

Faith, fun and fear in the Dutch Orthodox Protestant Milieu: Towards a non-cinema centred approach to Cinema History

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Abstract:

Since the early 2000s, the New Cinema History has resulted in a growing interest in historical audiences and the socio-cultural dynamics of cinemagoing. A major impetus behind this move towards a social history of film culture was Richard Maltby's call for an integration of cinema history and the general history of which it is part. In line with Maltby, this article proposes milieu-analysis as a method to situate research on film circulation and consumption more firmly in an analysis of its societal context. After a brief methodological reflection, it examines film culture in the Dutch Bible Belt to illustrate the benefits of such approach. The Orthodox Protestant milieu represents a fascinating case because of its idiosyncratic recreational patterns, including a near total rejection of the cinema as an entertainment and educational medium. Before 1940, this self-imposed abstinence from watching movies was widely respected and rarely questioned. However, in aftermath of World War Two and in the context of rapid (rural) modernization, traditional Orthodox Protestant leisure culture came under increased pressure from the inside and outside, causing strong ideological tensions between advocates of liberalization and defenders of the 'true Christian faith,' between church elites and grass-roots authorities. As a result, the cinema contributed in a powerful way to the social identity formation of post-war Dutch Orthodox Protestantism.

Keywords: New Cinema History, contextualization, community studies, milieu-analysis, film culture, religion, Protestant audiences, youth, Netherlands

Introduction

The subject framing my contribution to this special issue about *Audiences, Cultures, Histories* is the question how to gain better insight in the ways in which publics in the past

made meaning of the cinema and the experience of cinemagoing. Although there is certainly much more to say about the movies themselves, underpinning my work on film culture has always been the notion that if we want to understand how the cinema shapes the lives of people, we should put the audience at the centre of our research projects; not the films. In that sense, my work aligns itself with what is now widely referred to as the 'New Cinema History.' This new direction within film historiography emerged in the early 2000s and is methodologically characterized not only by a strong tendency towards multidisciplinary approaches, but also by a more radical shift away from the film text and theoretical analyses of spectatorship than the New Film History of the late 1980s and 1990s.¹ In retrospect, the turning point for the New Cinema History (NCH) was Richard Maltby's 2006 article 'On the prospect of writing cinema history from below,' in which he proposed to make a clear-cut distinction between the 'history of textual relationships among films' (film history) on the one hand, and 'a socio-cultural history of the economic institution of cinema' (cinema history) on the other.² What Maltby envisioned was a socio-historical approach of film culture inspired by the work of E.P. Thompson: research that would restore the agency of ordinary people and situate their everyday (and not-so-everyday) experiences in the context of broader societal processes and transformations. A key motive behind this proposition was to enhance the relevance of film scholarship for other disciplines. Significantly, the question 'How Can Cinema History Matter More?' became the title of a second article, which Maltby published in *Screening the Past* in 2007. His answer was bold and clear: 'for cinema history to matter more, it must engage with the social history of which it is a part.'³ However, until now the NCH is primarily perceived as 'exhibition studies,' a subfield of film history that focusses on questions concerning the circulation and consumption of films – often on the local level without addressing larger macro-historical issues.⁴ Altogether, this is a much more restricted and limited endeavor than envisioned by Maltby, which implied giving up the medium-specific approach of film studies. That is obviously one step too far for most cinema historians.⁵ And yet, as I have argued elsewhere in more detail, the passage from cinema history to general history does entail more than new methods and a shift away from the film text. It imposes new research questions as well as a conceptual change of scale that is embedded in the research design right from the start.⁶

Looking through the lens of community or social *milieu*

What might be helpful in developing a genuine social history of cinema is to look at potential models from social history. Maltby's ideal was a '*Montaillou* of cinema history'⁷ – a reference to Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's 500+ page multi-layered study of everyday life in a small French village in the early 14th century, one of the greatest works of French historiography. I prefer to consider somewhat less overwhelming examples to illustrate how an analysis of specific historical audiences can benefit from integrating the wide range of socio-economic, cultural, demographic, and spatial factors at play in shaping everyday life and social identity formation.

For my earlier work on film culture in Jewish New York,⁸ the main inspiration came from the so-called ‘community studies’ written by American social historians in the late 1970s and 1980s, when working-class leisure became a subject in its own right within labour history. Influenced by E.P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman (among others), a new generation of social historians broke away from a strictly economic perspective on American working-class life to explore its cultural and political dimensions in one particular city, town or neighbourhood. As Francis G. Couvares explains, the aim was ‘to read in popular culture the imprint of class and other kinds of social experience and, conversely, to recognize the ways in which belief, custom, and ritual shape responses to the socioeconomic order.’⁹ His research on Pittsburgh merits to be read by anyone interested in the transformation of working-class culture under the impact of industrialization. For our purpose, however, Roy Rosenzweig’s *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* and *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* by Kathy Peiss represent more relevant examples.¹⁰ Both studies demonstrate how local histories of leisure can provide building blocks for understanding the emergence of mass culture, the concomitant transformation of working-class life, and cinema’s specific role in this complex process. More importantly, Rosenzweig and Peiss are able to do so precisely because they do not focus on one single medium or recreational activity, but compare a range of commercial and non-commercial entertainments, such as saloons, amusement parks, movie theatres, dance halls and Fourth of July celebrations. Tellingly, until the early 2000s, their work was a must-read for film scholars working on historical audiences and reception (including myself), but it has been largely overlooked since then.¹¹

A second and partly overlapping approach that I find helpful for research on cinema audiences is the notion of social milieu.¹² Milieu-analysis had its first heydays in late 19th and early 20th German sociology. Almost simultaneously with the new social history in the United States, it re-emerged in West-Germany – first in sociology and then in history - as a paradigm to explore in the interrelationship between cultural, political, social and economic aspects of collective behaviour from a bottom-up perspective. In the 1980s, milieu-analysis gained popularity as an alternative for the top-down social stratification approaches of the 1960s and 1970s, which looked primarily at class belonging and status-group affiliation (*Standen*) to explain the ways in which people think and act. Milieu-analysis, on the other hand, takes into account a much broader spectrum of factors, including the ‘subjective’ interpretations of everyday life and society.¹³ In fact, its proponents often foreground consumption and leisure practices (live style) rather than more ‘objective’ socio-economic characteristics (e.g. occupation, income, formal education) to delineate a specific milieu.¹⁴ Stephan Hradil, one of its most prominent advocates, broadly defines social milieu as:

Groups of like-minded people, each with similar values, principles of life, relationships with fellow human beings and mentalities. [...] Those who belong to the same social milieu interpret and construct their environment in a similar way and thus differ from other social milieus.¹⁵

However, milieus should not be seen as completely static or fixed once and for all. On the contrary, as Hradil points out, boundaries between milieus are elastic and subject to change. They can overlap, merge or disappear altogether. Within a particular class (vertically-defined in socio-economic terms), different milieus typically coexist next to each other. Along a more horizontal axis, social milieus often distinguish themselves by their relationship to modernity, ranging from various degrees of resistance (traditional/conservative milieus) to more openness and 'liberal' attitudes.¹⁶

In the 1980s, the concept of social milieu also made an inroad into European history departments, especially among German social historians who sought to understand working-class attitudes towards National Socialism and the ultimate failure of the workers' movements to resist Hitler. The milieu concept helped them to better understand what had happened by looking at the grass-roots level, whereas until then the dominant approach had been to examine the institutional history of left-wing party politics during the Weimar Republic. Characteristic of the milieu approach among German historians was that their research was often spatially confined to a particular town or city - similar to the American community studies approach. A classic example is Klaus Tenfelde's study of the political radicalisation and anti-Nazism among the working-class population of Penzberg, a small mining town in Bavaria.¹⁷

While milieu-analysis does not necessarily imply working on a specific locality, what makes it a particularly attractive concept to add to the tool box of the new cinema historian is that its sociological conceptualization can be combined with its use by geographers. The latter's interpretation of milieu draws our attention to the fact that film culture as a social practice is also shaped by the physical environment and material conditions: the buildings in which movies were screened, their geographical location, the landscape or the transportation infrastructure (roads, railways, bridges) that enable or limit the circulation of films and the opportunities for audiences to watch them. Viewed in this light, the milieu-concept can fulfil an analytical function similar to Doreen Massey's conceptualization of space and place,¹⁸ which in recent years has increasingly influenced the ways in which new cinema historians explore the spatial dimensions of film culture and the complex relationships between sociality and spatiality.¹⁹ The advantage of milieu, however, is that it is less abstract and provides a wide range of concrete parameters and perspectives for empirical investigations of the lived experience of the cinema in its societal and historical context. Moreover, approaching historical reception from the perspective of social milieus may help to overcome the ultimately self-defeating choice between doing cinema history and doing general history. On the one hand, it allows the cinema historians to keep audience practices at the centre of their research. On the other, the milieu concept is an incentive to contextualize these practices by looking beyond the confines of cinema and to include in the analysis a range of contextual factors that shape the experience of cinemagoing.

