

Hollywood Before the Code



Sorbonne Université and Nanterre Université, Paris

THURSDAY 27th June – SATURDAY 29th June, 2024

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to *Hollywood Before The Code* Conference.

This international conference aims at re-examining the notion of “Pre-Code Hollywood” and its periodization. Scholars from all over the world will examine the socio-political, ideological, and aesthetic negotiations conducted by the studios before July 1934, to go beyond the approach that consists in reducing “Pre-Code cinema” to the early days of the talkies, generally approached through the prism of scandal, provocation, and the expression of the forbidden. The aim is to take a fresh look at the impact of this rise in censorship from 1921 onwards and on the intensification of the public conversation on the need for censorship. The conference will focus on how films were made prior to 1934, despite or because of these tough negotiations, and on how the studios

and the Hays administration were able to use the power of public opinion and respond to its pressures to protect the Hollywood industry.

We hope you enjoy the conference!

Organizing committee :

Claire Dutriaux, Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris, Joséphine Grébaud, Joanne Vrignaud, Antoine Simms

Scientific committee :

Claire Dutriaux, Gilles Menegaldo, Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris, Fran Pheasant-Kelly

**THURSDAY 27TH JUNE – SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ, COUVENT DES
CORDELIERS**

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| 8.30-9.00 Registration and Coffee |
| 9.00-9.15 Opening Remarks (Claire Dutriaux and Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris) |
| 9.15-10.30 KEYNOTE |
| Chair: Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris Thomas Doherty (Brandeis University) - The Miscegenation Clause: Before the Code and Under the Code |
| 10.30-10.45 Tea and coffee |
| 10.45-12.15 PANEL 1 FALLEN/FALLING WOMEN |
| Chair: Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris Emily Carman (Chapman University University) - <i>The Stories of Temple Drake: The Fallen Woman Film, Industry Self-Censorship, and Negotiating Patriarchy and Heterosexual Violence in Pre-Code Hollywood</i> Milo Farragher-Hanks (University of St Andrews) - <i>Maintained in Wealth and Affluence: Codifying the Fallen Woman Spatially</i> Danila Kuznetsov (Université Paris 8) - <i>Red-Headed Woman and Baby Face in Advertisements and Reviews in the Trade Press</i> |
| 12.15-13.15 LUNCH |
| 13.15-14.45 PANEL 2 PROTECTING, EDUCATING, ELEVATING AUDIENCES |
| Chair: Marguerite Chabrol Patrick Adamson (University of St Andrews) - Hollywood takes the world 'to school': International Harmony and the Early Years of the MPPDA Diana Anselmo (California State University) – <i>Maddened by the Movies: Female Audiences, Criminality, and the Emergence of Hollywood Censorship</i> Sarah Gleeson-White (University of Sidney) - <i>Pre-Code Medical Melodrama: Bryan Foy and Wallace Thurman</i> |
| 14.45-16.15 PANEL 3 BEFORE THE CODE: AESTHETICS AND STYLE |
| Chair: Gilles Menegaldo Sue Matheson (University College of the North) – <i>Anton Grot at Warner Brothers</i> Tom Brown (King's College, London) – <i>The "Pre-Codeness" of "Pre-Code" Cinema: the Tensions between History and Criticism</i> Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (Université Nanterre) – <i>That clear object of Desire: Erich Von Stroheim's Greed (1924) adapted from Frank Norris's McTeague (1899)</i> |
| 16.15-16.30 Tea and Coffee |
| 16.30-18.30 PANEL 4 ACTORS AND ACTRESSES |
| Chair: Gregoire Halbout Mark Glancy (Queen Mary University, London) – <i>Looking at Cary Grant: Before and After the Implementation of the Production Code</i> Katherine Fusco (University of Nevada) – <i>Anita Loos and Jean Harlow, Pedagogues of Media Literacy</i> Baptiste André (Université of Strasbourg) – <i>Le Code et l'actrice: Mae West ou la dissolution du jeu</i> David Lagain (Université Paris 8) - <i>L'intégration de Mae West à Hollywood: un enjeu narratif autant qu'idéologique ?</i> |
| 18.30-20.00 Cocktails, Couvent des Cordeliers |

**FRIDAY 28TH JUNE – UNIVERSITÉ PARIS NANTERRE, ADRESSE BÂTIMENT
MAX WEBER**

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| 9.00-9.30 Registration and Coffee |
| 9.30-11.00 PANEL 5 HORROR BEFORE THE CODE |
| Chair: Sue Matheson Gilles Menegaldo (Université de Poitiers) - Transgression, Sensations, and Censorship in Pre-code Horror Cinema Dorota Babilas (University of Warsaw) - Metamorphoses of the Grotesque in <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> (1925) Frances Pheasant-Kelly (Wolverhampton University) - Cuts and Controversy in Pre-Code Hollywood Horror: The Case of James Whale's <i>Frankenstein</i> and <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> |
| 11.00-11.15 Tea and coffee |
| 11.15-12.30 KEYNOTE |
| Chair: Gilles Menegaldo Marguerite Chabrol (Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis) From "banned plays" to "proof of motion picture progress": the Hays Office's "Formula" and Broadway star vehicles (1924-1934) |
| 12.30-13.30 LUNCH |
| 13.30-15.00 PANEL 6 CINEASTES BEFORE THE CODE |
| Chair: Claire Dutriaux Tatjana Jukić (University of Zagreb) - The Lubitsch Touch: From the Hays Code to Stanley Cavell Trudy Bolter (IEP de Bordeaux) – L'eau et la poussière chez Sjöstrom, Murnau et Vidor Jean-Marie Lecomte (Université de Lorraine) - Poésie et érotisme dans les films pré-Code de Frank Borzage |
| 15.00-15.15 Tea and coffee |
| 15.15-17.15 PANEL 7 LOCAL CENSORSHIP(S) OF HOLLYWOOD |
| Chair: Trudy Bolter Antoine Guegan (Independent researcher) – Le cas de l'adaptation d' <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> en 1927: entre fidélité à l'esprit du roman et pressions de la censure locale sudiste et de la MPPDA Emmanuel Dreux (Université Paris 8) – Censures d'états et comités locaux contre Chaplin : les exemples de <i>The Pilgrim</i> et de <i>A Woman in Paris</i> en 1923 Kajsa Niehusen (Independent researcher) – "The situation in Chicago is admittedly the worst in the country": Hollywood's struggle with Chicago's Police Censorship Board Claire Dutriaux (Sorbonne Université) – Better Film Committees and Local Censorship Boards in the US: Regulating Cinema Locally before and after the Implementation of the Code (1922-1945) |
| 17.15-18.30 KEYNOTE |
| Chair: Claire Dutriaux Charles Wolfe (University of California Santa Barbara) "Pre-Code" Censorship, Circa 1924: the View from Southern California |
| 21.00-23.00 Conference dinner at L'Escarmouche, rue de la Montagne Sainte Geneviève |

**SATURDAY 29TH JUNE - UNIVERSITÉ PARIS NANTERRE, ADRESSE BÂTIMENT
MAX WEBER**

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| 9.00-9.30 Tea and Coffee |
| 9.30-11.00 PANEL 8 WILL HAYS, THE MPPDA AND THE PCA AMIDST RELIGIOUS BATTLES |
| Chair: Thomas Doherty Frédéric Cavé (Independent researcher) Un contrat sans code d'honneur : la nomination de William Hays à la présidence de la MPPDA Paul Monticone (Rowan University) Haysites Take the Stand: Private-Plaintiff Antitrust Suits, the MPPDA, and the Coming of the PCA Erwin F. Erhardt (University of Cincinnati) The Catholic Church and the Emergence of The Code: 1920-1934 |
| 11.00-11.30 Tea and Coffee |
| 11.30-12.45 PANEL 9 SEX, MORALITY, HOMOSEXUALITY |
| Chair: Joséphine Grébaut Milan Hain (Palacký University) <i>Our Betters</i> (1933): Negotiating Sex, Morality, and Homosexuality in Pre-Code Hollywood Cinema Stylianios Kypraios (Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle) <i>Millie</i> (1931) de John Francis Dillon : La censure à l'épreuve |
| 12.45-14.00 LUNCH |
| 14.00-15.30 PANEL 10 ADVERTISING, PRESS BOOKS, TRADE PAPERS |
| Chair: Fran Pheasant-Kelly Eric Hoyt (University of Wisconsin-Madison) Hollywood Pressbooks at Scale: Analyzing the Codes and Patterns of Movie Publicity Natasha Farrell (Memorial University) Star-Dust in Hollywood: Interwar Writers Jan and Cora Gordon's multimedia portraits of America's Dream Factory Joël Augros (Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle) Looking for Mrs Blondell: Advertising Forms before the Code |
| 15.30-15.45 Tea and Coffee |
| 15.45-17.15 PANEL 11 HOLLYWOOD BEFORE THE CODE THROUGH THE CONTEMPORARY LENS |
| Chair: Gilles Menegaldo Joséphine Grébaut (Université Paris Nanterre) "Never have I seen such a maelstrom of bad taste and sheer magic": Contemporary Reading of a Mythified Pre-Code Hollywood in <i>Babylon</i> (2022) Benjamin Champion (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3) Perpétuation d'un mythe : le Forbidden Hollywood dans la fiction contemporaine |
| 17.15 Closing remarks: Claire Dutriaux, Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris, Gilles Menegaldo and Fran Pheasant-Kelly |

HOLLYWOOD BEFORE THE CODE PROGRAMME

List of Abstracts and Delegate Bios

Patrick Adamson

Hollywood takes the world “to school”: International Harmony and the Early Years of the MPPDA

When the first president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Will Hays, appeared before the National Education Association in 1923, he put forward an ambitious, but by no means unprecedented, vision for cinema:

To reflect on the possibilities of the motion-picture in education is to regret that one’s school days were spent before this great invention came to us as a poultice to heal the blows of ignorance, but there is consolation in the fact that since the advent of pictures the whole world, regardless of age, can go to school.

Against mounting criticism over its subject matter, star scandals, and monopolistic business practices, Hollywood’s leaders—“movie czar” Hays foremost among them—responded to calls for regulation and reform with bold claims like the above: that their products could have a significant positive impact on the very future of humanity. By taking this singularly wide-reaching form of mass entertainment and putting it to the purpose of educating and enlightening its vast audience, Hollywood film, they argued, could become the world’s greatest instrument for bringing about a state of mutual understanding, uplift, and, in its boldest imaginings, global peace. Censorship was thus unconscionable; to permit external regulation would be to blunt the most effective force for international harmony ever known.

Such claims built on what was then a widespread idea: that cinema was intelligible alike by all—a universal language that, put to the right purpose, could become an industrial instrument of mass education. Through consuming its images, humanity could be united around a shared understanding of its past and present, resulting in harmonious social progress. Among pro-cinema figures of the day, Hollywood’s noted influence over the minds of the masses was not a cause for concern but something to be celebrated: the potential harbinger of a utopian age of world peace.

This paper will explore how such ambitions informed the American film industry’s production, distribution, and public relations strategies in the mid-1920s, reading the claims of Hays and his ilk in relation to two of the films cited most often in this discourse: Paramount’s *The Covered Wagon* (1923) and *Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life* (1925), titles hailed for not only the rare “authenticity” they brought to their subjects but the edifying, uplifting ends they could serve. The former is an epic historical Western about the 1840s pioneers, the latter a popular ethnographic film about the Bakhtiari people of Iran—but the two inspired regular comparison, together being identified by vocal Hollywood proponents and critics of filmdom morality alike as exemplars for a laudable way of exploiting the motion picture’s vast popular appeal. Projecting inspiring historical episodes and enlightening visions of far-flung life before audiences from across linguistic and cultural divides, they were seen to prove, in an unparalleled fashion, the singular social purpose that Hays’s Hollywood was ideally placed to serve.

Patrick Adamson lectures in Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. Specialising in silent Westerns, early popular historical filmmaking, and internationalist discourses in 1920s Hollywood, his research has been published in *Film History: An International Journal* (2019), *Transnationalism and Imperialism: Endurance of the Global Western Film* (ed. by David Roche and Hervé Mayer, 2022), *Motifs* (forthcoming, 2023), and *Film Journal* (forthcoming). He received the “Best Doctoral Student Article or Chapter” award from the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies in 2020 and the “Best PhD Dissertation on English Language Cinema” award from Société pour l'Enseignement et la Recherche du Cinéma Anglophone in 2021.

