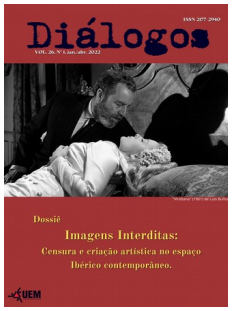

Diálogos

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Banned Images: censorship and artistic creation in the contemporary Iberian space.[1]

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Introduction

This dossier results from the first International Congress *Banned images. Cinema and Literature in the Iberian Peninsula – 20th and 21st Centuries*, which took place on April 12-14, 2021, organized by CEComp – Centre for Comparative Studies (School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon), in collaboration with IHA - Art History Institute (NOVA University of Lisbon – School of Social Sciences and Humanities) and CHAM – Centre for the Humanities (NOVA University of Lisbon – School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Azores).

The event featured 33 communications from 38 participants from 15 universities (Universidade de Lisboa, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade

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do Minho, Universidade Lusíada, UNED - Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Universidade de Brasília, University of the Western Cape, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, Université Paris Nanterre, Universidad de Alcalá, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Universidad de Málaga and Universidade de Bergen) from six countries (Portugal, Spain, Brazil, France, Norway and South Africa). There were also communications by an editor and film director. The event's two plenary speakers were Ana Cabrera (NOVA University of Lisbon) and Josefina Martinez Alvarez (UNED - Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia).

After the congress, there was a call for papers for the present dossier, which followed a double-blind peer review, by reviewers from Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and Brazilian institutions.

Some of the main questions that guided the event's proposal, and which now underlie the dossier, are the following: what is the difference between the images before our eyes and those the imaginary produces? Which are more powerful and "subversive"? Then, what justifies censorship? The images themselves, their aims or their uses? Are images what is censored or what we think and do with them later? The tension between visibility and invisibility, between seen and imagined image, directs us to the complex relationships between literature and visual arts.

A few decades ago, in countries such as Portugal (country of origin of this issue's guest editors) or Brazil (where the magazine *Dialogues* was founded), questioning and debating the very legitimacy of censorship was an impossible task, or at least unthinkable in the ways proposed here. Notwithstanding the acclaimed conquest of the right to freedom of expression in Portugal, Spain, and Brazil, as part of a Rule of Law and democratic values, as these lines are being written, in these three countries and in many other parts of the world, law enforcement agencies, public officials and private parties continue to silence, suppress or remove particular works of art from the public sphere, cancelling exhibitions, seizing books and banning the distribution of movies, simply because they are “controversial” or "uncomfortable" creations. This is done in the name of "protecting the public" and "higher principles", with the justification of avoiding moral corruption and the subversion of politics and society.

Much of the Iberian 20th century was marked by censorship imposed by dictatorial regimes (especially the Estado Novo and Francoism) that targeted all forms of expression, especially social communication, cinema, theatre, music and literature. In parallel, resistance phenomena arose, both open and clandestine, which developed into movements such as neorealism in Portugal and *tremendismo* in Spain. In this country, after the Civil War, a large part of intellectuals emigrated and built an impressive literature of exile, telling an alternative version from that propagated by the

victorious regime. This circumstance clearly demonstrates that, by denying certain works of art, the mechanisms of censorship may turn into a main driver of creation denouncing and answering the censor himself, who plays a decisive role in building its meanings and interpretations.

Research on censorship in cinema in Portugal during (and after) the dictatorship is beginning to take ever wider strides, particularly after the project "Censorship and information control mechanisms in theatre and cinema during Estado Novo", coordinated by Ana Cabrera. In Spain, studies on the topic of cinema censorship during Francoism are more developed. However, comparative studies between the two Iberian countries have only a recent history, particularly one comparing the organization of the respective cinema censorship commissions and their composition and *modus operandi* during both dictatorships. The most recent publication is the dossier "Cinema censorship in the Iberian dictatorships" (*Ler História*), which concluded there were more similarities than differences and that there were changes over the years, depending on the political and social events and contexts of the two countries (MORAIS, 2021, pp. 9-84).

Internationally, studies about censorship have resurfaced in recent decades. On the one hand, the decline of colonial powers and the collapse of the Soviet model of socialist States (with the events in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991) provided access to a considerable volume of archival material and thus shed new light on the relations between state control and artistic production. On the other hand, the last wave of globalization, mitigating institutional restrictions previously confined to national state policies, has triggered debates about the very definition of censorship as such. The traditional perspective, according to which the control of artistic creation represents a "state of exception", is challenged by what has already been called "new censorship" (BUNN 2015).

According to Pierre Bourdieu (1982), the practice of censorship can be systematized, roughly speaking, according to three broad categories: *institutional*, when imposed by a State by means of specific legislation and bodies; *structural*, based on the control the very structure of society exerts over circulation of a given discourse, establishing a hierarchy between dominant voices and those voices relegated to the margins (and which can take the form of popular intimidation, reprisals and ostracism); and, finally, *self-censorship*, which consists of the conscious or unconscious response or concession of a given author/agent to the two previous forms. Accordingly, in 1945, the Portuguese writer Ferreira de Castro wrote that "each of us, when writing, has an imaginary censor upon the worktable" (CASTRO 1945).