To explore what such an approach can yield, I will discuss the first findings of a new research project on cinemagoing in the Orthodox Protestant milieu in the Netherlands

during the immediate post-war decades. Research on Dutch film history has amply documented the negative impact that Protestants had on the film exhibition business because of their deep suspicion of the film medium, which was particularly strong among the members of the most conservative denominations.²⁰ Hence, it may seem an odd choice to focus on the ways in which the Orthodox Protestants experienced the cinema. But with Robert C. Allen, I believe that it might be productive to 'pay attention not only to avid movie fans, but also to social groups that resisted the incorporation of moviegoing into everyday life and groups whose access to moviegoing was limited or denied.'²¹ For most of the twentieth century, Orthodox Protestants (*Gereformeerden* in all sorts of varieties) made up about 10% of the Dutch population and they were overrepresented in rural regions and the agricultural sector.²² Despite a number of important New Cinema History publications on Dutch film culture, we know altogether very little about where, when and how these publics encountered the cinema in their lives.

The case study will zoom in on the 'long fifties' (1945-early 1960s) – a period in which cinema attendance in the Netherlands peaked as never before.²³ In the post-war years, the growth of the film exhibition business was particularly strong in the countryside, especially in regions that were predominantly Protestant. Many multipurpose halls which before the war had occasionally been visited by a travelling film exhibitor were turned into weekend-cinemas, while existing weekend-cinemas switched to daily screenings to fulfil the increased demand. We also see new venues opening in Protestant towns and villages where there was no evidence of commercial film exhibition in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁴ Did the religious milieu no longer have such a great influence on how people spent their leisure time? To what extent did attitudes towards the cinema change as a result of post-war (rural) modernization? What new meanings did Orthodox Protestants produce for and through the activity of cinemagoing? Answers to these and related questions may well complicate our assumptions about the cinema's role in Dutch society in the long 1950s – a period that historians have characterized as highly paradoxical. At first sight, the traditional hegemonic formations in Dutch society had successfully re-established their power positions, which they had lost during the German occupation. In many respects, they had effectively tightened their reins in the realms of politics, religion and culture. But beneath the surface, at the grass-roots level, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the traditional order and its institutions. From this perspective, cultural and social historians have understood the popularity of the movies and other forms of commercialized popular culture as the first steps in a broad process of social modernization – a sort of warming up for the 'liberation' that characterized the late 1960s.²⁵ So to begin with, we need to understand something about the way Dutch society was organized and how this influenced film culture, especially for Protestants.

Dutch Protestantism and the Cinema

From the late nineteenth century, public life in the Netherlands was structured by the phenomenon of pillarization (*verzuiling*), that is, the breakdown of society into a Protestant,

Catholic, socialist and liberal ‘pillar,’ or ‘compartment.’ Each pillar had its own institutions: political parties, newspapers, social clubs, schools, radio stations and so on – to assure internal conformity to the pillar’s world view. The socialists and to a lesser extent the liberal pillar rallied their members on the ground of a shared class interest. The other two pillars derived their coherence from religious affiliation and were, so to say, ‘vertically-integrated’ in socioeconomic terms. Catholic and Protestant leaders in particular sought to conceal class differences within their respective pillars. Whereas the elites of the respective pillars maintained close and friendly contacts, the lower classes were strongly encouraged to organise their lives from birth to grave exclusively within one’s pillar and to keep apart from people and institutions belonging to other pillars. In other words, pillarization functioned first and foremost as a hegemonic system of control.²⁶ Inevitably, however, alternative or even ‘unauthorized’ forms of social behaviour develop in the margins of pillarized culture, notably in the realms of consumption and commercialized leisure. Hence, a milieu approach can be helpful to reveal bottom-up practices and perceptions, and examine how these shaped everyday life in interaction with the hegemonic forces at work in Dutch society.

Karel Dibbets was the first to point out that unlike radio and television, the cinema was never integrated into the system of pillarization.²⁷ Each pillar had its own response. In line with their political ideology, the liberals left film exhibition to the market. For a brief period during the 1910s, the socialists tried to open so-called ‘red cinemas,’ but these attempts were soon given up and after that they more or less ignored the cinema as a potential instrument to raise political awareness or address social evils. The religious pillars took the medium far more seriously, albeit in very different ways. The Catholics never opposed the medium itself, only specific films. In the 1910s, they set up a national network of ‘white cinemas,’ which only showed films that were formally approved by the Church. Eventually this attempt also failed.²⁸ Henceforth, the Catholic pillar sought to minimize the ‘moving picture danger’ by way of censorship, taxation and age restrictions.²⁹

The Protestant pillar was highly fragmented due to many schisms,³⁰ but all denominations – from the moderate *Hervormden* to the Orthodox *Geformeerden* and including the Dutch Lutheran churches – fell back on Calvinist iconoclasm and anti-theatricality to define their attitude towards the new film medium. Cinematography was rejected on theological grounds because of its visual nature, dramatic quality, and illusionism. Under strict conditions in terms of the exhibition context, however, exceptions could be made for scientific films, documentaries that gave a purely photographic representation of reality or historical events (without the use of professional actors), animation films and fairy tales (again on the condition that no professional actors were used). Like other sites of commercial entertainment, movie theatres were perceived with suspicion and condemned on religious, moral and social grounds.³¹

A preliminary study of the reception of the cinema of attractions suggests that as long as non-fiction dominated the program and many shows took place in non-theatrical venues, most Dutch Protestants did not worry about the new medium.³² However, their neutral attitude changed radically after the breakthrough of narrative cinema and the

opening of the first permanent movie theatres. Henceforth, the cinema was rejected outright like the theatre and this wholesale rejection strongly hampered the development of film culture in Protestant regions and towns in the Netherlands.³³ Although there are no detailed attendance statistics until the 1940s, it is safe to say that in the early decades of the twentieth century, most observant Protestants avoided movie theatres on their own behalf. Of course, on the individual level, attitudes towards filmgoing could be more relaxed, in particular among members of the *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*, which since the late 19th century wrestled with substantial secularization.³⁴