Baptiste André

Le Code et l'actrice : Mae West ou la dissolution du jeu

Cette proposition de communication souhaite aborder un angle singulier et peu étudié lorsqu'il est question de s'intéresser au Pré-Code Hollywoodien, à savoir celui de l'étude actorale. En effet, outre l'impact de cette montée de la censure, à la fois sur les sujets, mais également au regard des manières de les mettre en scène, nous remarquons qu'elle engage une autre, si ce n'est une nouvelle, façon de jouer pour les acteurs et actrices de cette période. En s'immiscant dans la fabrication des œuvres cinématographiques, le Code Hays perturbe à la fois la vision des cinéastes et celle des scénaristes. Or l'acteur, que nous considérons, à l'instar de Luc Moullet, comme un sujet à valeur commerciale est également un élément auctorale de l'œuvre dans laquelle il apparaît, ce qui suppose un geste artistique de sa part qui peut alors être bouleversé par un code de censure plus ou moins strict. En prenant pour exemple canonique celui de l'actrice Mae West, dont la persona sulfureuse à l'écran s'est vue quelque peu éteinte par le Code de censure, il s'agira alors pour nous de proposer une lecture et analyse des qualités de son jeu pré-code (*Night After Night*, Archi Mayo, 1932; *She Done Him Wrong*, Lowell Sherman, 1933; *I'm No Angel*, Wesley Ruggles, 1933; *Belle of the Nineties*, Leo McCarey, 1934) et d'observer sa méticuleuse dissolution post-1934. La “personnalité animale”, sa verve cinglante, son déhanché provoquant et les multiples poses statiques qui statufie le jeu de l'actrice, sont autant de marques de fabrique qui disparaissent sous l'égide du Code. La créature amoralisée qu'elle représentait alors est graduellement démontée et vidée, voir presque démembrée, de la substance qui constituait ce supplément d'âme actorale de l'actrice (et qui la différenciait naturellement d'autres actrices au tempérament similaire: Greta Garbo et Marlène Dietrich, entre autres). Nous pensons par ailleurs à *Klondike Annie* (Raoul Walsh, 1936), œuvre dans laquelle l'actrice se voit assigner le rôle d'une soeur missionnaire, dénaturant à la fois la persona westienne et contribuant au propos du Code: tout le monde, même les personnalités les plus farouches, peut être racheté. Et ce, au prix d'une dissolution actorale. Il s'agit alors pour nous de proposer une autre lecture des conséquences du Code Hays. Jouant à la fois sur l'écho d'un monde où le corps de l'actrice jouissait d'une liberté certaine et celui qui la voit restreinte à un ordre de mouvements et de gestes, dénaturé de ses potentialités de provocation et de l'expression d'une féminité subversive.

Titulaire d'un double Master de Cinéma & audiovisuel Parcours Pensée du Cinéma à l'Université Lumière de Lyon et Parcours Théorie, Analyse et Histoire des formes cinématographiques de l'Université de Strasbourg, Baptiste André poursuit son parcours universitaire en réalisant une thèse, à la rentrée 2023, qui porte sur l'élaboration d'une méthodologie propre à l'iconologie actorale. Ses recherches portent sur les études actorales. Il a écrit deux mémoires qui s'intéressent aux questions du jeu de l'acteur dont, Marilyn

Monroe, les Années Actors Studio: 1955-1961, et travaille actuellement à la publication du second, Le contender: Rod Steiger dans l'ombre de Brando (aux éditions PUR, coll. Cahiers de Recherche Études Actorales).

Diana Anselmo

Maddened by the Movies: Female Audiences, Criminality, and the Emergence of Hollywood Censorship

In the early 1920s, local calls for film censorship found in the American press intersected with a social panic surrounding “deviant” female audiences. Generally presented as a underclass of single, underpaid, unwell, foreign-born moviegoers in their teens and twenties, “the movie mad girls” of trade and popular papers reportedly endangered their lives due to the nefarious influence of Hollywood pictures. Bewitched by dreams of affluence and easy living, movie mad girls’ trespasses ran the gamut from loitering, running away from home, and engaging in premarital sex to stealing, murdering, and attempting against their lives. In surveying published criminal statements and suicide letters attributed to movie mad girls alongside reports of local censorship boards and legal cases across the US, this paper explores an emergent rhetoric of industrial oversight and civic protection targeting Hollywood filmmaking. Indivisible from increased interest in legislating women’s and children’s public involvement, the discourse on “movie mad girls” sought to strengthen the maternalist case of film censorship being a matter of child protection and public welfare. In the wake of WWI, some journalists, activists, and reformers vociferously argued that cinematic depictions of sexual promiscuity, crime, addiction, suicide, and other social ills specifically corrupted the moral fabric of adolescent female patrons—deemed by medical and legislative experts as one of the most vulnerable social demographics in early twentieth-century United States. Shaped by pandemics, the push to legally regulate “dangerous” content distributed in commercial cinema became enmeshed with fears of contagion, of moving images and movie stars disseminating the germs of vice. Analysing the press discourse on female audiences’ movie-motivated transgressions thus offers insight into the unexplored overlap of film censorship movements with the growing medicalization and criminalization of divergent ways of being and feeling, particularly as they manifested in the public sphere through unmarried, foreign-born, underprivileged, gender-nonconforming, or non-white female bodies.

Diana W. Anselmo is a feminist film historian. She is the author of *A Queer Way of Feeling: Girl Fans and Personal Archives of Early Hollywood* (UC Press 2023), and an Assistant professor of Critical Studies at California State University, Long Beach.

Joël Augros

Looking for Mrs Blondell: Advertising forms before the Code

Since the emergence of the pre-Code concept, it has been common practice to use a few photos, often the same ones, to illustrate a book, an article, a theatrical or television programme, a selection of sequences on You Tube, etc. These are the pictures of Joan Blondell, in a bath tub, trying to catch a piece of soap, Blondell again, obviously naked, astride a chair, Barbara Stanwyck adjusting her garter: photos taken from *Blonde Crazy* (Roy del Ruth, 1931), *Three on a Match* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932) or *Night Nurse* (William A. Wellman, 1931). However, a quick search will reveal that these photos were not part of the films themselves nor the publicity material used at the time. To understand the period, it would therefore be useful to look back at the press books, lobby cards, film stills of this so-

called pre-Code era. It is also necessary to retrace this history of these photos of Joan Blondell which today became the emblems, perhaps fraudulently, of an era.

Joël Augros est professeur à l'Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle, spécialiste d'économie du cinéma.

Dorota Babilas

Metamorphoses of the Grotesque in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925)

The first (surviving) film adaptation of Gaston Leroux's novel *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* is arguably the most faithful to the literary source despite several serious changes to the plot introduced in post-production. Called "a flawed masterpiece," *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) was made by Universal Pictures before the enforcement of the Hays Code, but still was subject to various ideological and commercial pressures from the studio and preview audiences alike. The film would transmogrify several times thanks to the, unequally effective, efforts of multiple directors: Rupert Julian, the starring actor Lon Chaney, Edward Sedgwick, and Ernst Laemmle. A "controversial" cemetery fight was removed, comical scenes were added, then removed again, "American justice" was served with pitchforks and torches to replace Leroux's original ending of the Phantom literally "dying of love." Additionally, parts of the film were reshot with sound in 1929, with a notable exception of the scenes featuring the title Phantom, as Lon Chaney was under contract with a rival studio. The result, one of the earliest horror films and still one of the best remembered silent movies ever made, is an interesting, if imperfect, evidence of the political and artistic climate of early Hollywood.

Dorota Babilas (dr hab.), is Associate Professor at the Institute of English Studies, the University of Warsaw, Poland. Her academic interests include Victorian, Gothic, and Film Studies. Author of several scholarly articles, two monographic books (including one on the cultural representations of the Palais Garnier), and a new, critical re-edition of Gaston Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* into Polish (Vesper, 2019).

Trudy Bolter

L'eau et la poussière, chez Sjöström, Murnau, et Vidor

J'aimerais étudier pour ce colloque ce groupe de films célèbres appartenant plus ou moins à la période pré-code, se démarquant des autres par la beauté et la profondeur des éléments qu'ils contiennent -de Victor Sjöström, *Le Vent* 1928, de F.W. Murnau *l'Aurore (Sunrise)*, 1927 et de King Vidor, *Notre pain quotidien*, 1934.

L'un des traits communs à ces œuvres est la présence dans le monde fictionnel d'un élément décisif qui ne dépend pas des protagonistes, dépassant leurs moyens mais décidant de leur avenir - la pluie dans les films de Sjöström et de Vidor, le vent dans le film de Murnau. Tous les trois films finissent bien avec des couples re-formés, pourtant sans avoir complètement innocenté les personnages coupables de fautes (tentative de meurtre, meurtre-bien que justifié) sauf dans le film de Vidor, qui semble devenir une moralité – en trouvant de l'eau et menant son équipe afin de la capter, il est responsable du succès du groupe, alors que dans les deux autres films du trio, les personnages doivent rester passifs devant le jugement (aléatoire ?) des nuages.

Trudy Bolter is Professeure émérite of American culture, especially English-speaking film, at the Institut d'études politiques, in Bordeaux. She holds a BA from Bryn Mawr College in

Pennsylvania, and the MA and ABD from Columbia University in New York City, where she studied under Robert Brustein. A Fulbright scholar in Paris, she studied under Marcel Brion, and later taught at the Institut catholique. For five years under Covid, she gave monthly Cinéconférences on current film at the Cinéma Utopia in Bordeaux, in partnership with the Librairie Mollat *Ouvrage principal: Figures de l'écrivain dans le cinéma américain, itinéraires de la voix baladeuse*, 1998. A member of the Ciclaho from its early days, she is married to the English wine merchant William Bolter.

Tom Brown

The “Pre-Codeness” of “Pre-Code” Cinema: The Tensions between History and Criticism

What Richard Maltby (2003) calls the myth of “pre-Code” Hollywood is remarkably persistent. Of course, no one can argue that there is a pre-Code period but the “pre-Code” label Maltby critiques is one that circulates in our culture primarily as a designation for a series of films of (primarily) 1930-1934, marketed to modern audiences on their greater sexual frankness and more risqué content – the small UK, touring festival, “Cinema Rediscovered”, had a “pre-Code” strand in 2022, for example (see Hutchinson and Newland 2022). A range of scholarship (Maltby’s work but also especially Lea Jacobs 1995) has shown that the Code and its administrators were having a role in the shaping of Hollywood film production throughout the ‘30-34 period. In this, the worlds of film critics, commercial film culture and cinephilia seem to operate in isolation from academic film history.

“Hollywood Before the Code” will broaden the terrain of discussion of the period before 1934 and excavate the gradual process of industry self-regulation that began in 1921. However, I want to tackle head-on the early talkie period that has proved so marketable through the specific case study of John M. Stahl’s *Only Yesterday* (1933). More famously remade (or re-adapted) as *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), Stahl’s film, in its texture (the visible marks of censorship intrusion in at least one scene of the extant versions of the film) and in its archival records (the Studio Relations Committee files on the film) provides the opportunity to re-consider the category of the “pre-Code”. Rather than simply pointing to another film of this period and declaring, “isn’t this different to the cinema of after 1934?”, which is what a lot of popular criticism seems to do, I want to focus my paper on the methodological questions surrounding how one reconciles the kind of deep, archaeological work called for by Maltby (see especially 2021) with a sensitive academic film criticism that is attuned to the specific tone and style of individual films. While *Only Yesterday* cannot be called a “pre-Code” film in any simple, stable or secure way, it evinces a style that is characteristic of... something. What that something is will be a matter for debate. Through this, my paper will show how a textually-grounded film history (or a historically grounded film criticism) need not throw the baby of “pre-Codeness” out with the bathwater of the “pre-Code”.

Bibliography

Hutchinson, Pamela and Christina Newland (2022). “Pre-code Hollywood: Rules are Made to be Broken”. A recorded talk at Bristol (UK) Watershed cinema: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTTtpMHqcb4>

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Maltby, Richard (2003). "More Sinned Against Than Sinning: The Fabrications of 'Pre-Code Cinema.'" *Senses of Cinema* 29: https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/pre_code_cinema/

Maltby, Richard (2021). *Decoding Movies: Hollywood in the 1930s* (Exeter University Press)

Tom Brown is a Senior Lecturer at King's College London. His work is strongly invested in the category of the "classical" (for example, the 2016 monograph *Spectacle in "Classical" Cinemas: Musicality and Historicity in the 1930s*) and the relationship between traditions of close textual analysis ("mise-en-scène criticism" etc.), classical film theory and film history. He is the editor of a forthcoming special issue of *The Quarterly Review of Film and Video* provisionally entitled, "'Hollywood Film Style and the Production Code: Criticism and History". His single-authored contributions for the special issue are one broad-ranging introduction and one essay on *Only Yesterday*. He is also hoping to produce video essay work on the relationships of *Only Yesterday* and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* to the Code and its administration.

