V.M.18 (*Vietato ai minori di 18 anni - Restricted to 18 and over*): Nobody under the age of 18 years is allowed. Restricted to adult audiences only. The film is likely to contain very explicit and strong sexual content, strong and/or extreme violence and explicit drug use. The sign was a circle with the number 18 inside against a red or dark red background.<sup>138</sup>

All in all, between 1950 and 1984, in the period of my direct concern, with the exception of a very high number of 'second-class films ('film di cassetta'), censored for gratuitous display of obscenity of violence, mainstream filmmakers whose films underwent cuts and modification of dialogues, and scenes considered offensive of religion and religious values can be categorised as follows:

Michelangelo Antonioni: *I vinti*, 1953; *Il grido*, 1957 (the shop seller reaches a stall where he sells some sacred items irreverently); *La notte*, 1961; *Blow Up*, 1966. Bernardo Bertolucci: *Partner*, 1968; *Ultimo Tango a Parigi*, 1972 (sexual depravation and dialogues offensive towards the religious and civil institution of the family, and suicide). Tinto Brass: *Il disco volante*, 1964 (vilification of Catholic death, ritual, obscenity, sexual depravation, insult of military officer, and representation of strongly male-dominated culture). Vittorio De Sica: *Umberto D.*, 1952 (dialogues stressing cruelty of the institutions and social lack of human compassion, and crude realism); *Un uomo a metà*, 1966. Federico Fellini: *Boccaccio '70*, Fellini's episode *Le tentazioni di Sant'Antonio*, 1962 (obscenity, blasphemous association between religious item – ostensory - and cosmetic powder box: cfr. plot summarised in footnote).<sup>139</sup> Mario Monicelli: *Casanova '70*, 1965 (offence of the army); *L'armata*

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138 Movies with pornographic contents, like *Deep Throat*, and *Last Summer*, were given a special X rating. Today, this rating is not part of the official censorship and is issued only to extremely pornographic videos. Aside these ratings, films were also censored for screening too radical political views. It was the case for *Freaks*, *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, *Last Tango in Paris*, and *Cannibal Holocaust*. However, in recent times, previous bans were lifted. The laws, which imposed total banning, are still part of the official censorship regulation, although part of them have fallen into disuse.

139 The AFI Catalogue: *Boccaccio '70* (Film composed of four episodes by filmmakers Fellini, Visconti, De Sica, and Monicelli, 1962): First episode: *The Temptation of Dr. Antonio* by Fellini: Dr. Antonio, a self-appointed crusader against vice and immorality in Rome, is outraged when a gigantic poster of a seductive blonde holding a glass of milk is erected on the vacant lot facing his apartment. To placate him the authorities cover the poster with paper, but the covering comes off during a storm, and the obsessed moralist imagines that the giant woman on the poster has come to life. Ignoring his squealing protests, she playfully picks him up, holds him to her bosom, and dances through the streets with voluptuous abandon. He is driven mad by the encounter, and, with the coming of morning, the police find him clinging to the top of the billboard. A huge crowd gathers as he is lifted down and carried away to an asylum.'

*Brancaleone*, 1969 (for cruelty against animals and nudity scenes). Pier Paolo Pasolini: *Accattone*, 1961 (for violence, criminality, and vilification of clergyman); *Film Giornale Sedi* n. 1361, 1962 (for misogyny); *Ro.Go.Pa.G.*, Pasolini's episode '*La ricotta*', 1963 (for vilification of state religion); *I Racconti di Canterbury*, 1972 (for obscenity, nudity, sexual perversion, blasphemy, vilification of religious rites/ sodomy involving a priest / vilification of clergymen and religious women); *Il fiore delle Mille e una Notte*: (sexual perversions, nudity, and blasphemy). Roberto Rossellini: *Vanina Vanini* (use of oath, blasphemy, and vilification of the clergy). Luchino Visconti: *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960 (violence, and offence of family values). *La caduta degli Dei*, 1969 (offence of family values, and incest taboo/mother and son). Ingmar Bergman: *Djävulens öga / L'occhio del diavolo*, 1960. Luis Buñuel: *Viridiana*: 1961 (sexual violence); *Diario di una cameriera / Le journal d'une femme de chambre*: 1964 (blasphemous dialogues). Jean-Luc Godard: *Fino all'ultimo respiro / A' bout de soufflé*, 1959; *La donna è donna / Une femme est une femme*, 1961; *Week-end*, 1967); *Je vues salve Marie* (1984). Ken Russell: *The devils*, 1971. Marco Ferreri: *Storia di Piera*, 1983 (incest taboo, paedophilia, sexual perversion, and offence to family figures and values).

### 7.3. Case study 2: Pier Paolo Pasolini's subversion of the Status Quo

In this critical section of film analysis, I demonstrate how my use of the theoretical literature and methodologies, outlined in chapter 2 and 3, support my argument that Pasolini was censored by the state's official censorship, and by the church's censors for being what Gramsci defined as an unaligned atheist intellectual, producing counter-discourse, and for upsetting his disconcerting allegories with what Foucault defined as the relationships between the subject and the state via the governmentalisation of forms of control, discipline and punishment.

It is worth to flag out that my analysis remains at the level of historical survey of the circumstances that lead to and result in efforts to censor, to narrate and explore particular aspects of film history and allow film analysis and the discourses of censorship, related to specific films analysis, to merge.

It was Marxist homosexual, poet, novelist, and filmmaker Pasolini, author among others of the films *Accattone*, *La ricotta*, *Racconti di Canterbury*, *Teorema*, *I fiore delle mille e una notte*, *Porcile* and *Salò*, who instigated the Catholic audience's homophobic and bigots most fierce aversion. However, despite the prejudices that surrounded his public *persona*, Pasolini was

recognised by film critics as the most daring *agent provocateur*, and continued to play this role in the cinema world as script writer, editor, and film director, until the day of his assassination on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1975 (Betti: 1977).<sup>140</sup> I focus on Pier Paolo Pasolini's court trial for *La ricotta*, but also recall all the other censorial instances against his filmmaking between 1962 and his assassination in 1976. During this time he was charged of, and punished for, crimes that range from public indecency to contempt of state religion, the latter being the only offence this thesis specifically focuses on.

The censorial attacks against Pasolini's *La Ricotta* (1963), *Teorema* (1968) and *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975)<sup>141</sup> bring about considerations on the citizens' constitutional freedoms, both as producers of artistic messages (the filmmakers) and as receivers (the audience). Here again I draw upon the discussed Gramscian and Foucauldian premises as they present interesting points of convergence on the issues of hegemony and power as opposed to the individual's fundamental freedoms. The core of my discussion starts from the understanding that all social, political, or religious discourses and knowledge, whether coming from intellectuals, public bureaucrats or ecclesiastics, are invariably linked to governmentalised techniques for the implementation of different forms of power control over society.

Pasolini's intellectual *persona* traverses different periods, genres and discourses in Italian society and culture: the gifted protagonist of an artistic rebellion, and at the same time the victim of homophobic prejudice, he witnessed the traumatised passage from the fascist autocracy to the new apparently liberal Republic. Like many of his contemporaries, during the post-war economic 'miracle', he managed to become engaged in filmmaking and became an inflammatory instigator of public debate. Cinema, in Pasolini's views had to translate the 'written language of reality' in poetic terms (Barnabò Micheli 1987).<sup>142</sup> As an artist and

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140 In December 1960, intervening in a debate in the magazine *Vie nuove* on the state/clerical censorship against Luchino Visconti's film *Rocco e I suoi fratelli*, Pasolini argued: 'When I say 'state' I mean, a bit freely, that atrocious fascist/catholic entity, which constitutes officially the Italian nation. [...] We must totally ignore their hypocritical issues' (Pasolini, 1977: 67-71). Pasolini added that the filmmakers' error is 'lowering themselves down to the censors' degrading argumentative level, centred on sex and decency. Pasolini, who had already undergone press censorship in 1955 for his novel *Ragazzi di vita*, was imposed 6 scene cuts x 28, 5 metres of film for *Accattone* (1961).

141 *La ricotta* ('over the age of 18', 1963); *Teorema* ('over the age of 18', 1967-1968); *Salò o le 120 Giornate di Sodom* ('over the age of 18', 1975) (Moscati 2005: 157).

142 Cinema can in fact represent reality through the 'reality of cinema', transcending its technicality (Pasolini). In order to question reality, cinema must break through its codes, disrupt its discourses, and challenge its equilibriums. 'Cinema ought to go against history's false conscience' (Moscati, 2005: 156).



intellectual, Pasolini is known for having denounced the crudest realities of social injustice with the passion of his artistic authority. He has indicated throughout his literary and cinematic work the pressures exercised by both ruling hegemonies and the culture industry, to make artists advance the financial interests of their lobbies. As cinema critic Landy claims, Pasolini saw the rise of High Capitalism as a new Fascism with its phenomena of commodification of all aspects of social life, including sexuality (cfr. *Salò or le 120 giornate di Sodoma* 1975) (Landy, 1986: 180). On the theoretical front, Pasolini identified with Gramsci's idea of the committed intellectual as 'mass pedagogue' and with this principle in mind, he fashioned the character of *his* Jesus.

Pasolini acknowledged Gramsci's ideas as a main influence on his artistic and intellectual practices in his 1954 long poem *Le ceneri di Gramsci*. As he also argued in his 1961 poetry collection, *La religione del mio tempo*, the difficult and painful relationship of the artist with the neo-capitalist society proves the decline of the sacred under the steamroller of mass production. This long poem is Pasolini's conversation with Gramsci's ashes as recipient of ideals no longer attainable in the consumerist society of mass homologation. The elegiac tone arises from the observation of the lives of the proletariat in the Roman suburbs, where Pasolini discovers the coming together of sacred and profane, without the ideological charge of the politically correct intellectual and artistic 'commitment' to Social realism, exacted by the Communist leader Achille Togliatti to the nation's poets and filmmakers.

Despite being deeply interested in the theme of the sacred, Marxist Pasolini vehemently criticised governmentalised Catholicism, which he considered complicit to Capitalism. Along this line of reasoning, he expressed a preference for folk forms of religiosity closer to Early Christianity. Indeed, Pasolini's representation of Christ as a dissident intellectual, in *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo*, is companion to the spirit of the religious movement known as Liberation theology. Marco Belpoliti informs that *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* was produced at a time when Pasolini was going through a deep psychological crisis due to his growing distrust in the present and in the role of the Gramscian intellectual he had taken on.

At the conference *Cristianesimo e Marxismo*, which took place in Brescia on 13 December 1964, Pasolini declared the existential and political disillusionment, which had led him to reevaluate Christ's message albeit from the point of view of his deeply rooted atheist laicism. (Belpoliti, 2010: II, 63) The reasons for Pasolini's state of scepticism, Belpoliti argues, are to be found in the decline of the ideological cohesion of the committed intellectuals' unitary

project for the Gramscian cultural unification of the nation.

As a result, despite the many literary, cinematographic and sexual scandals of his life, Pasolini behaved as if accomplishing a solitary educational undertaking as he often claimed in his articles published in *Vie Nuove* in which he problematised the notion of the artist's 'political commitment' (Belpoliti, 2010: II, 65-66). In *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964, censorship case: 43400 - 15-09-1964), he coherently represented Jesus of Nazareth as a man whose mission was to educate the masses of his followers against the corruption of the ruling hegemonies in the name of universal freedom.

It is worth mentioning Nesti's theory of post-Catholic dissent, as it offers valid support to my argument on Pasolini's relationship to the sacred, in Ch.7.6. In *Il cattolicesimo degli italiani. Religione e culture dopo la 'secolarizzazione'*, Nesti claims that what may appear as religious dissent is in fact rooted in the Christian schismatic tradition (Nesti, 1997: 132). Socialist Catholic theorists too see the evangelic message in neat contrast with the Church of Rome's models of dominion (Nesti 1997). Nesti has questioned the problem of interpreting the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Western societies, particularly in consideration of the general decline of religious observance.<sup>143</sup> He argues that only Jesus should remain the true leader of modern Christianity, as Pasolini suggested in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*

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143 Sociological statistics suggest that an impressive percentage of Italian people still takes for granted that their nation is a confessional state with Catholicism being entitled to dictate its point of view on morality and even on politics.(Nesti 1977)



Pasolini, Orson Welles and Laura Betti on the set of the film *La ricotta* (Cinecittà, 1963)

### *Censorship against the ill-famed artist*

The following sections concentrate on Pasolini, whose remarkably attractive negative fame grew proportionately with his alleged offensive treatment of subjects related to institutionalised Catholicism. The ideological framework in which Pasolini's constructed his cinematic dissidence was that of an *agent provocateur*. In his films, he made constant reference to class conflict (state and law authorities against outlaws and dissidents; the church against heretics or sinners, *Pater familias* against libertines, etc.). His favoured film characters were chosen among common people, and often represented the difficult life conditions of individuals coming from disintegrating and humiliating socio-economic realities. In his stories, class struggle and injustice are often associated to moral decadence, or frenzied sexuality, tragically viewed upon as the ultimate 'consolation' to civil, economic, and spiritual misery. These clashing aspects, in Pasolini's representations, were systematically subjected to harsh critique and criticism. It is useful to restate that the theoretical background which supports my analysis of cinema censorship against cases of outrageous, indecent and sacrilegious plots, as those by Godard and Pasolini, is once again based on Foucault's 1982 Lecture Series, at the Collège de France in which he faced the problem of religion as a

constituent part of the ruling powers. In this line of argument Carrette has also noted:

‘One of the central features of Foucault’s later ‘religious question’ is how religion, and Christianity, in particular, creates ‘forms of subjection’ by developing ‘new power relations’. [...] ‘The spiritual’, in this sense, refers to the construction of the subject through a series of power relations which shape life, the body, the self. Religious beliefs, ceremonies and rituals enact those relations of power and maintain a system of control through the mechanism of pastoral authority. Religion is constituted as a political force which brings people under a certain system of control. In Foucault’s work, the ‘spiritual’, like the ‘sexual’, does not exist apart from the ‘political structures, requirements, laws, and regulations that have a primary importance for it.’ (Carrette, 1999: 136)

Indeed, during the first Republic (IV Fanfani’s Government, 21 May 1962), due to the ideological shift to the left, introduced by the DC-PSI alliance in the period of the Italian economic growth called ‘economic miracle, producers Franco Cristaldi, Dino De Laurentis, Angelo Rizzoli, Goffredo Lombardo and Carlo Ponti began financing films, which had a good chance of entering the world market (Nowell-Smith 2008).

The new productions arranged international casts and presented less politically committed plots by screening stories of love and lust, jealousy and ‘delitto d’onore’, mafia and murder, political intrigues, and anarchy and revolution from a perspective which would also be of interest to an international audience. As a reaction, the Vatican intervened repeatedly and in regressive ways on questions of public interest related to family, education, gender identity, reform and legislation. In order to circumscribe the shift towards the left, catholic activists resorted to different measures, exploiting the proximity to voters in the parish churches and related agencies.

It is worth recalling the ground-breaking effects of the ’68 revolution over matters of censorship. By ’68, the world had gone through a complete turmoil, due to the action of utopian activist movements, which asked for more direct and transparent forms of democracy and at the same time aimed to subvert the international centres of power. In the utopian political climate that followed, which fed the social revolt of the students’ protest, the inherent violence of the western alleged ‘democracies’ had finally become visible (Bertelli, 2001: 184).

Due to the new climate, cinema artists censored under decrees that sheltered the church’s status

became ‘infamously’ reputable in the 1970s thanks to Catholic censorship.<sup>144</sup> However, when the urge for civil reforms became more important than religious orthodoxy, the Vatican had no other choice but to relent its controlling action. Catholic critics, officials, and scholars, in this respect, showed less obstructive attitudes towards civil issues, introducing cultural and legislative changes that they would otherwise not approve of.<sup>145</sup>

The following year, 1969, the Vatican intervened through the Catholic newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* to request that Jane Birkin's song, *Je t'aime, moi non plus*, be censored. With today's wisdom, it seems a rather trivial undertaking for an institution as spiritual as the Holy See. Extensively censored playwright, Dario Fo, and his co-author and wife, Franca Rame, staged with great success *Mistero Buffo (Comic Mysteries)*, ‘lampooning the Catholic Church's dogma.’ (Chales and Sponza, 20001: 331).

Most importantly, from 1968 onwards, throughout the Republic's political turmoil the participation of cinema viewers to self-reflexive cultural phenomena allowed Italian cinema artists to adopt a fresh anthropological perspective, offering new insight into the sacred in all its cultural and folk manifestations. Following Visconti's example in *Il Gattopardo* (1963), Bertolucci's *Novecento* (1976),<sup>146</sup> and Olmi's *L'albero degli zoccoli* (1978) proved the subversive potentials of post-Catholic critique.

From the late 1970s onwards, public debate regarding the interference of the Vatican in Italian society and politics intensified. In fact, the Divorce Referendum outcomes, in May 1974, proved that the Vatican's regressive attitude, in the long term, had jeopardised its spiritual ascendancy over the population. The general attitude of the Catholic audience became one of

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144 The list of movies which have been banned by the church censors for containing indecency scenes allegedly offensive of the family decorum is long and varied and ranges from the quoted Antonioni's 1961 *La notte* and Godard's 1961 *La donna è donna*, up to Monicelli's 1965 *Casanova*, Antonioni's 1967 *Blow-up*, Pasolini's 1972 *I racconti di Canterbury* and 1974 *I fiori delle Mille e una Notte*, and Bertolucci's 1972 *Ultimo Tanto a Parigi*.

145 In 1966, the novelist Milena Milani and her publisher were condemned to six months imprisonment for the publication of *La ragazza di nome Giulio (The Girl whose Name is Giulio)* (March). Actress Gina Lollobrigida and film director Mauro Bolognini were sent to jail for ‘obscenity and indecency’ for the film *Le bambole (The dolls)* and then suspended from their pending convictions. USA poet Allen Ginsberg was arrested for reading ‘obscene poetry’ at the Spoleto Festival (July). Antonioni's *Blow-up*, winner of the ‘Palma d'Oro at the Cannes Festival, was impounded on grounds of obscenity (Oct.).’

146 A former assistant to director with Pasolini, Bertolucci intends cinema as a way to construct counter-discourse to address political issues (Before the revolution, 1964; Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man, 1981), and display the cultural obsessions of the bourgeoisie), but also on religious diversity (*The Last Emperor*, 1984, *Little Buddha*, 1993; *Besieged*, 1998; *The Dreamers*, 2003).

deep ambivalence, requiring to be at the same time ‘well disposed towards the educational role of audio-visual media contents in public education, and opposed to their potentially offensive influence.

In certain historical periods and socio-cultural circumstances, an author’s bad reputation may hugely penalise his or her artistic merits. This was certainly the case for Pasolini who among the greatest film directors of Christianity, with Zeffirelli and Scorsese, did not go smoothly with the Church of his time, not only for having allowed himself artistic license on the themes of the Sacred scriptures, brought provocatively on the cinema’s profane screen, but also for his aversion to the temporal power of the Popes (like Fellini, with his fiction-film, *Roma*). Ill-famed, highly controversial, eclectic and experimentalist, Pasolini’s films certainly stood as instances of reprimanding from the point of view of the Catholic censors. In 1963, Pasolini’s short film *La ricotta*, staging Christ’s deposition, introduced his counter-discourse on the relationship between religion and cinema and presented it as subjected to the laws of the culture industry. He was charged with ‘vilification of the state religion’ and condemned to four months imprisonment.

The sentence was suspended for an amnesty, and later quashed on appeal. Pasolini soon became well aware of his persecution, as becomes clear in his book *Persecuzione. Poesia in forma di rosa* (1964). As I will go on to explain, Pasolini in his last film *Salò* took his ultimate and fatal revenge against the church whereby he put a high priest among the members of the infamous Nazi-fascist oligarchy, whose crimes he was going to screen in his most condemned film. During his life, Pasolini underwent legal prosecution for approximately 70 different charges. He was trialled innumerable times for corruption and public indecency.<sup>147</sup> He appeared no fewer than eighty times in various Court tribunals as an alleged sexual offender in trials involving child abuse and exploitation of prostitution.

Spectators of Catholic background or those linked to the DC Party, perceived Pasolini’s films as extremely distasteful and morally offensive. As I have mentioned, a four-month criminal

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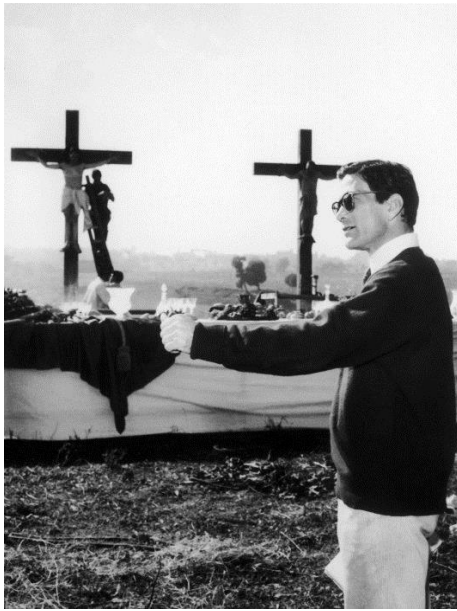
147 O’Rourke, Stephen R. A. G. M Duncan, *Glossary of legal terms*, 4th ed. Edinburgh: Thomson W. Green, 2004; ‘Obscenity’, in legal terms, applies to anything offensive to morals. Often it is paired up with ‘pornography’, even if pornography refers to generally ‘erotic’ contents. Although obscenity always implies pornography, not all pornographic materials with sexually explicit contents can be judged as obscene. Many are the films charged of obscenity under the Italian legislation and trialled for threatening to corrupt the public morals. In cinema censorship, explicit sex and obscenity, violence, instigation to suicide or terrorism, individual judges can make up their own mind as what is to be forbidden nationwide.

conviction was inflicted on Pasolini for blasphemy and ‘vilification of state religion’ for *La Ricotta* (1963). The Catholic audience, putting forward denunciations against the film’s offensive contents, rarely failed to obtain from the board the imposition of banning and restrictions.<sup>148</sup>

In the following trial appeal, which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1967 (and was registered on 19/5/1967), Pasolini was absolved from all charges and the amnesty conceded. The Magistrate stated that the crime, ‘Vilification of state religion’, did not subsist. ‘The subject of the incrimination is not the plot, but the musical background, consisting of modern dance (twist and cha-cha-cha); the performance (Christ’s laugh in response to the Virgin Mary’s lament; the striptease performed by Magdalene, while the crucifix leaps rhythmically on the cross); the offensive dialogue (cries shouting ‘Cornuto!’ at the Virgin Mary and all the saints and ‘Via i crocifissi’, repeated several times even by a barking dog’) (*Sentenza della Corte di Cassazione*, 24/2/1967). Elements considered sacrilegious and/or culturally problematic were cut and/or modified, such as 1. Pasolini’s opening caption, 2. The phrase marked by the director’s voiceover, ‘Via il crocifisso!’ repeated by a series of characters on the set, 3. Orson Welles’ final exclamation ‘dying was his own way of acting the revolution.’ Other deleted scenes which permitted the circulation of the film included one where Stracci appeared to have an orgasm while bound to the cross, and another, in Fellini’s style, where the young people on the set engaged in suggestively erotic dances during a pause of the Deposition reconstruction scene

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148 Sentenza n. 328 - Registro Generale n. 22775/64, Repubblica Italiana. La Corte Suprema di Cassazione, Sezione 3 Penale: Baccigalupi Mario - Presidente, Muscolo Domenico, Leogotti Giovanni, Odorisio Casimiro, Pernigotti Pio, De Micheli Vincenzo, Martinelli Carlo - Consiglieri ha pronunciato la seguente Sentenza: ‘Sul ricorso proposto dal P.M. contro Pasolini Pier Paolo avverso la sentenza 6/5/1964 della Corte di Appello di Roma che, riformando quella del 7/3/1963 del Tribunale di Roma, assolveva Pasolini Pier Paolo dall’imputazione di vilipendio alla Religione dello Stato, perché il fatto non costituisce reato. Visti gli atti, la sentenza pronunciata ed il ricorso; Udita in pubblica udienza la relazione fatta dal Consigliere Giovanni Leone. Udito il Pubblico Ministero in persona del Sostituto Procuratore Generale Dr. Vaccaro che ha concluso per annullamento senza rinvio per amnistia.’ [www.pasolini.net/processi\\_ricotta\\_sentenzacassazione.htm](http://www.pasolini.net/processi_ricotta_sentenzacassazione.htm)



In *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Il cinema in corpo* (2001), Pino Bertelli strikes a chord by stressing that those who denounce the truth, or recommend justice, as Pasolini used to do, are doomed to clash against the interests of the ruling classes (Bertelli, 20001: 302-330).<sup>149</sup> Any art form must gain knowledge of how to break itself free and create its own system of arbitrariness. Radical minds always upset the political and economic establishment, and thus instigate their own suppression. As a true dissident artist, Pasolini never gave up his battle against his critics' narrow-mindedness.