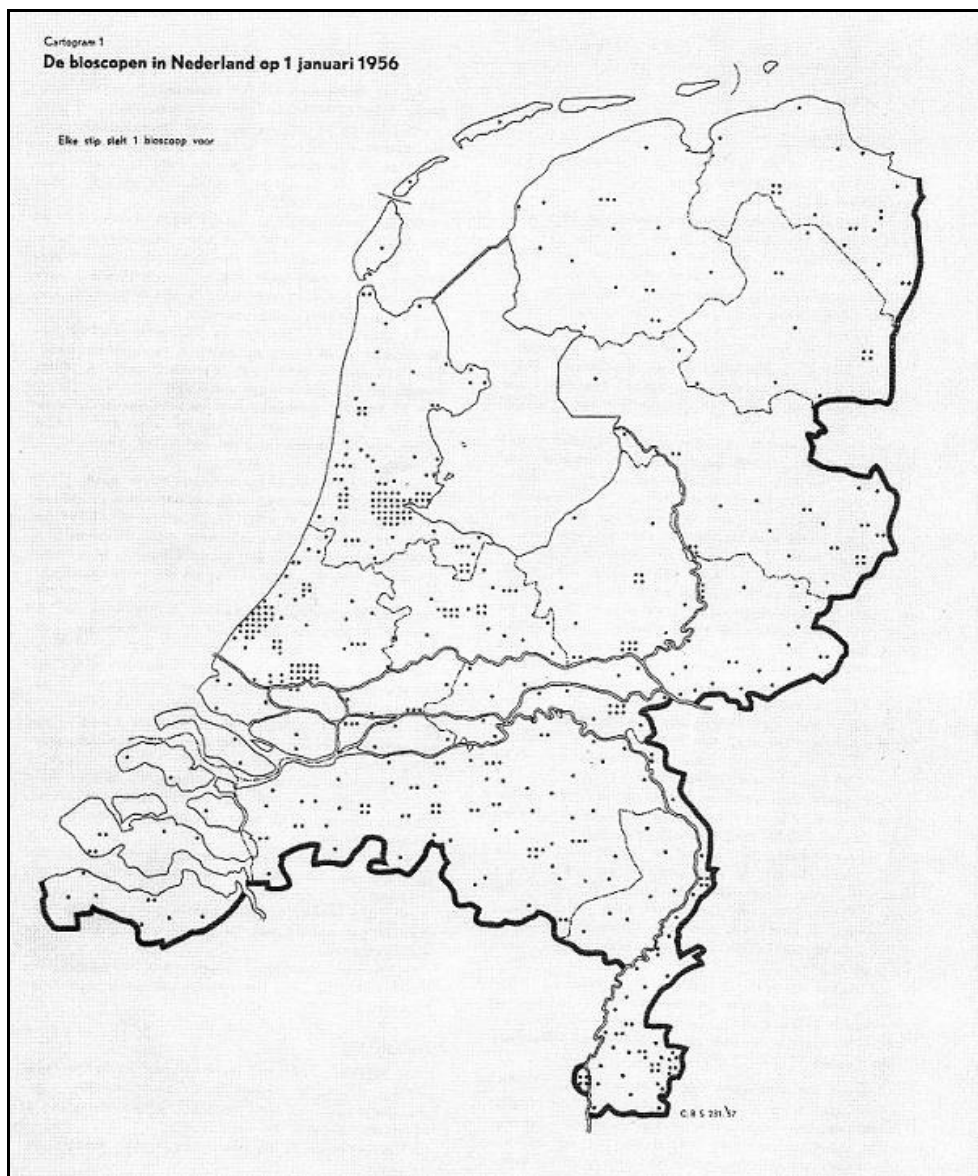


Figure 1: Map showing all movie theatres in the Netherlands on 1 January 1956. Based on data provided by the Netherlands Cinema Alliance (NBB) and concerning all permanent venues that offered at least one screening per week. Source: CBS, *Vrijtijdsbesteding in Nederland Winter 1955/'56*. Vol. 3, 27.

Because Protestants and Catholics were geographically clustered, cinema culture varied greatly across the different Dutch provinces (see **Figure 1**). One found hardly any movie theatres in the so-called Dutch Bible Belt, a strictly Protestant area that stretches from the northern part of the province of Overijssel in the North-East of the Netherlands to the province of Zeeland in the South-West. The film exhibition sector was also underdeveloped in the predominantly Protestant North (Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe). Outside the largest urban centres and some industrialized rural towns (characterized by a high rate of secularization), there were hardly any permanent movie theatres in these provinces. The cinema was not totally absent, but small towns and villages were mainly served by travelling showmen who used multifunctional halls for their screenings. The local demand was simply too low to build a permanent movie theatre.³⁵ Moreover, when Protestant parties dominated municipal politics, local authorities were often inclined to impose restrictive measures upon film exhibitors (e.g. Sunday closings) since the overall policy of the Protestant pillar was directed towards curtailing cinema attendance. However, under the German Occupation things began to change. The available data show a remarkably rapid expansion of (semi-) permanent film exhibition outlets in the Protestant provinces between 1941 and 1944 and this development continued after the Liberation.³⁶ By the mid-1950s, the taboo on cinemagoing had considerably weakened among members of the moderate Protestant churches. Screenings of 'cultural' and 'educational' films in non-commercial settings were actively promoted in this milieu as an alternative to the commercial movie theatres. In sharp contrast, the Orthodox churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken* and other conservative Protestant denominations) continued to reject commercial film screenings and watching fiction films more generally. Although my evidence suggests that on the national level most Orthodox Protestant institutions began to acknowledge that the total ban on watching movies was an anachronism and might actually have a contrary effect on the younger generation, we will also see that on the local and grass-roots level the resistance towards the cinema was resilient.

The Orthodox Protestant lifestyle

Dozens of internal surveys and reports document the leisure practices of Dutch Protestants in the post-war era. Anxiety about the growing participation of Protestant youth in modern entertainment media explains this abundance of evidence. In particular among community leaders - from local ministers to General Synods and across the Protestant spectrum - there was an ongoing debate about the 'opening up to the world' which this new leisure culture implied and its impact on moral values, religious identity, and in-group conformity. From the late 1940s and well into the 1960s, local, regional and national Protestant bodies produced a range of studies, many of which are based on some kind of audience research (albeit rarely of a type that would meet today's scientific standards).³⁷ These are important sources to gain insight in the social dynamics of film culture in Protestant milieus in relation to other leisure practices. At this juncture, it is important to point out already that Protestants were not alone in worrying about the 'corrupting' influences of commercial

entertainment. Throughout the 1950s, there was a widespread concern among the nation's established elites about the emergence of an American-style leisure culture, especially among the younger generation.³⁸

Although well-informed about these wider debates, the reports by the General Synod of the Reformed Churches (*Generale synode van Gereformeerde Kerken*) and field work by local Orthodox Protestant organizations focus almost exclusively on cinema attendance and other leisure activities by young adults from their own constituencies. Tellingly, the Synod's first national investigation into the 'leisure-time question' (1950) was primarily driven by its ambition to protect the young from the 'appalling dangers' of unlimited cinema attendance and other forms of leisure activities that were considered incompatible with a 'truly Christian lifestyle.'³⁹ It is worth discussing this first investigation in more detail as it set the format for future investigations in Orthodox Protestant circles. The report opened with a 25-page theological discussion of the church's 'ethical-pedagogical responsibility' in the realm of leisure.⁴⁰ Bible citations are frequently used to make a point. Clearly, the authors expected that their readers were intimately familiar with 'the Scriptures.' The carefully argued critical reflection concludes with a number of practical recommendations, including the advice to church members to keep avoiding the cinema because the 'average films that are shown in the cinema constitute a serious danger for the spiritual and moral welfare of our people.'⁴¹

By contrast, the second part of the report offers a sociological analysis of the 'leisure problem' based on quantitative survey data, including a solid discussion on the validity of the empirical research. Some 2,000 unmarried young men and women (age 18 or 22) were asked to give insight in their leisure-time patterns by filling in a questionnaire. The list also included more general questions to contextualize their leisure-time behaviour, such as their family situation (notably: the atmosphere at home), education, satisfaction with working conditions etc. The first series of questions was mainly concerned with the social behaviour that evidently qualified the Protestant Orthodox milieu according to their own internal criteria: going to church twice a week, regularly attending Catechism, reading the bible at home every day (alone or with other family members), reading Christian weeklies, participation in the Christian youth movement and membership of the federation of Christian unions. The remainder of the survey address their participation in what could be qualified as secular lifestyle activities: listening to the radio (how often? with the option: 'we don't have a radio'), going to evening school (yes/no), listening to music (differentiating between classic, light and Jazz), theatregoing (sometimes/never), playing card games (yes/no), dancing (yes/no for social dance and folk dances), hanging out on the streets (like/not like), going to a restaurant or pub (often/sometimes/never), cinemagoing (never/sometimes/1x per months/ 1 x per week), and sports (including watching soccer on Sundays).⁴²