Benjamin Campion

Perpétuation d'un mythe : le Forbidden Hollywood dans la fiction contemporaine

Depuis la sortie en DVD des Trésors cachés de Warner, le cinéma hollywoodien pré-Code suscite l'attention voire, dans certains cas, ce qui s'apparente à une fascination. Une aura quasi-mystique entoure ces films interdits, jusqu'alors inédits, que d'aucuns n'hésitent pas à qualifier de "plus incroyablement crus, humains, réalistes, audacieux, engagés, libres, et surtout féministes, de toute l'histoire du cinéma, pas seulement hollywoodien" (Frappat 2012). De 1930 à 1934 (Doherty 1999), avant qu'une application plus stricte du Code de Production soit imposée, il semblerait que le sexe, la violence, la grossièreté, voire l'obscénité aient été fréquemment mobilisés pour attirer dans les salles de cinéma américaines un public désireux d'oublier la crise liée à la Grande Dépression. Mais ne s'illusionne-t-on pas quand on parle de "parenthèse enchantée" (Tessé 2013 : 65) au cours de laquelle les cinéastes purent braver impunément la plupart des interdits de l'époque ? Doit-on se laisser convaincre que le pré-Code fut réellement "sulfureux, provocant, résolument moderne" (Warner Bros. 2012) ?

Les recherches internationales menées au cours de la dernière décennie sur ce cinéma (dont on ne peut voir pour l'heure qu'une infime portion, Thoret et Bou 2014) ont depuis fortement nuancé l'affranchissement socio-politique, idéologique et esthétique dont il a pu faire l'objet. Sur le plan du féminisme, par exemple, Mélanie Boissonneau constate que "si Jean Harlow incarne des personnages qui désirent être libres et n'hésitent pas à se servir de leur corps, ils n'en sont pas subversifs pour autant" (2013 : 74). Philippe Rouyer précise pour sa part qu'en dépit des accroches publicitaires ayant accompagné la sortie de ces films en DVD ou en salle, "il ne faut pas s'attendre à voir un déchaînement de pornographie, de violence et de gore" (Thoret et Bou 2014). Quant à Frédéric Cavé, il réfute fermement la notion "d'homogénéité" (2014 : 176) d'une période sujette à de multiples revirements stratégiques visant à instaurer officiellement le Code de Production.

Pour élargir le spectre de recherche, cette communication s'emploiera à étudier les citations intertextuelles de films issus du "Forbidden Hollywood" dans la fiction contemporaine (cinéma, télévision, Internet). Je me concentrerai sur des films et des séries produits aux États-Unis au cours des trois dernières décennies et contenant au moins un extrait visible de

film américain sorti entre 1930 et 1934. À partir d'analyses filmiques, il s'agira de mettre en perspective la postérité et, potentiellement, la perpétuation du pré-Code hollywoodien comme 2 "mythe" de liberté et de rejet des interdits avant le basculement dans une ère beaucoup plus réglementée et contrôlée. Quelle relation notre époque entretient-elle avec celle, idéalisée voire sacralisée, du "Forbidden Hollywood" ? Tient-elle compte du remplacement, en 1968, du Code de Production par un système de classification (le MPAA film rating system) axé sur le filtrage du public plutôt que sur une ouverture des films à tous ? Ou se réfugie-t-elle dans une lecture conservatrice d'un temps doré où les films pouvaient encore dépasser certaines limites (de mœurs, de violence, de sexe) sans se restreindre à un public de niche ? Le pré-Code renvoie-t-il aujourd'hui à un passé révolu ou entre-t-il en résonance avec les libertés de la création contemporaine ?

Benjamin Campion enseigne le cinéma et les séries télévisées à l'Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. Docteur en études cinématographiques et audiovisuelles, il a publié plusieurs articles sur le cinéma hollywoodien pré-Code. Ses travaux portent sur les représentations-limites, les modalités de censure, la sérialisation du cinéma et son expansion narrative et formelle à la télévision et sur Internet.

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Emily Carman

The Stories of Temple Drake: The Fallen Woman Film, Industry Self Censorship, and Negotiating Patriarchy and Heterosexual Violence in Pre-Code Hollywood

One of the most controversial films from the "Pre-Code" era, *The Story of Temple Drake* (Roberts, 1933) is a demonstrative film to examine industry self-censorship as a mode of

narrative and thematic regulation of gender and sexuality with its depiction of rape, forced prostitution (aka “white slavery”), murder, and moral redemption. As the adaptation of William Faulkner’s novel *Sanctuary*, *The Story of Temple Drake* exemplifies how the Hollywood film industry adapted pre-sold material for the screen through its self-censorship organization, the Studio Relations Committee (SRC)—later renamed the Production Code Administration (PCA)—of the Motion Pictures Producers Directors Association (MPPDA). Featuring Miriam Hopkins as a southern belle with a flirtatious sexuality, Temple Drake is part of what Lea Jacobs calls the “fallen woman film genre”, in which a woman commits a sexual transgression, “falls” from her social position, and must atone for her sin and seek redemption by the film’s close. Fallen woman films dominated the US box office in the early 1930s, and there were plot variations within the genre, ranging from the “kept-woman” and class rise films—whereby a woman in an illicit sex relationship uses her sexuality to provide her with wealth and a rise in social status (the seminal example being *Baby Face* (1933)), and the maternal melodrama when an errant mother is reunited with her child.

Thomas Doherty calls *Temple Drake* a “model for pre-Code immorality” in three ways that illuminate why the film was problematic in terms of industry self censorship. First, because the open-ended questions posed by the narrative as to whether Temple enjoyed the rape and thereafter willingly prostituted herself to the bootlegger Trigger; and secondly, the narrative is left open-ended as no character “pays” for their crime by means of the law. Thirdly, if any moral lesson is taught by “the story of Temple Drake” it is one of “poetic justice” in that she is punished for her sexual teasing (being “just a fake”)—hence, if Temple “does not enjoy her degradation, the audience should”.

Expanding upon the work of Doherty, Jacobs and others, this paper investigates the production history of *The Story of Temple Drake* to illuminate how the SRC negotiated the “sensitive” material incongruous with the Code. It also considers how this negotiation impacted the aesthetic and narrative style of the final film. Close analysis of the SRC discourse and Paramount production memos underscore how the SRC guided producers to adapt the narrative primarily to avoid “deviant” male sexuality while ignoring the sexual violence against women that abounds in the film. This is a stark difference from proto-feminist Pre-Code films like *Baby Face*, which championed an empowering female sexuality that obviated economic hardships and sexism. However, as this paper makes clear, Hollywood films like *Temple Drake*, re-inscribe hetero-normative, patriarchal norms both in the regulation and style of this film, however much it adhered to or flaunted the Code.

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Emily Carman is an associate professor of Film and Media Studies in the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University. She is the author of *Independent Stardom: Freelance Women in the Hollywood Studio System* (2016) on University of Texas Press and co-editor of *Hollywood and the Law* (2015) on BFI Press/Palgrave-Macmillan. Her published work also appears in *Cinema Journal*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Celebrity Studies*, *Cinephile*, and *The Moving Image*. She is currently working on a manuscript about *The Misfits* (Huston, 1961) as a transitional film that represents both Old and New Hollywood production cultures.

Frédéric Cavé

Un contrat sans code d'honneur : la nomination de William Hays à la présidence de la MPPDA

À son vieil ami George Ade le questionnant par courrier sur les raisons ayant poussé les principaux gérants de l'industrie cinématographique à lui proposer d'être le président d'une National Association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, William H. Hays confessa à la fin de sa lettre du 28 mars 1922 : "Je n'en sais vraiment rien".

Notre intervention souhaite proposer plusieurs hypothèses quant à cette élection à partir des relations de Hays avec les cercles cinématographiques avant 1922 afin de proposer une image plus complexe que celle d'un républicain par drôle [chargé] d'endiguer la corruption morale galopante du cinéma¹, élu à la suite du scandale Arbuckle.

A partir du dépouillage de la presse d'époque et des archives de la MPPDA, nous reviendrons sur les indices historiques de cette nomination (de par des images politiques, économiques et confessionnelles) qui s'avère, au-delà d'une dynamique censurelle, plus à même de conduire à une véritable standardisation du cinéma hollywoodien au cours des années 1920.

Frédéric Cavé est professeur de lettres modernes. Ancien ATER à l'université de Rennes 2, ses travaux portent sur l'avènement de l'auto-régulation hollywoodienne entre 1921 et 1933. Auteur de plusieurs articles sur l'historiographie de l'auto-régulation ainsi que d'une étude sur la gestion du scandale *Arbuckle* (1895, n°83), il a dirigé *Fantaisies de John Ford* (Passages, 2020), *(d')Après Hitchcock* (The Searchers éditions, 2022) et co-signé avec Francis Bordat, *Le Code Hays* (AFRHC, 2023).

Marguerite Chabrol

From "banned plays" to "proof of motion picture progress": The Hays Office's "Formula" and Broadway star vehicles (1924-1934)

Aiming at understanding Hollywood's relationship with the Broadway stage at the turn of the talkies, I will investigate the early control that the Hays Office established on play adaptations before the more stable process induced by the PCA after 1934 (that I studied in *De Broadway à Hollywood*).

Plays were one of the first controlled materials because playscripts existed before any scenario had to be written and, and therefore allowed for an easy expertise without financial risk. But beyond the economic stakes, I will examine how Hays also reflected on those adaptations to define his notion of quality cinema and the part stage adaptations took in what he called "proof of motion picture progress" in his 1932 annual report for the MPPDA.

The "Formula" established in 1924 (and later revised) mostly consisted in banning objectionable plays and novels from screen adaptation. Even though the Hays Office publicly denied the words "banned plays" or "blacklist," the former often appear in the inside correspondence with the studios.

Hays was confronted to a crucial step in Broadway history in the mid-1920s, when New York became a first-rate theatrical center, matching European capitals. A major feature of this springing art was the emergence and appraisal of a generation of American actresses who became national divas, often supported by their connections with the big Broadway producers.

Controlling Broadway plays meant avoiding the controversial shows and at once allowing the movies to borrow successful star vehicles. The process was all the more complex that many shows were both at the same time. Without necessarily raising scandal on stage, some shows dealt with topics censorable on screen, which required "careful treatment": *The Sin of Madelon Claudet* (1931) provides a good example of a sensitive subject (prostitution) – outlined by a title typical of the era – that brought an Academy Award to Helen Hayes.

Following Lea Jacobs's highlighting of the importance of the fallen women cycle in the early self-regulation in Hollywood, I will focus on the adaptations of Broadway melodrama that were the great star vehicles of the 1920s stage actresses (Rain/Sadie Thompson, Madame X...). I will also examine plays of the same trend that were prohibited by the Hays Office (*Lulu Belle*, *The Shanghai Gesture*).

Those case studies will draw the evolution of play adaptations in Hollywood, that diminished in 1924 but were revived with the talking pictures. They will reveal the diversity and contradictions of comments about the plays and derived films: the understanding of the artistic merits of plays with sensitive topics provided by the Hays Office, the lobbies and censors, and notably two journals dedicated to the subject, *Exceptional Photoplays* and *Educational Screen*.

Marguerite Chabrol is Professor of Film Studies at Université Paris 8 in France. Her research tackles the relations between (straight and musical) theatre and classical Hollywood cinema. She wrote *De Broadway à Hollywood* (CNRS Editions, 2016) and *Katharine Hepburn. Paradoxes de la comédienne* (PUR, 2019). Her interest in the musical led to a French critical edition of Jane Feuer, co-edited with Laurent Guido (*Mythologies du film musical*, Presses du Réel, 2016). She also co-edited with Pierre-Olivier Toulza *Star Turns in Hollywood Musicals* (Presses du Réel, 2017).