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149 Bertelli has noted that cinema has been linked to a society of 'shameful signs' since its very beginning. In order to subvert the existing ethicality, experimentalist cinema had to oppose the *status quo* by means of its special expressive forms. Thus, 'form' is not opposed to 'content', but rather that which reveals its deepest meanings. Filmmakers in fact have a broader dictionary than writers do, which includes the verbal, the pictorial, the musical, and the choreographic.





***La ricotta*: The Deposition from the Cross. (Cinecittà, 1963)**

In a scene of the short film *La ricotta*, Orson Welles, voicing Pasolini's disdain, describes the typical middle-class prejudiced Italian man as a 'monster,' adding that post-fascist Italy had generated new forms of fascism with the aid of the media. Pasolini asserted in various public occasions that cinematography and television are neither democratic nor educational media,

‘but means of communications conceived and created to serve the interests of the ruling classes’.<sup>150</sup> The media industry in contemporary times, he claimed, had failed to renew the old repressive principle of education. Moreover, according to Pasolini, Capitalism has the power to increase the subordination of all discourses on education to the sole advantage of the ruling classes’ profit.<sup>151</sup> In *Salò*, he highlighted the disastrous outcomes of normative pedagogy and underlined the permanent crisis of the relationship between culture and the state.<sup>152</sup>

Between the 1960s and 1970s, Pasolini’s libertine reputation surpassed his fame as a mass culture’s pedagogue. Pasolini’s sexual libertinage and unusual public persona contributed to attract the conservative public opinion-makers’ criticism. His lifestyle altogether offered too easy an excuse for police inspection and governmental interventions over what was seen as a creative awkwardness. Strong disapproval came prominently from the Italian Catholic strata of society, for which the moral law had still to be dictated by the Church of Rome. However, censorship against Pasolini’s libertinage was often a cover up for the Catholic world’s

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150 In a TV interview with Enzo Biagi, at the Studios of the RAI, in Rome, on the matter of the artist’s freedom of speech, Pasolini stated: ‘Television is a mass media thus it is able to alienate the audience, turning culture into commodity’ (‘La televisione è un medium di massa. E il medium di massa non può che mercificarci ed alienarci.’). When Biagi prompted him that in fact he was freely speaking within a RAI program (RAI is the Italian state’s television), Pasolini replied: ‘No, it is not true: I cannot say everything I want. I could not even if I wanted, because I would be accused of some form of vilification or the other by one of the many codes of the Italian fascist state. In fact, I cannot say everything. And then, apart from that, objectively, in front the naivety of some listeners, I myself would not say these things. And, therefore, I am self-censored. Other than that, it is to do with the nature of the medium itself: whenever viewers listen to what we have to say in a TV program, they experience subordination, which is terribly undemocratic. [...] It is the spirit of television the channel through which the spirit of the new power manifests itself. It is a *mass medium* that enslaves the viewers masses to enslave them, *id est* to impose on them lightness and superficiality, ignorance, and vanity, as models of a compulsory human condition’ (Biagi and Pasolini, ‘Televisione e inganno’, Series *Terza B: facciamo l’appello – ‘Pasolini’*, RAI Archive 1971). See also P.P. Pasolini, *Opinioni sulla Censura* (1960).

151 ‘The harm that contemporary mass culture inflicts upon society, Pasolini argues in *Chaos*, is making individuals accustomed to political abuse, thus silently acquiescent with the irrevocable process of cultural decline. Pasolini’s films aimed at making that ‘decline’ unordinary and visible in the form of intolerable scandal. He saw in the circulation of commodities (products, culture, policies, ideas, projects, myths, and dreams), the ‘religion of terror’ and the ‘end of any true wonder’ (Pasolini 1975: 301).

152 Here Pasolini conveys a similar concept as Foucault in the 1980 interview with Michael Bess ‘I’m not forcing you at all and I’m leaving you completely free – that is when I begin to exercise power. It’s clear that power should not be defined as a constraining force of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon. Therefore, power is not always repressive. It can take a certain number of forms. And it is possible to have relations of power that are open.’ (Foucault and Bess, 1988: 2)

intolerance against homosexuality (Siciliano, 1978: 140-146).<sup>153</sup> Pasolini's 1960 film, *Accattone*, bringing to the screens the same poor world of the Roman 'borgate' which he had illustrated in his scandalous novel *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), was charged with indecency, and was subjected to immediate censorial prosecution. The Catholic censors especially, did very little to acknowledge the cultural and social value of Pasolini's critique of society and religion. Until his assassination on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1975, Pasolini remained a chief target of the Italian Board of Film Censorship and its Catholic-inspired connected bureaucrats. Whenever he dealt with his traditional topics – juvenile delinquency in the forms of hooliganism, sexual promiscuity, prostitution and thievery, or irresponsible adult behaviour involving marital adultery or homosexuality – the catholic crusaders joined forces to obtain the banning of Italy's most corruptive artist, and thus enlisted his titles in the 'Index of Prohibited Films'.

As I have stressed, the Catholic establishment's opposition to Pasolini's filmmaking remained strong and inflexible. Allegedly concerned with the 'welfare of young people' and the 'morality of citizens', the Vatican representatives in the cinema censorship boards used restrictive verdicts to ensure Pasolini's films would not obtain a *Nihil Obstat*, but rather a clear 'X' rate ('vietato ai minori di 18 anni') as happened for the films 'Trilogy of Life' – *Il Decameron* (1971), *I racconti di Canterbury* (1972) and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (1974), allegorising artistic freedom as 'sexual exuberance'<sup>154</sup> (Pasolini, 1975: 11-13). In another interview, published in *Lettere luterane. Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, Pasolini ascribed to the clerical authorities' obsessive control over the individuals, as well to those exercised by the state and the television people's loss of reality and contact with the 'self', affecting all social strata<sup>155</sup> (Pasolini, 1976: 544).

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153 Pasolini was charged with the crime of 'corruzione di minorenni e atti osceni in luogo pubblico' ('corruption of minors and public display of obscenity') on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1949. As a consequence, he was expelled from the Communist Party and removed from his position as teacher at a law secondary state school in Valvasone. He was cleared of all charges due to lack of evidence.

154 In the 1969 interview with Jean DufLOT, *Il sogno del centauro*, Pasolini placed on a cultural level his interest in eroticism and the body: 'For me eroticism is culture, the spirit's endless rituals'. 'Per me, l'erotismo è soprattutto cultura, e quindi rituale dello spirito. Si può dimostrare scientificamente, con Saussure e Morris, che sul piano semiologico esiste un linguaggio del sesso. [...] Perché l'eros racchiude una potenza che non ha facoltà di autosoddisfarsi' (DufLOT 1983)

155 From an interview with Tommaso Anzoino: 'People have understood with some delay that they have lost contact with the 'body'. Until a few years ago, when I was planning the *Decameron* and the following *Trilogia della vita*, the folk people were still in control of their physical reality and in touch with the related cultural models, which informed the body. For a filmmaker like me, who is aware of the loss of reality, except of the physical ones, it was only fair to identify narratives of the body with the physical reality of the folk people'. (Pasolini and Anzoino, 1970: 261)

Pasolini used to claim in TV and magazine interviews that the media embodies messages coming straight from the political, religious, and economic centres of those global powers whose aim is to expand their control over the masses. He repeatedly stressed, in his articles and films, the many ways in which the media are manoeuvred by capitalist power-lobbies, exploiting them to manipulate the audience's response and instil self-censorship. Pasolini's idiosyncratic attitude against cultural products broadcasted by the media and subjected to the control of the 'garante della legalità' (which may be equivalent to the 'Defence of the Principle of Legality', in the British Legislation), was shared by the majority of leftist Italian intellectuals. Pasolini claimed that citizens are censored in every aspect of their life, in the contemporary world: 'All that which comes from the above is stronger than what may ever come from below. [...] There is nothing which I consider more ferocious than the very banal television'.<sup>156</sup>

As argued by John Foot's study of the relationship between the media and Italian society in post-war years, cinema along with state TV, transmitting from 1954 onwards, helped spread consumerist values at the expense of people, religious and labour cultures (Foot, 2001: 29). As Foucault also later argued in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Pasolini believed that the media had an intrinsic manipulative weight on the popular masses. In fact, from post-war Italy onwards, despite being under a democratic regime, people suffered the dehumanising influence of the process of homologation created by consumerism and consolidated by the mass industry. According to Pasolini, the fascist regime did not attain a similar process of homologation even by means of its pervasive and powerful propaganda machinery.<sup>157</sup>

Pasolini's public polemics as 'flagless intellectual' ('intellettuale senza bandiere') against the church and the *status quo* were received with great intolerance. Pasolini's plan to produce a film on the life of Saint Paul ('the apostle/prophet, founder of the powerful church, hateful, energetic, self-confident, and fanatical') that intended to go unambiguously against the Vatican was boycotted and the film never accomplished. Pasolini's treatment of the life of St Paul aimed to slap the Catholic Church in the face as a mere secular institution of power. In this screenplay, he wished to show how faith and dogma are preserved by means of fear, ignorance,

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<sup>156</sup> Statement released during the cited interview with Enzo Biagi: 'Non considero nulla di più feroce della banalissima televisione'.

<sup>157</sup> In response to Pasolini's fight against the dominion of consumer capitalism by means of visually shocking forms of sexual 'vitalism', censorship intensified because of the proliferation of Pasolini's imitators, producing soft-porno commercial remakes of *Il Decameron*, *I racconti di Canterbury*, and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*. (Moscati 2005).

and oppression. Having abandoned his plan to direct the film on the life of St Paul, Pasolini started a new script, which had to follow at completion of *Salò*. It consisted of around seventy pages, with the potentially highly offensive title *Porno-Teo-Kolossal* addressing the theme of the decline of all ideologies, and, at last, of faith, in a technocratic apocalyptic future.<sup>158</sup>

Between 1949 and 1975, the year of his assassination, Pasolini dealt almost daily with the magistrates and the police.<sup>159</sup> From 1949 to the year of his death, in 1976 – and even when dead, in 1977, a year after his assassination – Pasolini underwent thirty-three criminal trials in total (Betti 1977).

Pasolini was trialled in 1949 and 1951, first for the so called ‘Casarsa scandal’ involving sexual harassment of three minors (‘corruzione di minorenni’), who denounced him for obscenity, then for being caught by the police for driving under the influence of alcohol. In 1955, Pasolini was struck for the first time by censorship for his novel *Ragazzi di vita*, because of the intervention of a Milan magistrate. Pasolini was accused of having accomplished offensive representations of minors engaging in sexually explicit conduct. A second censorship struck Pasolini on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1960, for the publication of his novel, *Una vita violenta*. The novel stirred scandal among the members of the ‘Azione Cattolica’, the Association of Italian Catholics who in May 1960 pressed charges against Pasolini (Betti 1977). The Milan magistrate commissioned Alessandro Cutolo to write a critical-aesthetical review of the book in order to incriminate its content. Cutolo, discussing Pasolini’s style noted:

‘The narrative makes a very crude offensive use of language [...] the representation of vice is desolate, sinning gives no joy, sinners do not arouse in the reader any desire to imitate them. In this book there is nothing titillating...In my opinion, although this is not a novel that can be

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158 The film’s themes were organised around an imaginary journey through three important big cities, Numazia (Paris), Gomorra (Milan) and Sodom (Rome), ending in a mysterious utopian land, namely, ‘il Paese dell’Innocenza’ (‘the Country of Innocence’), in the Indian continent, Ur. The film’s protagonists, to be interpreted by Pasolini’s main actor and lover, Ninetto Davoli, and the Neapolitan actor and playwright, Eduardo De Filippo, follow the journey of a comet, which passes over three European capitalist and neurotic metropolis (Pasolini 1975: 307).

159 In November 1975, Pasolini was assassinated near Ostia beach. Bertelli claims: ‘When Pasolini was murdered on the border of an invisible suburb – as one of the many characters who he had described / filmed in his movies –. Many believed that the *Agnus Dei* had been killed, others that he had died just a degenerate thug. [...] In spite of his professional persecutors (whether dressed in cassock or in double-breasted suit, it makes no difference!). Pier Paolo Pasolini remains a landmark of culture and politics and his oeuvre keeps on participating, fighting, and taking the side of the oppressed of the world. Pier Paolo Pasolini is politics alive, alive because of the poetry of his utopian / heretical thought.’ (Bertelli)

freely left around in a family house, its content is not such to justify a legal action against its author (14.3.1960).’ (108).

The criminal law persecuted him in his functions as teacher and filmmaker, finally limiting his freedom of speech and prohibiting the public display of his cinematographic products, as they were believed to advocate moral corruption and sexual promiscuity. Pasolini spent much of his career and life in courts attempting to defend his ideas against criminal charges.<sup>160</sup> *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975) is Pasolini’s most heavily impeached film, produced 6 years after *Porcile* (1969), a film intended to show the evil consequences on individuals of disintegrating power and family relationships, and which stirred much public outrage.

*Salò*, one of the most controversial plots that Pasolini ever conceived, was premiered in the Milan cinema theatre ‘Majestic’ on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, a month and half after Pasolini’s assassination. Three weeks after its premier, the Milan ‘Procuratore della Repubblica’ confiscated *Salò* and established a trial against the producer, Alfredo Bini. Dis-sequestered, trialled again, banned and released several times up until the eighties, *Salò* was finally released and recognised artistic dignity as a ‘work of art and historical document of rare ethical value’ by the Milan ‘Corte D’Appello’ (Court of Appeal) in 1991.

Prosecutions of Pasolini now involved his roles as scriptwriter, novelist, and filmmaker. One could surmise that the absence of a law criminalising homosexuality in Italy, prompted moralists to find transverse modes of ostracism against Pasolini as the author of political and sexual scandals, both in literature and in the national cinema. In the same year of its production and release (16<sup>th</sup> November 1960), the film *La giornata balorda*, directed by Mauro Bolognini, and co-written by Alberto Moravia and Pasolini, was charged for obscenity and banned by the Judge Advocate General, Pietro Trombi, who claimed: ‘We will keep persecuting this kind of film in order to discourage producers to make films that go against public decency.’<sup>161</sup>

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160 Pasolini’s best friend and favoured actress, Laura Betti has edited a volume *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione e morte*, in which she makes a detailed list of all the thirty-three trials, enlisting for each trial their motivations, dates and places (Betti 1977). Laura Betti’s volume *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione e morte* includes a section (Pietro Mastroianni ed.) enlisting the trials that took place against Pasolini. The list includes the trials and investigations against his suspected killer, Giuseppe Pelosi, as well as those against Pasolini’s last film, *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, confiscated and banned by the First Censorship Committee on 9th November 1975, seven days after Pasolini’s death (On 19th February 1976, the producer of *Salò*, Grimaldi, was also trialled for corruption of minors and screening of obscenity in public cinemas. Grimaldi was absolved in Milan in 17th February 1977 but the film maintained the banning).

161 ‘Noi continueremo a perseguire questo genere di film per scoraggiare i produttori dal mettere in lavorazione pellicole che offendono il comune senso del pudore.’ (Betti 1977: 107-108)

Thereafter, laws on decency have been invoked in several other circumstances. In 1962, for instance three of Pasolini's films, *Accattone* (24.2.1962), *Mamma Roma* (31.8.62), and *La ricotta* (4.10.1962), were reported to the Rome and Venice legal authorities.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1963, the short film *La ricotta*, included in Bini's *RoGoPaG*, was sequestered for alleged 'vilification of state religion'. Pasolini vehemently defended the edifying intention behind his plot (Del Re 1962). However, a 'processo per direttissima' ('instant trial') struck Pasolini: after a number of appeals and hearings, *La ricotta* was banned on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1967. However, the film was released a year later on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 1968, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1968, Pasolini himself was cleared of all charges (Betti, 1977: 154).

As Pasolini's favourite actress and closest female friend, Laura Betti, argues in her book *Pasolini: cronaca giudiziaria, persecuzione e morte* (1977), Pasolini's films were subjected to relentless censorship procedures despite their credited artistic value. One of its strongest opponents was PM, Di Gennaro, who authored *Contro Pier Paolo Pasolini* (1963). The legal persecution intensified through the years, despite the fact that *Mamma Roma* expressed an idealistic idea of cinema as poetic artwork, in which the crudest Neorealist representations of life encounter the language of poetry. A series of attacks, denunciations, confiscations, trials and bans followed thereafter against the films *Teorema* (13.9.1968), *Porcile* (27.4.70), *Decameron* (26.8.71), *I racconti di Canterbury* (7.10.72), *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (27.6.74).

#### ***a. La ricotta (1963). The Italian Cinema, the sacred and the Italian Working Class***

In analysing the legal procedures connected to 'offence of religion', 'indecenty' and 'blasphemy', prompting state censorship's interventions in defence of the Catholic' community's religious sentiment and dignity, hereafter I recall some of the reasons and facts, which instigated clerical reprimand against Pasolini's short *La ricotta* (1962), included in the collage-film produced by Alfredo Bini, *Ro.Go.Pa.G.*

Gramsci's theory of the role of intellectuals in the cultural emancipation of the population, or adversely in their domination is of salience to the understanding of Pasolini's representations of class division in *La ricotta*. This is true especially because of the film's focus on high and popular culture as irreconcilable dichotomies. They are in fact models of class injustice and speak for the hypocritical pedagogical interactions of the media world's influential intellectuals

(the militant student as Christ, the film director, and the journalist) with the film's uneducated 'comparsa' (extras) who belong to Rome's lower classes. The hegemonic supremacy of the intellectuals on the set is emphasised to illustrate the stereotypes, which persist in the cinema world as in the liberal society.

At structural and ideological levels, Pasolini's film highlights the phenomenon of assimilation and readjustment of the symbolic-religious ethics in the world of cinema, with a popularisation process, which acts in the interests of the Capital, but somewhat saves the worth of the religious. The storyline narrates the misadventures of Stracci, a poor character on the set of Cinecittà Cinema Studios, who is taking part in a film production, which reconstructs the Deposition of Christ. He must obey to the film's fictional director, Orson Welles, who interprets the role of Pasolini according to the technique of *mise-en-abyme*. Stracci plays the secondary role of the Good Thief and is nailed to the cross next to a long-haired, attractive Christ, suggestive of a young political protester. In the film, the main sacred symbol of Christianity, the cross, has a central-stage position and remains within its symbolic connotation in the two Technicolor *tableaux vivants*, recreated from the classic paintings of Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino. What changes is the community of people who refer to it in the black and white sequences, which refer to the new economic and social transformations emerged in the critical decades after the end of the Second World War.

Pasolini conveys in this way an image of the 'grammar of high culture' which reproduce class imbalance, with the individuals in the pictorial/filmic order reminding of a social ladder, in which hungry Stracci is only a slave figure, doomed to succumb to his poor economic conditions. Stracci's complete neediness makes him almost happy of his meagre daily profit at Cinecittà, consisting in a free pack-lunch, as he to some extent feels to be part of the much celebrated Italian cinema industry.

Stracci is presented also as a clown figure, an involuntary entertainer, with the 'innate' humour of the desperate man. Stracci's death on the cross for indigestion occurs in an atmosphere of highbrow indignation at his quasi-animal death-instinct: 'Povero Stracci, aveva bisogno di morire per dimostrare che anche lui era vivo!' (*La ricotta*. final scene: the filmmaker's voice over) However, Stracci's psychological condition is without guilt, so it is his 'spontaneous consent' to being controlled, having accepted passively, in Gramscian terms, the world-view of the dominant groups. The film's ideological core suggests that Stracci is willing to serve Cinecittà's masters not so much for an innate disposition to slavery, but because of the poverty



and ignorance in which people like him are kept. However, he is not capable of identifying by himself how cinema continues disseminating oppressive class stereotypes and is prompted to reflect on this issue by a fellow walk-on, the student playing the role of Christ in the *tableaux vivants*.

Pasolini shows that elitist attitudes govern the whole production processes at Cinecittà. Moreover, to underline the prejudice of the working class's cultural inferiority in media representations, Pasolini employs comedy to stress the existence of such class-bound stereotypes throughout the history of Italian high culture's visual arts. In fact, the film's fictional director, Orson Welles, who poses as if he were progressive and liberal, proves only to be able to perpetuate class stereotypes. The filmmaker does nothing politically correct on the film set to disturb the hegemonic forces which he contributes to as an intellectual aligned with power. Pasolini tells viewers that the media's self-celebrating hedonistic world makes only superficial concessions to the lower classes and maintain hegemony by replicating its order and privilege (as in the film's two *tableaux vivants*).



*La ricotta*

I argue that through *La ricotta*'s allegorical images and sequences, Pasolini made use of

Gramsci's theory of hegemony to show his audience the motivations and ethos behind class-inequality. He also pointed the finger at the inadequacy of media intellectuals at fostering 'liberal' reforms. In spite of well-meant plots, Pasolini suggests, the hegemony of the financial lobbies over cinema production continues to subjugate the subordinated classes. Mixing Marxism and Christian critique, Pasolini brought on the screens the processes of secularisation that took place in the second half of the twentieth century. In the film, the cross still belongs to the symbolic-religious structures and tenets of Christianity, and therefore retains its primitive semantic meaning. However, its function is misplaced and abused in the secular context of Cinecittà studios. The presence of the cross on the set therefore, produces contradiction. The subject somehow anticipated the theories regarding the democratisation (and related decline) of the prestige of elitist theology in modern societies. <sup>162</sup>.



*La ricotta*: Jesus' crown of thorns. (Cinecittà, 1963)

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162 Talking about the process of democratisation of the Christian bible's heritage and culture, George Aichele, in *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible*, while underscoring some inevitable loss of aura, has noted that the phenomenon will allow the Bible to 'continue to exist as an identity cultural marker': 'The sacred and biblical events have always been an elitist object produced, consumed, transmitted, and studied by elites variously defied by religious praxis, age, gender, class, ethnicity, occupation and status. [...] democratization entails popularization; easy dissemination of information and knowledge requires the abolition of copyright restrictions together with trade secrets (Aichele, 2000:11).

From the 60s until his death in 1975, he framed the deep social crisis as determined by the new economic realities of the emerging post-industrial society. At the same time, he emphasised the emergence of intermediary forms of religiosity, determined and promoted by new forms of individualistic and subjective morality, upheld by hazy links to the official church. The film's criminal law vicissitudes can be better understood by recalling Foucault's perspective on how the Catholic doctrine manages to influence believers on certain conducts in conformity with the church teachings (Carrette 2002). Evidence of clerical censorship in fact emerges at audio-visual level in the forms of cuts and revisions imposed on the editing of the footage of Pasolini's *La ricotta*, offending the Italian censor 'religious sentiment.

The cuts and revisions determined four different versions with alterations imposed on textual segments and film footage. Scenes abolished included 1. Insults and swear words in the sacred context of the tableau vivants, 2. The actor, personifying the Christ, bursting into laughter, 3. Stracci jumping over the cross on which two women are seated during a pause, 4. Rude behaviours around the crucifixes; 5. Natalina performing a strip-tease, 6. Stracci on the cross visibly excited during Natalina's strip tease, 7. The filmmakers commanding that the crucifixes be taken away from the set, 8. the filmmakers' voice over, commenting crudely upon Stracci's death, along with various other alleged profanities.

***La ricotta*: actor Stracci is nailed to the cross. (Cinecittà, 1963)**



### ***La ricotta: Stracci dies on the cross. (Cinecittà, 1963)***

The court case involving the directors and producers of *La ricotta* caused the film to be censored and confiscated, and its director, Pasolini, sentenced to 4 months imprisonment for ‘vilification of state religion’ (Crisafulli, Art. 7 ‘Costituzione e vilipendio della religione dello Stato’, in *Archivio penale*, 1950, II.). In my previous study, *Italy on Screen* (Conference 2006), I have already discussed the verdict, ‘contempt of the Catholic religion’, (1962 censorship case: 39455 - 08.02.1963) as the unequivocal outcome of the joint action of government censorship and Church censorship.

#### *7.4 Censorship from the 1970s ‘Anni di piombo’ through the 1980’s ‘religious destitution’*

Up to this point in the discussion, I have demonstrated how cinema of dissent in Italy resulted from a complex interplay of hegemonic struggles. Indeed, political confrontation over film censorship in Italy has always implied a clash between the cultural and ethical values of the left-wing party and the conservatives.<sup>163</sup> It expressed objection towards the *status quo* and, for this reason, was repeatedly placed under the mallet of censorship. It is worth stressing that most radical attacks to the nation in the 1970s should be seen as reactions to the growing awareness of the state's connections with mafia organizations (Vogel, 1974: 4).