The attempt to control public discourse by legitimizing certain voices and relegating others

to silence is one of the main objectives of censorship. This is closely linked to state and/or institutional coercion to impose an ideology with the pretext of protecting a society's values. Nevertheless, given the traditional liberal conception of government censorship as something "external, coercive and repressive" (BUNN 2015), more recent approaches have argued that censorship is much more subtle and pervasive than the first model. New studies have shown that the relationships between creation, production and reception of art, on the one hand, and its control and censorship structures, on the other, can be immensely dynamic and complex (KENNEDY & COULTER 2018). In light of this reinterpretation, not only can any of us assume the role of active censor at any time, but it is also difficult to determine definitively whether a given work is not simultaneously an act of censorship and its refusal. Any questioning of a given aesthetic or hegemonic theme also has an unintended censorial consequence.

Very recently, a huge wave of censorship – in museums, the press and social networks (such as *Facebook* and *Instagram*) – has been targeting works that, from cinema to photography and including even the historical legacy of painting, have generated heated public debates. At the same time, the dependence of art institutions on private financing – albeit partially – seems to legitimize interference in their programming and activities. Although States are responsible for establishing the rules of speech considered acceptable in the public sphere, that is, who can speak and what can be said, *lobbies* and private groups, in their association with state power, have acquired the power to impose their own standards and ideologies. In addition, we are witnessing the rise of far-right parties in countries with democratic traditions, but with dictatorial pasts, such as Portugal and Spain. The new outbreak of war in Europe, with the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, illustrates how control of the media is again on the agenda.

In this context, in the "digital age" and age of "post-truth", where social networks are increasingly gaining relevance in the formation of public opinion, the figures of "counter-information" and "disinformation" reach levels never seen before. Every day we are bombarded by *fake news*, the result of using communication and information techniques to induce error or give a distorted image of reality, by suppressing or concealing information, minimizing its importance or distorting its meaning. Therefore, approaching censorship as a practice implies considering it more than the exclusive monopoly of authoritarian regimes, but identifying moments when democratic regimes resort to censorship practices (GUBERN, 1981). Censorship can thus be seen as a communication system, independent of the political regime in which it operates, where there is a desire to impose an interpretation of reality considered valid by the reigning power (DARNTON, 2015; LUHMANN, 1999, 2000; MOORE, 2015; MÜLLER, 2004). Thus, in the present democratic

regimes, as demonstrated by successive denunciations, we cannot say that censorship is definitively extinct in the field of the arts. We live in an intense moment of non-institutionalized, non-legislated censorship, and, therefore, a time when censorship is more difficult to quantify, contextualize and analyse. This seems to be the right time for researchers from various fields of knowledge and geographies to face the challenge of working on contemporary censorship and thus contribute to its understanding and the minimization of its effects. This dossier aims to promote the debate on the subject, focusing on two countries that, in addition to similar historical contexts – semi-periphery, Inquisition, colonialism, among others – endured two of the longest dictatorships of the twentieth century.

The dossier beings with "Clandestine culture, exile culture and subversive images in the Portuguese dictatorial sunset", by **Daniel Melo**, a comprehensive article based on films, photographs and posters, among others, analysing the relations between repressive practices in Portugal since the 1960s and the clandestine and exile cultures, highlighting issues related to anti-fascism, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. This is followed by three studies covering specific cases of censorship in Portugal: "From the Mónicas of *Novas cartas portuguesas* to the Mónica of Maria Teresa Horta", by **Andreia Oliveira**, about the hortian universe, feminist characters and censorship; “Ernesto De Melo and Castro and the *horse's jump* in the Estado Novo's chess game”, by **Cláudia Madeira**, addressing the artist's strategy to avoid the PIDE's control through experimental practices and visual poetry; and “Somewhat marginal. The case of *Catembe*'s censorship”, by **Maria do Carmo Piçarra**, analysing the use of cinema to build a certain image of Portugal and its colonies, the function of the censors and the censorship of the film *Catembe*.

Sexuality and eroticism are traditionally targets of censorship. The following articles address this issue chronologically in different areas, in particular cinema in the last years of the Portuguese dictatorship ("Censorship of eroticism and violence in cinema in Portugal (1968-1974)", by **Ana Bela Morais**); and "cruising", *queer* and homosexual identities in contemporary arts (João Pedro Vale and Nuno Alexandre Ferreira: "cruising" in the realm of the unspoken, by **Bruno Marques**).

The dossier concludes with articles addressing non-exclusively Portuguese contexts: "Forbidden (Homo)sexual Images in Translated Short Fiction in Estado Novo Portugal and State-Socialist Hungary between 1949 and 1974”, by **Zsófi Gómbar,** where homosexuality is once again approached, this time using the literary translation of English-language texts and the strategies to escape censorship; “The coincidence of revolutionary poetic invention with revolutionary political invention": the cases of the *Cuba Colectiva* and *48 artists, 48 years* exhibitions", where **Cristina Pratas Cruzeiro** reflects on the relationship between the collective painting experiences of *Cuba*

Colectiva (Havana, 1967) and *48 artists, 48 years of fascism* (Lisbon, 1974) and how they were received in contemporary Portuguese society, in particular in the poetic and political spheres; and finally "Luisa Carnés: the recovery of a female voice from the early twentieth century by academia and publishers", by **Isabel Araújo Branco**, reflecting on the contexts and processes that led a writer from the second Spanish Republic to be "ignored" during the Franco dictatorship and then become a target of a growing interest by readers, critics, editors and researchers, in 21th century.

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