Thomas Doherty

The Miscegenation Clause: Before the Code and Under the Code

In 1937, Hollywood Reporter columnist Irving Hoffman commented on a curious casting trend in Hollywood. In recent months he noticed that no less than five Chinese themed motion pictures were in the pipeline, all starring white actresses in yellowface, “but none employed Anna May Wong.” Wong was then Hollywood’s most famous Chinese American player, but for some reason she just “wasn’t the type.” Making light of the racist exclusion he had just called out, Hoffman passed on a lighthearted witticism (allegedly) cooed by the “orientalented Anna May Wong.” When asked if she was under consideration for the lead role in a “forthcoming Chinese flicker,” Wong replied alas, no, “the producer said I wasn’t the type—I look too Jewish!”¹ Hoffman’s item exposed the operation of a bright color line in classical Hollywood cinema. Partly a product of normative American racism and partly due to a blunt edict in the Production Code, the line kept Asians, Native Americans, and especially Blacks from being cast in high profile roles as objects of erotic desire. The line was drawn in the most notorious of all the prohibitions dictated by the Production Code, the so-called miscegenation clause, a seamless merger of American racial and sexual pathologies set in relief against the commercial exigences of Hollywood cinema. The miscegenation clause first appears in 1927 under the list of emphatic “don’ts” adopted by the Association of Motion Picture Producers, the west coast branch of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. It is listed as the sixth in a litany of eleven do-nots, inserted between bans on “white slavery” and “sex hygiene and diseases.” Miscegenation is forbidden,” reads the injunction with no further elaboration.² According to long time Code staffer and, after 1954, Production Code Administration head Geoffrey Shurlock, MPPDA president Will H. Hays inserted the ban at the behest of Southern exhibitors. Shurlock also said that Code authors Martin J. Quigley and Daniel A. Lord, S.J. always considered the clause “outrageous and un-Christian.” In 1930, upon the formal adoption of the Quigley-Lord Code, the ban is listed under a subsection entitled “Seduction or Rape,” where the former if not the later might be assumed to be radiate a shiver of erotic excitement. In 1934, upon the creation of the PCA, the word began to be specifically defined in a parenthetical clarification: “Miscegenation (sex relationships between the white and black races) is forbidden.” The polarities of the definition—the inviolable line between white and black-- remained firmly imbedded in the Code and enforced in both the pre-Code era and under the PCA regime. In terms of the two other groups perceived as off-white--Asians and Native Americans—the ban did not, nominally, apply, but a kind of penumbra effect made regulators and filmmakers alike wary of overt sexual attraction between races. The pre-Code era offered particularly fertile ground for interracial comingling between whites and Asians and whites and Native Americans, sometimes defiantly foregrounded in the plotline, sometimes more subtly insinuated in the cinematic grammar--longing eyeline matches, the shimmering close ups, and the sexual chemistry radiating between two gorgeous embodiments of two different races. It may be too much to say that white-yellow, white-red coupling abounds, but it is not so aberrant as to be shocking. The joys of sex across the colour line are affirmed in *The Silent Enemy* (1930), *Call Her Savage* (1932), *Massacre* (1934), *Shanghai Express* (1932), *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), and *Java Head* (1934). As always in American culture, the most un-crossable line, either in the narrative or the cinematic grammar, was the line separating black white. The surveillance extended to off-screen space and backstory. The mere existence of a biracial character on screen was an admission that sex had in fact occurred between a white and black. But even in the most fraught binary of American race relations, one may detect cracks

¹ Irving Hoffman, “Tales of Hoffman,” *Hollywood Reporter*, March 27, 1937:

² “37 Don’t’s for Film Makers in Making of Am. P. P. Pictures,” *Variety*, September 21, 1927: 4.

in the structure. From this vantage, the two key films are *Imitation of Life* (1934) and *Showboat* (1936). The talk will discuss the cultural politics of the miscegenation clause--black and white, red and white, and yellow and white—mostly in the pre-Code era with some concluding remarks about the enforcement under the Breen office until the ban was official lifted in 1954.

A cultural historian with a special interest in Hollywood cinema, Thomas Doherty is a professor of American Studies at Brandeis University. He is also the film review editor for the *Journal of American History* and an associate editor at *Cineaste*. His books include *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934* [1999] and *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* [2007], both published by Columbia University Press. He is currently working on a book about the rise of the archival documentary in 1930s America. He lives with his wife Sandra in Salem, MA, and he suggests you do not visit the city in October.

Emmanuel Dreux

Censures d'états et comités locaux contre Chaplin : les exemples de *The Pilgrim* et de *A Woman in Paris* en 1923

Au cours de l'année 1923, Chaplin sort deux films qui font l'objet de censures (accompagnées ou non de coupes) pour des motifs variés, dans différents états, à l'instigation de commissions de censure locales et de groupes de pression : *The Pilgrim*, en février (pour la caricature du clergé et de la piété, la consommation d'alcool prohibé, ...) et *A Woman of Paris*, en octobre (pour des questions morales). Nous mettrons à l'étude non seulement ces censures et les réponses apportées par les distributeurs (First National Pictures pour le premier, United Artists pour le second) dans cette période où la profession s'organise contre les censures locales, mais aussi les stratégies d'autocensure mises en œuvre par Chaplin dans l'élaboration de ces deux films.

Emmanuel Dreux est maître de conférences en études cinématographiques à l'Université de Paris 8. Il a publié un ouvrage et de nombreux articles sur le cinéma burlesque américain et travaille actuellement à réunir les textes de Charlie Chaplin sur le cinéma pour leur publication en recueil (en français).

States censorship and local committees vs. Chaplin: *The Pilgrim* and *A Woman in Paris* in 1923

In 1923, Chaplin released two films that were censored (with or without cuts) for various reasons in different States, at the instigation of local censorship boards and pressure groups: *The Pilgrim*, in February (for mocking clergy and devotion, drinking prohibited alcohol, etc.) and *A Woman of Paris*, in October (for moral issues). We will examine not only these censorships and the responses of distributors (First National Pictures for the former, United Artists for the latter) at a time when the profession was organizing against local censorship, but also the self-censorship strategies employed by Chaplin in the making of these two films.

Emmanuel Dreux is associate professor in cinema studies, Université Paris 8. He has published a book and numerous articles on Slapstick Comedy, and is currently working on collecting Charlie Chaplin's texts on cinema for publication in a collection (in French).

Claire Dutriaux

Better Films Committees and Local Censorship Boards in the US: regulating cinema locally before and after the Code (1922-1945)

When the Chicago decree authorizing the chief of police to ban or cut scenes from films was issued in 1907, local censorship committees multiplied throughout the United States to fight against representations that were considered contrary to decency and virtue. Despite the full implementation of the Production Code in 1934, which was supposed to empty these censorship boards of their substance, they continued to act, particularly in the Jim Crow South. Censors used their status to fight against film representations that they considered likely to disturb public order, i.e. films highlighting African American claims or presenting episodes of racial violence (such as lynching) on screen. The control of Hollywood cinema became the place where the political opinions of the South were expressed – mostly those of white Southern women, but women acted as movie censors throughout the United States.

Censorship committees were organized within Women's Clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations, and Better Film Committees (BFC). From Florida to North Dakota, the Better Film Committees and the local boards allowed these women to occupy a space where their political voice could be expressed, opposing any representation they deemed "obscene." This paper will examine the fluid definition of "obscenity" among the BFCs, and how many women censors paradoxically became more radical after the advent of the Code – which puts a dent into the notion that post-Code cinema was more acceptable to them than it was before the Code.

Claire Dutriaux is Associate Professor in United States history and culture at Sorbonne Université, Paris, France. Her research interests include American cinema from the beginnings of the Hollywood industry to the contemporary era, focusing more specifically on issues of race and class in the movies, as well as local and national film censorship. She has published articles and co-organized conferences on various subjects ranging from Southern films to westerns and co-edited an issue of *LISA* (Revue LISA/LISA e-journal, vol. XVI-n°1 | 2018) on Westerns and Southern, as well as an issue of *InMedia* on the links between visual culture and consumer culture (*InMedia*, 7.1. | 2018). Her latest article, "Southern Censorship against Hollywood in Better Films Committees and Local Censorship Boards: Film Control as a Woman's Political Weapon" was published in *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (2024).

Erwin F. Erhardt, III

The Catholic Church and the Emergence of The Code: 1920-1934

In reviewing the criteria of the International Colloquium: Hollywood Before the Code (1921-1934), I was immediately reminded of many textual passages and a variety of print media I had been exposed to since my student days at university. Being a historian with an interest in film, I regularly took notice of the Catholic Church's objections and positions on everything from plays to films which they found to be morally offensive. With this in mind, this paper will explore the role of the Catholic Church in the United States in helping to eventually author—and enforce—the Code which emerged in 1934.

When we think of morally offensive films—one usually thinks of those providing varying degrees of sexual content. Prior to the code, and even after, objections were often made over the portrayal (and suggested glorification of) crime, drugs, etc. (for example, D. W. Griffith's

The Musketeers of Pig Alley, 1912) —potentially leading to the corruption of young people in society.

Complaints against such films emerged in the silent film—leading to secular film censorship boards in a variety of states—such as Ohio, Kansas, Pennsylvania—but also including New York and Massachusetts. The archive of the Ohio Censorship Board (held at Ball State University) specifically refers to this group consulting religious groups concerning what was found to be acceptable and unacceptable in motion pictures. Thus, in the early years of film, religious denominations were already voicing concern about the content of film. To be sure, one must remember that the Thirteen Points were developed under the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry (NAMPI) in response to the demands for film censorship by municipalities and states. As time moved forward, growing concern about the various levels of immorality in film began to be incorporated in books and other print sources throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. At times, some criticism was even lodged against the portrayal of a religious figure in a film—such as *The Confession* (1920). While Hollywood did indeed produce a number of Christian-oriented religious films during the 1920s, titles of other films suggested pursuit by Hollywood of the netherworld. Titles such as *Safe in Hell* (1931) and *Merrily We Go to Hell* (1932) were the type of films that raised the level of anger and objection regarding the direction Hollywood was heading.

This author believes that the attempt by Hollywood's attempt to produce even more controversial films by the early 30s, led directly to the volume being raised among leading Catholics for the establishment of censorship enforcement body to protect the culture and morals of American and Catholic society. By 1934, Martin Quigley and Fr. Daniel A. Lord—both Catholics - had completed the 'code of standards' which was adopted and became known as the Hays Code.

Utilizing the Archives of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary (founded in 1829), this study will thus focus on the growing influence of the Catholic Church from the early 1920s in the quest to establish a form of censorship, direction, and monitoring device to the Hollywood Community. This paper will also argue that the continued rise of more risqué movies produced by Hollywood commencing with the beginning of the sound-film era helped, fuel the Catholic Church in its drive to achieve controls over Hollywood producers and their content.

Erwin F. Erhardt, III, PhD earned his doctorate in history studying domestic newsreel propaganda in WWII Britain. He currently is a Professor-Educator in the Department of Economics at the University of Cincinnati. He is an active member of IAMHIST and NECS and continues to regularly offer conference papers and review books on film history on a regular basis. Thus far in his career, he has presented 145 scholarly papers at regional, national, and international conferences. This year he was presented with the 2024 A.B. "Dolly" Cohen for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Cincinnati.

Milo Farragher-Hanks

“Maintained in Wealth and Affluence”: Codifying the Fallen Woman Spatially

This paper seeks to address omissions and generalisations in contemporary historiographies of the early years of the Production Code, which I feel have obscured and mystified the Code's root causes. It will do so by calling attention to the hitherto neglected role of sensory and affective factors in shaping the Code. The 'fallen woman' film remains prominent in historiography of the origins and early years of the Code, referring to a subset of Hollywood

films prevalent across the 1920s and early 1930s in which a woman defies the sexual norms of her society out of lust or in pursuit of material gain. The cycle has often served as a symbol of the licentiousness and libertinism which survived the introduction of the Code only to be snuffed out by the 1934 formation of the Production Code Administration (PCA)—particularly since the 1991 publication of Lea Jacobs' *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film*. This paper reads the fallen woman phenomenon and its relation to censorship through the more specific lens of spatiality. I will ground this controversy in the contact between two kinds of space; the luxurious, glamorously appointed locations displayed in the films themselves, which served as material reward for the female character's transgressions and sensory spectacle for the audience, and the spaces of exhibition where these films were marketed and screened to the American public—which for these films at this time meant a largely working-class and female audience. This paper will present an examination of internal records from the MPPDA from the period 1930 to 1933 as well as press reports from the same period regarding the treatment of female infidelity on screen and its relationship to spatial aesthetics, substantiated by analysis of the spatial styling of relevant films and their marketing. This dual methodology will show that the objections raised were rooted in the perceived moral incompatibility of the spaces of cinematic sensuality with the cinema space and its inhabitants. In so doing, this paper will move our understanding of the roots of the Production Code not in an abstract notion of what constitutes moral or decent content for a film. Rather, the Code enacted a highly specific politics of affect, based on judgements regarding how the form of a film made its audience feel, who that audience were, and when and where that feeling takes place. Through this analysis, I hope to open a dialogue which treats the Production Code and other moralising discourses and institutions around cinema not as reactive but generative, not simply applying existing moral standards to the content of films but actively articulating affective judgements into moral ones.