Italian secularist filmmakers engaged in social concern, continuously subjected to the censors’ repressive control, in the 1970s took up as never before the responsibility of producing films of dissent. As after the war, cinema once again became an vehicle of critique and denunciation, addressing cultural, political, civil, and legislative questions. From the mid 1960s onwards, terrorist acts as tragic as the Piazza Fontana mass massacre in Milan on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1969, began to be carried out by both fascist and anarchist extremist groups. Political conflicts between the government's establishment and the extra-parliamentary forces in the 1970s recorded a violent outburst of terrorism also against civilians. The phenomenon, now historically defined as ‘Anni di Piombo’, intensified the state control over public demonstration and exhibitions. The year 1970 started with the RAI journalists’ strike to defend ‘freedom of representation’ against their vice-president, Italo De Feo, who had begun to indiscriminately

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<sup>163</sup> The term ‘Historic Compromise’ (compromesso storico) refers to the agreements between the DC (Italian Christian Democrats) and the PCI (Italian Communist Party), which occurred in the 1970s, because of the diplomatic manoeuvres of PC leader Enrico Berlinguer. The agreement was contested by the left wing extra-parliamentary associations ‘Lotta Continua’ and ‘Manifesto’, as well as, on the opposite front, by the Catholic activist group ‘Comunione e Liberazione’ (ex Catholic Action).

cancel TV programmes and authors. Terrorist acts reached a climax with the kidnapping and assassination of Leading Christian Democrat politician Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1978, when the state came under the direct attack of terrorists.<sup>164</sup> Following the ‘Caso Moro’ crisis, and the break-up of the DC/PCI ‘historical compromise’, PSI leader Bettino Craxi reinforced his hold on the Christian democratic/socialist coalition while carrying on his personal anti-communist campaign (Chales and Sponza, 2001: 336-337).

However, despite the increased range of political censorship actions in the ‘Anni di Piombo’, the flourishing market of Italian mass audience films established the success of Italian cinema at Hollywood level, as in the case of Sergio Leone’s ‘Spaghetti Western’, which temporarily overturned the primacy of the American film industry at box office. Without a doubt, social changes throughout the 1970s were so constant that any clerical film boycott was subjected to satire. For instance, politically committed filmmaker, Pietro Germi, who had authored the social satires *Divorzio all’italiana* (1961) and *Sedotta e abbandonata* (1964), in 1970 directed *Le castagne sono buone*, derisive of the catholic bourgeoisie’s hypocritical sense of personal and family decorum. In 1971, again, he produced the film *Alfredo, Alfredo*, mockingly portraying the standard Italian male’s vanity and psychological impotence.

In the 1970s, public decency and religious orthodoxy was still warranted by the rampant action of the ‘centre/right’ catholic extremist group, ‘Comunione e Liberazione,’ sharply boycotting the performances of progressive arts (Bianchi and Turchini 1975). In this much troubled decade, the Catholic political activists of Azione Cattolica advanced anti-communism and anti-secularism campaigns, summoning Catholic followers to parish church halls and ‘cinema theatres’ to boycott films conveying progressivism. The subtle Church censorship’s apparatus intensified the activities of its Centro Cattolico Cinematografico (CCC), applying vetoes according to a multi-coloured disk, inclusive of the categories: 1. ‘excluded to all’ (‘escluso a tutti’) 2. ‘Inadvisable for all’ (‘sconsigliato a tutti’) (Forgacs and Gundle, 2009: 222). Virtual excommunications and derogatory labelling were customary practices connected to the film reviews issued by the CCC’s Segnalazioni cinematografiche.

In *Cinema e censura in Italia* (1972), cinema critic Gambetti underlined the anachronism and anomaly of film censorship, given that censorship on theatre and the press had both been

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164 The Red Brigades’ political violence protracts up to the 1980s with the assassination in February 1986 of the former mayor of Florence, Lando Corti. In 1987, the Court of Cassation confirms insufficient evidence for the incrimination of the arrested right-wing extremists held responsible for the Piazza Fontana Massacre.

abolished.<sup>165</sup> He argued that when it comes to the abolition of cinema censorship in practical terms, the legislators' claims over its usefulness tend to multiply and hide its true preoccupation - the use of cinema as a means of political propaganda – behind moral concerns the protection of minors (Gambetti, 1972: 7). Even so, from the 1970s onwards, not all film directors and producers accepted the practice of self-censorship. Controversial films by famous Italian filmmakers gained international attention partly because of their censorial odysseys. Bertolucci's *Il conformista* (1970) and *Ultimo Tango a Parigi* (1972), Pasolini's *Decameron* (1971), Lina Wertmuller's *Mimì metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (1972) / *Amore e anarchia* (1973), Liliana Cavani's *Il portiere di notte* (1974) / *Al di là del bene e del male* (1977) represent instances of films, which made their authors famous for embarrassing the Catholic establishment and instigating clerical censorship.

In 1980, Renzo Arbore's film *Il Pap'occhio* was sequestered by Judge Donato Massimo Bartolomei, who charged both the filmmaker and the script writer with 'vilification of religion' and satire against God, adding to the court's pronouncement that the film had intended to foster propaganda of atheism. The film was intertextual at heart. It was composed of extensive quotations from Gramsci, Marx, Engels, Fellini, Zeffirelli, Chaplin, Dante, and Battisti, to fashion a satirical and demystifying hotchpotch of voices and perspectives, matching Marxism to Christianity, and Fascism to Catholicism.

Following the civil and cultural revolutions in the 1970s (divorce and abortion acts, right to vote to 18 years old citizens, equal rights to other than heterosexual individuals, conscientious objection, discussion of decriminalisation of drug use, political radicalism and popular referendums, abolition of state-run mental health hospitals, etc.), Italy advanced toward the 1980s on steady reformist grounds. As a result, the Vatican's censors steadily lost their grasp on the films at the time when filmmakers started addressing the changing place of religion in a progressively amoral society. Italian and foreign films, in the meantime, gradually entered people's homes through the national TV channels (RAI). In fact, the rapid success of commercial television, and the Reform for TV Broadcasting in 1975, allowed media entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi to climb the nation's financial ladder with the creation of the Fininvest commercial domain, challenging the monopoly of the RAI in the fields of film and TV production.

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<sup>165</sup> Censorship for theatre and opera was abolished in 1962. It was maintained only for cinema and variety shows.

Despite these circumstances, the Vatican kept attempting to exercise pressure on the official boards of film censorship, regardless of the fact that Craxi's centre-left political coalition ('governo di centro-sinistra') was planning the destitution of the Catholic Church from the Italian Constitution. In the 1980s, the censorship appeals brought in front of the Magistrates by Catholic applicants against foreign films such as Scorsese's *The last temptation of Christ*, and Godard's *Je vous salue Marie!*, allegedly offensive of the Catholic religion, began to be systematically rejected as anti-constitutional and anti-social.<sup>166</sup> The court sentences become progressively clearer in recognising cinema as an art form in its own right for the expression of the author's free-opinion, allowing discussion to open up over all matters of public debates, religion not excluded.

While politically grounded terrorist violence was going on, a new decree law was approved to offer reduced detentions to the terrorists who chose to collaborate with the Justice. The historical phase between 1980 and 1985, under Craxi's rampant leadership, was marked by the P2 Masonic Lodge scandal, revealing close connections between Sicilian mafia, the Lodge P2's subversive organisation and the secret services, whose plan was to destabilize the *status quo*. In June 1982, Roberto Calvi, chief executive of the Catholic-funded Banco Ambrosiano, was found hanged under the Blackfriars Bridge, in London. His assassination concluded the biggest scandal that ever involved the Catholic Church. It was no surprise that the 1984 revision of the 1929 Lateran Pacts was welcomed with some relief by the leftist and secular side of the Italian population (Stella 1989).

It is important to note that in the 1980s, Berlusconi's Fininvest and its private TV channels, Rete 4 and Canale 5, acquired the right to broadcast political propaganda, laying the ground for Berlusconi's own future electoral success in the 1994 political elections.<sup>167</sup> Berlusconi's growing TV Empire and his exclusive attention to profit pushed the cinema industry into a crisis to the point that filmmakers started applying to themselves the criteria of self-censorship to facilitate the acquisition and distribution of their products by the competing public and private TV

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166 In April 1985, the Pope deplored Godard's *Je vous salue Marie*, for being blasphemous. The film shows a pregnant high-school girl compared to the Virgin Mary. Godard aimed at suggesting that scientific education does not do much to help eliminate Catholic misogynist mentality, in civil society. The following year, 1986, the Parliament conducted a heated debate on the prospect of eliminating the teaching of the Catholic religion in public school.

167 Berlusconi's political success found support in his alliance with Umberto Bossi's 'Lega Nord' and the neo-fascist party, MSI, bringing the government towards the creation of the coalition named 'Polo della Libertà'.

channels (Sallustro, 2007: 103). Italian filmmakers vastly represented such deep political and cultural crisis. Indeed, the first generation of committed film directors (Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti, Mario Monicelli) and the second generation (Bernardo Bertolucci, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Ermanno Olmi, the Taviani brothers, Giuliano Montaldo, Ettore Scola, and Elio Petri) opened the way to a third wave of radical filmmaking in the 1980s. The third wave was captained by Carlo Verdone, Pupi Avati, Roberto Benigni, Valentino Orsini, Salvatore Piscicelli, Marco Tullio Giordana, Gabriele Salvatore, Cristina Comencini, Francesca Archibugi, Gianni Amelio, Giuseppe Tornatore, who have maintained a critical line against the *status quo*, comprising the state and church's puzzling linkage.

In 'The Ambiguities of the Catholic Church', included in the volume *Italy and its Discontents. 1980-2001*, Paul Ginsborg has claimed that in the 'mobile sands of cultural change, the Catholic Church in the 1980s and 1990s communicated messages which, to the outside eye, seemed deeply contradictory' (Ginsborg, 2001: 129).<sup>168</sup> Likewise, in *I peccati del Vaticano*, Claudio Rendina has argued: 'In two thousand years, the Catholic Church has done her best to fight vice, punishing those accused of failing to adhere to Christian morals. But those religious men, who continue to condemn and make judgements, are they themselves blameless?' (Rendina, 2009: *Preface*). The church of today, these authors claims, can no longer censor others, without expecting to be subjected to counter-censorship attacks.

This was the case during 'the long and influential pontificate of Karol Wojtyla', when the Italian conference of Bishops, attempting to keep believers under its pastoral care, managed to reinforce the church doctrinal prestige (Tettamanzi and Del Rio, 1993: 162-175).

Pope John Paul II's document *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) asserted that the family and the church are the ideal place where individuals first learn how to respect social values and comply with their social duties against the evils of individualism, consumerism, and materialism. John Paul II's restated the church's traditional opposition to gender diversity and the alleged 'irregular' families', created by divorced or orthodox laicity (Pope John Paul II, 1994: 45).<sup>169</sup>

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168 For a better understanding of the politics and economic developments of Italian society and culture during each of the above periods, see also Nick Carter, *Modern Italy in Historical Perspective*, London: A&C Black, 2010.

169 For a commentary of *Familiaris Consortio*, see M. Toso, 'Famiglia, lavoro e societa nell'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa', Roma: LAS, 1994. See especially, Hogan, Richard M. and John M. LeVoir. *Covenant of Love, Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in the Modern World*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985. For the decline of Catholicism see Massimo Borghesi, 'La fine del mondo cattolico (cattolici e secolarizzazione)', in *Il Sabato*, 3.12.1988, N. 49



Ginsborg stresses how, being fully aware that the secularisation process was imposing on contemporary society ‘new trends and life styles deeply alien to the Christianity spirit and mentality’, ‘John Paul II turned his back firmly on any interpretation of John XXIII’s ecumenical pronouncements in the Second Vatican Council, as an invitation to liberalise and democratise the church’ (Ginsborg, 1990: 48-49).

The first half of the 1990s was marked by internal conflicts within the clergy and the ecclesiastic authorities. The tension reached the point of making priests in the Milan dioceses offer confessional shelter to private repentance over public justice to those involved in the ‘Mani pulite’ trial, despite Cardinal Martini suggesting that the church had the duty to collaborate with the Magistrates, before offering forgiveness to petitioners of moral and religious repentance. The small clergy was in fact acting within the continuum of the Italian culture’s traditional identity, which for centuries had planted the seed of the phenomenon of familism. In these situations, with the clergy boycotting films ‘in good faith’, the Magistrates’ investigations were helplessly standing in front of the forced change imposed over the civil society by the rather decadent modernity of Berlusconi’s media. Journalist Pino Nicotri offered evidence of such situations by taking with him a tape recorder in the confessional and pretending to be a repentant Catholic politician so to pose the dilemma to the confessor of whether he had or had not the duty to collaborate with the Magistrates. The confessor’s question went in the opposite direction of the one indicated by Cardinal Martini. Other journalists obtained similar responses from other clergymen (Ginsborg, 1990: 134).

Contributing to the volume *Immagini della religiosità in Italia* (Burgalassi, Martelli, Prandi 1993) in his essay ‘Religione, religioni. Contributo ad una definizione’, Italian sociologist Arnaldo Nesti argues that from the postmodernist phase onwards, the religiosity of Italians proves to have changed: ‘While a steady decline of [institutionalised] religions can be observed, at the same time one can sense an increase of religiosity. The loss of plausibility of the great doctrinal creeds does not mean the end of quest for meaning in society’ (137). On the same line of argument, in *Il cattolicesimo degli italiani. Religione e culture dopo la ‘secolarizzazione’* (1997), discussing the ongoing emergency of institutionalised religion, Nesti argues that, within Italy’s broad and yet still hazy conformity to the Catholic doctrine, one should acknowledge the dramatic changes which have occurred in people’s life styles,

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1970; and Angelo Amato, ‘Cattolicesimo e secolarizzazione nell’europa contemporanea’, Conference Paper, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, V. 23, N. 2, 26 January 2009: 237-251.

aggregation habits, sexual and ethical conducts, and values. These changes are responsible for the marginalisation of the social religious codes, which, in the past, have had a central role in the Italian parochial mentality and culture. These elements today are shifting towards what Nesti calls 'diffuse' religiosity. (Nesti 1997).

*Introduction*

Chapter 8 incorporates into my thesis' structure a concluding socio-historical analysis of the most recent controversial socio-political relationships between laicism and religion in Italy. It discusses theories on the decline, as well as on the return of religion, quoting different contemporary approaches in the sociology of religion. The aim is to show how the interests of the religious and the secular groups keep clashing or converging around not only ethical dilemmas but also issues of power. The following discussion will give an idea of the degree to which, while Catholic activists involved in cultural programs have become secularized, secular institutions have come to defend the fading symbols of the nation's time-honoured religious values and traditions as a reaction to the global wave of multiculturalism and religious diversity.

I examine how the anachronistic centrality of the Vatican in maintaining the Church's hegemony had to confront the force of the secularisation process, progressively brought to the cinema screens in film plots which, up until Pope Bergoglio's innovative pastoral approach to media communication, have attacked (often also by means of satire) the Vatican's unwillingness to adapt to the changing era. To frame the tradition of clerical intrusion in cinema censorship before and after the year 2000, some considerations will be made on how the legal procedures, previously endorsed against blasphemy and vilification of religion, have changed in the Italian legislation, presenting the most significant legal changes that occurred in the Italian Criminal Code in matter of 'offence of religion', required by the Revision of the Lateran Agreements.

In relation to the persistent institutionalisation of the Catholic education in state schools, it is worth considering the waves of dissidence, which have emerged against the nation's confessionalism. In the second part of Chapter eight, I mention films, which have dealt with, on one side, the crisis of Italian Catholicism, and on the other, the persistence of a socio-religious tradition, which sociologist of religion Cipriani has defined as Italy's 'diffuse' religion. I construct a mapping of films that promote religious and cultural pluralism, marking a decline in the role of institutionalised Catholicism. These films demonstrate how film directors and investors are now more protected in advancing their counter-discourses despite

the enduring attacks by clerical censorship in the forms of financial boycott and public shaming.

Before advancing my final argument, it is important to highlight a certain number of new conditions regulating the circulation of cinema products. Today, in the official boards of film censorship, film examination is delegated to a committee of experts employed by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment (now Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities). The committees ascertain, among other fact, that domestic films have the qualities to be eligible for state grants. Films approved for public screening obtain *aq nihil obstat* by the official Boards of film review, pursuant to Law on April 21st 1962. 161. The Board establishes age restrictions and determines the following film categorization: 1 visible for everyone, 2 visible only for those over 14 years of age, 3 unsuitable for people under 18, and rejected, that is 'not admitted' to public screenings in cinemas.

I develop insight into new forms of religiousness emerged in the new Millennium. I investigate new theoretical perspectives in the sociology of religion and establish their effects on the current 'post-Christian' era. The church of today in fact is not immune from feelings of disorientation in front of the radical changes occurred in the postmodernist age and has gone through a difficult phase of transition, calling into question most of its previously held theological and ideological positions. In order to survive such challenging epochal juncture and remain part of the time in which it lives and operates, Catholic organic intellectuals have endeavoured to expand their institution's critical awareness and self-consciousness. This has been a skilled and advantageous determination for the church's theological 'narratives', made by the church's academic theology facing the secular world and sciences, if it is true, as Gramsci argues that *hegemony* is also *cultural*, and, as Foucault argues, that *knowledge* is *power*. (Smith, 2006: 17)

In the final part of this Chapter, I examine the legal case of *Totò che visse due volte* as the latest known instance of censorship for 'offence of religion'.

### *8.1 Dis-Establishment of the Catholic Church. Amendment of a constitutional anomaly*

Silvano Burgalassi in *Il comportamento religioso degli italiani* has argued that the Catholic hegemony in Italy cannot be measured on church attendance and observance (Burgalassi 1968: 68). Beside the presence of a schismatic tendency among the Catholic clergy, discussed in

*Preti in Crisi* (1970), Burgalassi argues that institutionalised Catholicism manifests a decline which can be traced back to the Seventies with the amendment of the divorce law in 1970 (Baslini Law, n. 898), and the decriminalisation of abortion in 1978, following popular referendums. These two national ballots marked a decline of the church's influence on ethical matters, proving the political incidence of the Partito Radicale in issues of civil reforms.<sup>170</sup>

To understand how clerical censorship has evolved, it is important to present the legal and constitutional amendments of the Church and state's accords that occurred from the 1980s onwards in the so-called 'Second' Republic. To fight back clerical bias, stirring moral reserves against films engaged in critique of belief, legislators have begun to question 'vilification of religion'. Indeed, the huge impact on parliamentary reforms obtained by the cinema artists' ideological battles, indicate how today, clerical censorship of films perceived detrimental for the Catholic community's sense of prestige is no longer tenable, particularly when it translates into financial boycott.

The 'Revision of the Concordat', also known as the 'Accordo di Villa Madama', was designed by socialist leader and prime minister, Bettino Craxi. The reform was accomplished between 1984 and 1985 to eliminate the 'Stato confessionale' (state religion) and promulgate the principle of the state's 'supreme laicity'. The revision, first undersigned by state and church on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1984 and enacted on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1985 with Law n. 21, had significant consequences at legislative level (Stella, 1989: 7). It led to the abolition of 'vilification of religion' from the Penal Code, in 2000 (Constitutional Court, Decree 13, n. 508, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2000 for Constitutional illegitimacy): 'The Constitutional Court declares the illegitimacy of Art. 402 of the Criminal Code: Vilification of state religion'.<sup>171</sup>

The principle of the state's supreme laicity affirms that the secular state should not deal with the problem of protecting Catholic people's religious sentiment by applying the criminal code against people's free opinion. However, crimes of oath and blasphemy could still be punished when offence was made to people's 'religious sentiment' (see 'Bestemmia'. Art. 724, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code).<sup>172</sup>

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170 Art. 545, prohibiting abortion, was abrogated in the 1978 Popular Referendum.

171 Before this amendment, citizens could be charged of: 1. Derision or offence of a religious authority; 2. Derision or offence of the participants in processions or religious rituals; 3. Verbal offence against a minister of religion during a religious celebration; 4. Derision, offence of a religious community, and/or its values.

172 See Leonard W. Levy, *Treason against God: A History of the Offence of Blasphemy*, New York:

The reason why Art. 402 of the penal code, ‘vilification of the state religion’, has remained in force for so long after the foundation of the Italian secular republic, thus going against the Constitution’s principle of equality of all religions in front of the state, had more to do with the factual issue of the privileged continuation of the tax free Vatican state remaining untouched. Following the demanded changes to Chapter I, Title IV of Book II of the *Penal Code*, Catholicism and other cults are now treated on equal grounds. Already in the 1990s, the decreasing number of trials defending the church’s special interests (‘Tutela del sentimento religioso, principio di uguaglianza e laicità dello Stato’) was a forerunner of the current legal protection of freedom of opinion, freedom of religion, and freedom of representation on more equal grounds (Rimoli 1997).

Although Christianity has had a long-lasting cultural and historical significance as a faith professed by the majority of Italian citizens, different churches and beliefs have entered the nation’s territories by new waves of immigration. This has made the issuing of reforms encouraging pluralism even more urgent.<sup>173</sup> For this reason, on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2000, following the 1984 ‘Revision of the Lateran Accords’, the Constitutional Court declared the unconstitutionality of the clause of the 1930 ‘Rocco Code’ which used to protect the Catholic faith by Art. 403, paragraphs 1 and 2, c.p. ‘Offese alla religione dello Stato’ (offence of the state’s religion’) and changed it into ‘crimes against people’s religious sentiment’<sup>174</sup> (Cavana, 1992, V. XXVIII: 8).

In the 20 years that have passed since the Villa Madama Revisionist Agreement, the various Italian succeeding governments have for this reason introduced new regulations to encourage ‘integration’ of religious diversity. Cultural historians have defined this as the ‘end of the Catholic world’ (Borghesi 1988). The abolition of previous legal sheltering of the Church of Rome as an institution has helped to fight cultural discrimination. Commenting upon the emerging situation of religious pluralism, in 2004, Pope John Paul II asserted:

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Schocken Books, 1981, and *Verbal Offence Against the Sacred, from Moses to Salman Rushdie*, University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

173 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Recommendation 1804-2007-1. Point 4 of the Recommendation asserts: ‘4. The Assembly reaffirms that one of Europe’s shared values, transcending national differences, is the separation of church and state. This is a generally accepted principle that prevails in politics and institutions in democratic countries. In Recommendation 1720 (2005) on education and religion, the Assembly noted that ‘each person’s religion, including the option of having no religion, is a strictly personal matter’.

174 ‘Sentenza n. 508 del 13 novembre 2000’, ‘Sentenza n. 327 del 1 luglio 2002’, ‘Sentenza n. 168 del 18 aprile 2005’: <http://www.italialaica.it/news/articoli/26361>.

‘The church asks for no privileges, nor does the church intend to go beyond the spiritual context suitable for her mission. The agreements, which originated in this respectful dialogue, have the sole purpose of enabling the church to carry out her universal task in full freedom and to foster the spiritual good of the Italian people.’ (John Paul II, 2004: 8)

At international level, the question is more open to debate. Freedom of religion is, in fact, secured by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights as well as by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. However, a religion cannot support a doctrine or practice, which goes against the citizens’ fundamental rights. Restrictions can, in fact, be imposed by law on religion associations if their cult contrast people’s freedoms. Indeed, Art. 9.2. of the Convention established that restrictions to freedom of religion are ‘necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others’. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Act 13 July 2007) with regards to matters concerning the relationship between state, religion, secularity and human rights, supports the separation of religion and state, stressing that religious leaders must accept the priority of human rights over religious orthodoxy. In relation to the crimes blasphemy, offence of religion and hate speech, which are punished by law in most nations, the Council of Europe has suggested that blasphemy should no longer be considered a criminal offence (Recommendation 1804- 2007-1).

The DC party, which used to voice the political ‘interests’ of the so called ‘Catholic population’ (‘mondo cattolico’) and endorse the Vatican’s transversal forms of propaganda, no longer exists. In addition, despite the church’s reluctance to acknowledge its crisis, studies in the field of the Sociology of religion in the 1990s (Bausola 1996) and statistical inquiry on the function of Catholicism in contemporary Italy (Garelli, ‘Gli italiani e la Chiesa’, 1996: 246) have shown that the Italian society has changed in matters related to religion orthodoxy and identity. Reported data suggest that while acknowledging the church’s social function, a growing percentage of Italians now criticise the church for being power seeking, hypocritical and opportunistic (Cesareo, 1995: 3). Changes are evident, especially in the impact of the Vatican’s sayings on civil matters concerning marriage, adoption, divorce, abortion, genetic engineering, and assisted suicide, etc.