The analysis of the survey data revealed that young men went more often to the cinema than young women⁴³ and that urban youths went more often than their rural counterparts.⁴⁴ On the whole, however, the data were reassuring as they suggested that

cinema attendance in the Orthodox Protestant milieu was rarely a regular habit. Yet the Synod understood very well that this outcome was probably more favourable than the actual situation. About half of the youths who were invited to fill in the form had not done so and those who did may have given socially-desirable answers, under-reporting their visits to the cinema because it was considered bad behaviour.⁴⁵ Indeed, 46.5% of the respondents claimed that they never went to the cinema, whereas only 3.5% answered that they went to the cinema once a week. Not surprisingly, there was a negative correlation between churchgoing and cinemagoing: youngsters who went frequently to the movies were rarely seen in church.⁴⁶

In the winter of 1955/56, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), a government agency, carried out a large-scale, nation-wide study of leisure patterns in Netherlands.⁴⁷ This survey also showed a negative correlation between churchgoing and cinemagoing. It was the case among Protestants as well as among Catholics (see **Table 1**). However, in no other denomination was the effect as strong as in the Orthodox Protestant milieu. The CBS-survey also revealed that the people who did not belong to any church were the most frequent moviegoers. Ten percent of them went more than twice per month to the movies (see **Table 2**). For many Orthodox Protestants, statistics like this confirmed that there was no other option but to totally reject the cinema. Those who could not resist the attraction of ‘Satan’s peep show’ were lost for ever.⁴⁸

	Cinemagoing Men		cinemagoing women	
	A	b	a	b
Roman Catholics	58%	59%	57%	64%
Moderate Protestants (<i>Hervormden</i>)	51%	58%	46%	57%
Orthodox Protestants (<i>Gereformeerden</i>)	34%	56%	34%	51%

Table 1: Percentage of men and women (12+) going to the cinema for the three main denominations in the Netherlands. Source: CBS, *Vrijtijdsbesteding in Nederland Winter 1955/’56. Vol. 9: Kerkelijke gezindte en vrijetijdsbesteding* (1959), 21.

a = observant (went to church at least 1x in the three weeks prior to the survey);

b = non-observant (did not go to church in the three weeks prior to the survey)

Comparative perspective

Because the data gathered by the CBS allow for a comparison between different social formations, they reveal the milieu-specific characteristics of the Orthodox Protestant lifestyle in more detail than the internal survey by the Synod.⁴⁹ From a comparative perspective, the Orthodox Protestant recreational patterns and preferences stood out when it came to the cinema and other ‘forms of leisure that they reject for reasons of principle.’⁵⁰ *Gereformeerden* went to the theatres and the movies (see **Table 2**) far less than members of other denominations and the secularized part of the population. They shunned card games and social dancing too, whereas attending a sport event on Sunday was also considered

inappropriate behaviour. On the other hand, in the categories of churchgoing, reading, playing musical instruments and participation in religious and political organizations they scored significantly higher than the rest of the Dutch population. In sum, Orthodox Protestants showed a preference for leisure-time activities ‘with a certain intellectual inclination,’ according to the CBS.⁵¹ In their view, this recreational behaviour was anchored in ‘the Calvinist philosophy of life,’ which postulated an ‘intense experience of religious values in all areas of life and therefore also in the field of leisure-time activities.’⁵²

	Percentage of cinemagoers	Percentage of cinemagoers attending > 2x per month	Average annual attendance per capita
Roman Catholic	59%	8%	9
Moderate Protestants (<i>Hervormden</i>)	49%	2%	6
Orthodox Protestants (<i>Gereformeerden</i>)	37%	2%	3
Other denominations	61%	3%	6
No religious affiliation	70%	10%	11
Total population	57%	7%	8

Table 2: Key figures about cinema attendance in the Netherlands for people of 12 years and older according to religious affiliation. Source: CBS, *Vrijtijdsbesteding in Nederland Winter 1955/’56. Deel 3. Bioscoopbezoek* (1957), 55.

Going to the movies might not have been part of the Orthodox Protestant live-style, but the 1955/56-survey showed nevertheless that the taboo on cinemagoing was no longer as powerful as it had been. About a third of the Orthodox Protestants (37%) went to the cinema every now and then: on average three times a year (**Table 2**). However, these averages hide important differences. For one, the salaried middle-class, professionals and the higher classes were more likely to be found in a movie theatre than workers (especially farmhands) and farmers.⁵³ Education was unquestionably a factor at play and its effect was probably reinforced by the geographical environment in which people lived (rural versus urban). While there was also a correlation between socio-economic position and cinema attendance in other denominations and among the secularized population, it was nowhere as strong as in the Orthodox Protestant milieu.⁵⁴

As might be expected, age was another important variable (**Table 3**). The most avid cinemagoers were young men and women in the age group 18-28.⁵⁵ For all youths regardless of their social or religious background, this was a phase of life in which parents had less control over their children, many of whom worked and hence had an income of their own. What made the cinema particularly attractive for these youngsters, as Richard Maltby points out, is ‘the fact that it offered a public privacy to groups who have no other

Age group	Percentage of male cinemagoers	Percentage of female cinemagoers	Average annual attendance per capita
12-17	35%	40%	3
18-28	61%	53%	6
29-59	32%	32%	2*
60+	16%	26%	

* separate data not available

Table 3: Cinema attendance among members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* according to age. Source: CBS, *Vrijtijdsbesteding in Nederland Winter 1955/'56. Deel 9: Kerkelijke gezindte en vrijetijdsbesteding* (1959), p. 28-29.

legitimate access to a comfortable, unchaperoned space.⁵⁶ Put differently, the cinema was not only a place where they went to watch movies, but it was also 'a prime site for courtship rituals.'⁵⁷ The CBS data also hint in this direction: cinema attendance among Dutch youths increased at the age of fifteen and declined when they reached their mid-twenties, which coincided more or less with the average age for marriage.⁵⁸ In this respect, young Orthodox Protestants did not stand out compared to their peers, except that cinemagoing was a recent phenomenon in the Orthodox Protestant milieu and still very controversial.

Cinema and the social 'feralization' of youth

In the post-war era, the deep anxiety about the effects of cinema attendance was unique for the Orthodox Protestant milieu.⁵⁹ At the same time, as I noted before, it was part of a more widespread fear about the growing popularity of mass entertainment media and their influence upon the Dutch youth. This is not surprising if we take into account that the memory of the abuse of mass media by the Nazis was still fresh. Moreover, in the context of post-war restoration, any threat to the recently re-established democratic order was met with great concern. In October 1948, in response to growing public alarm, the Dutch *Ministry of Education, Arts and Sciences* initiated a three-year nation-wide investigation into the 'mental state' of the so-called 'mass youth' (*massajeugd*).⁶⁰ Public opinion in the Netherlands positioned these mass youths as irresponsible and 'wild,' because they allegedly showed a strong tendency towards extreme individualism, self-indulgence and antisocial behaviour. From the point of view of the nation's political leadership, these juveniles were considered unfit for good citizenship and thus formed a potential danger for the stability of the emerging welfare state. Perhaps what worried them most was that the new mass youth culture cut across all layers of society (pillars and class) and thus subverted the position of vested authorities – from parents to priests, from teachers to politicians. By better understanding the conduct of the *massajeugd*, the government hoped to be able to prevent further 'Vermassung' (creating of a mass) of the younger generations.⁶¹

Between 1949 and 1952, researchers from six institutes for social science produced a total of 106 (!) reports, ranging from large-scale neighbourhood surveys in Rotterdam to small studies of the social conduct of working girls at a dairy factory and office girls at the

national railway company.⁶² From reading the final summary and some of the surviving local reports, one gets the impression that the investigators were obsessed with the lack of middle-class propriety and the diminishing influence of religion. For one, there was consensus that the social ‘feralization’ (*verwildering*) of adolescents manifested itself most prominently in working-class urban milieus and the industrialized countryside, notably in rural regions that were in an early phase of industrialization. In search of possible explanations for this behaviour, some reports pointed to the lack of traditional law and order during the Occupation and the frenzied period after the Liberation. Other researchers believed that it was an effect of the rapid industrialization of peasant society, which destabilized rural families and undermined patriarchal power. Most observers, however, blamed the increasing sway of mass culture in post-war society for the breakdown of parental control and guidance. Time and again, the cinema and the dance hall were singled out as commercial contexts that fostered ‘feral behaviour’ – from unwise expenditures on ‘luxury’ consumer goods such as sweets, make-up, and fancy clothes to promiscuous relationships between boys and girls, including premarital sex. The reports frequently noted that participation in commercialized popular culture was fostered by peer pressure and the growing economic independence of working youths.⁶³ But the danger was not limited to working-class youngsters. On the contrary: the main summary emphasized that even at high schools (a strong signifier of a middle-class upbringing), a minority of students already showed mass youth behaviour albeit in a ‘polished’ form.⁶⁴

At stake was not only a fear for a widespread decline of middle-class norms and values. Investigators were often equally troubled by the fact that religion had not regained the authoritative power that it had before the war. Tellingly, a remarkable high number of local case studies focussed on ‘deviant’ juvenile behaviour in the Dutch Bible Belt and the rural North. That even in ultra-conservative families, a growing number of parents were no longer able to control their children and impose their religious value system clearly rang alarm bells well beyond the Orthodox Protestant milieu. In many respects, the changes occurring in the Bible Belt epitomized the dangers that all pillars faced in their encounter with mass consumer society.