Milo Farragher-Hanks is a third-year PhD student in Film Studies at the University of St Andrews, where he previously completed his MA and MLitt. Funded by the Wolfson Foundation, his thesis focusses on the history of moral panic around cinema, with a particular emphasis on the role of anxieties around the corporeal and sensory in such controversies. His work incorporates reception theory, political context, and sensory analysis in an exploration of how films have been morally classified. His work is scheduled to appear in *The Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *Movie: A Journal of Film Criticism* and *Frames Cinema Journal*.

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Filmography

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Red-Headed Woman. Directed by Jack Conway. USA; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1932

Natasha Farrell

Star-Dust in Hollywood: Interwar Writers Jan and Cora Gordon's multimedia portraits of America's Dream Factory

“Over the heads of almost everyone who touches the [movie] plot, there looms, like the mummy at the Egyptian feast, the ghosts of the sheriff, the parson, and the flapper of Oshkosh” (Gordons 124). So parodied Jan and Cora Gordon in their 1930 best-seller *Star-Dust in Hollywood*. Prolific British authors of the 1920s and 1930s and prominent artists of the Modern Art movement in Paris (their adopted home for over twenty years), the Gordons were a veritable publishing phenomenon whose travel books were widely read in Europe and the United States. Although their work in *Star-Dust* foresees the genre of the Hollywood exposé and is one of the earliest commentaries on the important transition from silent to sound film, the Gordons' contributions are overlooked entirely in studies of cinema's Golden Age. Gaining access to major film productions at studios such as Paramount, MGM, and United Artists, the Gordons' portraits of the arrival of talkies emphasize radicalization of censorship and class divides in the Hollywood hierarchy. Directors such as Lubitsch, Murnau, Vidor or Von Sternberg were trying to push technique to higher realms of artistic expression. Authors like [Sam] Ornitz were struggling for greater honesty of expression. Colour had been tried with little success. Suddenly the movietone appeared, and the capitalists cried with a unanimous voice: ‘We are saved’ (274).

In this paper, I investigate this underappreciated text of a transformative moment in film history with reference to the Gordons' observations of productions and film shoots such as *The Docks of New York* (Joseph von Sternberg 1928) and *Chinatown Nights* (William Wellman 1929). Drawing on studio pressbooks of these films, newspaper articles and other primary materials, as well as the work of contemporary scholars (Rick Altman, Alexander McGregor, Mark Vieira), I argue that among other factors, studios pushed the violence, sin and sex onscreen in a desperate attempt to lure cash-strapped viewers into theaters. This, in turn, fueled the fire for moral-minded groups calling for federal censorship. What is unique in my paper is the recovery and positioning of the Gordons in both American cultural studies of the Great Depression and film studies of the Golden Age.

Natasha Farrell is a doctoral candidate and teaching fellow in Memorial University's English department; and since 2017, she has taught first year French courses in the Modern Languages department. She is a Canada Graduate Scholarship Doctoral Award holder. Her doctoral dissertation *Star-Dust in Hollywood*– focused on the work of prolific interwar British writers and artists, Jan and Cora Gordon – is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. She has published articles on the Gordons, Agnès Varda (part of a special collection “Reframing Varda”), Irène Némirovsky, and a book chapter on Don Siegel's film noir output is forthcoming (2024) in *ReFocus' International Directors Series*.

Katherine Fusco

Anita Loos and Jean Harlow, Pedagogues of Media Literacy

Scholars of the silent era have credited Anita Loos with helping viewers learn to “read” the movies, developing an intertitle style that was a complex blend of text and image. This paper focuses on a different kind of reading enabled by the double-act of the Loos-Harlow

partnership in the 1930s. Jean Harlow and Loos's well-publicized partnership would seem to have generated precisely the kind of material we think of as pre-Code across a series of films, including titles *Red-Headed Woman* (1932), *Hold Your Man* (1933), and *The Girl from Missouri* (1934).

In this paper, however, I'm interested in the way the two women complicated the meaning of the word "sophisticated," applied to describe them or their comedies. While on the one hand, sophisticated could be code for sexual knowledge, it also, I argue, suggested a mode of media consumption that ran counter to literalist censors who would read films about sex as infecting audiences with a sex madness. In other words, sophistication could be a word for reading well. Through their self-aware discussions of filmmaking as well as promotional materials (notably around *Red-Headed Woman*), Loos and Harlow encourage an association of sophistication with a mode of reading film and star discourse, reminding fans how movies were made, that actors were performers, and that writers captured both truth and fantasy. In short, I argue that Loos, who was famous for her stance against censorship, and Harlow, who was famous as an object of censorious scrutiny, combatted regulation by promoting their own, cheeky form of media literacy.

Katherine Fusco is associate professor of English at the University of Nevada. She has written two books, *Silent Film and U.S. Naturalist Literature* and *Kelly Reichardt: Emergency and the Everyday*, coauthored with Nicole Seymour. She has published articles in *Feminist Modernist Studies*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Adaptation*, *Camera Obscura*, *Cinema Journal*, *MELUS*, and *PMLA*. For her *PMLA* article "Sexing Farina," she was awarded the William Riley Parker prize, and for her recent coauthored essay with Lynda Olman, "Techniques of Justice: W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits and the Problem of Visualizing the Race", she was the recipient of the 1921 Prize in American Literature. She has just finished a manuscript for a third book on celebrity and identification in the 1920s and 1930s.

Mark Glancy

Looking at Cary Grant: Before and After the Implementation of the Production Code

Late in his life, Cary Grant looked back on his film career by commenting that in his earliest roles he served as a kind of 'window dressing'. That is, he was a leading man whose striking good looks made him a suitable consort for prominent stars such as Marlene Dietrich (*Blonde Venus*, 1932) and Mae West (*She Done Him Wrong*, 1933; *I'm No Angel*, 1933). In these and many other films of the early 1930s, women openly admire and comment on his appearance, which is coded with a quality of 'to-be-looked-ness' that, as Laura Mulvey has argued, was usually reserved for women.

This paper examines this 'pre-Code' phase of Grant's career, analysing the narrative and visual terms in which a man was treated as the object of a female gaze in both films and in the publicity that appeared in film fan magazines. What were the circumstances and contexts in which women were able to express their desire for Cary Grant? And to what extent did this change after the more vigorous implementation of the Production Code in 1934? Grant's screen image remained that of an unusually handsome and desirable man throughout his film career, which lasted into the 1960s. As this paper will argue, however, the contexts in which audiences - as viewers and as magazine readers - were allowed and even encouraged to look at Cary Grant changed markedly over the years.

Mark Glancy is Professor of Film History at Queen Mary University of London. He was the editorial consultant and narrator of the documentary feature film *Becoming Cary Grant* (2017), an official selection of the Cannes Film Festival. His books include *Cary Grant: The Making of a Hollywood Legend* (Oxford University Press, 2020), *Hollywood and the Americanization of Britain* (Bloomsbury, 2014), *The 39 Steps: A British Film Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2003), *When Hollywood Loved Britain* (Manchester University Press, 1999), and, as co-editor with James Chapman and Sue Harper, *The New Film History* (Palgrave, 2007).

Sarah Gleeson-White

Pre-Code Medical Melodrama: Bryan Foy and Wallace Thurman

In late 1934, Joseph Breen, newly heading up the PCA, bemoaned the “slight return to the questionable SOCIAL PROBLEM type of story” such as Hollywood B-film producer Bryan Foy’s 1934 medical melodrama, *High School Girl*. Breen had been “hammered,” he told Will Hays, for having granted a seal to a film that critics then condemned as “an unpleasant sex picture”. In this paper, I focus on the two medical melodramas—*High School Girl* as well as *Tomorrow’s Children*—Foy produced in early 1934, only months prior to the implementation of the Code. While the fate of these films, especially their reception across 1934, provides important insights into the knotty transition from Pre-Code to Hays Code, they also offer an opportunity to scrutinize the ways certain film genres like the medical melodrama may very well have, if not entirely depended, then certainly thrived, on various forms of censorship across the silent and early sound eras, thanks to the publicity this frequently generated. Foy was, according to Breen, “of the opinion that he cannot compete with other companies making the usual type of pictures and that he must resort to the sensational, the shocking and the lurid”. Indeed. The medical melodrama, as it promoted its social problem message—here, to do with sexual hygiene and state-mandated sterilization—could equally be exploited for its risqué, even erotic, potential: doctors and nurses at close quarters, déshabillé (female) patients, invasive surgeries. It was no wonder many of the genre’s conventional scenes and plots—sexual hygiene, childbirth, surgical operations—wound up on the 1927 Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America list of “Don’ts and Be Carefuls”. When we know the scenarist of both *High School Girl* and *Tomorrow’s Children* was Wallace Thurman, a major author of the Harlem Renaissance who wrote his own medical melodramas, the stakes of these films’ entanglement with sexology and eugenics become particularly high. As Annette Kuhn has asked, was cinema “a threat to public morals, or a means of spreading moral enlightenment?” It is no wonder then Breen found Foy “increasingly troublesome.”

Sarah Gleeson-White is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Sydney. Her interests lie in U.S. literature and film, especially African American studies and modernism, and her publications include *Silent Film and the Formations of U.S. Literary Culture: Literature in Motion* (Oxford UP, March 2024), *William Faulkner at Twentieth Century-Fox: The Annotated Screenplays* (Oxford UP 2017), *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers* (Alabama UP 2003) and, as co-editor, *The New William Faulkner Studies* (Cambridge UP 2022). She has published articles in *PMLA*, *Modernism/modernity* and *African American Review*, among others, and chapters in *William Faulkner in Context* and *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American South*. Her current projects include an essay on Alice Dunbar Nelson and the movies, and a biography of Wallace Thurman, supported by a 2024 Beinecke Fellowship.

Joséphine Grébaut

“Never have I seen such a maelstrom of bad taste and sheer magic”: Contemporary Reading of a Mythified Pre-Code Hollywood in *Babylon* (2022)

Despite the fact that it was quickly turned into a profit-centred hyperproductive factory, it was initially creative freedom and independence that the first filmmakers had been seeking by emigrating to the Californian desert in the 1910s. Moving as far as possible from the yoke forced upon them from New Jersey by Edison, their strive for autonomy enabled stars like Clara Bow to take on roles that defied the rules of social and moral propriety of the time, and to give cinema its modern shape. From the perspective of the press, the chaos that characterised this atmosphere led the promised land of the West Coast to transform into a place of debauchery that they soon nicknamed Babylon. The gradual implementation of the Production Code, in parallel with the arrival of the talkies in 1927, attempted to impose the return to a moral order within the chaos, as well as the restoration of a social order that some of the agents of production were then questioning. From this moment, it seems that the manifestations of an unsupervised freedom violently met the greedy restrictions the still youthful studios were asked to submit to. Director Damien Chazelle, who started writing a film on pre-Code Hollywood in 2009, noticed a paradigmatic change in the following decade, one that had a growing echo with this period of transition at the end of the 1920s. By studying the end of the silent era and the way it disrupted mentalities and carriers before the official enactment of the Code, he noticed the consequences of the return to regulation, which had many actors lose their popularity. His project became *Babylon*, which came out in the US in 2022, and presents a spectacular version of this change through the various trajectories of characters embodying the hopes and failures of the American Dream, from the sudden rise to fame to the tragic return to anonymity. Written in a period of democratisation of feminist thought for wider audiences, which came with the denunciation of misogynistic and racist practices ingrained since the early days of Hollywood, the film offers a reading of that time infused with contemporary views on the abuse perpetrated by the industry in the name of material success. This very perspective on the dusk of pre-Code Hollywood will be the focus of this paper, through the analysis of symbolic figures, like that of fictional actress Nellie LaRoy (Margot Robbie). Her dazzling and uncontrolled ascension then dramatic fall throughout the film shed light on this evolution and inscribe her in the mythology of the Los Angeles Dream Factory. The space of the entertainment industry as it is shown in the film is also deeply marked by the transition under study, which will be examined through the various limits gradually invading the vastness of La-la Land's initially deserted landscape. The paper will thus be exploring the treatment of a fantasised Hollywood through its funding myths, and the particular resonance they have with the context of creation of Chazelle's film.