The growing wave of laicity in Italy touches all aspects of social interactions and affects

change in the ongoing secularisation processes.<sup>175</sup> This results in a ‘progressive reduction of the spaces of the sacred’. The changing socio-economic realities too favour new and less centralised forms of religiosity (Cesareo, 1995: 6). Hence, for the very first time in history, Catholicism is faced with a progressively de-Christianised environment, in response to which the Vatican urges for a new evangelism. Moreover, the Vatican is facing internal dissent among the Catholic progressive *intelligentsia* (Magister 2003). Church historian, Alberto Melloni, in *Chiesa Madre, Chiesa Matrigna (Mother Church, Stepmother Church 2004)*, criticises the Vatican for making itself the centre of ‘a different’ political-religious *faith*, wholly civic, power controlling and at the service of capitalist lobbies. Melloni, in line with Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s thesis (2003) argues that Catholicism has reached a phase irreconcilable with contemporary culture. By failing to adapt to the new realities, Melloni claims, the church will keep losing credibility due to the erosion of early Christianity’s eloquence. Melloni argues against the Catholicism authorities as proving unable to maintain a dialogue with the new globalised world, and to face and solve epochal nodes such as the role of women in the church, as other Christian religions have succeeded to do. It segregates its mission within mere catalogues of good values, prohibitions and sins (Melloni, 2004: 4). Other critics, such as Flores d’Arcais, in *Il fatto quotidiano* (29<sup>th</sup> June 2005) have argued that Catholic clergymen should be thought of as ‘ordinary people’.

Sabino Samuele Acquaviva, in *Il seme religioso della rivolta*, has argued that ‘the loss of technical links between church and society’ is due to the decline of the church’s role as ‘a means of political and social action’ (Acquaviva, 1979: 46). Italy’s history and culture in fact, indicate certain constant elements related to principles and values connected to the Catholic model of ‘religious socialisation’. In Catholic countries, the Vatican’s conservatism is believed to have slowed down the process of secularisation (Acquaviva, 1973: 5). This is most tangible in nations where Catholicism has educational involvements with state institutions and agencies, as in Italy. Acquaviva’s observations have proved correct when one considers the loss of effectiveness of Catholic activism during the last two decades of the Berlusconi era, influencing other-than-ethical changes in Italy’s education system, civil reforms, and cultural schemes.

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<sup>175</sup> According to the statistics presented in *La religiosità in Italia*, changes in people’s religiosity are evident despite the fact that the majority of the Italians still define themselves as Catholic. A considerable change is recorded in mass attendance and worshipping, while ‘rites of passage’ are still routinely practised.



However, despite both the external changes that have affected the church due to the secularisation processes and the dilemma embedded in the Church's involvement in the discourses of politics, indicated by Liberation Theology, Catholic activists still take part in the iron cage of bureaucracy and governmentality of the Foucauldian model of the modern liberal state, and seem at home in it, as if it were an extension of the old confessional/pastoral state. Indeed, to survive this era, the Vatican has attempted to offer contributions to the success of Berlusconi's leadership, as is evident by the Roman Catholic bourgeoisie's massive electoral support of Berlusconi's right/centre-right conservative party coalitions (FI/UdC/Forza Italia/Il Popolo della Libertà) during his first 1994 campaigning, inaugurating his political 'discesa in campo' (political involvement), and for 16 years afterward. Berlusconi, as a form of recompense, promised to support decrees, which fell within the Vatican's agenda.

What is more, the crisis of Catholicism and the state's secularist reforms did not result in filmmakers immediately enjoying a total autonomy from clerical intervention in censorial matters. Taking advantage of the political climate of the Berlusconi era, providing the Church with public financial assistance and tax exemptions, the Vatican kept intervening against media scandals (also those involving Berlusconi's public persona) (Teodori 2013). This was typical of President of the OCI, Cardinal Bagnasco, who has made constant appeals through the media for the protection of Catholic morality. Supporting Cardinal Bagnasco's assumption that the Church's values preserve universal, numerical and moral superiority, Italian conservative parties continue to pretend that the Establishment recognises the truths taught by the church as resting on a 'majority principle'.

## *8.2. Recent debates on the endurance of clerical censorship*

In *Film and Censorship*, Sheila Whitaker clarifies some complex aspects of film censorship today:

'Cinema censorship has taken a variety of forms all over the media world. Foremost, the act of censorship in its most unambiguous form is epitomised by the relevant authorities' refusal to licence public screening to a film (or to part of a film), considered objectionable and harmful to the public, or problematic for the government or media organisations.' (Whitaker, 1997: 1).

She appropriately underlines that in contemporary liberal societies, the various forms of film censorship are not always as obvious as outright banning, and are therefore more difficult to

identify and fight. This is in the case of ‘prior censorship’, epitomized by both the governmental and private corporations’ refusal to provide financial support for the production of a film, or to permit its production. On a different note, discussing the relevance given to freedom of communication by the market’s liberal ideology, John Keane, in *The Media and Democracy*, clarifies how modern media has contributed to the age of ‘high capitalism’, to endorsing forms of cultural censorship, and promoting or discouraging the production of certain ideas, genres, and forms. Keane argues: ‘Communications markets restrict freedom of communication generating barriers to entry, monopoly and restriction upon choice, and by shifting the prevailing definition of information from that of a public good to a privately appropriable commodity (Keane, 1991: 89).

Today, in the increasingly globalised world of the new media’s technologies, dominated by ‘informative democratisation’ – a world in which the users’ direct access to facts rather than interpretations makes more difficult selective occultation of unapproved materials – cinema censorship is designed with greater limitations. It is implemented, for instance, when the law considers the circulation of cinematic products believed to go against the interests of both the state and the civil society as disadvantageous for the common welfare. New problems may concern the place of contemporary cinema in such new communication spheres, where the old Gramscian question, concerning the relationship between culture, religion and the state, clashes against the postmodernist self-reflexive attitude to value systems, history and memory (Hope 2009). How can the limits and functions of cinema be established in a world where the cultural monopoly of the intellectuals no longer relies on the former forged notion of the ‘passive users’? (Weber 1988) What is the future of cinema censorship in the new media world where viewers not only perceive but can actually *be* an active part of the acquisition/distribution systems and interpretation processes by gaining access to the available cable TVs, private televisions, WWW media channels, DVDs, cinema *blogs*, internet downloads, online magazines and discussion forums, YouTube services and other cinema related social networks, etc.? Thus the interrelating individual and collective practices concerning the political, cultural and ideological universe cinema users can now share almost as a new religion (Godzich 1988).

Can Gramsci’s notion of ‘intellectual dissent’, intended to help to fashion the social self-identity in *Quaderni dal carcere*, and Foucault’s idea of the ‘specific intellectual’, in *Truth and Power, Power/Knowledge*, whose specialised knowledge can produce positive political effect in society, still be articulated in our contemporary non-ideological world of apoliticism,

generated by deconstructivism? (Michaels and Knapp, 1982: 737). In the 1960s, at the time when Pasolini announced that the ‘consumer’s society of mass entertainment was doomed to become the worst dictatorship’ with the aid of television, he foresaw the demure of the older dictatorial forms such as fascism, based on the church, censorship, and the military. As Italian journalist and communist intellectual Rossana Rossanda has pointed out, the Berlusconi era is one in which a shift from *using* the media and *being* the media is observed and where accordingly what is fake becomes real and what is real appears fake (Rossanda 1994). It is the era, where all that is opposed to Berlusconi’s media empire is removed and censored from the screens, no matter what the ideological subjects of the dissenters’ contention. Therefore, despite the reforms endorsed in media censorship and the amendment of many instances related to the ‘vilification’ offence, censorship is most rampant in shielding Patron *Silvio*’s political performances and self-legitimising programs, constructing social ‘made to measure’ consensus around his quasi-religious figure. The Italian government’s censorship board, in recent decades, has shown a tendency to reform existing policies and measures to reduce the old censorial procedures. In fact, for the modern state, censorship is for the most part a binding legal requirement jeopardising the financial investments of the cinema industry. Looking at the current policies of the national film boards, it appears that the legislation is more involved in political negotiations with the industry and the Capital, than with setting moral standards and ideals.

### 8.3 *Post-Catholic Italy and the secularisation processes*

It has been widely discussed in this thesis how, in Italy, spanning almost the entire history of the film industry, films with problematic contents, offending the viewers’ values and beliefs, have been banned by Boards for film censorship, or have suffered cuts imposed by review organisations acting on the behalf of the so called ‘public interest’. Cinema historian Sallustro claims that state censorship and Church censorship against cinema products will never radically change: ‘The censorial action is always identical to itself: its aim being that of repressing dissent and fabricating consensus. What changes is eventually the ‘who’, the ‘what’, and the ‘how’ of censorship (Sallustro, 2007: 8).<sup>176</sup> Taking measures at institutional levels,

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<sup>176</sup> Sallustro’s third volume spans from Ermete Zacconi’s first decree on censorship, in 1908, as a means ‘to protect people’s innocence’, to the most recent decree (July 2007) ‘vietato ai minori di 10 anni a meno che non siano accompagnati’. The volume has a sub-chapter, entitled *Lost and Found*, with a list of films, sequences and scenes gone totally missing for several decades, until brought back to light

state, church and law simply adapt their methodologies to the changing generations of authors, *genres* and products. Less pessimistic critics believe that the crucial interplay of the national and the global from the turn of the century onwards has allowed cinema to face less restrictedly issues of religious identity. Inside the church itself, change has been advocated. Liberation Theology, for instance, have fostered communication from the local to the global, helping common interests to be discussed with the lay society, and processes of social integration to take place beyond the Vatican's monopoly<sup>177</sup> (Romero, 2001: 484).

On the example of Don Lorenzo Milani's 'pedagogy of dissent', advocating conscientious objection, Catholic cleric, Don Sardelli, in February 1972 wrote a public letter undersigned by twelve priests, 'Lettera ai cristiani di Roma'. Sardelli advanced a critique of the church and state's 'regime concordatario' still defining Italy as a 'confessional state'. The letter stated that the Church of Rome's official status, as state religion, was a privilege that the Vatican ought to renounce to free itself from the charge of spiritual insincerity and political opportunism, raising from the public opinion.<sup>178</sup>

The Vatican responded adversely to Sardelli's call for reforms. Sardelli's ideological and theological confrontation, which continued throughout the 1970s, was not solely an ecclesiastic battle: it brought about important repercussions in the nation's political and cultural way of life. As Cuminetti argues in *Il dissenso cattolico in Italia*, the political shifts made in the 1960s towards the left was the root of growing Catholic dissent, which helped to introduce developments in the 1970s, affecting the status of family and education nationwide (Cuminetti, 1983: 165). This implied that the Vatican's moralization issues started to appear as an untenable politicization of the Catholic Church's mission.

To what extent could the church trust its style of censorial interference without suffering a cultural backlash is a question that progressive theologians and sociologists of Catholic background have rightly posed. Observers, following the route of Catholic priest and

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to reconstruct the 'how' and 'why' they have been blacked out from public screening.

177 On charismatic/schismatic activists in contemporary Christianity, see Hunt, S., M. Hamilton and T. Walker (eds.), *Charismatic Christianity. Sociological perspectives*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

178 The new Catholic activists now judges the 'Concordato' negatively as 'a means of power against the liberation of God's people, the unity of the urban and rural workers and the world's justice' ('strumento di potere contro la liberazione del popolo di Dio, l'unità delle masse operaie e contadine e la giustizia nel mondo') (*Bollettino di collegamento*, N. 23, 1971). A similar position is restated in the 'COM, 'Il concordato è contro il Vangelo', 11/3/1973.

theologian Ignaz Döllinger (1799 - 1890) writing polemical invectives against the Church of Rome's temporal power and urging the Church's autonomy from the state, started to claim that the Church's *Magisterium* as a form of power should be countered with another power and opposed by public opinion. Lay theologians should play a decisive intermediary role in such dialectical interchange. In this regard, Burgalassi and Prandi's observations on the decline of the official religion and the increase of people's personal religiosity are particularly revealing (cfr. 4.6).

Since the religious climate fostered by secular culture started to appear more compatible with Protestantism than with the Catholic Church, in the 1970s, the Italian Catholic Church's activist group, Azione Cattolica ('Catholic Action') opted for the 'religious choice'. However, in the 1970s, despite the course of the secularisation processes making sociologists of religion theorise a decline of the sacred,<sup>179</sup> the alternative debates which took place from the late 1970s onwards up to the mid 80s, gradually raised the hypothesis of a 'religious awakening' taking non-orthodox forms, as argued by Marxist sociologist of religion Carlo Prandi in *Religione e Classi Subalterne* (1977).

An important contribution to such an assumption has come from Roberto Cipriani in *The Sociology of Religion in Italy* (1990). Supporting the presence of what he defines 'diffuse religion', Cipriani argues that, in Italy, there is no real sign of a real secularisation process in action, as contrarily sociologist Acquaviva's 'eclipse of religion' theorises. Cipriani also dismisses the existence of a religious revival, supported by Franco Ferrarotti's idea of a 'persistence of religion' in secularised societies as referent of people's cultural identity, and most precisely of the type inspired by Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (Cipriani, 1984: 29). Cipriani rather thinks that any of the attempts at examining religion, that proved successful in other nations and societies, would fail in Italy. Drawing upon Luckmann and Bellah,<sup>180</sup> Cipriani claims that 'civil religion', of the kind achieved by Protestantism, could never affect Italy (Cipriani, 1984: 30). This is because the Vatican's influence over Italian society encourages a uniformity of mentality and customs, which deepens and widens beyond religion itself. In this respect, even politicized groups such as the Italian Associations of Christian Workers may 'opt for less politically orientated positions' to

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179 See my discussion in Chapter 8 (4).

180 Cipriani argues that Italians lack 'knowledge of biblical sources' and 'awareness of a greater mission' unlike the Jewish people who believe they belong to the chosen nation.'

remain aligned with the Church's tenets (Cipriani, 1989: 34-36).

### *a. Italy's diffuse religion*

Put aside the Pope's call for a religious revival, according to Cipriani, 'diffuse religion' is alive in the types of education imparted in the family and at school. The crisis of 'church religion', Cipriani insists, was aggravated in the Seventies by the Vatican's antagonism to reforms pioneered by the Radical party and introduced in the Italian law by means of popular referendums. In those occasions, the Italian lay population, composed of Catholics, non-religious, agnostic, and atheist citizens, found an agreement with regard to the introduction of divorce and the legalisation of abortion, ostracised by the Holy See. Cipriani uses the expression 'diffuse religion' to describe both large sections of the Italian population, whose denomination as Catholic goes beyond 'church religiosity' and 'religious motivation', and the widespread presence of Catholic institutions in Italy, having a 'socialising and legitimising action', such as schools, radio, and television programmes in both private and state networks, and specialised publishing houses etc. Cipriani gives a clear cut definition of such networks of financial and political interests, which link together institutions under what can be sociologically understood as Italy's 'diffuse religion':

'It is to be noted that 'diffuse religion' constitutes one of the most recurring forms of legitimation, in as much as it always remains a ready solution, which can resolve various situations, even of political choice... Catholic based socialisation-legitimation is obviously prevalent. Even many of those who do not share opinions of such orthodoxy often recur to this element, for reasons of convenience. It is true that the condition of youth comes with profound crisis of reaction against teaching received. However, the dissent is, necessarily, even a complementary form of consensus, because to a certain extent it uses the same general framework present in the contested religious modality.' (Cipriani, 1989: 34)

Cipriani claims: 'It is licit to think of religion as being 'diffused' through the acceptance of other individuals' or groups' religious experiences, and also because it represents a parameter, which can be referred to with regard to moral and/or political choices. [...] It 'reaches degrees of freedom which the concentrated and centralised pattern of church religion would not favour.' (Cipriani, 1984: 32) In *The Catholic-Communist Dialogue in Italy: 1944 to the Present* (1989) Cipriani speaks of the overt link between the Church as overruling public

education and people's private sense of belonging to the catholic community. For this reason, Italy remains Catholic, even when Catholic people assume non-Catholic positions, as is the case of the quoted referendums, which for the first time in history upturned the church's control over civil matters. Furthermore, 'diffuse religion' is characteristic of ex-catholic believers of left-wing ideology (the so called 'catto-comunisti').<sup>181</sup> The idea suggests a connection between the Italian nation's 'ethical memory', celebrated in religious rituals and ceremonies and Christian ethics at the heart of 'diffuse religiosity'. It could even be said that Italy's diffuse religiosity facilitates the country's party pluralism, to the extent that people involved in politics fight upon issues whose principles derived from the same value system. Cipriani concludes that Catholicism in Italy is doomed to keep marking the nation's historical-cultural continuum. The state's traditional policies to negotiate public matters with the church remained unchanged even when the communist party (PC) was taking part in the country's government, as attested by Enrico Berlinguer's program called 'Compromesso storico' (Cipriani, 1991: 131-132). Cipriani argues that the church in Italy will endure the turn of the Millennium. In fact, the changes imposed by the 'post-religious' era<sup>182</sup> will not easily reduce the weight of the Vatican on Italian society, since despite the changes introduced by both religious dissidence and the secularisation processes, priests always manage to find new ways to transversally influence the public (Casanova, 2001: 415).<sup>183</sup>

In *Forme del sacro in un'epoca di crisi*, in the late 1970s, Ferrarotti maintained that Catholicism still played a political role in Italy, more so in periods of crisis, when people turn to their Catholic background, doing so without the official church's mediation (Ferrarotti et Al., 1978: 54). Entering the debate on the future of church in secularised Italy, in the early 1980s, Enzo Pace noted that the Italian population had lost 'faith' in politics as much as they had lost trust in the official church. 'What has first and foremost entered a crisis are the traditional relations between the personal world and the political world formerly ensured by a

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181 On the ideological and political liaisons between Catholicism and Communism see Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, Turin: Einaudi, 2006. The term 'cattocomunismo' refers to those Catholic thinkers and politicians who have espoused to some extent both Marxism and the communist doctrine. It also refers to getting politically closer to the DC and the PCI within Enrico Berlinguer's strategic manoeuvre, defined as 'historical compromise'.

182 The Catholic community records a considerable decline in the old confidence that the church can assist citizens in defending their rights. Sociologists of religion such as Acquaviva, Guizzardi, and Grunelli have defined the current phase as 'post-Catholic'.

183 Casanova argues: 'Sacred time and secular time are related, as sacred time can only happen within worldly time.' In this respect, despite the political cosmography of the present time, Italy does not seem to have fully adjusted itself to religious pluralism.

system of alliance between church and Catholic party' (Pace, 1981: 11).

However, Catholicism in Italy has never stopped its contribution to the state's structure. Such bond is convenient for both sectors of the public life: the church obtains political consensus for the state by means of secondary propaganda and receives in return the right to its moral authority (Brunetta 1972). The Church has kept its traditional educational power-related objectives and functions, which it used to have before the 1984 Revision of the Lateran Pacts. Indeed, in Italy, moral conduct in public schooling still appears under the broad definition of 'religious education'.

In recent decades, Ferrarotti and Pace's theories about the decline of religion in Italy have been challenged by a new hypothesis, claiming that the secularisation processes in the Italian one-religion landscape, despite affecting all aspects of the public life, generally leave unaltered the nation religious landscape. The ideological and parliamentary disputes which are taking place between centre-right parties and the progressivist ones concerning immigration, genetic testament, adoption, and gay marriage, etc., have raised questions of national identity as much as nationalism, more so in relation to the emerging multi-ethnic realities brought about by the immigration of 'other than Christian' immigrants. In this respect, Roberto Esposito, in *La politica al presente*, commenting on Foucault's discourse on religion and bio politics as forces which tend to suppress the subject, argues that the suicidal tendency of modern, democratic societies, speaks for the weakening of national sovereignty with the spectral return of religion in the heart of those political decisions that deny the 'right to life' of some individuals and protect those of others (Esposito, 2008: 24). The growing political, social, and cultural tensions created by immigration are stimulating new trends of filmmaking, which dig deep into the new realities of the present global crisis: on the front of Italian cinema on religion immigration, promoting dialogue and integration. It is worth mentioning, beside *Lamerica* by Gianni Amelio (1994), and *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*, by Marco Tullio Giordana (2005), centred on the hopes and traumas of the immigrants' journey towards Italy, also *Ragazzi del Ghana*, by Alessandro Angelini (2000), *Arrivederci* by Valeriu Jereghi (2008), *Lettere dal Sahara*, by Vittorio De Seta (documentary film, 2006), the latter portraying Italy from the perspective of a Muslim immigrant and his experience of integration.

#### 8.4. Recent methods of clerical censorship



As I have argued, the Catholic Church's neo-conservatism has extended its mobilisation for the defence of its authority to the third millennium. The protection of the traditional family offers an anchoring to the Vatican's views concerning society and health, sexual and gender diversity, and the use of contraceptives in West and Third World countries, etc. However, as discussed at length in the course of this thesis, the Catholic Church's articulation of moral standards and the regulation of sexually acceptable practices in Catholic Italy can no longer rely on people's adherence to it.

In the terms which concern this research, the language of condemnation which the Church adopted to influence society has become less effective in the postmodernist era due to the spreading of media (internet and digital communication, *blogs*, online discussion groups, TV talk shows, etc.), allowing people's direct participation in public debate. Indeed, the new media constructs possibilities for people to personalise self-awareness and utter dissent. For the implication of such changes, it is worth stressing that the clerical reprisals against certain incriminated films are now more clearly understood for what they truly are: nothing else but manipulative attempts to counterbalance the detrimental self-ridiculing which the church does to itself.

In recent years, Church censorship has struck religious dissent in different ways. It has for instance boycotted two American productions, one for the film *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), and the other for *Angels and Demons*, requiring onsite shooting at various sites in the Vatican. Permission was denied as the two film plots conveyed allusions to violent criminal forces within the Vatican, fighting against or with, financial and political lobbies. Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authority, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, challenged Ron Howard's 2006 and 2009 productions, and intervened in person during the shootings to deny access to the Chiesa del Santo Supplizio.

Presently, the only form of censorship in the Italian legal system is the one which can still be imposed on films and TV productions under the quoted Law n. 161 21 April 1962, of the Criminal Code. A special committee, whose members are appointed by the Minister for Arts and Culture (Ministro dell'arte e della cultura) grants full permission of broadcasting only to those visual works which are not judged as contrary to morality. The same Committee determines the suitability of each film and TV production and establishes age limits ('Vietato ai minori di anni...') to protect minors from being exposed to corruption, extreme violence and obscenity.

The last paragraph of the Constitutional Law n. 21 warrants all citizens the right to express freely their thoughts in the written form, or in any other means of broadcasting: ('diritto di manifestare liberamente il proprio pensiero con la parola, lo scritto e ogni altro mezzo di diffusione'). However, the citizen's thoughts, when perceived as being insulting and defamatory, cannot be expressed without restraint in disdain for other people's rights, and in contexts which could be harmfully and undignified and/or spread prejudices in the community or outwith. In spite of the fact that Law n. 33 of the Italian Constitutional Law safeguards and sanctions the freedom of the arts, the history of the Italian cinema is rich in trials and censorial actions preventing the artist's freedom and jeopardising Law n. 33 constitutive principles.

*b. The Sacred and Secular: cross-fights in cultural hegemony and the demise of clerical imperialism in the Post-catholic era*<sup>184</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church in Italy still has some relevant moral impact on Italian politics to the point of playing a major part in the country's Home affairs, and on the culture shaping the nation's sense of identity. What has emerged thus far, is that censorship standards are not universal and may vary considerably over time even within the same individual country because of political change or shifting moral attitudes. As it stands, the influence of the Catholic Church on cinematographic censorship, in Italy, is still a fertile ground for socio-cultural query.

The Vatican state has no legislative right on deciding how clerical censorship should be implemented in relation to cinematic works, whose contents may offend the Catholic community's religious sentiment and values. At present, Catholic authorities have no official representative authorised to take part in the committees of the central government censorship deciding on the legal suitability of films. However, the Vatican can rely on a network of interrelated agencies, institutions, boards, and media channels, which keep the church's censorial gaze fixed on the world of cinema. Despite having no authorised role to prevent a film to be produced and circulated when the Vatican strongly objects to a film, it can boycott it by disseminating prejudice through its special channels.