It comes as no surprise that the investigations into the ‘feralization’ of the Dutch youth evoked wide interest, but also critical responses and even outright anger. Critics rightly condemned the lack of objectivity and the moral judgments inherent in many reports.⁶⁵ They pointed out that their observations about youths and popular culture were often heavily determined by the experts’ middle-class notions of morality, respectability, and good manners. However biased, these local and regional studies remain an important source of qualitative evidence to gain insight in the concrete ways in which Orthodox Protestant youngsters spent their leisure time as they tell us more than statistics what these youths were actually doing.

Far away and out of view

The most striking aspect of the leisure culture of Orthodox Protestant youths is that they preferred to go to the movies and other entertainments in another town, village or urban neighbourhood than where they lived.⁶⁶ Time and again investigators commented on this phenomenon, for which I also found ample evidence in the individual stories that respondents told during an oral history project on cinemagoing in the Protestant Orthodox milieu.⁶⁷ What was the rationale behind this idiosyncratic practise?

In general, Dutch people went more frequently to the movies when there was a permanent movie theatre in the vicinity than when one had to travel to get there.⁶⁸ In the cities, the average attendance per capita ranged between 8 and 12 visits per year (statistics for age 12 and older). In the rural small towns and their hinterlands, the average annual attendance per capita was six visits.⁶⁹ Put differently, distance discouraged cinema attendance. And because many Orthodox Protestants lived in (semi)-rural localities, this reinforced the effect of the religious taboo upon filmgoing. But for the younger generation, the reverse was true: a larger distance between home and cinema was an incentive to go to the movies rather than a hurdle. Considerable distances were covered to go to the movies. Biking trips of ten to twenty kilometres (single way) were no exceptions. Even in the countryside, this was often a deliberate decision because by the late 1940s, many small towns and larger villages in rural regions had a semi-permanent cinema, typically a multipurpose hall that belonged to a hotel-restaurant or café, where films were shown during the weekend and on Wednesday.⁷⁰ However, for youngsters who came from Orthodox Protestant families this was often too close to home. The rationale to seek entertainment elsewhere was that in another town or village, they could sneak more easily into the cinema without being discovered by relatives and neighbours, or worse yet: the local minister or one of the elders. The most zealous defenders of a strictly Calvinistic way of life sometimes kept watch near the entrance of local movie theatres.⁷¹ Social control was fierce, especially in the smaller towns and villages. The report about youth culture in Veenendaal (circa 14.000 inhabitants in 1950), an Orthodox Protestant bulwark in the province of Utrecht, explained:

Unlike for urban youngsters, the cinema still remains a 'strange' novelty, where you only go once in a while. [...] of course, social control also plays a part. And youngsters are susceptible for this. According to local opinion, one should not go to the cinema regularly. This is why young people often bike to Ede or Wageningen [small towns situated at a distance of circa 12 km]. Sometimes they go to a café or cinema, but usually they just go to cycle around, to watch girls and for the 'action.'⁷²

Veenendaal had a cinema, the 400-seat Luxor Theater, which was located on the outskirts of the town.⁷³ But even so, locals preferred to go elsewhere to watch a film. For the same reason, the Luxor attracted patrons from surroundings villages and towns. Its owner was

well aware of the specific sensibilities of his Orthodox Protestant clientele. He used to switch off the lights as soon as the people began to enter the auditorium because many patrons preferred to remain invisible. 'People felt ashamed when an acquaintance saw them in the cinema,' his son explained.⁷⁴ We have to realize that the weight of the taboo against cinema attendance was still so strong in the Orthodox Protestant milieu that marginalization and stigmatization of a person who had been caught going to the movies usually extended to include his or her family.

Moreover, it was not just a matter of avoiding to be seen at the cinema. Other forms of commercial entertainment were equally condemned and led to out-of-town traffic. In the study of working-class youths in Ede (44.000 inhabitants in 1950), we read:

They like watching soccer games and movies and strolling around in groups. Three nights per week there are social dances in three different venues. On Tuesday night, cinema attendance drops because people listen to the 'Bonte Dinsdagavondtrein' [a popular radio program]. Many of the 18+ year olds also go to Arnhem [a city at 20 km], where they make new friends. During lunch-time and in the evening, there is a lot of loafing about near the railway station, where there are ice cream vendors and an automatic snack bar. Groups of boys are lying in the grass on the roadside, they jeer after girls and are bored (one is forced to do nothing on Sunday). Youths from Veenendaal and Wageningen also gather there, while the youth of Ede goes to the surrounding villages.⁷⁵

All reports about youth culture in Orthodox Protestant communities make observations about youngsters hanging around on the streets in mixed-sex groups, preferably in the next village or town. The investigators also note that it was a habit that was strongly tied to courtship and mainly took place during weekends and on summer nights.⁷⁶ While not explicitly discussed, the evidence suggests that boys travelled longer distances than girls. And they not only met on the streets, but also in cafés and cafeterias (snack bars). Many Protestant parents disapproved of such places, which they considered too 'worldly.' More importantly, in their eyes, these venues offered the wrong kind of company and amusements such as playing cards or billiards, listening to pop music on the juke box, and drinking beer. Even going out to eat French fries or meatballs in a cafeteria was condemned by some as conspicuous consumption and decadent behaviour.⁷⁷ The fiercest criticism was reserved for the cinema and for social dancing. In fact, the latter was considered even worse than going to the movies because the dances supposedly fuelled 'sexual passions.'⁷⁸ Hence, for the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Protestants, but also for many moderate coreligionists, it was completely out of the question to go to a social dance (see **Table 4**). In the Orthodox Protestant milieu, this was even the case when people did not go to church regularly (an indication of estrangement from their faith). Put differently, the taboo on social dancing was more effective and long-lasting than on cinemagoing (cf. **Table 1**). What

probably helped was that it was easier to offer ‘safe’ alternatives like folk dances or dances at Protestant social clubs under the watchful eyes of older church members.

	social dancing men		social dancing women	
	a	b	a	b
Roman Catholic	33%	29%	40%	34%
Moderate Protestants (<i>Hervormden</i>)	14%	25%	21%	35%
Orthodox Protestants (<i>Gereformeerden</i>)	4%	11%	6%	15%

Table 4: Percentage of men and women participating in social dances for the three main denominations in the Netherlands. Source: CBS, *Vrijtijdsbesteding in Nederland Winter 1955/’56. Vol. 9: Kerkelijke gezindte en vrijetijdsbesteding* (1959), 21.

a= observant (went to church at least 1x in the three weeks prior to the survey);

b = non-observant (did not go to church in the three weeks prior to the survey)

Father, may I go the cinema?