Joséphine Grébaut is currently a PhD student supervised by Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris at Paris-Nanterre University. Her project is entitled “L’Usine à Rêves Hollywoodienne : Fantasmagories et Réalités Alternatives dans les Films et Séries des années 2010.” In her work, she examines the evolutions of these representations in the era of fourth-wave feminism, leaning on the recent works of Quentin Tarantino, David Cronenberg, Nicolas Winding-Refn and David Mitchell in film, but also those of Ryan Murphy and Gregg Araki for television. Her master's dissertation is entitled “Hollywood Viewed: Phantasmagoria and Alternative Realities in Recent films on the Los Angeles Dream Factory”.

Antoine Guégan

Le cas de l'adaptation d'*Uncle Tom's Cabin* en 1927 : entre fidélité à l'esprit du roman et pressions de la censure locale sudiste et de la MPPDA

En s'intéressant tout particulièrement aux pressions exercées par la censure locale sudiste et la MPPDA, cette communication reviendra sur le tournage et les sorties successives de la version d'*Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Universal, 1927) de Harry A. Pollard. Fondateur et président d'Universal, Carl Laemmle envisage cette nouvelle adaptation du roman éponyme d'Harriet Beecher Stowe comme un projet ambitieux pouvant rivaliser avec *The Birth of a Nation*. Pour cette raison, alors simple conseiller "sudiste" de la MPPDA, le futur scénariste Lamar Trotti met en garde Carl E. Milliken sur les conséquences qu'occasionneraient une telle production dans le Sud des États-Unis. Les archives témoignent également d'échanges avec les représentants de la censure locale sudiste, ces courriers visant à apaiser les esprits avant la sortie du film. En effet, la crainte d'une censure était telle qu'elle a poussé Pollard et Laemmle à s'éloigner du roman ; les deux hommes allant jusqu'à déclarer dans la campagne de presse qu'*Uncle Tom's Cabin* n'offensera pas le Sud et que le roman est une œuvre "de propagande (...) qui a toujours caché la vraie beauté et la gloire du Sud!" Tous ces efforts n'auront que trop peu d'effets puisque le film sera interdit dans cette région.

Si les motivations de la censure locale s'expliquent logiquement par l'héritage controversé d'*Uncle Tom's Cabin* dans la culture populaire sudiste, la position de la MPPDA est plus étonnante. Elle doit se comprendre comme une méfiance envers un sujet bientôt interdit par le Code Hays: la miscégenation. Comme nous le verrons dans un dernier temps, c'est sur cet argument que la MPPDA fondera son opposition constante aux ressorties du film ainsi que toute nouvelle adaptation d'*Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ces décisions se comprennent comme la volonté à peine dissimulée de protéger les intérêts du Sud puisque, au même moment, la MPPDA accepte favorablement les ressorties de *The Birth of a Nation*.

Docteur en études cinématographiques, ancien ATER à l'université de Toulouse Jean Jaurès, boursier de la Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage et le musée du quai Branly, Antoine Guégan a réalisé une thèse intitulée : *Reel Slavery, Hollywood et les mémoires cinématographiques de l'esclavage américain* (1903-2013). Ses recherches s'ancrent dans une approche transdisciplinaire qui mêle l'histoire, l'analyse filmique ainsi que les études culturelles. Il a publié des articles portant sur ses recherches dans des revues comme *Positif*, *Transatlantica* ou *Alarmer*. Antoine Guégan a également organisé des journées d'étude sur la comédie américaine ainsi qu'un colloque jeunes chercheurs "Les imaginaires du Sud : à l'écrit à l'écran". Enfin, il est un collaborateur régulier de la Fondation de la mémoire de l'esclavage pour laquelle il a, entre autres, créé un festival de cinéma "Esclavage et cinéma" accueilli par le musée du quai Branly.

Milan Hain

***Our Bette* (1933): Negotiating Sex, Morality, and Homosexuality in Pre-Code Hollywood Cinema**

This paper will focus on the seldom-analysed film *Our Bette* (1933), produced for RKO by David O. Selznick and directed by George Cukor. Based on the play by W. Somerset Maugham, the plot revolves around American heiress Pearl Saunders (played by Constance Bennett), who marries a British nobleman, Lord George Grayston, and becomes embroiled in the complex and often hypocritical world of British high society, leading to marital tensions and unexpected romantic entanglements. Described by industry jargon of the time as an

example of a “sex picture,” *Our Betters* poignantly reflects the Hollywood Pre-Code era’s tensions and contradictions. Although the film was subject to scrutiny by the Studio Relations Committee, which raised several major objections (directed particularly at its attitude to marriage and infidelity and a character overtly coded as homosexual), the final form, like many other pictures of the period, did not entirely rid itself of potentially offensive and problematic motives. The credit for the film’s approval by the industry self-censorship mechanisms was given by the press mainly to director Cukor and his discrete work with the script and actors. Commercially, however, *Our Betters* failed to find success despite the presence of the popular Bennett, resulting in a significant loss of \$100,000 for the studio.

The paper will merge a textual analysis of the film with a comprehensive examination of censorship records from the AMPAS archives and contemporaneous press articles. It aims to unravel how the movie navigated the complex and often contradictory representation of sexuality, morality, and homosexuality on screen, all within the broader context of Pre-Code Hollywood’s socio-cultural landscape. It will examine narrative conventions associated with the representation of homosexuality and loose morals in Hollywood’s early talkies, as well as RKO studio’s production trends. Finally, it will explore the contributions of David O. Selznick and George Cukor, whose combined prestige, even in the early stages of their careers, lent the film an air of sophistication and acceptability.

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Eric Hoyt

Hollywood Pressbooks at Scale: Analysing the Codes and Patterns of Movie Publicity

From the 1910s through the 1980s, Hollywood studios promoted their productions through the creation and dissemination of pressbooks—bound pamphlets containing publicity materials, advertising layouts, accessories for sale, and ballyhoo ideas. The pressbooks were sent to exhibitors and press outlets, making them vital nodes within the wider networks of film circulation and culture. The Media History Digital Library (MHDL) has scanned over 1,000 pressbooks from the 1920s to 1940s, allowing for the broad access to these records of Hollywood’s Golden Age. What can we learn from the pressbooks? What, if any, changes are observable across the silent feature era, to Pre-Code sound era, to the Breen era of Code enforcement? One of the Hays Office’s chief goals was in improving public relations; to what extent did the publicity and advertising materials circulated in pressbooks help or hinder in this goal?

Utilizing the MHDL’s digitized pressbooks from the 1920s to 1940s as a dataset, this paper shares some of the patterns and changes across time that are observable within the pressbooks and their relationships to newspapers and magazines. I argue that the Hollywood studios produced the lengthiest pressbooks during periods when the domestic box office was in a plateau or decline. A line graph of the average page counts of Warner Bros. pressbooks (viewable at <https://mediahistoryproject.org/features/wb100.php>) produces a wave-like visualization, with the crests in 1933 (22.8 pages) and 1947 (22.5 pages), and the trough in

1942 (11.96 pages). The graph is roughly an inversion of the U.S. box office (which boomed during World War II), revealing that the studio put more resources into generating publicity and marketing materials—and trying to encourage exhibitors to promote their films—during downturns within the US marketplace. I am still conducting an analysis of the content (and especially representation of sexuality and violence) represented within the pressbooks. But my initial findings suggest a great deal of continuity across the 1930s, rather than an abrupt change in the Breen era.

Finally, I investigate the extent to which the text from the pressbooks, regardless of length or content, wound up in their intended destinations: American newspapers and magazines? Answering this second question requires computational analysis of text similarity using cosine measurements, the same basic processes employed by most plagiarism detection algorithms. The results from cosine analysis within the MHDL magazine corpus and historical newspaper databases suggest that multi-city tours and travel-oriented PR stunts got more traction than star profiles and behind-the-scenes production stories. The uneven disbursement of results across time and space also reveals the importance of human agents, especially the publicists who utilized relationships and methods of persuasion to get their stories into print. A digital method thus reveals the presence of human intermediaries who worked hard to keep themselves out of the story.

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Eric Hoyt is the Kahl Family Professor of Media Production in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research focuses on the intersections between media history and the digital humanities. He is the Director of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research and Media History Digital Library, which has digitized over 3 million pages of historic books and magazines for open access. He is the author of *Hollywood Vault: Film Libraries before Home Video* (2014) and *Ink-Stained Hollywood: The Triumph of American Cinema’s Trade Press* (2022), as well as co-editor of *Hollywood and the Law* (2015), *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities* (2016), and *Saving New Sounds: Podcast Preservation and Historiography* (2021).

Tatjana Jukić

“The Lubitsch Touch”: From the Hays Code to Stanley Cavell

In many ways, *The Lubitsch Touch* “summarizes the impact of the Hays Code on classical Hollywood cinema: not because Ernst Lubitsch devised a – secret – formula that sidestepped the restrictions introduced by the Code, but because this formula was in operation before the Code, suggesting that the Code in fact served the purpose of reaffirming the very intelligence that Hollywood at the time saw as seminal to its constitution. With this in mind, I propose to analyse *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), a Lubitsch film in which this particular intelligence is engaged to mediate the prerogatives of genre in classical Hollywood. Rather than being a screwball comedy or a melodrama, *Trouble in Paradise* interrogates the rationale of genre and codification, so much so that the story, which is essentially about a pair of con artists, ultimately reveals fraud itself as code and censorship against which the intelligence of film makes itself known. I will also address the fact that *Trouble in Paradise* entails the groupings that Stanley Cavell later flags as hallmarks of Hollywood’s affinity with philosophy – the remarriage comedy and the melodrama of the unknown woman – only to unpack them and, with them, the philosophy’s mandate in its encounter with film.

Tatjana Jukić (tjukic@m.ffzg.hr) is Professor and Chair of English Literature at the University of Zagreb, where she teaches Victorian literature and arts, and film studies. She is the author of two monographs, as well as of essays in, amongst other journals and collections, *The Henry James Review*, *Orbis Litterarum*, *Neue Rundschau*, and *The European Journal of English Studies*.

Stylianos Kypraios

Millie (1931) de John Francis Dillon : La censure à l’épreuve

La présente communication propose une étude de cas portant sur les circonstances de censure entourant le film intitulé *Millie*, réalisé en 1931 par John Francis Dillon avec Helen Twelvetrees, produit par Charles R. Rogers et distribué par la RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum). À cet effet, notre recherche s’appuie sur la correspondance relative à la censure de ce film, un corpus documentaire d’une étendue de 52 pages, faisant partie de la sous-collection intitulée “Production Code Administration Records”, elle-même intégrée au fonds de la Motion Picture Association of America à Los Angeles.

Notre étude révèle en détail le processus de surveillance minutieuse exercé par le “Code Hays” sur le scénario du film, lequel s’inspire du roman controversé de Donald Henderson Clarke. Nous mettrons en lumière les coupes, suppressions et ajustements imposés par le SRC (Studio Relations Committee) afin de se conformer aux normes morales de l’époque. En outre, nous nous pencherons sur la réception critique de *Millie* dans la presse généraliste et spécialisée de l’époque, tout en examinant les répercussions de la censure sur l’accueil du film par le public. Par la suite, notre étude abordera les défis inhérents à la distribution internationale du film, en se concentrant spécifiquement sur le Canada et le Royaume-Uni. Cette démarche vise à mettre en évidence l’importance capitale du contexte international dans le domaine de la distribution cinématographique, tout en permettant une meilleure compréhension des efforts déployés par la RKO pour surmonter les obstacles posés par la censure dans le cadre de ses activités commerciales. Les trajectoires évoquées ci-dessus offrent une opportunité pour approfondir notre compréhension de la dynamique régissant le Code pendant la période en question (1930-1934), tout en contribuant à une réflexion plus approfondie sur les évolutions du cinéma de cette période. Malgré les contraintes imposées

par le Code, *Millie* parvient néanmoins à se démarquer par une volonté affirmée de transcender les normes formelles alors en vigueur. Cette démarche artistique vise à explorer des thématiques socialement sensibles. L'œuvre audacieuse s'attarde sur des questions taboues et controversées, qui auraient aisément pu être éludées dans un cadre plus conventionnel, telles que l'adultère, la prostitution et l'alcoolisme. De surcroît, le film n'hésite pas à aborder les manifestations occultes de la pédérastie, même lorsque celles-ci se dissimulent hypocritement derrière des personnages chrétiens revendiquant vertu et exemplarité.