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184 Cardia writes: 'The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faiths all over the world.' Cardia examines the legal and cultural reasons for people's attachment to their historical, cultural and religious symbols. She argues that the cross is a valuable symbol of Christianity, but it also has a universal meaning because it is known all over the world and speaks to all men of good will.' (Cardia, 2010: 84)

This was the case for Marco Bellocchio's *L'ora di religione* (2002), Peter Mullans' *Magdalene* (2002), Giuseppe Ferrara's *I banchieri di Dio* (2004), Ron Howard's *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) and *Angels and Demons* (2009), and more recently Alejandro Amenábar's *Agorà* (2009) and Nanni Moretti's *Habemus Papam* (2011). Hence, on the whole, the relationship between cinema artists, society, law, religion, and the censors continues to be highly complex, not only due to the presence in films of themes and images related to violence, obscenity and blasphemy, but for issues of power which are too intricate to disentangle (Heins 1993). With regard to the problem of clerical censorship as an instrument of cultural control that the church continues to exercise on civil society and the arts, with now more indirect forms of governmental support, - or else oblique as in the teaching of the Catholic education in state schools - the question of the defence of the principle of secularism has become, at this point, central to my argument (Semeraro, 1991: 701).<sup>185</sup>

Thus far there is little doubt that the film industry has a subtle opponent in the Vatican, manoeuvring the audience's reception of consensus. In recent years, the Vatican has found new strategies to impose its demands on the subject of public morality on the film industry. Finding constant support in the various territorial authorities still affiliated to the former Christian Democratic Party, the Vatican's influence on film productions precedes obliquely by making appeals to the Civil Law. Reacting to this lasting inference, cinema artists have increasingly refined their rhetorical tools (or weapons) to oppose state and church censorship. In 1988, filmmakers Tornatore's criticism against the small clergy's control over films, judged as morally improper, took the form of cultural satire in *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*. Bellocchio's drama film, *Vincere!* (2009), expressed a radical complaint against clerical censorship by showing its close collaboration with the fascist state in the persecution of dissident citizens. Today however, very few films are not certified for public release.

Keen defenders of expressive freedom warns that, while on the one hand an optimistic view of the future of democracy is essential for believing in the progress of humanity, liberty is never immune from historical-related reconsideration and restrictions. As it is the case for most western countries, in Italy too, films still have to undergo either government-appointed or

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185 Angelo Semeraro, in the 1990s, in his essay 'Elogio della educazione laica', introduced important considerations (see my discussion in 8.2) for the debate on the possible ways of communication between the religious and the secular cultures, with respect to freedom of thought, opinion, and representation.

private censors, to be rated for cinema theatre and television screening.<sup>186</sup> Because it is common for films to be edited down in order to fall into certain rating classifications, a list is available in all countries of films, which have been prohibited for public screening.

There are critics who assert that traditional Italian passionate quarrels between the lay society and the Catholic one over matters concerning civil freedoms<sup>187</sup> (of conscience, speech, expression, scientific research, economic growth, and information) will be appeased when ideological and cultural oppositions will be strictly replaced by multiculturalism. Such preconditions may require the removal of institutionalised Catholicism.

Enrico Gavalotti claims that the abolition of the Concordat has not been totally enacted.<sup>188</sup> Gavalotti cites Marx: ‘At the cultural level, the bourgeoisie can do without religion, yet it needs it at the political level in order to secure itself the consensus of the Catholic masses.’<sup>189</sup> He adds, ‘it is still true, in this respect, Marx’s motto, according to which the political emancipation of the bourgeois state from religion is not yet the *human* emancipation of

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186 Capsar Henderson, ‘No Ecstasy please, we are British’, in *Film and Censorship. The Index Reader*, 115. Matters related to blasphemy and vilification of religion are no less intricate nowadays than in ancient times, regardless of the country where Christianity is held as people’s major system of belief. In 1989, for instance, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) banned Nigel Wingrove’s 18-minute short film *Vision of Ecstasy* for blasphemy and vilification of St Teresa of Avila, shown while erotically caressing Christ’s body. Marina Warner, a scholar on the history of women and Christianity claimed that ‘the concept of ravishment as divine love is central in Catholic and Protestant metaphysics of the 16th Century.’ She pointed out that the filmmaker had rendered this liaison by interrelating visual representations of both Christ’s passion and Bernini’s statue representing the ecstasy of St Teresa.

187 The church’s objections to civil reforms have been related, as I have said, to divorce, contraception, abortion, assisted death, and sexual equality.

188 ‘The Concordat should be abolished because it compromises the principle of equality of the citizens asserted by the Constitution (art.3: ‘All the citizens have the same social dignity and are equal in front of the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social status’). Moreover, the Concordat is in contrast with Art. 8 and Art. 19 pertaining the equality and freedom of the different religious confessions. The tax exemptions, favouring the ecclesiastical agencies and assets of the church, along with the donation to the church of the eight out of thousands percentage of the citizen’s taxes, the wages assigned to the teachers of religion appointed by the bishops, and the donations to private schools, which generally are the property of the Catholic agencies, are in evident contrast with Art. 33 of the Constitution. They represent a breeching of the principles of equality, while avoiding a clear-cut separation between church and State.’ (Gavalotti 2008)

189 Whereas Feuerbach argued that religion as a projection of human aspiration is false, and thus considered it superfluous and negative for society, Marx criticised religion merely in Hegelian terms, in so far its principles and values do not seem to translate into immediate action for the accomplishment of the common good. Marx argued that religion makes men reconcile in injustice and accept it with resignation. Consequently, he suggested a relation between institutionalised religion and injustice, as it tends to encourage fatalism, which acts as ‘opium’: ‘The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the fight against the other world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma’ (Esler, 1998: 102).

religion' (Gavalotti 2008).<sup>190</sup> Gavalotti believes that, whereas fundamentalist societies press for the political impact of their religious institutions and cults on civil society, in liberal democracies church and state are supposed to be independent from each other. A state of whatever political orientation can never act against religion *per sé*, as and promote 'propaganda against religion' (Gavalotti 2008).

While a liberal state is not entitled, in theory, to educate people to either religion or atheism, it should, in theory, impede the Church's claims of political and ideological influence on the civil institutions and civil matters. Only communism has thus far achieved a clear-cut separation of state and church (Mack Smith 1997). Scholars in the field of Constitutional Law believe that until high capitalism will be ruling the liberal democracies of the West, Christianity will keep its privileged cultural role as mass pedagogue.<sup>191</sup>

As I have argued, Catholic dissent became the subject of four cultural/socio-historic plots representing the crisis of the nation's religious identity from the 1980s onwards: <sup>192</sup> *Morte in Vaticano* (Aliprandi 1982), *La Messa è finita* (Moretti 1985), *L'ora di religione* (Bellocchio 2002) and *Habemus Papam* (Moretti 2012). In particular in *La messa è finita*, Moretti seems to suggest that the main character, a young charming leftist priest from a middle class family, collaborating with Catholic activists and in touch with secular intellectuals, has gained the confidence of his people and a good position in the Church's institution, which once reached, he begins to anxiously question this in relation to his own family's tragic moral decadence.

From a Foucauldian perspective, one may infer that the Church of today (at least up to Ratzinger's papacy which he resigned in March 2013) still appears as an institution of moral and disciplinary control, intervening on issues of sexuality, birth control, and assisted death,

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190 See the Italian Statuto Albertino: 'Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana e Statuti Costituzionali del Regno d'Italia', 1, art. 1: 'La religione cattolica apostolica romana è la religione dello stato'.

191 See Enrico Gavalotti, 'Revisione o abolizione del Concordato?', in *Homo Laicus, Sezione Diritto*, 26/12/2008, Sito-web *Idee per un Diritto Democratico. La laicità e la democrazia come valori universali*, [homolaicus.com/diritto/concordato.htm](http://homolaicus.com/diritto/concordato.htm) 'The bourgeoisie can do without religion at cultural level. However, it is true Marx's phrase that "the political emancipation of the bourgeois state from religion is not yet human emancipation from religion"' (My translation).

192 In recent years, filmmaker and actor Verdone has directed the photo exhibition 'Priests in the cinema' (Sala Nervi, Vatican, Rome, 24 May 2010), dedicated to the figure of Vatican priests, featured in cinema stories, and curated by the Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo (Institute of Performing Arts) in collaboration with the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Centre of Cinematography). The CEI President Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco stated: 'The cinema has offered a variety of representations of priestly ministry, often recounting the sacrifice of the clergy on the altar of society, both in peacetime and during the difficult war years, as for Don Camillo (1935), a man of great simplicity of faith'.

etc. to censor rather than to endorse their improvement. In this respect, cinema in the post-Catholic era can keep on conveying forms of scepticism and disbelief against religious dogma, opening up to issues of plurality, as well as to problems of communication among ethnic, sexual, political, and religious diversity (Bauman, 1997).<sup>193</sup>

To reiterate what has been discussed so far, despite the sexual and financial scandals it was involved in, the Vatican's authority continues at both theological and sociocultural level. As one of the world's most prominent systems of belief, it still has a substantial say over the ethical foundations of social structures (in the field of 'education', in particular). Pope Ratzinger has claimed that the Catholic Church trusts certain dogmas as being non-negotiable. A Catholic cannot be a mason, and if a mason, he or she cannot receive the sacraments. However, at present, Pope Ratzinger's writings on the principle of democracy and dialogue prove that relativism has become a visible dilemma, also from the Catholic world-view. Pope Ratzinger, conveying a surprisingly relativist assertion, has argued:

'Democracy presupposes that no one can presume to know the true way, and that all roads are mutually recognised as fragments of the effort toward the 'common good'. Therefore, all roads seek something common in dialogue, and they compete regarding knowledge that cannot be compatible in one common form. A system of freedom ought to be essentially a system of positions that are connected with one another because they are relative as well as being dependent on historical situations open to new developments (Ratzinger VHS).

This quote highlights Ratzinger's awareness that Western liberal societies are relativist at heart. However, while this may seem valid for the relativity of the principles of politics and finance, the same is not defensible for the Catholic faith's claim of absolutes: 'Therefore, although a certain right to relativism in the social and political area should not be denied, the problem is raised at the moment of setting its limits.' Ratzinger's only reserve is against relativism in faith, as shown by his aversion to Liberation theology, which from the 1950s onwards, has advanced a radical rethinking of autocratic Catholicism.

Among the many nations in which Catholicism is the main religion, Italy is the country where the Roman Catholic Church is strongest. Its relevance to the nation's ways of life can be equalled only to those of Latin America, Poland, and Spain. It is undeniable that catholic values and rituals affect a percentage of the Italian society's public festivities and ceremonies.

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<sup>193</sup> Church-attendance in many parts of the Christian world has visibly declined, despite the fact that Christian values, attitudes and experiences are still salient (Bennett, 1995: 25)

Moreover, the Vatican still calls the community of believers to socio-religious activism. This typical situation implies that, despite the growing discussions over the need for a post-Catholic society, allowing participation to all citizens beyond their faiths, the cinema production companies and authors who work under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, are generally more promoted and financed, at the expense of those who declare themselves independent from religious affiliation.

While I approach the concluding chapter of my thesis, it has become clear that over the last twenty years, particularly after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the cultural and political landscape in which Italian Catholicism flourished has visibly changed, in part due to the demur of old ideologies. The consequence of the general crisis of the western socio-political-financial model for the Church of Rome is a limitation of its authorised range of interference in civil matters. The Italian lay society has fought a war to limit the Catholic Church's institutionalised intrusion into the nation's ways of life. Immigration and globalisation processes involving Islamic, Pentecostal, and New Age beliefs, have contributed to the new cultural landscape.

It still remains problematic that the Italian state authorises Catholic education as a discipline taught in state schools, with teachers appointed by means of a different selection channel, but salaried by the state, an anomaly which allows the Church to maintain its cultural hegemony over other religions.<sup>194</sup>

### 8.5 *Cinema censorship in multicultural Italy*

The Vatican's active part in the maintenance of a 'one-religion nation' situation has obviously not ended in 1984, when the Revision of the Lateran Agreements seemed to have halted its previous privileges, endorsed at legislative and constitutional level. What is peculiar today regarding the current position of the church is that, regardless of losing its legitimisation, the Vatican still plays a consistent role in the maintenance of the *status quo*, despite the growing presence in contemporary multi-ethnic Italy of many different cultures and religious beliefs (Battista, 2011: 7). Up until Pope Ratzinger, yet with considerable revolutionary changes under

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194 This privilege was endorsed in October 2010 by left-wing politician, Massimo D'Alema who, speaking as Italy's Prime Minister, to Monsignor Rino Fisichella the chief defender of the Catholic orthodoxy and promoter of the re-evangelization program, argued: 'The current political season aims at a re-evaluation of religion. The electoral system we are using today makes it once again essential for us to seek the contribution of Catholic voters to maintain the equilibrium of the different cultures active in this nation.' (Marco Damilano, 'Vade retro Berlusconi', *L'espresso*, 21 October 2010: 64)

Francis' papacy, the Church of Rome has proved to have little concern for entering a situation of equality with other religions. Understandably, despite having accepted the clear-cut separation from the state established by the Revision of the Lateran Agreements, the Vatican has resisted to accept a position of neutrality in Italy for evident hegemonic reasons (Acquaviva, 1971: 16). Concern, on the other side, has arisen in the civil society for the Church's no longer acceptable privileges, for instance, the Church's total tax exemption (ICI/IMU) on its patrimony, still active during the current wave of dis-Establishment of the Catholic Church (Norris and Inglehart 2004). It should be noted that despite the shifts occurring with the revision of the Lateran Agreements in 1984, the church strives to keep an unwavering control over the Italian society to maintain hegemonic control of the values of the Italian citizens and state under the auspice of the Catholic patronage. These defenders of Catholic ethics act as if their religious belief is a force for ideological unity, but putting it in practice as a weapon of social division, as was the case during the cited 2011 civil dispute over the presence of the crucifix in public schools. So strong are these actions that it is still common to find people of Catholic background in public campaigns, joining crusades against ethical divergence from the Church's predicaments as in the Catholic activists' campaigns against the appeal of the lay activists for a law, regulating euthanasia and assisted suicide.

### *c. New Millennium's political and cultural censorship*

I hereafter analyse contemporary cinematic works in which, despite the new regulations in matters of cinema censorship, clerical censorship has played a part in public condemnation. I present a number of emblematic cases, which may record shifts in the attitude towards religious dissidence of the Boards of Cinema Censorship. While I write (September 2013), the progressive portion of the Catholic society is appreciating the new pontiff Francis's ideological position in national and international affairs.<sup>195</sup> Signs show that Bergoglio may aim at promoting a less prescriptive, and more humanitarian role of the Church, in promoting dialogue between opposite fronts (Habermas and Mendieta, 20002: 56).

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<sup>195</sup> It is worth recalling Benedict XVI's abdication after being accused of malpractice for the way he dealt with paedophilia crimes perpetrated by priests, before being elected pope, while he was in charge of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. See also the recent scandal involving the IOR on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013, marked by the police's arrest of Archbishop Scarano, director of the Vatican's bank. The new pope Francis (Bergoglio) is expected to introduce revolutionary ideas and practices to reform the way the Vatican deals with internal cases of corruption.



The new approach will probably affect the way the church will negotiate its relationship with the arts and especially with the film industry. At the sociocultural level, despite the fact that the film industry has entered a phase of financial crisis, in the new pluralist and multiethnic Italy, cinema continues to exercise a huge influence on society, and to promoting change. Filmmaking thus remains one of the most effective and established vehicles of public opinion-making. In its entertainment/educational function, it fosters awareness of the new Italian multicultural religious and social landscape. It extends its function to promote cultural dialogue and ideological debate in the era of secularism and globalisation, as it has been traditionally the case. Examples of such a role in the 1990s are the films produced by Salvatores, Tornatore, and Sorrentino. The trend continues in the newest generation of filmmakers such as Massimiliano Bruno, Claudio Cupellini, Luca Miniero, Matteo Garrone, Matteo Rovere, Luca Guadagnino, Leonardo Pieraccioni, Luca Lucini, Alessandro Piva, and Marco Ponti, who are bringing to the screens, the nation's hope for change and desire for expressive freedom.

In its interplay between high and mass culture, Hollywood mainstream filmmaking and European *auteurism*, political convention and dissent, the cinema keeps presenting itself as one of the most complex forms of political and social debate. Indeed, films active in the public sphere, which are at the same time creators and demolisher of socio-cultural myths, the containers of common sense, as well as of challenging ideas and alternative perspectives than those endorsed by the *status quo*, remain, in the censors' sights. They inform the audience on circumstances that state, church, and the law may have concealed or altered.

It is interesting to note the growing engagement of the new generation of cinema directors in issues of cinema censorship. Peter Lee-Wright, *Violence and the Censors* (1995), David Kenny's *Fear, Panic and Censorship* (2000), Nigel Algar's *Salò: Fade to Black* (2001), Federico Caddeo's documentary on censorship *Nel supremo interesse della nazione* (2007), Elaina Archer's *Why Be Good? Sexuality and Censorship in Early Cinema* (2007), and Rob David's *Walking with Pasolini* (2008) all present the troublesome relations between the cinema artists and the censors, who continue to invigilate cinemas contents in the interest of protecting the *status quo*.

Before advancing into the cinema of the third millennium and its relationship with the old forms of clerical and state censorship, it is worth stressing how deeply the new era of multiculturalism and neo-liberalism has affected the Italian film industry, and film consumption within the European cultural and economic integration processes. At present, the

situation determined by the technological changes in production and distribution through chain cinema theatres, introducing videocassettes and DVDs, efficiently competes with state-run TV channels, thus marginalising the fields of action of censorship, which can only be effected against public screening but cannot touch the audience's private access to more independent media sectors (Gili 2003). In other words, the alternatives posed by the new regulations permit customised and personalised moderation of cinema viewing.

### *8.6 Cinema censorship: recent changes in cinema censorship's regulations*

In 1998, the suppression of the 'Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment' moved the Board of Censorship to the new 'Ministry of Heritage and Culture' ('Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali'). Despite the administrative change Law 161, 21 April 1962 ('Revision of the films and theatrical works'), reformed at various stages in the 1970s and 1980s, it was largely kept in force: the system maintained the old typology of censorship, by which films' screenings for national and foreign film markets had to be subjected to official boards, granting or rejecting clearance. In the 1990s, as in Law n. 161, censorship's normative included first and second degree appeal committees ('Prima e seconda commissione di appello'). The committees were appointed to supervise cinema and theatre performances to determine their suitability for the general public ('Revisione dei Film e delle Opere Teatrali'). The committees' assessment procedures comprised of two distinct levels: 1. 'first degree' revision stage, and 2. 'appeal' stage.

In July 2007, the 'Council of Ministers' ('Consiglio dei Ministri') passed the bill *Modifiche alla legge 21 aprile 1962, n.161, in tema di revisione cinematografica*, promoted by vice-Premier, Francesco Rutelli.<sup>196</sup> The new decree has abolished 'Preventive censorship' and thus secured a relative freedom to the cinema from external control.

However, the problem of censorship has not been eradicated as new regulations of self-monitoring have been introduced, which expects producers to issue self-certificates, and attest to whether a film is 'for all', or to be prohibited to viewers under the age of 18, 14 or 10

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<sup>196</sup> See 'Rivoluzione-censura: divieti per gli under 10 per i film obbligo di autocertificazione.', in 'Spettacoli e Cultura', Repubblica Online, 20 July 2007: 'Vietato ai minori di anni dieci. Nel cinema, alla tivù e anche nei videogame. Le nuove regole della censura sono contenute in un disegno di legge del vice-premier Francesco Rutelli approvato stamani dal Consiglio dei Ministri.'

[www.repubblica.it/2007/07/sezioni/spettacoli\\_e\\_cultura/censura-under-10/censura-under-10/censura-under-10.html](http://www.repubblica.it/2007/07/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/censura-under-10/censura-under-10/censura-under-10.html)

(Viriglio, 2000). This form of censorship is implemented by agreement and is based on social responsibility: hence, it is not immune from moralising clerical pressure. The code of agreement does not make the freedom of the media stronger, but rather weaker since it is subjected to implicit normative codes of behaviours. More so in the current separation of state and church, given that political organizations continues to maintain forms of identification with the religious establishment.

Producers still have the option to rely on the decision of a special committee nominated by the ‘Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali,’ whose aim is the classification of film contents according to the principles set for the protection of minors, established by the ‘Ministry of Heritage and Culture’. The committee is also expected to pass judgement on the decision-making processes and classificatory criteria. Whenever self-certifications is not considered appropriate or accurate, and the film is screened in public regardless of the limitations established by law, administrative penalties can be imposed to the producers for sums up to 100,000 Euro, and for penalties up to six months imprisonment.

Currently, there are eight existing Boards of censorship (‘Commissioni per la Revisione Cinematografica’). They are subjected to the ‘Dipartimento dello Spettacolo del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.’ Fees applied to films being reviewed go to the ‘Entertainment Department’, at the ‘Ministry of Heritage and Culture’. A chairperson, usually a magistrate or a Professor of Law, two members of the cinema industry (producers and distributors), as well as two representatives of the delegation of Children’s rights groups, two experts in film culture, and a psychologist make up each of these committees. Each committee includes a representative of the ‘Animal rights’ organisations, in all instances where animals take part in the film. The national Board of censorship assigns a set number of films to each of the eight committees. Committees can approve the distribution of the film they review (‘Per tutti’ / For all), or impose a ban to protect minors (‘Vietato ai minori di anni 14’ / Forbidden to minors of 14’).<sup>197</sup> The distribution company is allowed a gap of 20 days to put forward an appeal, or to amend the film, making the cuts and changes suggested by the reviewing committee so as to make the film suitable for an audience of minors.

Once the appeal is accepted, the Board examines the film again and decides whether or not to

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<sup>197</sup> A case of cinema censorship has reoccurred on the 8th March 2012, when the Italian board of censorship has issued a certificate ‘Vietato ai minori di 14 anni’ to the French film, *17 girls*, by filmmakers Muriel e Delphine Coulin (sisters).

confirm the ban, or revoke it, following the assessment of the amendments of the unapproved scenes. Thus today, public screening appears to be more concerned with the ‘moral protection of minor spectators’ rather than with political issues.

If the first grade committee does not judge a film’s elements as offensive, the administration will proceed automatically to the clearance of the product for public screening nationwide, and will permit the production company the sale of its film abroad. The ‘Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment’ issues the required certificates (‘Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo’) (Cesari, 1982: 37). The other functions of the first grade committee is to determine the level of prohibition to be imposed on the reviewed films and, finally, to issue certificates prohibiting the viewing of the film to 14 or 18 year old minors, according to the decision reached (‘Proibito ai minori di anni 14 / o 18’) (Viriglio 2000).<sup>198</sup> Decisions can be reviewed, if requested, by a second-degree committee accepting claims of appeal. The final clearance of a film is issued by the same ‘Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment.’

When a total banning decision is made, the first grade committee is required to elaborate in detail the reasons for prohibiting the incriminated film’s public screening, and explain why it has been judged offensive either in its entirety or with respect to individual scenes and sequences. The ‘Appeal Committee’ (‘Commissione di Appello’) receives and assesses the producers and distributors’ possible claims against the judgment expressed by the first-degree committee on their films. The author, and any applicant for the clearance of the work under review, may, if they so request, be heard. If the author, producer, and distributor wish to challenge the decision of both first and second grade committees (that is, when permission for public screening or admission to minors is denied), the law allows to make an appeal to one of the regional T.A.R Boards (‘Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale’) and, then, to the ‘Consiglio di Stato’ (‘State Council’).

In relation to the specific subject matter, when it comes to censorship over matters involving religion, Sallustro argues in *Storia del cinema italiano. Censure. Film mai nati, probiti, perduti, ritrovati*, the current law can merely ascertain that a film’s contents are not offensive of the people’s religious sentiment (Sallustro, 20007: 8). However, censorial surveys can nevertheless affect, either positively or negatively, the reputation of a filmmaker at various

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198 Art. 5, Law 21 April 1962, on the legal protection of minors, can in some circumstances grant a partial permission limiting the vision of the film to viewers younger than 18, 14 or, under the new normative, 10 years of age.

degree of severity.

### *8.7 Cinema, religion and satire*

Art. 33 of the Constitution protects freedom to art-works in two different ways: 1. by the author's right to broadcast his/her creation and critical opinions, and 2. by the right of the people to expand through art and free information their intellectual heritage. In truth-films, for instance, the Italian law grants filmmakers the right to artistic representations and the right to criticism and satire.

The Italian legislation recognises satire as an art form as well as a right related to 'seeking, receiving and imparting information or ideas', regardless of the medium and style of delivery used to convey information. It thus falls within the 'freedom of speech' constitutional right. Satire is often interpreted as a form of artistic dissidence.

An author's right to represent religious satire is recognised by Art. 33 of the Constitution. Nevertheless, this right is subjected to restrictions. In fact, although Art. 33 of the Italian constitution protects freedom of expression, when satire addresses religious institutions, principles, figures, and community, the code faces a constitutional contradiction because the artists' right to freedom of expression clashes with the protection by law of people's 'religious sentiment' (Spirito 1989: 34). In these cases, Art. 19 of the Constitution, which protects 'freedom of religion' is called in to force.

The Penal code can be called into force by Arts. 403, 404 and 405, which prohibit and punish the crime defined 'contempt of religion'. Any satirical work screened in public, and charged with 'contempt of religion,' is thus legally assessed against the rights of the contenders. Court decisions must counterbalance the constitutional laws whose norms and principles guarantee 'freedom of thought' and 'freedom of artistic expression' on the one hand, and on the other, 'freedom of religion' and 'the right to reputation' (Viriglio 2000: 24).