Oral history interviews conducted among Orthodox Protestants suggest that there were two modes of the ‘out-of-town’ pattern of cinemagoing: an occasional variant, in which a person went to the cinema rarely or even only a single time to see what it was like. And a variant in which going to a cinema elsewhere was more or less a routine. The elderly people who Herma Beuving interviewed in 2015 all grew up in strictly observant families and hence in a social context in which the ban on cinemagoing was strictly maintained.⁷⁹ At some point in their youth, however, most of them became so curious about the movies that they decided to find out for themselves what it was all about. It was rare that they asked for their parents’ permission and an even greater exception that they actually obtained it. Fathers seem to have been the strictest in their resistance to modern leisure practices, especially when their daughters were concerned. Some mothers would look the other way as long as their husband would not discover the illicit outings.⁸⁰ However, most youngsters wisely kept their mouth shut. Manda S. (born in 1942), who grew up in Hardinxveld-Giessendam, a small town with a high number of ultra-Orthodox Protestants, remembered that one Sunday afternoon she skipped church to go to the movies with a friend:

Secretly [we got] on the bus and then dived under the couch, so no one from the village saw you sitting. And then to Sliedrecht [a nearby town]. And then to the cinema. I really don’t remember the movie anymore. I think I sat there with my buttocks squeezed. [...] And then... Then make sure you got back on time, before the church was out. And then hope that you would meet someone whom you could ask what the minister had preached. And then tell at home, ‘well, the minister preached about this or that.’⁸¹

When cinema expeditions took place secretly, the stories about these outings are typically intertwined with memories of fear. It was not only the fear of being discovered, but also about what would happen 'if you would die in the cinema'⁸² or 'if Jesus returned to earth at that very moment and would find you in there [...] after all, it was the place of the Devil.'⁸³ Would hell and damnation be your fate?⁸⁴

Collectively-devised cover-up manoeuvres were sometimes part of the experience of moviegoing. Henk Berg, who gave Sunday screenings in a multifunctional hall in the harbour district of Heijplaat on the South bank of Rotterdam, recalled that many of his customers were boys and girls from the rural hinterlands.⁸⁵ The local dockworkers and their families rarely went to these shows because the hall was owned by the Rotterdam Dry Dock Company for which they worked. They preferred to spend their leisure time and money in the city centre. But for the youngsters from the strictly Protestant villages in the surroundings, it was a popular destination – not least because around the block there was an Orthodox Protestant church. This was a perfect pretext for a Sunday bike trip to Rotterdam. They all had a fairly watertight story to cover up their 'sinful' behaviour upon their return as long as one member of the group actually attended the service and could summarize the sermon. Since this was a widespread practice among these village youths, it is likely that quite a few parents knew very well what was going on, but turned a blind eye on these cinema outings as long as it happened outside of their view and that of their neighbours and relatives.

In fact, most studies on 'mass youths' in the Bible Belt pay a lot of attention to the indifference and passivity of the parents. Typically, the investigators blame them for teaching their children a formalistic relationship to faith based on rules and the need to keep up appearances, rather than one rooted in an authentic experience of 'God and his world.' Regarding parents of mass youth in Veenendaal, the report notes:

The religious rearing is dominated by notions of temporality and formalism. [...] If it goes wrong [with their children], if they want to do wrong, there is nothing that can be done. Only God can intervene. Even churchgoing and catechism are merely outer, not essential means of education. They [the parents] take the way of the least resistance. They remain passive. [...] As a result, there is no initiative, no perseverance or sense of responsibility on the part of the youngsters either. [...]

No wonder then that, in addition to honest obedience, one finds in these families the worst hypocrisy, the most cunning deceit. If you want to go to a cinema, pretend that you are a regular. Then you won't stand out and your father won't find out. If you're not allowed to cycle on Sunday, park your bike at a friend's and go from there to Ede or Wageningen to go out.⁸⁶

Comments like this are no exception. Superficial religious observance was frequently brought up to explain the deviant and asocial behaviour of Orthodox Protestant youngsters. Obviously, the investigators considered themselves superior Christians compared to these 'mass youths' and their parents. Their tone is often condescending or even outright arrogant. In whose name were these investigators speaking? Did they belong to the most conservative forces within the Protestant pillar or to the more progressive and liberal factions? We don't have their names, which makes it difficult to determine their position in the overall debate on Protestantism and modernity. But one thing is clear: by the 1950s there was no longer a consensus within the Protestant pillar about the 'leisure-question' and about what constituted proper recreational behaviour for observant Christians, young or old.

As a matter of fact, in the post-war era, almost all Orthodox and moderate Protestant denominations in the Netherlands were struggling to find a way to accommodate members who went to the cinema, theatre and other commercial entertainments once in a while. In the upper echelons of the Protestant pillar, the elites were inclined to be more lenient towards this growing group, especially as far as young people were concerned. In their view, sticking firmly to the old dogma of avoidance was a scenario that was doomed to fail. Rather than alienating the young any further, they considered it wiser to give them a proper film education so that they could judge for themselves which films were right and wrong. Thus progressive forces within Dutch Protestantism began to set up film education programmes and a Protestant screening circuit: the Christian Film Action (CEFA). This collaboration of various Protestant churches, which was launched up in 1946, organized screenings outside the framework of the commercial film exhibition business. CEFA films were often documentaries, a genre that most Protestants still preferred above fiction films. But from the perspective of many observant Orthodox Protestants, there could be no such thing as a Christian cinema. Fiction or non-fiction, the cinema was evil— an instrument of Satan, regardless where the films were shown and by whom. Even educational films especially developed for Protestant schools could meet with fierce resistance. 'Film is film! ... It's an antechamber of hell,' as one Orthodox alderman put it in an appeal against the use of films in the classroom.⁸⁷

Where Orthodox Protestantism dominated everyday life and local politics cinema attendance continued to be a practice that was not only disapproved verbally, but also actively contained by extremely high amusement taxes (up to 50% on the gross receipts), age restrictions (no entrance under 14 or 18 year) and efforts to ban Sunday screenings or the screenings of particular films. For instance, in 1952, when the news spread in Veenendaal that the Luxor Theater would show Cecil B. DeMille's blockbuster *Samson and Delilah* (Paramount, 1949), it triggered strong protests and calls for a ban on films that 'offended the Christian part of the population.' One member of the town council described the film as 'profane, satanic and seductive.' Another councillor feared:

When the Devil is given free rein, films like *David and Bathsheba* [Henry King, 1951] and *Deluge* [Feist, 1933?] will be screened as well. The result of all this will be easy to guess, namely: the downfall of Christian culture and indeed an acceleration of the end of the world.⁸⁸

The mayor also received a letter from a local farmer who asked him to prohibit films that ‘dramatized stories from God’s precious Word to mock the public.’ ‘Wasn’t it already bad enough that there was a movie theatre in the municipality?’⁸⁹ As it turned out, the mayor did not have any legal means to stop the film exhibitor from showing *Samson and Delilah* or any other film that had been approved by the national board of censorship because there was no local law regulating film exhibition. So despite all the protests, the film was shown. However, a few months later a new municipal law stipulated that the local cinema could only show films and use publicity materials that had been approved by the newly-installed municipal censorship committee.⁹⁰ The decision to program *Samson and Delilah* had clearly backfired. Moreover, in addition to ensuring local censorship, the council also decided that no children under age 14 were allowed to go the movies.

This ultimately successful fight for strict censorship is just one example of the continued opposition to the cinema on the grass-roots level, which we can witness in the Bible Belt and in outlying Orthodox Protestant towns. It suggests that many ordinary church members simply did not go along with the modern ideas of the synodic authorities. Others simply were confused and looked for straightforward answers and explanations in sermons, lectures, brochures and the advice columns in Orthodox Protestant magazines. For some ultra-conservative ministers it became almost a mission in itself to oppose the synodic concessions to the profane world. One of the fiercest opponents of a more tolerant attitude to cinemagoing was Leendert Vroegindewey (1901-1969). Until this day, he is remembered as a very gifted preacher with a talent to explain complex issues in simple words, using ‘graphic examples drawn from everyday life.’⁹¹ He was frequently invited to speak at youth conferences, had his own ‘question and answer’ column in *De Vaandrager*, an ultra-Orthodox youth magazine,⁹² and he wrote a booklet with the tantalizing title *Father, may I go the movie theater? On the value of the cinema for young and old.*⁹³ The title is a trap. Right away it is evident that his answer is ‘no’ – and indeed under all circumstances it should remain ‘no,’ according to Vroegindewey. Evidently his readers wanted to know why. Using ample examples from film history (he is amazingly well-informed!), Vroegindewey explains in great detail why the cinema is the ultimate danger for Orthodox Protestantism (‘worse than the fairground, the theatre, the dance hall’) and why ‘the Church’ should oppose it with all its force.⁹⁴ The brochure was published in 1948 and reprinted at least four times, indicating a continued demand for persuasive arguments against cinemagoing.