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Stylianios Kypraios a suivi des études de cinéma en Grèce, en Angleterre et en France. Il a travaillé pour plusieurs festivals. En 2013 il a réalisé *À l'italienne*, son premier court-métrage, dans le cadre du laboratoire de réalisation documentaire des Ateliers d'Angers, et en 2020 *Petites Pattes*, son deuxième court-métrage, en partenariat avec l'ECPAD. De 2017 à 2021 il a été programmateur et projectionniste à l'Espace culturel de Nangis. En 2020 il a été chercheur associé à la Cinémathèque française, et prépare actuellement une thèse en histoire du cinéma, en tant que doctorant contractuel chargé d'enseignement, au sein de l'IRCAV à l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, sous la direction de Kira Kitsopanidou. Cette communication s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'enseignement de son cours dédié à l'histoire économique du cinéma américain (1895-1950).

Danila Kuznetsov

Red-Headed Woman and Baby Face in Advertisements and Reviews in the Trade Press

As a part of exploration of the history of Hollywood in the early thirties, we would like to focus on a pair of films that hold a particular place in the evolution of American cinema: *Red-Headed Woman* directed by Jack Conway (1932) and *Baby Face* (1933) directed by Alfred E. Green. The second film was produced at Warner Brothers Studio and served as a sort of response to the successful MGM melodrama *Red-Headed Woman*. The plot of both films is built around the image of a predatory woman who makes her career solely through sexual relationships with men, including married ones, or as Thomas Doherty put it more succinctly, make “vertical movement up the economic ladder via horizontal means”.³ In these films female sexual immorality becomes the object of viewer interest — and the film's advertising campaign. The image of the predatory woman they create can be considered a predecessor of the archetype of the femme fatale in film noir: in *Baby Face* men go on a crime spree because of the protagonist. In any case, the two films had problems with various forms of censorship pressure both at the scripting stage and after release. We're talking here about regional bans

³ Doherty, Thomas. *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 34.

and cuts, as well as a request by William Hays to immediately remove *Baby Face* from distribution.

Baby Face is known as a film “of interest because it is clearly a limit case, one which provoked a great deal of comment both inside and outside the industry”.⁴ We would like to consider this well studied film precisely in the context of and in comparison, with its predecessor. Based on an analysis of the trade press, we would like to trace the attention paid to the sexual aspects of the films in advertising campaigns and reviews; what exactly were the difficulties associated with the distribution of both films, and how audiences and distributors reacted to such scandalous subjects. The analysis of the documents will help to trace how the major studios were gradually finding the limits of what was acceptable in the search for a balance between “vice content” and the box office.

Danila Kuznetsov is a director and film historian. Born in Moscow, Russia in 1984, he studied at Lomonosov Moscow State University (Department of History, Chair of Ethnology) and Graduate School for Scriptwriters and Film Directors. He has taught film studies at Moscow State University, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration and the Academy of Photography. He moved to Paris in 2020 to study for a master's degree at Paris-8 University. He is currently a doctoral student of Paris-8 working on the dissertation “American film noir and its French sources: a stylistic study” under the direction of Marguerite Chabrol.

David Lagain

L'intégration de Mae West à Hollywood : un enjeu narratif autant qu'idéologique?

Mae West apparaît comme une figure majeure de la période Pré-Code du cinéma hollywoodien. Par son succès de scandale, son premier film, *She Done Him Wrong* (Lowell Sherman, 1933), a pu sauver le studio Paramount de la faillite, en même temps qu'il a précipité l'application du Code de production. C'est pourquoi Mae West a autant retenu l'attention des études et histoires culturelles. Celles-ci se sont souvent intéressées à son statut d'icône : féministe, gay, afro-américaine... Elles ont aussi tenu à mettre en avant le fait que Mae West était la véritable autrice de ses films, adaptant pour l'écran ses succès de Broadway et un personnage qu'elle avait rôdé à la scène. Pourtant, ce que les films de Mae West donnent à voir, en même temps que la star iconique et le personnage dont elle est l'autrice, c'est une actrice ; et peu de choses semblent avoir été écrites à ce sujet. On ne retient souvent de ses performances qu'un certain nombre de gestes idiosyncrasiques : chalouper, relever ses cheveux de la main droite tandis que la main gauche est posée sur la hanche, etc. c'est sur cette gestuelle que repose le “personnage Mae West”, où la persona de la star se confond avec les êtres de fiction qu'elle incarne. Si ce jeu peut paraître limité voire stéréotypé (que l'on songe la réception camp des numéros de travestis), il est important de rappeler que Mae West était à la scène une véritable performeuse, à la fois actrice, chanteuse et danseuse. Comme l'explique Marguerite Chabrol, lors de son passage à l'écran, l'actrice intègre les contraintes de la censure en vigueur pour se limiter à un jeu statique : dans son premier film, qui adapte sa pièce *Darling Lil*, ce que nous voyons aujourd'hui à l'écran résulte donc d'une réduction de sa palette actorale. Et cette réduction de registre touche également la narration : la dimension (mélo)dramatique et réaliste de la pièce, se déroulant dans un cabaret des bas-fonds, est gommée au profit des éléments comiques. Dès lors, la performance de Mae West prend un aspect distancié et ironique, voire caricatural. Dans ce contexte, *Belle of the*

⁴ Jacobs, Lea, *The Wages of sin: censorship and the fallen woman film, 1928-1942*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 69.

Nineties de Leo McCarey, tourné un an après l'adaptation de *Darling Lil*, pourrait bien apparaître comme un simple produit de série, exploitant les recettes d'un succès de scandale et laissant Mae West s'autoparodier. Évoqué par les histoires culturelles, le film retient surtout l'attention par la présence de musiciens noirs : Duke Ellington et son orchestre (les numéros musicaux de Mae West empruntaient déjà aux musiques afro-américaines). Pourtant, par comparaison avec *She Done Him Wrong*, le film de Leo McCarey se présente plutôt comme une variation cherchant à re(mélo)dramatiser le jeu de Mae West. D'une part, si le scénario de *Darling Lil* avait fait l'objet de coupes afin de passer la barre de l'écran, *Belle of the Nineties* repose sur un scénario original, directement écrit pour l'écran par l'actrice et son cinéaste ; d'où une narration possédant une plus grande cohérence dramatique. D'autre part, le découpage de McCarey intègre davantage à cette narration la performance de l'actrice. Celle-ci se trouve alors moins distanciée. Dans un contexte où la star doit s'adapter à un Code de production gagnant en vigueur, l'intégration idéologique passerait aussi par une intégration narrative, ce qu'entend montrer la comparaison de *Belle of the Nineties* avec *She Done Him Wrong*.

David Lagain : agrégé de Lettres modernes et doctorant en études filmiques, prépare une thèse sous la direction de Marguerite Chabrol, portant sur la « mise en scène actorale » de Leo McCarey, George Cukor et William Wyler.

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Jean-Marie Lecomte

Poésie et érotisme dans les films pré-code de Frank Borzage

Frank Borzage s'est illustré, dès 1929 avec "The River", dans un genre filmique qui allie poésie, lyrisme et érotisme. Au cours de sa période pré-code (1929-1933), Borzage reste sous l'influence esthétique du cinéma muet et de ses métaphores stylistiques. Il est intéressant de comprendre comment, dans le cinéma de Borzage, le désir sous-jacent est traduit visuellement et parfois (mais avec davantage d'économie) verbalement.

Jean- Marie Lecomte est spécialiste du cinéma muet, de la transition au parlant et du cinéma pré-code. Il est l'auteur de nombreux articles sur la période appelée inter-règne (1926-1934), spécifiquement sur le pré-code : "Outcast Lilies : Prostitutes in Pre-code Movies" (*Film Journal*, 1. 2010); "Figures du discours féminin et désordre social dans l'Amérique dépressionnaire" (AMAES, Grendel, hors-série 2,2008); and "The Genesis and Poetics of Technicolor Voice" (in *Film and Colour*. Ed. Raphaëlle Costa de Beaugard, Michel Houdiard, 2009).

Sue Matheson

Anton Grot at Warner Brothers

After majoring in interior decoration, illustration, and design at the Krakow Art Academy and a technical school in Königsberg, Germany, Anton Grot arrived in Hollywood to help Wilfred Buckland with the sets for *Robin Hood* (1922) and stayed on to work with Cecil B. DeMille and William K. Howard. As art director, artist, and designer, Grot dominated Warner Brothers' look and style with Pre-Code films like *Little Caesar* (1931) and *Gold Diggers* (1933). Most notably, he collaborated with his fellow émigré, director Michael Curtiz, on 15 films (11 were Pre-Code) and is credited with contributing significantly to Curtiz's style. This paper examines how Grot's European modernism broadened the emotional range of Warner's movies. Examples of Grot's responses to demands for the increasing censorship of Hollywood's aesthetics from *Noah's Ark* (1928), *Svengali* (1931), *20,000 Years in Sing Sing* (1932), and *Gold Diggers* (1933) will be considered.

Sue Matheson is Professor of English at the University College of the North in Manitoba, Canada. Her many interests in film, culture, and literature may be found in more than sixty essays published in a wide range of books and scholarly journals. She is the author of *The Westerns and War Stories of John Ford* (Rowman & Littlefield 2016) and the *John Ford Encyclopedia* (Rowman & Littlefield 2019), as well as the editor of *Love in Western Film and Television* (Palgrave 2013), *A Fistful of Icons: frontier fixtures of the American*

Western (McFarland 2017, *Women in the Western* (Edinburgh University Press 2020), and *The Good, the Bad and the Ancient: Essays on the Greco-Roman Influence in Westerns* (McFarland 2022). Currently, she is editing two books at press: one is a collected volume about the films of Mel Brooks for McFarland, the other, a collected volume about the contemporary Western for Edinburgh University Press. Both will be released in 2025. She is also co-editing a collected volume about adventure films for Edinburgh University Press with Cynthia J. Miller.

Gilles Menegaldo

Transgression, Sensations, and Censorship in Pre-code Horror Cinema

Following the box office success of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, horror cinema became during the pre-Code era, one of the most popular genres in Hollywood. These films try and answer the spectators' expectations by staging transgressive desires, sexual fantasies, hubristic or deviant patterns of behaviour, often implying the victimization (bordering on sadism) of female characters. A frequent motif is that of the mad scientist experimenting on the human or animal body as in *Island of Lost Souls*.

This paper will analyse the narrative and formal devices used to provide the audience with extreme sensations (horror, terror, fascination with abjection) while trying to avoid censorship even before 1934 and the reinforcing of the Code. Stress will be laid in particular on the use of voices, diegetic sounds and musical scores. We shall see that these films, at times heavily censored, are also a means of dealing with taboo topics such as miscegenation, homosexuality or controversial issues like Darwinism while they also may be a reminder of the true horror and traumas of the first world war as in *The Black Cat*.

Gilles Menegaldo is Emeritus professor of American literature and film studies at the University of Poitiers and founder and former head of the Film Studies Department. He has published many articles on gothic literature and cinema, horror films, film noir, and other film genres. Latest books as editor or co-editor: *King Vidor, odyssee des inconnus*, (with J-M Lecomte, CinémAction, 2014, *Le western et les mythes de l'Ouest* (with L. Guillaud), UP Rennes, 2015, *Sherlock Holmes, un limier pour le XXIème siècle* (with H. Machinal et J-P Naugrette), UP Rennes, 2016, *Lovecraft au prisme de l'image* (with C. Gelly), le Visage vert, 2017, *Tim Burton, a Cinema of Transformations* (PULM Montpellier, 2018), *Spectres de Poe* (with J. Dupont), le Visage vert, 2020, *Le Goût du noir* (with M. Petit), Rennes University Press, 202, *Dark Recesses in the House of Hammer* (with M. Boissonneau and A-M Paquet-Deyris), Peter Lang, January 2022, *Le studio Hammer laboratoire de l'horreur moderne?* (with M. Boissonneau and A-M Paquet-Deyris), le visage vert, January 2023.

Paul Monticone

Haysites Take the Stand: Private-Plaintiff Antitrust Suits, the MPPDA, and the Coming of the PCA

In the decades of Code history, film historians have shown that the development of the Production Code Administration (PCA), Hollywood's self-regulatory machinery, was a defensive response to and an active effort to shape public opinion about the industry, as expressed through the press, state and federal legislatures, and public-pressure reform organizations. While the interaction of Hollywood's monopoly of discourse (instantiated through the PCA) and its economic monopoly has received attention in the context of the Paramount suit, most notably by Guiliana Muscio, a heretofore unexamined site of discourse

is the US District Courts where several private-plaintiff antitrust cases were brought against the system in the years before 1934.