Religious satire can be better described as an author's polemical engagement with certain ecclesiastic themes, controversies, current affairs involving the clergy and/or the role of religion and religious people in society. It generally targets 1.) individual characters (the Pope, members of the clergy) in their status as spiritual authorities within a certain religion, or 2.) religious entities, values, icons. The first category does *not* pose particular legal problems, for the reason that, when a religious authority, belonging to a given ecclesiastical hierarchy, is

publicly derided, there may be ideological and political quarrels underlying the derision, often connected to news reports and tabloids, which cannot be punished, due to people's right to inform and be informed (Hofmann 1985). However, in Italy, the penal code may forbid and punish the expressions of satire perceived as offensive of people's 'religious sentiment' and 'freedom of cult'. As Antonello Tomanelli argues in the legal forum, *Difesa dell'informazione*, it is 'unlawful' to deride religious communities. This is because satirical attacks may eventually cause offence to individuals, who have *not* chosen to expose themselves to public satire, unlike those who hold positions of significance in the religious hierarchy (Tomanelli 2007).

In the arts, the domain of the mythical and the folklore is the *locus amoenus* of parody (Bakhtin 1965). Satirical themes ridiculing religious figures, specifically ecclesiasts involved in politics and public education, have been frequent in Italian cinema. In the reformed media regulations of contemporary Italy, even the Pope is not immune from becoming a target of satire (see Maurizio Crozza's caricature of Ratzinger and Bergoglio in the TV show, *Crozza nel paese delle meraviglie*) since even the Pope has somewhat 'chosen' to undergo public exposure. On the other hand, when satire targets religious symbols (the crucifix, the crown of thorn, the sacramental apparatus) and spiritual entities (Christ, God, the Virgin Mary, the holy dove, the Saints) – law can intervene to protect people's religious feelings from vilification of religion. The reason being that religious symbols and spiritual entities speak about people's private sentiments (Tomanelli 2007). Undeniably, if it is true that an egalitarian nation should favour free open debates on matters relating to religion and beliefs and authorize satire as part of people's right to freedom of expression, it should also be expected from it legal protection of the citizens' religious sentiment.

Satire, in Italian cinema – the being ridiculously subversive towards people, facts or institutions using the grotesque in filmic contexts – has been, and is accepted or prohibited by the legislators at various degrees of tolerability. Satire at the expense of society, folk customs, and national/religious values has often been exploited by the power system as a screen to cover up the discrimination of political filmmaking, using satire for ideological deeds to oppose the *status quo*. Examples of such truth in the past were provided by a variety of films interpreted by the popular comic actors such as Totò, Franco Franchi, and Ciccio Ingrassia, whose satirical performances were generally interpreted by the censors as simply clownesque with little defamatory impact on the prestige of the people caricatured. This form of satire is generally

accepted as allowing the community to come up to the same level of the authorities being satirised, and gain some degree of judgement over their roles.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, despite the revolutionary 60s, intellectual satire against the *status quo* has remained hardly tolerated and is often sanctioned. Indeed, ideological caricatures of public authorities remained a constant target of censorship, from Fellini's *Roma* (1972), ridiculing the Catholic hierarchies as fallen into the vortex of leisure and consumerism, to Sabina Guzzanti's docufiction *Draquila* (2010) on Prime Minister Berlusconi's vices and obsessions.<sup>200</sup>

It is not difficult to see how Fellini and Pasolini's anticlerical satire, from the viewpoint of Catholic censors, may appear subversive. Despite the two filmmakers' growing fame, the Catholics found it difficult to accept their nonconforming approach to religion. The censorial procedures that involved Fellini's masterwork *8 ½*, alternating realism and surrealism, and Pasolini's *La ricotta*, *Teorema*, and *I racconti di Canterbury* prepared the grounds to the process whereby Italian dissident cinema has progressively disengaged itself from clerical surveillance. It is worth mentioning that satire against the church, as part of the tradition stemming from the profane folk rituals connected to religious celebrations, tends to ridicule the political role of clerical figures (as in Renzo Arbore's quoted film *Il Pa'occhio* and Dario Fo's *Satyricon*) and less often the individual believers' principles of faith (as in Bellocchio's *L'ora di religione*). TV and media critic Jo Coppola, in stressing that good comedy is social criticism, already in 1958 argued that telecasters, frightened by the threats and pressure of sponsors, blacklists, and viewers, contributed to introduce conformity and self-censorship (Coppola 1958: 20). Theatre author and actor, Dario Fo has made a distinction between caricature and satire:

'A caricature, no question, is entirely good-natured. [...] It does not truly affect ideology,

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199 Bakhtin, following the desecration of religious order in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, argues that during the Renaissance, the use of the grotesque, burlesque and carnivalesque in literature and theatre aimed at reverting the power's social order by the use of satire. This was achieved by elevating gross triviality to the highest spheres, albeit temporarily, and within the coming together of the profane and the sacred in laughable circumstances. Bakhtin argues that folk scatological narratives implicitly confirms the higher spheres' irreducible power (Bakhtin 1965).

200 From the AFI Catalogue, one gathers innumerable samples of political satire against church and state. One example is Chaplin's critique of the Nazi regime in *The Great Dictator* (1940). Fellini's *Roma* suggested that the ostentatious style of the religious garments celebrates the Vatican state's legitimacy as a regime dependent on performance. Rising from Fellini's idea of cinema as an unrestrained imaginative and intellectual force, *Rome's* satire outraged the Vatican, yesterday, just as today it is outraged by *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons* (The AFI Catalogue. *Federico Fellini. Roma* 1972).

morality and the cultural dimension of the characters and authorities submitted to ridicule. In fact politicians feel flattered by being mocked and ridiculed, it is almost a bonus that bestows them.’ Cabaret theatre’s satire, on the other hand, examines the way in which public characters wield power and keep it, exposes their hardly disguised violence, their arrogance and especially their hypocrisy.’ (Fo, 1990: 2-3)

In an interview on a private TV channel, much censored satirist, Daniele Luttazzi,<sup>201</sup> who in his career has provided many instances of transversal satire against the *status quo*, has highlighted that satirists are entitled to ‘inform, deform and do all that which pleases them to do’. He once criticised the absurdity of the Church’s political control over artistic dissent *via* a cunning remark on God’s existence: ‘*Se Dio avesse voluto che credessimo in lui, sarebbe esistito!* / If God had wanted us to believe in him, he would have existed’ (Luttazzi 2006). Luttazzi in the YouTube interview, *Decameron, satira e censura*, has argued: ‘Satire it is not vulgar. It is explicit. It technically reduces every subject to bodily functions to subvert the power’s established hierarchies. Satire does not offend people. It offends only their prejudices. Satire does not convey hatred, but only irreverence’ (Luttazzi).

#### 8.8 Latest cases of cinema censorship (from 1992 onwards)

Under the old legislation, between the foundation of the first Italian Republic, in 1946, and 1992, the date, which traditionally signs the beginning of the Second Republic,<sup>202</sup> seven films were banned at various degree of severity: 1. *Colpo di stato*, by Luciano Salce; 2. *Arancia meccanica*, by Stanley Kubrick; 3. *Ultimo tango a Parigi*, by Bernardo Bertolucci; 4. *Gola profonda* by Gerard Damiano; 5. *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* by Pier Paolo Pasolini; 6. *Sesso nero*, by Joe D’Amato; 7. *Il leone del deserto*, by Moustapha Akkad. From 1992

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201 Luttazzi, who had already suffered media censorship and had been expelled from RAI, was charged with ‘vilification of nation’ in 2001, because during his TV program, *Satyricon*, in the course of an interview with Marco Travaglio stated: ‘You are a free journalist in this *shitty* nation.’ The legal trial against Luttazzi, Travaglio and authors Carlo Freccero and Roberto Zaccaria was filed on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002 by GIP Orlando Villoni who states that the ‘crime of vilification are incompatible with the Constitutional liberties’ (‘Decreto di archiviazione. Previa declaratoria di inammissibilità dell’opposizione (arts.409 – 410).

202 As Mughini explains in *Un disastro chiamato Seconda Repubblica. Miti, protagonisti e soubrette di un’Italia che declina*, the ‘Second Republic’ officially started when Berlusconi, owner of the most important Italian media channels, became Prime Minister of the Italian government, following a powerful political campaign despite a bill being passed in 8th February 1995 on the equitable distribution of media time in party propaganda (*par condicio*). Berlusconi’s media empire secured enduring governance to his party coalition (Mughini, 2005).



onwards, a relatively small number of films have undergone censorial trials. 1. *Totò che visse due volte* (1998) by Ciprì e Maresco; 2. *Li chiamarono briganti!*, by Pasquale Squitieri (the film was sequestered from the cinema theatres and the distribution in VHS and DVD prohibited); 3. *Oil*, by Massimiliano Mazzotta;<sup>203</sup> 4. *Citizen Berlusconi*, by Susan Gray e Andrea Cairola (the film on Berlusconi's intrigues was banned from the Italian state TV channels up until 2009 and shown only on the private 'Pay TV'); 5. *Bye Berlusconi!*, by Jan Henrik Stahlberg (this critique of Berlusconi, featured at the Berlin Film Festival in 2006 has been prevented distribution in Italy).<sup>204</sup> In the following section I will discuss *Totò che visse due volte*'s legal misadventures as they epitomise the most remarkable last case of clerical censorship occurring in recent years. It is interesting to note that the film has aesthetical resemblances with Pasolini's *La ricotta*, but particular ideological connections with Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (1979) for its subversive elements of religious parody.

### 8.9. Case study 3. Satire against religion: Totò che visse due volte

'What is 'sacrilegious' in a film under the penal code has pestered the courts for too long', the Judge of Supreme Court of USA argued, while absolving Rossellini's *The Miracle* from the legal ban prompted by clerical censorship, deciding for its total release in the 1952 court appeal, which I covered in Chapter 5. Rescued from the hounding of the Roman Curia's politics of sanctity, *The Miracle*'s favourable legal outcomes in the United States helped filmmakers to avoid persecution for expressing their free views of religion.

On the contrary, in Italy, despite the Italian constitution protecting freedom of opinion, speech, representation, and satire, the penal code has been enabled to impose many restrictions on non-orthodox filmic portrayals of religion in its multifaceted aspects, including restrictions to religious satire. For my final case study, I will discuss how the legal grounds for initiating a film censorship trial have been reduced in recent years. This was made possible by the court judge's decision against the case of cultural/aesthetic boycott raised by film critic Irene Bignardi against the film *Totò che visse due volte*. I argue that Bignardi's reaction to the film's

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203 Mazzotta's documentary film on the environmental damages caused by the pollution created by the industrial factory SARAS at Sarroch was sequestered by a magistrate and submitted to censorial scrutiny.

204 Among the most recent cultural initiatives against cinema censorship, see 'They Hate Us for Our Freedom, 'Arte e Censura', organised by Claudia Giordano e Giuseppe Racanelli at 'CSOA Mercato Occupato Artisti', Bari, 19 feb. 2011.

contents may reveal the accuser's personal sphere of indignation, otherwise defined by law as 'religious sentiment'.

Hereafter, I propose to trace this process in *Totò che visse due volte* to discuss the censorship case (1998, Censorship case: 92406 – 16 March 1998),<sup>205</sup> which was triggered by its irreverent and blasphemous storyline. As the two Sicilian avant-garde cinema filmmakers Ciprì and Maresco expected, the film was immediately disqualified and threatened of total suppression on the charge of 'defamation of religion,' for constructing an attack on Catholic belief. The two filmmakers intentionally included overtly sacrilegious material and scatological humour, which clerical censors usually regard as potentially offensive.

The plot tells the story of some Sicilian mafia men, which the camera portrays in their criminal and lustful rituals of law-breaking and illegal interactions. Their daily cynical and sordid codes of behaviours are presented as a sort of subspecies of perverse religion affiliation. The authors did not deny the intention to perform a satire of institutionalised Catholicism to underline the limited ways by which people consume national and religious culture. The sequence of events intertwines the mafia criminality's violent and obscene language with a grotesque use of the Catholic iconography. Religious signs are misplaced and re-contextualised within highly profane, vulgar settings, suggesting a total lack of moral restraint on the part of the interpreters who embody biblical figures: the leper, the Samaritan, and the good thief, all rendered as total delinquents and losers, uttering obscene language in front of the camera lens. Camera movements penetrate their world expressive of a permanent fall of the Italian civilisation.

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<sup>205</sup> Relevant considerations on this trial are made in Ciprì e Maresco in tribunale (Robiony 1999), *Truffa e vilipendio rinviati a giudizio* Ciprì e Maresco (Bonanno 1999), and *Al rogo il cinema truffatore* (Tornabuoni 1999).



(Photo: Totò che visse due volte)

The film is structured on three interconnected episodes. The first part tells the misadventures of Paletta, a local village idiot, who, in order to buy himself a prostitute, steals an ornament from a place of worship, which belongs to a local mafia 'boss'. The second part tells the story of Pitrinu, who is betrayed by his lover Fefè. The third and final episode is a satirical rewriting of Jesus' last days. It recounts the story of wretched Lazarus, who, after being killed by the mafia boss Don Totò, is resuscitated by a fastidious and irritable district prophet, also known as Totò (the role of the two Toto's is played by the same actor). Totò-Christ, moving around in exaggerated situations, is pestered by Judas who begs him for a miracle, and by Lazarus's relatives, who implore him to resurrect Lazarus from death.

Characters are framed in squalid contexts, devoid of all hope, in which humanity is shown as forever damned and depraved. Panoramic shots present a landscape of scraps of religious icons as barren as a wasteland. Close-ups make the indecency of these characters utterly untenable. Evil and degradation, in all their various aspects and environments, are framed within a low angle to look enormous and threatening. The camera lens shows a grotesque and pitiless world crowded with filthy individuals and values.

The choice of black & white dramatises the crude environment, which elicits a sharper reaction to the protagonists' degraded moral and social conditions. It plays a strategic role in depicting the sordid style of the characters' criminality and sacrilegious attitudes. Empty time, as a

representational component, is dramatised to create a sense of inescapable desolation, above which religion has no part to play. Shots on doggy details are excessively long. The idle pace of the various scenes is intended to create the viewers' embarrassment on the film's brutal human scenario.

The film's strange protagonists, caught in their nonsensical world are reminiscent of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, constantly penniless and hanging around at crossroads of degraded peripheries. In *Totò che visse due volte*, a winged flaneur suggestive of Archangel Gabriel conveys a mock characterisation of the Italian lower classes' socio-religious adaptation to their deprived world's irremediable gloom. He lives among semi-delinquent working-class people and dejected beggars, in a landscape of ruins, abandoned fields, filthy blocks of houses and uneven roads, crowded with morally dishonoured villains, taken into spirals of lust, fraudulent earnings and revenge. Lazarus, as the other biblical sub-quotation, once raised from the dead, seeks revenge for having been killed, and begins to look for his three assassins. In the meanwhile, a cripple Judas, annoyed at being neglected by his master Jesus-Totò, betrays him so that mafia character, Don Totò, captures Totò-Jesus and dissolves his body in a pool of acid. In other incriminated sequences, three obese men and a retarded villain rape the angel Gabriel.

Gramsci's *Note sul Machiavelli* (Gramsci, 1949: V. 4) offers key theories for the examination of power of the Catholic hegemony satirized in Cipri and Maresco's film, which suggests conclusions very similar to those reached by Pasolini in *La ricotta*: the Sicilian proletariat will never become part of the dominant historical block since militant Catholic intellectuals (also priests) will never create appropriate political alliances between the Northern economic leaderships and the southern workforces, especially in the mafia's territories. What is more, state and mafia's power lobbies will never allow left-wing organic intellectuals' cultural agenda to attain leadership to promote the totality of the interests and aspirations of the poorer social classes they represent, let alone to achieve reforms for the benefit of the working-class sectors.

Gramsci noted that to overcome this unbalance, and to create a new historical block, the communist party, with the help of the working classes, needed to obtain consensus from the peasantry. The working classes, he claimed, had a chance of acquiring ruling power by raising concern for the nation's cultural, social and economic dichotomies. The political militancy of the working classes, Gramsci argued, could solve the divisions between the agrarian and the industrial socio-geographical areas in Italy, thus surpassing the hegemony historical blocks

created by the alliance between the North's capitalists and the South's landowners and also help to emancipate the popular masses from the Vatican's hegemonic influence. (Gramsci, 1949: V. 21, Ch. 5)

Consequently, it may be inferred that the film implicitly criticises the left-wing Italian parties for not being sufficiently committed to resolving the Southern question at the national level, thus separating the claims of the workers in the north, from those of the peasants in the South. Another indirect satirical issue in the film shows how Vatican's policies preserve the differences between the subaltern cultures of the faithful and the Church's higher spheres. Indeed, Gramsci attributed the fact that the southern question would remain unsolved to the peasantry's subjection to the Vatican.

Cipri and Maresco show that the Catholic religion's worship practices, superstitions, devotions, religious solemnity, dogmas, symbols, formulas, sacramental liturgy, and vertical hierarchy, not only create persuasion, construct consensus for the hegemony of the Catholic society, and maintain the Church's power: they keep the poorer classes completely subdued.

The organic, clerical intellectuals (the clergy) in fact avoid integrating the theology of the Church with the beliefs and rituals of the common people in order to prevent the emergence of other forms of beliefs ('popular religion'). (Gramsci, 1949, V. IV, Ch. I: 104-115). Because of the two filmmakers' abrasive dissident discourse, censorship was invoked against the film's offensive representational style and the two authors were accused of blasphemy. Protests arose from some religious groups asking for the total banning of *Totò che visse due volte* from being shown, thus determining a boycott of the producer and distributor's marketing campaign. Protesters objected particularly to the scene where one of the three men copulates with a hen, while a donkey sexually molests the icon of the Vergin Mary.

The bizarre protagonist ends up nailed to the cross together with the other two delinquents, Paletta and Fefé, like Pasolini's villain Stracci. The filmmakers' assemblage of odd elements taken from the Neorealist cinematic tradition contributes to a sharp parody of the miserable condition of contemporary humankind.

In response to a negative censorial review, published in the Catholic magazine, *Avvenire*, the two filmmakers stressed that the true scandal was only in the censors' glance. They argued with humour that the church should censor its clergy people and prevent, for instance, priests to attend TV talk shows. In justifying their intentions, they stressed:

‘The film is permeated by a strong religious sentiment, but certainly not that of the church. It is the feeling of those who feel abandoned, of distraught men, which perceive the absence of God, as proportionately, in Dostoevsky’s characters. [...] We have not been asked to cut scenes.

The committee just thought that our film sucks. However, it is absurd such a return to the past, to the cultural climate of twenty years ago when a masterpiece as *Last Tango in Paris* was entirely banned. I wonder if it still makes sense, in a Western country and modern as Italy, the existence of a censorship committees, which decides that which we, as viewers, can see and that which should be forever banned. [...] Having said that, we do understand that some scenes may cause heart failure, especially in watching the third episode in which Jesus is depicted in a very human and territorial manner. However, it is ‘clear that religion, in Italy, is the last *taboo*.’ (Ciprì and Maresco 1998: 5)

At the ideological level, *Totò che visse due volte* sarcastically exhibits the interplay of forces which Gramsci defined in terms of ‘hegemony and counter-hegemony’. By amplifying the protagonists’ attitudes, which range from foolish quiescence with, and radical opposition to the national church’s religious symbols and figures of worship, Ciprì and Maresco attach satire to the dialectics between power, religion, and society, tearing them apart with extremes. In each of the three stories, religion is the undercurrent oppositional discourse constantly being parodied. It maintains, for this reason, a predominant function in the characters’ disrespect against Catholic-ingrained symbols of social control.

Crudely, and at times even brutally, Ciprì and Maresco show how socially dominant groups (the mafia and the church, in this context) influence in all ways possible, the conscience of the film’s protagonists who belong to very deprived strata of society. Their unawareness does not allow them to take in either moral teachings or discipline. They embody, the subclasses’ instinctual transgression, similar to that of Pasolini’s Stracci, whose frenzy and sterile resistance had no particular effect on the *status quo*, but proved effective only at the allegorical level in the sphere of satire.

This is a self-damaging subversive reaction, which, according to Gramsci, the committed intellectual must redirect to allow the oppressed individuals to develop class-conscience (Gramsci 1949). Gramsci’s theory of hegemony sheds light on the ideological mechanism at work in Ciprì and Maresco’s satirical film, as it considers both the Catholic cultures and mafia sub-culture, as semiautonomous spheres of society that play critical mediating and interfering

roles in collective life and national culture.

***Cipri and Maresco's parody of the lower classes' religious identity under the ethical hammer of Italian film critic Bignardi***

The film's censorial misadventures started at the 1998 Berlin Film Festival, the day when Italian cinema critic, Irene Bignardi, in the article 'Vale i soldi pubblici il presepe di Totò?' that appeared in *La repubblica*, judged the film as inadmissible at the aesthetic and thematic level and unworthy of the spectators' money:

'I've tried any possible way to make myself like it. I did transcendental meditation. I've seen all the films in the Berlin Film Festival diligently, hoping that, by the triviality of many of them, I could grow more favourable towards appreciating something 'different'. [...] But *no*: I have not come to accept the worth of Cipri and Maresco's crib. It does not touch me. I'm not outraged by it. I do not feel irritated or upset either [...] I simply feel *bored*. I realise that there is a large group of fans of the two Palermitan filmmakers: so, there must be something wrong with me.' (Bignardi 22 Feb. 1998)

Despite denying being morally outraged by Cipri and Maresco's 'vulgarisation' of religion as the nation cultural signifier, highbrow film critic Bignardi did in fact act an evergreen form of censorship, which is based on intellectual snobbery. Indeed, her review suggests a form of boycott, which translates into artistic derision based on 'aesthetic', 'quality' and 'taste' grounds rather than on moral ones. Bignardi also puts into practice what can be viewed as a relatively old form of censorship: financial boycott. She first objected to the film's pretentious caption, 'Of national cultural interest'. She then expressed outrage that public money was used to finance a film production 'unworthy the attention of an international cinema Gala':<sup>206</sup>

'I simply find it strange that *Totò che visse due volte* is presented at the *Panorama* in Berlin as a film of 'national cultural interest.' One could consider the definition a comic misinterpretation, except for the fact that it implies a participation of public money. [...] Disguised as grotesque transgression, this is but an intellectual masturbation, which offends women, homosexuals and the poor. The unpleasantness of the *mise-en-scene* does not leave any space to any emotional reaction whatsoever, beyond the few laughs of some naive fellow,

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<sup>206</sup> The caption 'Of national cultural interest' is there to inform viewers that a given film has received financial support from the State.

brave enough to giggle at the sight of a huge donkey's member and of a miserable who masturbate against the statue of the Virgin Mary.' (Bignardi 22 Feb. 1998).

Bignardi's remonstrance immediately stirred a quarrel between the defenders' of national decorum and those supporting the two artists' right to freedom of expression, in matters of cultural satire and critique of religion. Bignardi herself intervened with the authorities to have the film's original rating, VM18, revised. After a few days, the newspapers announced the veto of the censorship committee of the 'Ministry of the Performing Arts' against the film's degrading representation of the dignity of the Sicilian people, the Italian population, and humanity as a whole. The Committee charged the film for 'offence to the viewers' religious sentiment', 'public indecency', and declared it 'morally deplorable' 'blasphemous' and 'sacrilegious' in its disparagement of the Catholic religion. The basic issues, agreed on by the majority of members in the Audit Committee, on 2nd March, and which prevented the issuing of a valid certificate for the film's public screening, identified in the plot 1. 'Reckless psychopathological representations aimed at degrading the dignity of the people of Sicily, the Italian nation and humanity'; 2. 'A clear violation of Article 21 of the Constitution offensive of the public decency; 3. A clear violation of Articles 402 and related issues in the Penal Code, as the film expresses contempt of the religious sentiment in general, and of Christianity in particular, disregarding the values and qualities which the community attributes to the sacred and its components (dogmas and rites); 4. The sacrilegious intention behind the squalor of the scenes, the filthy and disgusting sequences steeped in moral degradation, the gratuitous violence and perverse bestial sexuality.' The verdict's admonition was: 'The right of the directors to express irreverent opinions and attitudes as unbelievers shall be limited by the respect due to the religious sentiment of the community of viewers' (*Repubblica* 4 March 1998). It is important therefore to also discuss some revealing details of this last court trial for contempt of religion. In the attempt to prohibit the screening of the Cipri and Maresco's film, the 'Commissione di Revisione Cinematografica' issued a 'forbidden to all' certificate the day before the film's official release. The banning covered the entire national territory, without the benefit of any age-related restrictive certificate. However, following the decision of the TAR of the Lazio region in March, the film was de-sequestered, allowing distributors to circulate it under an age restriction certificate (*Vietato ai minori di anni 18*) (Sallustro, 20007: 109).<sup>207</sup>

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207 'This involved not only the inability to distribute, circulate, and show the film to the public, but also the freezing of the financing after the Cinema Advisory Committee of the Italian Department of Performing Arts had considered it valuable following the viva of the Commissione credito



Having failed to obtain the total banning of *Totò che visse due volte*, the involved civil agency made a new petition, requesting the police authorities to act against the two filmmakers, who ended up denounced for the alleged crime of ‘offence of the religious sentiment’ and ‘attempted fraud’. However, the Rome Court released both the filmmakers and producer and allowed the public screening of the film in cinema theatres, as its content was judged as not intended to hurt the viewers’ religious sentiment. The case brought back to the constitutionalists’ attention that the laws concerning freedom of opinion, expression and representations entail the illegitimacy of the governmental measures of ‘prior censorship’ and of pre/postproduction banning imposed on filmed materials. To solve the untenable implications of preventive cinema censorship, a decree was drafted a few months later by Minister Walter Veltroni (‘Modifiche alla legge 21 aprile 1962, n.161, in tema di revisione cinematografica’) to remove articles 5, 9, 15 of law 161, ‘Film Revision’. The approbation of the decree by the Council of Ministers on July 2007 eliminated ‘preventive censorship’ of cinema works. (Celi 2008). Veltroni argued: ‘It is a bill conceived in the spirit of making Italy like other European countries. It is not the product of an ideological battle. We have removed the option for the censorship committees which survey the contents of films to prevent films to be screened in public theatres.’<sup>208</sup> The newly approved regulation removed the possibility that censorship committees may prohibit the public screening of a film by means of a prior decision, and introduced stricter restrictions for the protection of minors (Fumarola, 14 March 1998).

