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**Cinema, Censorship  
and Sexuality 1909-  
1925**

**Annette Kuhn**



## **Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925**

First published in 1988. This book shows how censorship as a set of institutions, practices and discourses was involved in the struggle over the nature of cinema in the early twentieth century. It also reveals the part played in this struggle by other institutions, practices and discourses — for example ‘new’ knowledge about sexuality and organisations devoted to the promotion of public morality. Instead of censorship simply being an act of prohibition by a special institution, this work reveals the issues at work were far more complex and contradictory — opening up critical scrutiny and challenging assumptions. This title will be of interest to students of media and film studies.

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# Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925

Annette Kuhn



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Annette Kuhn

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Dedicated to  
the memory of my father,  
Henry Philip Kuhn

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## General Editor's Preface

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The pre-eminent popular art form of the first half of the twentieth century has been the cinema. Both in Europe and America from the turn of the century to the 1950s cinema-going has been a regular habit and film-making a major industry. The cinema combined all the other art forms – painting, sculpture, music, the word, the dance – and added a new dimension – an illusion of life. Living, breathing people enacted dramas before the gaze of the audience and not, as in the theatre, bounded by the stage, but with the world as their backdrop. Success at the box office was to be obtained by giving the people something to which they could relate and which therefore reflected themselves. Like the other popular art forms, the cinema has much to tell us about people and their beliefs, their assumptions and their attitudes, their hopes and fears and dreams.

This series of books will examine the connection between films and the societies which produced them. Film as straight historical evidence; film as an unconscious reflection of national preoccupations; film as escapist entertainment; film as a weapon of propaganda – these are the aspects of the question that will concern us. We shall seek to examine and delineate individual film *genres*, the cinematic images of particular nations and the work of key directors who have mirrored national concerns and ideals. For we believe that the rich and multifarious products of the cinema constitute a still largely untapped source of knowledge about the ways in which our world and the people in it have changed since the first flickering images were projected on to the silver screen.

Jeffrey Richards

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Work-in-progress on the project has been presented at the Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association, Cardiff, April 1983; at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Cinema Studies, New York University, June 1985; and at the Power Foundation, Sydney University, June 1986. Earlier versions of chapters 4 and 5 have been published respectively in *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); and in *Screen*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1986). Extracts from Crown-copyright records in the Public Record Office appear

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Annette Kuhn  
London, May 1987

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# Abbreviations

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<b>BBFC</b>	<b>British Board of Film Censors</b>
<b>BSHC</b>	<b>British Social Hygiene Council</b>
<b>CEA</b>	<b>Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association</b>
<b>LCC</b>	<b>London County Council</b>
<b>MCC</b>	<b>Middlesex County Council</b>
<b>NCCVD</b>	<b>National Council for Combating Venereal Disease</b>
<b>NCPM</b>	<b>National Council of Public Morals</b>
<b>NVA</b>	<b>National Vigilance Association</b>