Conclusion and reflection

Vroegindewey’s anti-cinema pamphlet along with numerous newspaper articles, magazine stories, surveys and youth conferences put the ‘cinema-question’ (*bioscoopvraagstuk*) into

the forefront of the debate about what it meant to be an observant Orthodox Protestant in post-war Dutch society. As a result, the anti-cinema attitude developed into a highly significant identity marker both within and without the Orthodox Protestant milieu. The politics of inclusion and exclusion surrounding film consumption fostered bonds between members of different Orthodox Protestant churches, but also reinforced their collective status as outsiders in a society which was increasingly shaped by mass media and consumer culture.⁹⁵ At the same time, even in this traditional milieu we can witness signs of the cautious modernization and grass-roots emancipation that characterized Dutch society in the long 1950s and in which popular culture played a central role. On the level of everyday life, the cinema functioned as a liminal space between the Orthodox Protestant milieu and the outside world. For the minority of Orthodox Protestants who regularly crossed this threshold, the movie theatre offered an escape from suffocating religious rules and social control, and a temporary glimpse of the 'man-made world' that Calvinist Protestantism so strongly condemned. The cinema where they went was usually a place far away enough from home to feel a sense of freedom and liberation, but also close enough not to feel totally out-of-place as there were often others with a similar background in the auditorium. Most first-time visits to the movies, on the other hand, were unsettling. The excitement of venturing into an utterly unknown world, often secretly and hence without the reassuring company of parents or siblings, was often overshadowed by fear. Fear to be caught doing something bad, but also a deeper existential anxiety about going to hell because of this sinful behaviour.

With this case study, I hope to have demonstrated that the new cinema historiography would benefit from a much firmer integration into the broader histories of which it is part. How far a cinema historian should venture into the context depends to a large extent on the research questions one seeks to answer. If I had primarily focussed on the dynamics of film exhibition and consumption in the Dutch Bible Belt, without further investigating the surrounding leisure landscape and broader social and religious context, it would have been difficult to define the importance of the cinema for Orthodox Protestants – for the minority who regularly went to the movies, but even more so for the large majority who rarely or never passed the threshold of a movie theatre. The advantage of approaching the context through the lens of milieu is that it helped me to bring out the different meanings and multi-dimensionality of cinema practices within the boundaries of the Orthodox Protestant *mentalité*. At the same time, I realize that the Orthodox Protestant milieu (and Dutch pillarized society more generally) may seem an exceptional case, which requires a non-medium specific approach. Yet I am convinced that the milieu-concept can be equally productive to reveal the multiple meanings of cinemagoing in other social and historical contexts. Let me briefly illustrate this with a critical look at my research on the emergence and reception of cinema in New York's immigrant Jewish community. It is a very different historical context and concerns a social group who embraced the medium with great enthusiasm and frequently went to the movies.

The central question which I wanted to answer with my research on Jewish immigrant film culture was how cinemagoing contributed to the Americanization of these newcomers. In the footsteps of Roy Rosenzweig and Kathy Peiss, I also examined other forms of popular entertainment to determine cinema's specific position in the broader cultural landscape. In a nutshell, what I found out is that the central dynamic at work in the community was a hegemonic struggle between the Jewish workers (who constituted the bulk of the audience for popular entertainment) and left-wing immigrant intellectuals, who sought to help these 'uneducated masses' to integrate in America. For the first group, going to the cinema, a Yiddish vaudeville show or a spectacular melodrama represented a way to liberate themselves from traditional Jewish society in which social status and authority depended on (religious) erudition. However, much like the traditional elites, the secularized intelligentsia valued education over entertainment. Hence, they rejected cheap amusements as the wrong kind of Americanization and democratization.⁹⁶ While this picture is not incorrect, it is nevertheless incomplete. In line with most scholarly literature on the Eastern European Jewish immigrant experience in New York City, I marginalized a considerable part of the community: Orthodox Jews. By doing so, I missed out the continued importance of religion as a factor shaping the immigrants' relation to modern life in the United States. And because small independent entrepreneurs played an important role in the Orthodox milieu, I also overlooked the middle-class aspirations of many immigrant Jews, including most workers.⁹⁷ A milieu approach would have 'forced' me to start out by mapping the different milieus within the Jewish immigrant community before starting to examine attitudes towards the cinema and other forms of popular entertainment. I still could have singled out the working-class milieu for my case study, but I would have been more sensitive to the interaction with (overlapping) milieus – and not only that of the left-wing radicals.

More generally, then, the milieu concept can help to gain a deeper insight in the tensions between traditional views and modernity, which often come to the surface in debates about mass media entertainment. We have to bear in mind that such tensions are still at work in many parts of the world, especially in migrant communities and in post-colonial societies. Comparing across time and space, we may well find more similarities than differences in the ways in which traditional and progressive milieus respond to the cinema. *Publics et spectacles cinématographique en situation coloniale*, a ground-breaking volume about cinema audiences in colonial situations edited by Morgan Corriou explicitly adopts such a comparative socio-historical approach. Individually and together, the contributions offer a deep insight in the complexity of issues surrounding the responses of colonized publics precisely because the authors situate the socio-cultural experience of cinemagoing in the wider historical context.⁹⁸ Much to my surprise, I was struck by the parallels one might draw between the meanings of cinemagoing in urban Muslim milieus in colonial France and insights from my own research on film culture in the Jewish immigrant New York. A transnational milieu-analysis might focus on the question to what extent people in traditional and progressive milieus resist, adapt, or embrace modern media in similar ways, regardless of the local context. Put differently, a milieu approach could form a solid basis for

a comparative analysis of film consumption along a synchronic and diachronic axe. And by doing so, cinema historians (and others) may be able to break away from the latent narrowness of the local case study approach and engage with patterns of historical continuity rather than concentrating primarily on local singularities and difference.

Biographical note:

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Notes:

¹ The key text for the New Film History is Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery's *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985), which inspired a whole generation of film scholars to abandon film theory in favour of doing historical research.

² Richard Maltby, 'On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below,' *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 74-96, quotes on p. 85 and 84.

³ Richard Maltby, 'How Can Cinema History Matter More?,' *Screening the Past* 22 (2007), url: <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/22/board-richard-maltby.html>

⁴ For an example of a positioning of the NCH along these lines, see Haidee Wasson, 'Introduction: Entering the Movie Theater,' *Film History* 28 (2016): v-xii.

⁵ There are of course exceptions, for instance, Robert C. Allen's reflections on the history of moviegoing in the South of the United States and Paul Moore's research on the importance of newspapers for early film exhibitors. *The making of American Audiences* by Richard Butsch (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) shows the benefits of a diachronic media-comparative approach. Noteworthy is also Annette Kuhn's work on cinema audiences in the 1930s UK, which ventures deep into everyday life during the Great Depression. However, most of the recent research in the field of cinema memories is more medium-specific than hers. It is significant that Allen is trained as historian, while the other scholars are sociologists.

⁶ Judith Thissen, 'Cinema History as Social History: Retrospect and Prospect,' in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, edited by Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby and Philippe Meers (New York and London: Taylor & Francis, 2019), 123-125, 132.

⁷ Maltby, 'On the Prospect,' 91.

⁸ E.g. Judith Thissen, 'Next year at the Moving Pictures: Cinema and social change in the Jewish immigrant community,' in *Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by Richard Maltby, Melvin Stokes and Robert C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 113-129; 'Education or Entertainment?: Early Cinema as a Social Force in New York's Immigrant Jewish Community,' in *Screen Culture and the Social Question 1880-1914*, edited by Ludwig Vogl-Bienek and

Robert Crangle (New Barnet, Hertfordshire: John Libbey 2013), 151-160; 'Beyond the Nickelodeon: Cinemagoing, Everyday Life and Identity Politics,' in Ian Christie (ed.), *Audiences. Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2012) 45-65.