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cinematografico’ (Sallustro 2007: 107).

208 “La tutela del buoncostume, prevista dall’ ultimo comma dell’ articolo 21 della Costituzione, resta affidata: sul piano amministrativo, ai divieti imposti ai minori di assistere agli spettacoli; sul piano penale, ai reati previsti dagli articoli 528 e 668 del codice penale.” (Fumarola, 14 March 1998)



**(Photo: *Totò che visse due volte*)**

In discussing the guidelines regulating censorship, Italian intellectual, Edoardo Sanguineti, in an interview with Tatti Sanguineti on the censorial case of *Totò che visse due volte*, entitled *Censura, religione, cultura*, underlines the incongruence of the reasons at the root of censorship by religion:

‘If I were a believer, I would not be bothered if someone would hurt my religious sentiment. As a true believer, I would be serene even before offensive and outrageous interpretations of my values and faith. I’d say that in the Gospels such tolerance exists. Despite whatever versions others may claim, Jesus the Christ was not bothered at being disapproved. I believe that ‘censorship nostalgia’ is one of the elements that mostly affect our (Italian) society. Formally speaking, such notion should not exist. A vast majority of the things we can read and watch today were inconceivable only a few decades ago [...] Regardless of this, I think that the Vatican is constantly reworking its policy to take back its political powers to control the media. John Paul II seems a very rigid ruler on these matters, and in maintaining the power relations, which also Italian politicians wish to keep with the Vatican.’ (Sanguineti 2005).

*Totò che visse due volte* is indeed an anti-establishment satire radically challenging the *status*

quo. Its anti-realistic techniques (sound, light, speech) announce an apocalyptic time crowded with abhorrent humans in a godforsaken land. Describing the film as a dialectical interplay of sacred and profane, achieved by means of cunning satire, Sanguineti highlighted the anarchical nature of Cipri and Maresco's film:

‘For me *Totò che visse due volte* has a strong cultural significance, and can be judged as a masterpiece in cinema history. Yet the political and social significance of this film makes us reflect on the fact that, while the industry is allowed to broadcast horrendous, morally obscene films, if a film with a strong quality of cultural research – that is, with a drive not to exploit the public services, on the basis of non-existing virtues, but to convey elements capable of making the audience think critically – endeavours to offer a more realistic vision of the current state of affairs, such a film is banned. [...] The ways in which religious stereotypes are represented in *Totò che visse due volte* come from a definitely secular, lay perspective. Twentieth-century culture has been, in my opinion, remarkably anarchical in spirit: Marinetti, Majakovskij, Buñuel, Ejsenstejn, Brecht, and Bréton. Luckily, Cipri and Maresco are the heirs of such Twentieth century tradition. I consider them the ideal conclusion of this sort of process.’ (Sanguineti 2005: 18) In a democratic country like Italy, based on the principle of popular sovereignty, ‘freedom of satire’ is a valuable right, which should be unrestrictedly exercised by all individuals who are capable of advancing social progress through comicality. In generating cultural dissidence, knowledge, and awareness, satire must be safeguarded by law. Satire is the essence of the constitutional ‘freedom of thought. It does not merely circulate information: it communicates philosophy along with parody, social critique, anger, blame, and misrepresentation, etc. It is worth noting that ‘Contempt of religion’, in 1998, was still regulated under the civil and penal codes. As a crime, it was accordingly punished whenever an offender, called before the Civil Court by an offended part, is found guilty of, and punished for promoting behaviours of hatred or contempt of religion or the church (Sallustro, 2007: 107). The principle implies that the offender’s right to freedom of speech and opinion ends where the offended part’s right to protect his or her ‘religious sentiment’ begins. The Italian legislation under ‘contempt of religion’ includes any verbal act or behaviour, which defies the authority, justice, and dignity of the church.<sup>209</sup> Currently, swearing and blasphemy are no longer crimes.

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209 Contempt charges may be brought against individuals and groups. Generally, ‘contempt of religion’ proceedings can be categorised as either civil or criminal, direct or indirect. Criminal contempt can occur within both a civil and criminal case. A civil contempt usually is a violation of the rights of one religious entity, whereas a criminal contempt is an offence against religion. The publication or screening of any material that may result in ‘contempt’ charges falls within the ‘indirect contempt’

The Constitutional Court cancelled the article of the Criminal Code, which was punishable with up to one year of imprisonment on defamation of state religion. The High Court has entrenched the equal dignity of all faiths. As I have mentioned in Ch. 4.6, the Constitutional Court Judge, Gustavo Zagrebelsky, also cancelled the offence of blasphemy (Law n. 508, 13, 20, 11, 2000). Hence, Cipri and Maresco's creation, no matter how bizarrely rendered, addressed religion anthropologically to fill the gaps between popular and high culture. If we assume Gramsci's notion of hegemony's discourse and the dissidents' counter discourse in *Quaderni dal carcere*, the two filmmakers then appear to have contributed to stir change. It is very likely that *Totò che visse due volte* will remain a last instance of censorship for 'contempt of religion', as censors have lost the constitutional and legislative authority to attack a film for being irreligious or blasphemous.<sup>210</sup>

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category. The manner in which an act against the dignity of a religious authority or institution is committed, or the tone by which words and images are presented, can determine the Court decision on whether contempt has occurred. Circumstances, such as the context and medium in which contempt is uttered, the tone and style of expression, the manner and the emphasis, are also evaluated by the Court (Viriglio 2000).

210 For an interesting thesis on post-Christianity see Fabienne Sauvageot, *Il Cristiano e il Potere, Essere per il Futuro*, by Pietro Prini, Review in *Les Études philosophiques*, N. 4, *Philosophie Italienne* (Octobre-Décembre 1994), Presses Universitaires de France: 587.

## *CHAPTER 9 - Conclusions*

The history of the cinema produced by religious dissidents or non-believers is studded with constant troubles caused by state censorship or religion boycott, which always find new ways to silence or persecutes reformers. This may appear inevitable for films produced and screened in Italy, a prevalently Catholic country with a centralized Headquarters in the Vatican City which does not wish to give up its sovereignty, and which regularly solicits legal punishment and moral condemnation for those who do not follow the Pope's dictates. Indeed, even now, despite this notion has been overtaken by events and reforms changing Italy from a confessional state to a totally secular one, the Pope's ethical concerns have massive overexposure both inside and outside the Vatican City. This phenomenon is due to the general consensus for the idea of Italy as a Catholic country, justifying the intrusion of the clergy in finance, education, public ceremonies, media broadcasting, trade unions, and even police and military force. Indeed, the two thousand years of Catholic's presence on the peninsula has left deep traces, which cannot be easily annulled as I have demonstrated in the course of my discussion.

My research has reconstructed the different channels through which, by means of legal procedures and cultural influence, the explicit Vatican's ethical design against the dangers of cinema mass consumption has managed to attain the censorial persecution of filmmakers and films accused of immorality or irreligion. I have examined clerical censorship on the cinema industry, moving from Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Foucault's genealogical method of historical analyses of power, to construct my personal assumption on the interconnection of religion and political power, hypothesis that have resisted straightforward classification.

I have discussed how the industry has responded to the actions taken against cinematic representations proscribed by law and by clerical boycott, inside and outside the institutional framework of film censorship. This study has consequently identified the historical developments of the phenomena linked to clerical censorship, and has discussed the reforms and solutions proposed and applied between 1962 and 2010 to warrant the citizens' freedom of opinion and freedom of being informed. It has focussed especially upon a genre that has posed problems for the secular state's censorial system, in the constitutional and legislative fields where the church was allowed by law to interact at governmental level with the official boards of cinema censorship: the unorthodox cinematic re-staging of holy narratives perceived as

insulting.

The main assumption I have worked on is that clerical censorship against the film industry is a combination of institutional and legislative techniques, gimmicks, and pervasive cultural and socio-anthropological factors, determined at hegemonic level and thus difficult to eliminate. I have presented the laws and regulations, which have threatened and controlled the film industry with the criminal charge known as ‘offence of state religion.’ The Criminal court cases, which this thesis has presented have offered examples of what was and wasn't permissible for the film industry, and have allowed a discussion of the policies of self-regulation and self-censorship which filmmakers, producers and distributors have adopted to avoid financial boycott.

I have reached a conceptualisation of motivations for the clergy's participation in clerical censorship and film boycott. Factors that emerged imply, among others, the clergy's desire to influence the nation's culture at hegemonic level, and direct the morality of individuals in their entertainment consumption. Furthermore, it has emerged that the church tends to consider cinema among the ways people have for self-enhancement, and thus constrains Catholic viewers whenever a film is judged unworthy to serve this educational scope.

I have also discussed how, Pasolini as Italy's most condemned filmmaker and controversial dissident intellectual, paired up his overall Gramscian perspective with his critique of power, which anticipated Foucault's theories, describing it in *Salò* as a network of relations for the implementation of methods of control and discipline over people's freedoms, to which, in this most censored film, a cruel member of the clergy participates. In my three section of film analysis, I have drawn much of my considerations from Pasolini's critique of the church's participation to institutionalised models of power (the authoritarian ones as much as the liberal democratic ones), which has had a central role in constructing the Vatican's hegemonic territories and oppose all forms of discourse, believed to threaten the church's internal theological coherence.

Furthermore, the emphasis placed by Cipri and Maresco in *Totò che visse due volte*, ridiculing the lay society's attitudes in ‘religious censorship’, while indicating how it finds support in the governance and socio-cultural infrastructures, has constructed, in Foucauldian terms, the process whereby the artist's dissidence has had reformist outcomes on reality at social and legal levels. The court case involving this last film suggests the power of ideological cinema to

make history.

My thesis reaches its conclusions at a moment in history marked by a deep economic and cultural crisis in Italian society, which comprises our ideas of democracy, our sense of civil equality, our idea of cultural unity attained despite our nation's diversities, and our quest for freedom. In these historical phases, the need for a civil cinema, which speaks for freedom, is most important. For all these reasons, I hope to have contributed with this thesis to the fight against all the forms of censorship limiting the dissident intellectuals' rights to inform, criticise, and reinvent all that is problematic in our real lives.

As it is the case for most researches conducted in the social sciences, my investigation has found resistance between 'what is' and 'what ought to be', opening up ethical and practical dilemmas on how to warrant the artists' freedom of expression without offending any of the rights and worldviews of other civil subjects. Hence, my other hope is to have opened up a debate on cinema, censorship and the expressive freedom, on which to build further scholarly discussion.

This research has come to realise the following:

1. The presence of anticlericalism in a film has proved to rarely go unnoticed by the church censors' meticulous inspections, prompting immediate condemnation and the rationalised boycott of the disapproved film *via* all existing channels which the church has access to.
2. Catholic censors emerge as concerned with, as well as subtly able to persuade by cultural boycott as well as by law, mainstream cinema producers to insert or eliminate in their plots moral contents in line with, or in opposition to, the Vatican's prescriptions.
3. Clerical censorship takes action at different stages of the censorial processes. The Catholic censors, or laymen willing to collaborate with the Catholic agencies, have proved to dialectically instigate counter-discourse by dissident filmmakers, challenging the church's *status quo*, and for this reason becoming candidate to undergo censorship. Lay intellectuals (officeholders, lawyers, policemen, magistrates, etc.), working at the state's official boards of film censorship or with court tribunals, have left documents of their collaboration with clergy activists (often from Catholic action) in obtaining, retrieving, or refusing valid certificates or implementing legal censorship trials.
4. Limitation of clerical interference between 1984 and 2000 has been reduced by law, a) as an outcome of the Revision of the Lateran Pact, b) by eliminating the requirement of a

representative of the church in the state official board of censorship, and c) by amending the criminal code on the crime no longer defined as ‘offence of state religion’.

The aspects of state censorship, which I have also investigated on historical and legal grounds, have proved that the official censorship boards have maintained close connections with the church's capillary control over the Ministry of Public Entertainment's boards of film revision, which grant or rejects the issuing of valid certificates. The aim of the church's censorship activated through the state's channels have been primarily concerned with preventing the circulation of films, often directed by filmmakers of left-wing lay orientation, which are believed to undermine the nation's religious identity and its value-system.

I have dealt with the issue of the Catholic Church's hegemonic position to illustrate the severity of their claim of predominance over other minority faiths, laity and atheism, in Italy (Ch. 8.2). I have discussed how the criteria set by the culturally dominant Catholic religion, throughout the state's political and legal system, have been decisive on the course of given decisions and actions which activated the intervention of film censors. The aim was to demonstrate how, under the different forms of governments, Catholic cultural agencies, administering cinema associations, cinema theatres, clubs, magazines, and events, have expressed moral reprimand against films containing issues of dissent towards religious figures, values, and symbols.

I have identified the first stage of clerical censorship in the Papal Encyclicals containing advice on, and condemnation of, certain corruptive aspects of the moving image.

A second step of clerical censorship has relied on the criteria adopted by Catholic representatives, in the periods in which they were allowed to take part at official level in film censorship committees; this step consisted of the participation of Catholic affiliates in law-making (DC members) at Constitutional level.

A third aspect of clerical censorship, I have argued, has financial implications, given that it implements methods to influence the decision of film producers and consumers. Following this line of argument, I have discussed how clerical censorship, from religious objection to moral shaming, is applied by means of film ratings, film reviews, discussion groups, and/or lists of prohibited films, and how it proceeds by means of proved reticular techniques, which for instance, can cause economic sanctions and affect film consumption. In this respect, I have paid attention to the church's claims of promoting the common good.



A fourth step in clerical censorship is the direct involvement of self-appointed Catholic censors in the civil society against films which do not conform to the Pope's suggestion of the values and style which make a film worthy of the church's positive appraisal.

I believed it was important to underline the church's traditional ideological opposition to reforms related to the role of women in the family and in society, political and artistic dissent, sexual diversity, and so on. The cinematographic plots most often attacked by clerical intolerance that have emerged are those pertaining to reforms in the fields of religious dissent or cultural diversity.

In secularised Italy, the church's hegemonic role as a moral authority, which persists in spite of the relative decline of Catholicism elsewhere in most post-Catholic countries, seems to be a time-enduring convention (Ginsborg 1995). I have argued that, in the current post-Catholic society, given the changed political and governmental circumstances, the church's aversion to the cinema industry's freedom of representation and satire, ultimately affects the citizens' right to be informed. Clerical censorial actions have emerged as particularly organised political responses by Catholic activist groups (League of Decency, Catholic Action), to films which have put the church in an uncomfortable position before the Catholic world for non-Catholic screened interpretations of dogma of faith (the 'immaculate conception', the 'incarnation', the 'resurrection'), such as *Je Vous salue, Marie!*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and *Mary Mother of Jesus*.

I have shown how freedom of expression and the right to satire collides with people's rights to have their religious sentiment protected by law. Indeed the matter has proved to present contradictory aspects: in fact, whereas freedom of expression allows filmmakers such as Pasolini, Cipri and Maresco to criticize facts and opinions perceived as objectionable, the artist's freedom is limited by Article 10 of the 'European Convention of Human Rights', forbidding ideas and representations, which may offend the people's religious feelings. In such cases, satirical films may undergo trials for 'contempt of religion' or for stirring prejudice (this is the case of 'hatred speech'). As it is, while Article 9 of the 'European Convention on Human Rights' and 'Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' warrant 'freedom of expression', their application must harmonise with the laws cited in this section, warranting the respect of people's religious beliefs. All in all, by principle, when it comes to the state's responsibility to protect citizens, the right of single individuals to exercise freedom of speech in matters of religion generally comes second to the legal protection of people's religious

sentiment as in most countries' 'blasphemy laws.'<sup>211</sup> A single individual's freedom of speech and satire, for this reason, is always measured against other people's freedoms and safety.

I have endeavoured to advance a deeper understanding of the gulf between the values and world-views of Italian society, supported by the Catholic Church – from Fascism up until the end of the first Republic – and those of the contemporary Italian secular nation, which progresses towards the declaration of the state's supreme laicity. Italy, in fact, is by constitutional law, no longer a confessional state, due to radical changes in the nation's legislation, regulating the state and church's rapports.

Although clerical financial/cultural boycott of cinema products may have become less effective in relation to the state's cinema censorship proceedings, the actions which still mark the involvement of the clergy in cinema censorship compose an intriguing puzzle which has roots in the church's almost feudal idea of the intellectual, moral and political leadership of its belief system. Further research would be needed to clarify the Vatican's idea of hegemony and power in order to understand at a deeper level the contemporary catholic censors' motivations for authorising cinema and media boycott against topics of irreligion despite the radical reforms which have occurred in the Italian legislation and in the civil society.

This thesis has combined historical critique and film analysis. I have dealt with three case studies which provided examples of Italian films censored for 'offence or religion', both in Italy and abroad (USA and UK). Historically, I have addressed how in the post-war years, politically disengaged filmmakers managed to find new ways to elude state and clerical censorship to gain financial profit from the liberalisation of the film market, and to gain profit at box-office with their commercial films. The examination of the history of film censorship against religious, political, and civic dissidence has implied that the task of addressing the history of the Italian culture is multifaceted. In particular, the history of cinema censorship has proved to be a gage to diagnose the power relations and mechanisms that instigate film censorship, which lay at the basis of the state and church liaisons in Italy.

To progress my thesis on clerical censorship as a reticular control organism within the state's

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211 Limitations to freedom of speech by official prohibition may follow the 'harm principle' or the 'offence principle', for example, in the case of 'pornography' and 'hate speech'. This is particularly the case for hate speech coming from religious fundamentalism in the media public sphere(s), including the threat of violence against those considered to be unbelievers. Before the turn of the century, in Italy, the so called 'reato di bestemmia', once regulated by the article 724 of the penal Code, was decriminalized with the law N 205 of 25 June 1999. (Ivaldi 2004)

official organization, I have examined on the one hand Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' and on the other Foucault's concept of governmentality. The aim was to apply both notions to the practices exercised by the Vatican state as surveillance on cinema people and institutions, as well as on the viewers. Foucault's discussion on the church's pervasive use of 'confession' has helped to advance my theory of clerical censorship as a set of methods for the implementation of pastoral forms of influence over the citizens' constitutional freedoms.

Foucault's analysis of power in modern societies digs up various forms in which governmentalized powers have been established and implemented. Power is a 'state of war' between the relations of two classes or more. It cannot simply be regulated and limited by law, despite those who rule pretending it to be otherwise, in order to give it an appearance of legality to dominion (Foucault, 1980: 123). In *Truth and Power*, he states that law is what makes power less of a war and more of a state (Foucault, 1980: 121). 'Justice' in this sense is not universal, but rather related to the system of knowledge, which produces its own truth; therefore, truth is not 'outside power or lacking in power' (Foucault, 1980: 131). It is according to the system of such truth that the state, as law, stigmatises the 'unacceptable' in order to supplant it with the acceptable (that is applying censorship and imposing its domination). Foucault argues that power in fact exists beyond the confines of law. The forms of surveillance, which power develops to enact control and discipline, are exercised on the individual no matter whether he or she obeys or revolts (Foucault, 1980: 125).

Clerical censorship, in this sense, has emerged as both a component of the state's censorial practices and the hegemonic manoeuvres of Catholic lobbies, competing with non-Catholic and other-than-Catholic spheres to attain control over the *status quo* by means of ideological and doctrinal interventions. Clerical interferences in cinema and censorship matters appear as permeating society, politics, and culture at micro and macro level through many interactive channels, such as church attendance, media broadcasting, private/state education, etc.

More specifically, I have drawn on Foucault's *Power-Knowledge*, as it has provided my survey with important ideas on how state cinema censorship and censorship by religion have met at a crucial point through the long-standing institutional presence of ecclesiastical authorities in the Italian official committees of cinema censorship. Data attesting the clergy's constant participation in cinema censorial boards as well in court hearings against incriminated films has, indeed, sustained my hypothesis of a cultural phenomenon with legal implications, which I have defined as 'clerical censorship'. Clerical censorship, expressive of the discussed Catholic

hegemony (Gramsci), has emerged not a unilateral phenomenon, but rather as the result of an interplay of influences administered by ministerial state institutions, as well as by the Vatican's governmental branches.

While remaining within the boundaries of my Gramscian and Foucauldian critical methods, analysis has raised the collateral broader question of whether the legal and governmental structure which has given power and meaning to clerical censorship up to 1984 (Revision of the Lateran Agreements) was just and immune by political pressures and issues of preferential treatment. I have been particularly concerned with the church's power in its 'ultimate destinations', and have thus placed emphasis on the capillary nature of clerical censorship in terms of its genealogy (Foucault, 1980: 96). The genealogical perspective, transferred to clerical censorship, has in fact allowed demonstrating how the proliferating networks of censorial power relations always prove influential on the Italian society and culture, its systems, and its agencies. These can be interpreted as the implementation of techniques and practices dictated by the centralised power of the Pope at the Holy See, spread through the network of intercessions, and left to the care of bishops, parish priests, and Catholic activists.

The Vatican's centralised and peripheral techniques for monitoring film production and distribution, that affect the film industry, has been fought back by politically committed filmmakers and cinema scholars acting in defence of freedom of speech, representation, and satire. I have illustrated the process whereby the interconnections of sovereignty, discipline, and government take place forming a kind of triangle, with governmentalisation at the top of the power processes by which society and its structures are administered and controlled by the Church of Rome. Foucault has endowed critical theory with an original apparatus for the conceptualisation of religion, presenting it as 'a project, which breaks open the hegemonic structure which has ordered Western religious thinking and subjectivity' (Carrette, 1999: 9). Indeed, Foucault's theory of religion as a political organism, which plays a relevant part in the state power-structure, has been strategic to investigate the circumstances for, and the criteria by which the film industry's compliance with the Catholic-inspired world-view in Italy, is somehow still expected.

A relevant aspect of my research has provided an in-depth discussion of the Encyclical letters, which have historically directed the cinema's debates and investments instrumentally, in terms of their benefit for the Vatican's agenda. Drawing on Gramsci, I have described Encyclical letters as the ideological undertaking of the church's traditional intellectuals, teaching religious

orthodoxy and appointing the clergy with the task of guiding the civil society in every area of the public life. I have in addition discussed the contents of Encyclical letters in the light of Foucault's attention to the influence of religion not only on the material conditions of the secular society, but on the very system of control, which governmental power relies on, affecting the character of Capitalism.

While recognising the role of cinema as a political and educational arena for information, entertainment, and public discourse, the Vatican still appears to largely avoid the most difficult question regarding the relationship between the filmmakers' freedom of opinion, and the allegedly 'inviolable' sacred. The review of case studies 1, 2, and 3 had the aim of verifying whether or not the Vatican's interference in media and cinema matters, at national and international level, is political. However, the Vatican has recently opened to other-than-Catholic analyses of institutionalised Catholicism, showing a public appreciation for the groundbreaking film *Habebus Papam*, by Nanni Moretti, in which Ratzinger's resignation was intuitively anticipated.

Although a unambiguous definition of clerical censorship appears to be puzzling, I offer a practical approach to it by trying to understand, in concrete terms, how it has functioned and still functions, both intrinsically and extrinsically.