This paper analyses the legal history and trial record of lawsuits brought against the Hays Office itself in addition to the oft-sued Hollywood majors whose distribution arms and circuits carried out the actions that were allegedly in violation of antitrust laws. That the Hays Office itself was named as a party in actions brought by independent exhibitors, like Indiana's Frank Rembusch or New York's Edward Quittner, or independent producers, like Ivan Abramson, called into question its purported function as a public-relations agency and guardian of moral standards, and charged it with being the site of a conspiracy in restraint of trade.

Richard Maltby has recently called for attention to such legal disputations that focus not on "the legal significance of this or that decision for the history of antitrust in general" but instead on the representation and reception of the Hollywood system's operations. In this paper, I contribute to the project of building this history by drawing on US District and Appeals Court case records, the archival collections of Hays and the MPPDA, and local newspaper and industry trade press coverage. Through these sources, I trace the socio-political and ideological negotiations that imbued the MPPDA's censorship evolving functions with material consequence for its member firms and established its industrial function during the post-Code years.

Paul Monticone is a film and media historian and an Assistant Professor in the Radio, Television, and Film Department of Rowan University. His research focuses on industrial institutions and practices of mid-century US cinema, including both Hollywood and nontheatrical film. His work is published in the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, as well as edited collections including the *Editing & VFX* volume in Rutgers University Press's Behind the Screen series and the press's forthcoming *Hollywood Unions*. His dissertation, "'For the Maintenance of the System': Institutional and Cultural Change with the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America," was completed at the University of Texas at Austin under the supervision Thomas Schatz and Janet Staiger. It analyses the collision of occupational cultures and conflicting interests among the trade association's stakeholders and is presently being revised as a monograph.

Kajsa Philippa Niehusen

"The situation in Chicago is admittedly the worst in the country": Hollywood's struggle with Chicago's Police Censorship Board

My project investigates the activities of the very active local Chicago Police Censor Board in relation to Hollywood's censorship practices prior to the implementation of the Production Code. Chicago was the first city in the United States to introduce full-scale film censorship in 1907. It was also arguably one of the strictest and all-encompassing in this regard, and work as a censor became regarded as a civil service position beginning in the 1920s. Referring to the many cuts, changes, and rejections levelled against films by the Chicago police censor board, *Variety* summarized in August 1934 that the "situation in Chicago is admittedly the worst in the country as far as censorship is concerned".⁵

⁵ "Pictures: Chi Censors Ban 6 Ace Pictures, Put Theatres in Product Jam; 'Missouri' 'Empress' Among Rejects," *Variety*, August 14, 1934, 4.

In 1922, Mrs. E. Kerr of the Police Censor Board happily reported that pictures were much cleaner than they had been in the past, thanks to the strict application of the censor board's shears to any film shown in the city. In fact, according to Kerr, the board set up "certain standards which the producers have accepted, and they are endeavouring to keep their pictures up to that standard."⁶ Likewise, in 1923, her colleague and chairman of the board, Mrs. A. L. Adams, proclaimed that "it will not be long until censorship will be entirely superfluous. Directors do not want to offend the public, and they have learned that the public wants clean pictures."⁷

My project will discuss how far these statements hold true or whether they were merely wishful thinking by the censors. What impact did local censor boards, specifically the one in Chicago, really have on Hollywood's self-censoring even before the implementation of the code? I will also discuss examples of resistance by Hollywood studios to those rules, such as Universal Picture's effort to engage the legal system in getting their film *A Night of Love* past the censors and onto Chicago's screens.⁸

Another aspect covered in my presentation pertains to the issue that, while the main concerns of Chicago's censors initially revolved around indecency and indecent exposure and nudity, censorship began becoming more political in 1933 and 1934, for example when Mayor Edward Kelly ordered all riot scenes – such as those seen in newsreels reporting from Nazi Germany and Austria – cut from screens and threatened anyone who disobeyed with jail time.⁹

Kajsa Niehusen is adjunct lecturer in Film Studies at University of Bremen, currently teaching a seminar on Hollywood and World War II. She received an MA in Journalism from the University of the Arts in Berlin, Germany, and recently completed her PhD in Film and Media Studies. During her Bachelor's in American Studies and Art History at Freie Universitaet Berlin, she has also studied at the University of Nottingham and UC Santa Barbara. Her research focuses on German-American moviegoing practices in the U.S., as well as American and Hollywood film policy abroad.

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris

That clear object of Desire: Erich Von Stroheim's *Greed* (1924) adapted from Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899)

In 1923, June Mathis co-wrote the screenplay adapted from Frank Norris's naturalist novel *McTeague* (1899) along with director Erich Von Stroheim. She entitled the movie *Greed*, foregrounding the irrepressible passion which destroys the protagonists consumed with an "[...] accursed hunger of gold" (Virgil), from McTeague the self-made dentist, to his future wife Trina who wins the lottery, and her jealous cousin Marcus. In the unsettling and quasi-surrealist oneiric scenes and photograms of this 1924 "mutilated"¹⁰ silent film, Von Stroheim materializes how the maiming and destruction of bodies become a sign of mental and moral decay. He captures the emergence of certain irrepressible impulses Freud had popularized in the United States in 1909. Cinematographer William H. Daniels' treatment of drop shadows borders on the Fantastic and his representation of the abject in the slums of San Francisco

⁶ "Censorship Bureau Responsible For Clean Films," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 14th 1922, 9.

⁷ "Says Movies Will Eventually Need No Censorship," *The Washington Post*, September 9th, 1923, 9.

⁸ "Jurist attacks Film Censorship By City's Board," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 12 1927, 4.

⁹ "Film Board Will Fight Newsreel Censorship," *The Sun*, March 10, 1934, 8.

¹⁰ McCarthy, Todd. "Mutilated masterpiece gets the loving touch". *Variety* Sept. 13-19, 1992: 44.

generates a potent symbolic system which highlights the distorting strain of desire contaminating everything and everyone¹¹. This paper examines the inner workings of naked desire in a movie which was amputated by Irvin Thalberg who destroyed major sections of the negative film before its partial reconstruction by Turner Entertainment in 1999, and which was a major critical and financial failure. It examines the inscription of the pathological, the deformed and the mangled ten years before the Production Code was to curb this kind of frontal exploration of vice and the sordid.

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris is Professor of Film and TV Series Studies & (African) American Literature & Culture - & more specifically of the work of Toni Morrison - at University Paris Nanterre. Her books & articles mostly focus on contemporary American Cinema & screen adaptations as well as on English-speaking TV Series. She co-organized international conferences on David Simon's works, *The Wire* and *Treme*. She also worked on "TV Series & Addiction" with psychologists from University Paris Nanterre and a specialist of TV series from Paris 8 University. The resulting book is entitled *Combining Aesthetic and Psychological Approaches to TV Series Addiction*, co-edited with N. Camart, S. Lefait and L. Romo (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018). Her latest books *Vérités et mensonges dans le cinéma hollywoodien (Truths and Lies in Hollywood Cinema)* co-directed with D. Sipièrè, and *Dark Recesses in the House of Hammer* co-directed with G. Menegaldo and M. Boissonneau were respectively published in 2021 by Paris Nanterre UP & in 2022 by Peter Lang, New York (Best Edited Collection Award, Popular Culture Association, 2023). In 2023, she also co-directed *Le Studio Hammer. Laboratoire de l'horreur moderne?* (Le Visage Vert, Cadillon 2023), once again with G. Menegaldo & M. Boissonneau. She's currently teaching Film and TV Series Studies at University of Texas at Austin (Spring 2024).

Frances Pheasant-Kelly

Cuts and Controversy in Pre-Code Hollywood Horror: The Case of James Whale's *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*

This paper aims to evidence a claim by film scholar Richard Maltby that films were censored prior to the formal implementation in 1934 of the Hays Code, and to indicate how such censorship affected film aesthetics and reception. The study will achieve its aims through comparison of two films directed by James Whale, *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). *Frankenstein* was released during the Pre-Code era whilst *Bride of Frankenstein* was released after the full implementation of the Hays Code. A number of scholars contend that the Pre-Code era marked a period of lax censorship. For example, Thomas Doherty notes that, 'Unlike all studio system films released after 1934, Pre-Code Hollywood did not adhere to the strict regulations on matters of sex, vice, violence, and moral meaning forced upon the balance of Hollywood cinema' (1999: 2). Doherty's claims echo those of earlier scholar, Raymond Moley (1945), who likewise declared that the Pre-Code era lacked any adherence to the Hays Code. However, Lea Jacobs and Richard Maltby contend that such an understanding is erroneous (2009: 1). Indeed, Maltby suggests that there are several misconceptions regarding the Hays Code, one being that the Pre-Code cinema of the early 1930s freely violated the Code without any comeback. Rather, he claims that films between 1930-34 were not uncensored but 'instead, this period saw the more gradual, more complex and less melodramatic evolution of systems of convention in representation' (2003).

¹¹ Wolfe, Charles. "Resurrecting Greed". *Sight and Sound* V. 44, n. 3, Jul. 1975: 170-74.

While the most obvious scene deletions of the two Whale films have been addressed by other scholars more generally, the exact interactions between the PCA office, James Whale, and Universal Studios have not been hitherto examined. Moreover, the increasing employment of the Code via censorship of these two films has yet to be analysed. This paper thus aims to examine such interactions and involves both primary and secondary research concerning the two films as well as qualitative textual analysis of selected sequences that are affected by censorship and editing. Primary archival research entails access to the Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles in order to document clippings, censor reports, correspondence and PCA reviews pertaining to the two films. In addition, critical reviews and audience responses to the two edited films ascertained through news media will illustrate the effect of censorship on audience reception. The project will involve secondary research to support these findings.

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Fran Pheasant-Kelly is a Reader in Film and Screen at Wolverhampton University, UK. Her research centres on abject spaces, fantasy, and the medical humanities. She has written over eighty publications including two monographs, *Abject Spaces in American Cinema* (2013) and *Fantasy Film Post 9/11* (2013) and is the co-editor of *Spaces of the Cinematic Home* (2015) and *Tim Burton's Bodies* (2021). She is currently working on several monographs including *A History of HIV/AIDS in Film, Television and the Media* (2024) and *The Revenant: Towards a Sensory Cinema* (2024), and co-editing *Action Heroines in the Twenty-First Century* with Christa Van Raalte (2024).

Charles Wolfe

“Pre-Code” Censorship, Circa 1924: The View From Southern California

This paper takes as its starting point a cluster of events in 1924 involving actions taken by the Motion Picture Producers Distributors Association in New York, in relation to the activities of local theatre owners, municipal censors, and civic organizations in Southern California during the same period. In January 1924 the Hays administration took its first official steps to demonstrate the MPPDA’s capacity to internally regulate the selection and treatment of film stories produced by its member companies, a process promoted through the ambiguous and readily emendable concepts of the “Formula” and the “Open Door.” During the same period, regional debates about motion picture censorship in Southern California unfolded in ways that paralleled but far exceeded the MPPDA’s core industrial concerns. The practices and discourses of these local agencies, some of which were proximate to the sites of the Hollywood studios, illuminate and complicate the cultural and political dynamic that the new MPPDA initiatives were designed to address, in the organization’s effort to minimize the effects of external regulation and the loss of market control.

Charles Wolfe is Professor Emeritus of Film and Media Studies at UC Santa Barbara. He is the author of two books on the films of director Frank Capra and has published widely on various aspects of the history of commercial, independent, and documentary films, with a focus in recent years on California Slapstick, and the comic entanglements of different spatial and cultural logics in this genre. With his late colleague Edward Branigan, he co-founded and served as series editors of the American Film Institute’s AFI Film Readers (Routledge), which between 1989 and 2021 published 41 volumes of new critical essays on topics of emerging concern in film, television, and digital media studies. Viewed in composite, the AFI Film Readers series charted new paradigms for scholarly inquiry in cinema and media studies over the course of three decades. Professor Wolfe received the Outstanding Pedagogy Award from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in 2011, a Distinguished Teaching Award from the UCSB Academic Senate and Alumni Association in 1987, a Professor of the Year Award from the UCSB Mortar Board/Senior Class Council in 1992, and an Outstanding Faculty Award from the UCSB Office of Residential Life in 2001. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, as a Rockefeller Fellow at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, and as a member of the advisory or editorial boards of *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, and *Studies in Documentary Film*. He chaired the Department of Film and Media Studies at UCSB from 1994 to 1998, during which time plans were launched for the construction of the Pollock Theater, now the region’s premier public screening venue and current home to the public programs of the Carsey-Wolf Center for Film and Media Research. He held the position of Associate Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts in the College of Letters and Science at UCSB from 2003 to 2008.

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