In relation to my empirical analysis, the observed cases of films, which suffered clerical and state censorship, have shown that anticlericalism and religious unorthodoxy (as moral, political, ideological dis-conformity) generally represent the Catholic Church's main concerns. I have referred, in this regard, to Gramsci's analysis of religion and society, in *Note sul Machiavelli*, where it is suggested a lack of ideological and practical readiness on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to adapt to the changed social circumstances of the modern world. Scholars in the fields of cinema and religion today view the church's response to the quests for change posed by the secular world as responsible for the decline of the institutionalised religion (Bennett, 1995: 26).

The presence of the clergy in the boards of film censors has highlighted the practices and discourses, which interconnect cinema, religion, and public morality at the level of governmentality (Foucault), and of hegemony (Gramsci). These levels have proved to effectively interact, when it comes to setting methods of prevention and punishment of religious dissent.

At the historiographic level, I have addressed the church's reaction to cinema of political, cultural, and religious dissent. I have discussed how censorship was not so obvious during fascism, as it became effective in the years of the First Republic under the Christian democratic governmental system of alliances. The Duce, in fact, managed to exercise, not exclusively by means of pressure but of hegemonic influence, exactly like Berlusconi in current decades, a constant control on both the Papal pressure on culture and politics, and on the nation's antifascist intellectuals (Gramsci). Caught between two hegemonies, cinema struggled to acquire autonomy from such a control system of crossed influences. I have discussed the impact of Papal Encyclical letters on the cinema, starting from the one authored by Pius XI.

While Gramsci and Foucault have been the two main authors I have presented in my *Review of the Literature* Chapter, I have also taken into account a number of various other authors and theories. Alongside Gramsci and Foucault, I have reworked a range of philosophical and sociological theories on the relations between society, law, religion and cinema, to verify the routes, which have legitimised the church's self-assumed primacy on ethics, and its consequent participation in state's censorial policies over society and the arts. Revised theories in the field of the Sociology of religion have included the work of Roberto Cipriani, Arnaldo Nesti, and Carlo Prandi, whose works attain also to the fields of Cultural history and Media studies.

As I have argued, a first deep crisis between cinema and the church occurred between the 60s and the 70s. Bertolucci and Pasolini's plea for the autonomy of the arts was, in those decades, radical and visually violent, but it contributed to the gradual emancipation of dissident cinema (or *auteur* cinema) from moralising censorship and Catholic pressure. In the 1980s and 1990s, cultural debate over cinema censorship stressed that the censorship committees should be concerned in the first instance to instruct their executives on how to guarantee the citizen's rights to inform and be informed. One important innovation to diminish clerical boycott on cinema products regarded the way in which censorship committees were composed in the hiring process. The abolition of preventive censorship in 2000 introduced some relevant changes.

I have indicated how the criminalisation of unorthodox cinematic treatments of areas related to the sacred has affected the reputation of film artists (Scorsese, Pasolini, Gibson, Cipri and Maresco to quote but a few) for allegedly offensive representations of religious figures, narratives, and values. In my analysis of the latest cases of joint clerical/state censorship against Arbore and Cipri & Maresco (1990s), I have concluded that the most recent tendencies

in the Italian 'cinema d'autore' have rediscovered the polemist spirit of leftist film director Rossellini (1950s), Fellini and Pasolini (1960s-1970s), with special reference to their famous plots, dealing with religion from a dissident angle, and using the cinema medium as a vehicle for social and religious critique. These new trends confirm my analysis of why films of religious satire will keep being targeted by clerical boycott. My correlated discussion on the legal implications of cinema censorship in the post-production stage and later revisions of the *Lateranensis*, and of the Penal code, has shown how clerical censorship was implemented by law, and how after the Constitutional Revision of the Lateran Agreements and the following amendment of Penal Law decrees, it now operates mainly at diplomatic level.

The transformations brought about by the secularisation processes have caused the old methods of surveillance over popular media, such as cinema and TV, to shift from its traditional centres of control, ramifying out of the church or the party-state, to new, more pervasive and agency related forms of boycott. These new forms of control over individuals and society, Foucault argued, may vary from being merely normative to becoming strictly disciplinary and punitive as in the case of 'blasphemy laws'. Foucault argued that these new pervasive forms of control have allowed an increase in cultural change, fragmentation and pluralism, as well as the rise of new forms of dissent. The new media in particular have offered people the possibility of associating themselves with other like-minded individuals and agencies, promoting their groups' interests.

The scenarios of clerical boycotts of cinema products that I have presented have proved to be complex: none of them can be ruled out or is inclusive of all aspects of the phenomenon. Clerical censorship does not work as an iron cage. All the explanations have highlighted the problematic and often indecipherable aspects of religious interference into the media world. The instances of cinema censorship in their clerical manifestations (as in the trial cases prompted by Catholic activists) have proved to strike films in order to penalise their authors' alleged opposition to the church's hegemonic position.

The cases of censorship, which I have illustrated, have outlined the persistence of oppositional fronts between secular and religious, specifically at the level of deployment of government. The films I have discussed have shown that cinema artists, dissidents or not, in religious terms, have had the tendency to represent the church as a traditional censorial organ, almost incompatible with the secular state's democratic and liberal values. The cases of state censorship instigated by Catholic individuals or activist groups, which I have reviewed, have

provided evidence of their anchored prejudice, that the secular Western culture is hopelessly corrupt and vile.

The scrutinised court trials have proved that ‘offence of religion’ is often charged on vague or oblique allegations thus are difficult to pinpoint against evidence in court trials. However, there are only three films trialled for serious offence of religion, proving that the Italian legislation and the state’s cinema censorship apparatus are somewhat uneasy with such a crime, and ultimately, are moderately severe towards the filmmakers’ disregard of religion. In fact, the church’s censure on films charged with offence of religion, blasphemy, and moral corruption, in Italy and abroad, in England or the USA, has often been counter-productive. Indeed, this was particularly the case in the censorship court trials against *The Miracle*, *La ricotta*, and *Totò che visse due volte!*, since in extreme contentions, the lay Court Judges have had the predisposition to defend the filmmakers’ freedom of speech as opposed to shelter the church’s prestige.

My research’s findings and observations suggest that Catholic censorship, be it governmental (political), or hegemonic (cultural), manages to attack systematically and by means of all available direct and transversal methods, the filmmakers who produce representations of social behaviours of values different from those sanctioned by the Catholic doctrine. The recent legal and constitutional reforms that have occurred after the year 2000 have proved that the disciplinary actions of clerical intolerance against films conveying irreligious narratives could only be restricted by law, amending the Criminal code and the constitution regulating the relationships between state and church. The current widely reformed film censorship has become a more transparent legislative organ. It appears that state censorship now acknowledges the fact that state and law should not be guarantors of prescriptive and punitive action requested by clerical censors. This implies that it should no longer be necessary for the state to impose limits to freedom of expression in the name of the respect due to religion. The modern Italian pluralist secular state can no longer endorse, as it was the case in the twentieth century, the Catholic Church’s monopoly of ethics, particularly when this translates as an anachronistic monopoly over the Italian state education. The substantial limitation of film censorship endorsed by the 2000 reforms in cinema censorship is hopefully helping to achieve the realisation of freedom in law and morality, according to the liberal democratic state’s religious-free principles (Honneth 1991).

I have assumed that the Italian film industry is still exposed to the Catholic activists’ moral



boycott, whose task is to prevent reformist ideas and values considered dangerous for the church's tenets from filtering into society through the cinema screens. Catholic activist boycott indeed legitimise its forms of transversal intervention in all civil situations discussing issues such as abortion, contraception, assisted suicide, and the treatment of disease through method stem, etc. This increment in clerical censorship's strategies is possibly connected to the official removal of clergy's representatives from governmental censorship committees in 2000.<sup>212</sup>

This thesis ends with a discussion of the harsh, yet ultimately ineffectual censorship case which involved filmmakers, Cipri and Maresco for their blasphemous film, *Totò che visse due volte*. Cipri and Maresco have placed within a fully creative equilibrium, the civilised, the universal, and the holy on one side, and the unethical, the local, and the profane on the other, showing the murky links between society and institutionalised religion. Their provocative use of the cinematic language to address religious bigotry stirred so strong a debate that, after the Court absolved the two filmmakers from the charge of contempt of religion, preventive censorship was eliminated, thus creating a freer environment for cinema consumption.

The adoption of a Gramscian approach has allowed to examine how, at the turn of the century, with the aid of sociologists of religion and constitutionalists, acting as critical intellectuals towards the *status quo*, the judiciary, political and constitutional authorities have come together to solve issues of cinema censorship in light of the constitutional freedoms of people who produce, and who consume cinema products. The new regulation makes it no longer acceptable for a film's contents to be regulated by, and negotiated with, clerical censors.

Despite these new limitations, clerical censorship is always in action, as the Catholic censors still tend to assume that the moral values endorsed by the secular lay society are difficult to reconcile with their religion's morality and world views. In fact, when it comes to clerical censorship, it is difficult to come to a complete verification of its transversal operational methods and criteria in film boycott. The analysis of censored films conducted in this thesis speaks of many realities and perspectives that raise complex questions regarding the state of cinema's freedom from clerical control and pressure in Italy. Indeed, not only clerical censors,

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212 Stressing the political separation between state and church, Zapatero, at the first attempt of the Roman Church to enter into the affairs of his government, instructed the Ambassador of Spain to the State of the Vatican to inform the Pope that the Spanish state 'cannot deal with catechism and the program of the Catholic theology.' Zapatero added that 'the task of the executive is to govern "for all citizens: for those who profess a faith and those who are citizens of the secular state."' The Spanish ambassador stressed that the Prime minister of Spain must respect the principle of state laicity ('aconfessionalismo') <http://vaticandiplomacy.wordpress.com/tag/laicismo/>

but also the censors with a Catholic background have proved to be reluctant to acknowledge that the ethical views of other than Catholic filmmakers may influence viewers positively, and contribute to reform the nation's political, social and artistic ways of life. Cinema and religion will thus have to find new channels of dialogue to end the conflict between religious and lay people, too often marked by misunderstanding, mistrust, and mutual intolerance.

Recent theories in the sociology of religion, addressing issues of national identity, class struggle, law, and politics of religion have been functional in helping to answer my research question on the role of religious dissent through the cinema medium. I have relied on a Marxist theory of society (Gramsci) to analyse the role of the dissident filmmakers in promoting freedom of speech and representation through their creative endeavours.

As I have discussed, between 1984 and 2000, following the wave of counter discourse, promoted by Italian dissident filmmakers and intellectuals, Craxi's government eliminated 'state' religion to allow religious multiculturalism and face cultural diversity. However, one should note that the political and cultural diatribes on cinema, religion and censorship, which I have described in my thesis, have confirmed the power of the church of Rome at ideological hegemonic level.

The clashes between free thinkers and the Vatican's ideological apparatus was such to make it impossible to filmmakers not to feel the obligation to contribute to create new basis of dialogic critique. The powerfully cultural role of cinema, in progressively secularized Italy, has emerged out of the described legal clashes as one of the most effective vehicles of political, cultural, and sociological debate. In fact, often these antagonistic positions have somewhat favoured cinematic lines of theological discourse, as proved by the proliferation of Catholic film productions and cinematic Biblical narratives, fashioned on the early examples of the Catholic cinema companies, 'Orbis' and 'Universalialia' (see list in the Bibliography). As a matter of fact, not only catholic filmmakers but also lay film directors have produced films conveying new challenging representations of members of the clergy as militant educators in society acting, in Gramscian terms, as intermediaries through which the different social classes have been organically linked, and so the *cultura alta* and *cultura popolare* (Fontana, 1993: 140).

In conclusion, while I have welcomed the legislators' recent abolition of those forms of censorship, rooted in the Italian nation's religious bigotry, I have argued that the cinema people's legitimate claims of freedom of expression, representation, and satire (and

additionally the ‘freedom of religious dissent’) should not be limited to a mere struggle waged against religion to attain a condition of neutrality. Once freed from sterile threats of official or clerical boycott, non-Catholic filmmakers may recognise, as Pasolini did, the likely positive impact of religion on the arts. I wish to stress how Italian cinema as one of the most powerful promoters of social debate and counter-discourse, can help the church to situate religion people’s call for spirituality in a fairer light. Despite its overall critique of institutionalised religion, this thesis in fact, acknowledges the cultural relevance of the Roman Catholic Church's tradition, as a heritage capable of fostering dialogue (Habermas and Mendieta 2005). I have found stimuli for further research in the recent hypothesis of a possible alliance between religion and secularism (Ratzinger & Habermas, Vattimo). Following Vattimo’s relativistic view of religion, evocative of the preconditions created by the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentis*, I have discussed how important it would be for the Catholic Church to give up the politicization of faith and the monopoly of spirituality, and take up in the current historical phase, a reformed educational role as promoter of global peace, equality, freedom of conscience, and self-determination.

This thesis’ argument has hopefully demonstrated what notable changes have taken place within the legislative connections of the Roman Catholic Church with the Italian state, and how these changes have improved aspects of belief, society and law. It argues that cinema has hugely contributed to present waves of counter-discourse, which have influenced change. One can infer that the contemporary relations which the media maintain with the Church of today, relevant to my formulation of the problem, are in their turn dialectically influenced by the changes occurred within the Church itself after Vatican II in terms of deconstructing the notion of the Church as hierarchy, while also contemplating freedom of religion. This should have been expected given that the performing arts, and among them, also the cinematic one, owe their existence principally to religion and are influenced by the morality and discourse that religious cultures produce.

Indeed, in discussing the fundamental aspects of dissident cinema in Catholic Italy as a long struggle against the film industry’s subordination to the Vatican’s ideological hegemony, one of the crucial issues of the nation’s progress in freedom of speech and representation has proved to be connected not only with the reforms introduced in the Italian legislation but also to be closely related to some unavoidable cultural changes in the perception of the place of religion in society in recent decades of growing secularism.

Recently, given Pope Francis' ideological statements and political actions, his new style of papacy will most probably help also the Catholics involved in mass communication (whether as artists, producers, critics, or people in the audience) to build a freer platform for internal discussion, while contributing to the creation of a better dialogue with the new ethnic, cultural and religious realities emerging in Italy. Indeed, Bergoglio is trying to enlarge the framework of the debate on the social and cultural responsibilities of the Vatican in the world of today and disrupt its past compliance with the bourgeois conservative tradition to allow the Church to emerge transformed at practical and conceptual levels. Under these new circumstances, the function of a renewed Church would be clearer. Such reformist approach would in fact give also filmmakers, producers, and viewers' better opportunities to communicate their ideas without moralistic restraint, or being enforced to negotiate their freedoms before the threat of old and new forms of religious censorship.

*List of films which have undergone different forms of clerical censorship*

To summarise my empirical findings in film archives, clerical censorship proved particularly active at legislative/constitutional level against the following films: *Roma città aperta* (1945) and *Il miracolo* (second episode of the film trilogy, *L'amore*, 1948) by Roberto Rossellini; *L'age d'or* (1930), *Nararin* (1958), *Viridiana* (1961) *The Milky Way* (1969) and *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) by Luis Buñuel; *Il monaco di Monza* (1963) by Sergio Corbucci; *Accattone* (1961) and *La ricotta*, an episode in *Ro.Go.Pa.G.* (1963) by Pier Paolo Pasolini; *Ossessione* (1943) by Luchino Visconti; *Totò e Carolina* (1955) and *Brancaleone alle crociate* (1970) by Mario Monicelli; *Frà Manisco cerca guai* (1961) by Armando W. Tamburella; *Mamma mia che impressione!* (1951) by Roberto Savarese; *Lo sceicco bianco* (1952), *Le notti di Cabiria* (1957), the episode *Le tentazioni del dottor Antonio* in *Boccaccio '70* (1962) and *Ginger e Fred* (1986) by Federico Fellini; *Poveri ma belli* (1957) by Dino Risi, *Il grido* (1957) by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Frankenstein all'italiana* (1975) by Armando Crispino; *La notte brava* (1959), by Mauro Bolognini; *La congiuntura* (1965) by Ettore Scola; *Salomè* (1972) by Carmelo Bene; *Totò che visse due volte* (1998) by Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco, *Monella* (1998) by Tinto Brass.

Other Italian and foreign titles, which suffered cuts for allegedly offending religion are: *Tu che ne dici?* (1960) by Silvio Amadio, *Alvaro piuttosto corsaro* (1954) by Camillo Mastrocinque, *Don Camillo* (1952) by Julien Duvivier, *Prepotenti più di prima* (1959) by Mario Mattòli, *I piaceri dello scapolo* (1960) by Giulio Petroni, *Suor Letizia* (1957) by Mario Camerini, *Madre Giovanna degli angeli* (1961) by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, *Per un dollaro di gloria* (1966) by Fernando Cerchio, *I diavoli* (1971) di Ken Russell, *Cristiana monaca indemoniata* (1972) and *Nelle pieghe della carne* (1970) by Sergio Bergonzelli, *La vera storia della monaca di Monza* (1980) by Stefan Oblowsky, *Una città chiamata bastarda* (1971) by Robert Parrish, *La collera di Dio* (1972) by Ralph Nelson, *I racconti immorali di Borowczyk* (1974) di Walerian Borowczyk, *L'indiscreto fascino del peccato* (1983) by Pedro Almodovar, *Il pap'occhio* (1980) by Renzo Arbore, *L'avventura è l'avventura* (1972) by Claude Lelouch, *Trastevere* (1971) by Fausto Tozzi, *L'ultima tentazione di Cristo* (1988) by Martin Scorsese, *Un affare di donne* (1988) by Claude Chabrol, *La vergine dei sicari* (2000) by Barbet Schroeder, *Nel più alto dei cieli* (1977) and *Il giardino delle delizie* (1967) by Silvano Agosti, *Il ritorno* (1992) by

Jens Jorgen Thorsen, *Geppo il folle* (1978) by Adriano Celentano, *El topo* (1970) and *Santa sangre* (1989) by Alejandro Jodorowsky. A famous instance of metacritical film against clerical censorship is Ingmar Bergman, *Ritual* (1970).<sup>213</sup>

### *List of films, involving clergy characters*

*Un prete da uccidere* (1988), *Il prete bello* (1989), *Il prete* (1994), *Un prete tra noi* (1 and 2: 1997-1998), *Confessioni di un prete* (2011). Before this decade, films featuring clergy characters, which were often were erotic and/or sentimental drama. *L'amante del prete* (1976), *Un prete scomodo* (1975), *La donna del prete* (1974), *Prete fai un miracolo* (1974), *La ragazza del prete* (1970), *Il prete sposato* (1970), *La moglie del prete* (1970), *Contestazione generale* (1969), *Il cappello da prete* (1944).

Films based on non-orthodox figures of nuns include *Virginia, la Monaca di Monza* (2004), *La Monaca nel peccato* (1986), *La Monaca di Monza* (1986), *I peccati di una Monaca. Ines de Vallonga, 1870* (1978), *Storia d'amore di una suora* (1975), *Cristiana, monaca indemoniata* (1973), *Violenza per una monaca* (1967), *La suora giovane* (1964), and *La suora bianca* (1960, 1933). In particular, six different cinematic interpretations have been made from Alessandro Manzoni's scandalous story of cloister nun Gertrude, in *I promessi sposi* (1827). *La monaca di Monza* films' dates of production and directors are the following: 1947 (dir. R. Pacini), 1962 (dir. C. Gallone), 1968 (dir. E. Visconti), 1980 (dir. S. Oblowsky), 1986 (dir. L. Odorisio), 2004 (dir. A. Dironi). In 1977, filmmaker Luigi Magni directs the half-historical film *In nome del Papa Re*, set in Rome, 1867, screening the story of a High Prelate, who, having learnt from his former lover, Countess Flaminia, to be the natural father of a young imprisoned political dissident, abuses the his influence to rescue his son from the death penalty (Film Archive: Cinematografo.it).

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213 See, on this subject, the documentary film *Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God* (2002), by Alex Gibney. The film shows how the recent crisis of the Church's authority has been severely undermined by the scandals of child abuse by members of the Irish Catholic clergy, which Cardinal Ratzinger, elected Pope in April 2005, failed to disclose, causing public indignation. Some high prelates such as Cardinal Bagnasco and Cardinal Ruini have gradually acknowledged the Church's errors in relation to the cover-up of the clergy's sex crimes.

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214 Cfr Mino Argentieri, *Censura ed autocensura* (1957); Juarès Busoni, *I muli intrepidi della censura* (1960); Ernesto Laura, *La censura cinematografica: idee, esperienze, documenti*, 1961; Giorgio Moscon, *Censura illegittima* (1961); Aldo Ellena, *Censura cinematografica e libertà nello stato democratico* (1963); Tommaso Sorgi, *Censura e coscienza* (1971); Giacomo Gambetti, *Cinema e censura in Italia* (1972); Mino Argentieri, *La censura nel cinema italiano* (1974), Michele Aiello, *Contributi alla riforma della censura* (1976), Maurizio Cesari, *La censura nel periodo fascista* (1978) and *La censura in Italia oggi* (1944 – 1980), (1982); Alfredo Baldi, *Lo sguardo punito. Film censurati 1947-1962* (1994) and *Schermi proibiti. La censura in Italia 1947-1988* (2002); Sergio Di Giorgi, *Fantasma della libertà: il cinema d'autore tra censura ed esilio* (1995); Domenico Liggeri, *Mani di forbice. La censura cinematografica in Italia* (1997); Tatti Sanguineti, 'Italia Taglia', 1999; and Luciano Sovenà, *Omnia munda mundis. Il vilipendio della religione nelle opere cinematografiche da Buñuel and Cipri e Maresco* (Sanguineti 1999).

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### ***Associations***

- ACCC: Catholic Association of Film Critics
- ACEC: Associazione Cattolica Esercenti Cinema
- ACI: Italian Catholic Action
- ACI: Italian Cinematography Activity
- ACS: Archivio Generale di Stato
- AGIS: Exhibitors Association
- ANAC: Associazione Nazionale Autori Cinematografici
- A.N.I.C.A.: Producers' Association
- AVE: Ananima Veritas Editrice
- CCC: Catholic Cinema Centre

CCE: Consorzio Cinema Educativo

CUCE: Consorzio Utenti Cinematografi Educativi

ECHR: European Court of Human Rights

ESCO: Association of Parish Cinemas

MCO: Ministero della Cultura Popolare

OCIC: Organizzazione Cattolica Internazionale del Cinema

SCAEC: Catholic Association for the Assistance of Cinema Exhibitions

UCSI: Catholic Union of Italian Press

***Film Archives and other digital libraries***

Archivio On-Line Beni Culturali

Afi (Afi.Com -American Film Institute)

Archivio Generale di Stato /<http://www.archivi.beniculturali.it/ACS>

Bfi Archives (Bfi.Org.Uk – British Film Institute)

Cineteca Milano (Cinetecamilano.It – Fondazione Cineteca Italiana)

‘Cinema Database (Cinematografo.It – Fondazione Ente Dello Spettacolo)

A.N.I.C.A (Archiviodelcinemaitaliano.It – Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche)

Archivio ACEC – Archivio Associazione Cattolica Esercenti del Cinema

Archivio Luce (Archivioluce.Com/Archivio/ – Cinecittà)

Archive SCEC – Archivio della Sacra Congregazione dell’Educazione Cattolica

Cineteca Nazionale (<http://www.Archiviodellafondazioneesc.it/>)

Cineteca Bologna (Cinetecadibologna.It)

IGS Gramsci. Source: <http://www.gramscisource.org>

Ministero della Cultura Popolare: Direzione Generale Cinematografia

Museo Nazionale Del Cinema (Museonazionaledelcinema.It/ – Fondazione Maria Adriana

Prolo)

### ***Vatican Media***

Holy See Press Office

Papal Encyclicals Online <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/>

[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/television/index\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/television/index_it.htm) Vatican Television Centre

Official Site of the Holy See News: [www.news.va](http://www.news.va)

Pontifical Council for Social Communications

Vatican Information Service

Vatican Film Library<sup>215</sup>

Vatican Online Archives ([va.it](http://va.it) – Archivi della Santa Sede/Official Acts of the Holy See)

Vatican Radio

### ***Main catholic newspapers and periodicals***

L'Osservatore romano Daily (News Paper)

Segnalazioni Cinematografiche (CCC magazine)

Famiglia Cristiana (weekly magazine)

*La civiltà cattolica* (Jesuit weekly magazine)

### ***Main cinema reviews and periodicals***

Bollettino di informazioni cinematografiche

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215 The Vatican Film Library is working on a special project focusing on film and religion by studying productions from 1896 to today dealing with themes related to the transcendent.

La rivista del Cinematografo

Cinema Nuovo

Cinema

*Other Cinema Online databases*

Cinerepublic

Italia Taglia

Film TV

IMDb Movies

European Cinema Online Database

BFI Online Database

Youtube