⁹ Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁰ Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

¹¹ An explanation may be that unlike the New Film History of the 1980s (Robert C. Allen, Douglas Gomery), the New Cinema History has its roots in Europe rather than North America and its references points are typically taken from developments within European social history (e.g. E.P. Thompson, *École des Annales*, Italian microhistoria).

¹² André van der Velden and I have discussed the possibilities of using the milieu concept for cinema historiography more detail in Judith Thissen and André van der Velden, 'Op zoek naar de tweede helix. Over het milieubegrip en de ontrafeling van het DNA van de Nederlandse filmcultuur.'

Tijdschrift voor mediageschiedenis, 21.1 (2018): 19-38. See:

<http://www.tmgonline.nl/index.php/tmg/article/view/336>. Part of the present article draws on the same research.

¹³ Stefan Hradil, 'Soziale Milieus – Eine praxisorientierte Forschungsperspektive,' *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 44-46 (2006):5. See also, Carsten Ascheberg, 'Milieuforschung und Transnationales Zielgruppenmarketing,' *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 44-46 (2006):19.

¹⁴ Cf. Bourdieu's sociology of culture and his notion of habitus, notably in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). The book was published in France in 1979.

¹⁵ Stefan Hradil, 'Soziale Milieus – Eine praxisorientierte Forschungsperspektive,' 4.

¹⁶ Idem, 7.

¹⁷ Klaus Tenfelde, *Proletarische Provinz: Radikalisierung und Widerstand in Penzberg/Oberbayern, 1900-1945* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1982). See also: Gerhard Paul und Klaus Michael Mallmann, *Milieus und Widerstand: eine Verhaltensgeschichte der Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Bonn: Dietz Nachfolger, 1995).

¹⁸ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2005)

¹⁹ E.g. Robert C. Allen, 'The Place of Space in Film Historiography,' *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 9, no. 2 (2006): 15–27; Jeffrey Klenotic, 'Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema,' in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 58-84. For a broad overview of geospatial approaches in film studies, see Julia Hallam and Les Roberts, eds, *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

²⁰ See in particular, Jan Hes, *In de ban van het beeld. Een filmsociologisch-godsdienstsociologische verkenning* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1972); Jaap Boter and Clara Pafort-Overduin, 'Compartmentalisation and Its influences on Film Distribution and Exhibition in the Netherlands, 1934–1936,' in *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research. An Overview*, edited by Michael Ross, Manfred Grauer and Bernd Freisleben (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009), 55–68; John

Sedgwick, Clara Pafort-Overduin and Jaap Boter, 'Explanations for the Restrained Development of the Dutch Cinema Market in the 1930s,' *Enterprise and Society* 13, no. 3 (2012): 657–58.

²¹ Robert C. Allen, 'Race, Region, and Rusticity: Relocating U.S. Film History,' in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes and Robert C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 27.

²² The core of the Orthodox Protestant milieu was constituted by members of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN), the largest Orthodox group, members of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK), and the ultra-conservative faction within the moderate Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (NHK), the so-called Gereformeerde Bond. In addition, the Orthodox milieu comprised many much smaller congregations, most of which were more Orthodox than the GKN. For a detailed overview of the complex history of Protestantism in the Netherlands see: Hans Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland. Omvang en geografische spreiding van de godsdienstige gezindten vanaf de Reformatie tot heden* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992). Since 2004, the majority of Orthodox Protestants belong to the newly-formed Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN), which was the result of a merger between the GKN, the NHK and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

²³ Like in most countries in continental Europe, in the post-war period cinema attendance boomed as never before in the Netherlands. Ticket sales reached an all-time high of almost 90 million in 1946 with an average of 9.5 visits per capita. After the post-war euphoria, the demand shrank somewhat but remained much higher than before the war. Admissions fluctuated at around 64 million per year until 1959, when they began a strong decline. A decade later, the Dutch went to the movies not more than twice a year on average. The decline in attendance came to a halt in the 1970s thanks to a series of Dutch box-office hits, including *Blue Movie* (1971) and *Turks Fruit* (1973). Between 1980 and 1985, cinema attendance plunged again by half to stabilise at an average of one visit per year for another decade. Core data about film exhibition and attendance for the period 1946-2017 can be found in the online dataset *Bioscoopgeschiedenis in cijfers*, accessed 5 June, 2019. Url:

<https://www.boekman.nl/verdieping/publicaties/bioscoopgeschiedenis-in-cijfers/>

²⁴ For a detailed analysis, see Judith Thissen, 'Film Consumers in the Country: The Culture and Business of Cinemagoing in the Netherlands,' in *Cinema Beyond the City: Small-Town & Rural Film Culture in Europe*, edited by Judith Thissen and Clemens Zimmermann (London: BFI Publishing 2016), 87-104.

²⁵ Joop Ellemers, 'De jaren vijftig in Nederland,' in *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis 7, de jaren vijftig*, edited by Karel Dibbets et al. (Amsterdam: Stichting Mediageschiedenis, 1995), 21. See also: Hans Righart and Piet de Rooy, 'In Holland staat een huis. Weerzin en vertedering over 'de jaren vijftig',' in *Een stille revolutie? Cultuur en mentaliteit in de lange jaren vijftig*, edited by Paul Luykx and Pim Slot (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 11-18.

²⁶ Arend Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1968). For a nuanced evaluation of this widely accepted interpretation of Dutch society, see: Hans Blom and Jaap Talsma, eds., *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2000).

²⁷ Karel Dibbets, 'Het taboe van de Nederlandse filmcultuur: neutraal in een verzuild land,' *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 46-64.

²⁸ Some of these movie theatres managed to survive into the 1930s, but in most cases they closed down not long after the opening because audiences preferred what was on offer in commercial movie theatres.

²⁹ Thunnis van Oort, *Film en het moderne leven in Limburg. Het bioscoopwezen tussen commercie en katholieke cultuurpolitiek (1909-1929)*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2007; Hes, *In de ban van het beeld*.

³⁰ Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart*, 63-164.

³¹ Hes, *In de ban van het beeld*, 94, 116-124.

³² Judith Thissen, 'The Cinematograph in the Country: A New Cinema History Approach to Early Dutch Film Culture,' paper presented at the workshop *Rethinking the Attractions-Narrative Dialectics: New Approaches to Early Cinema*, Ghent, 9-10 November 2018.

³³ John Sedgwick, Clara Pafort-Overduin and Jaap Boter, 'Explanations for the Restrained Development,' 657-58.

³⁴ Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart*, 110, 227-240.

³⁵ Judith Thissen, 'Understanding Dutch Film Culture: A Comparative Approach,' *Alphaville. Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 6 (Winter 2013). Url:

<http://www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue6/HTML/ArticleThissen.html>

³⁶ All relevant data can be found in the online Cinema Context Database. Url:

<http://www.cinemacontext.nl/>.

³⁷ See for instance H. Van Alkemade-Kwakkelstein et al., *Rapport van de deputaten der Generale Synode van 1949 voor 'De Vrije Tijdsbesteding' aan de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken, samen te komen te Rotterdam in het jaar 1952* (n.p., 1952); E.D. Kraan et al., *Rapport van de Deputaten der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Leeuwarden in 1955/56, benoemd voor de bestudering van het film- en bioscoopvraagstuk, voor wat betreft de pastorale taak van de kerk: aan de Generale Synode dier kerken, die in 1957 te Assen hoopt samen te komen* (n.p., 1957). 'Jeugd en Gezin in Kerk en Dorp': *Rapport uitgebracht aan een Interclassicale Commissie der Gereformeerde Kerken in Noord-Groningen*. (n.p: Stichting Gereformeerd Sociologisch Instituut, 1959). E.W. Veldhuisen-Hiltjesdam, *Onderzoek naar de vrije-tijdsbesteding van de Wapenveldse jeugd* (n.p: Stichting Gelderland voor Maatschappelijk Werk, 1963).

³⁸ This may well have been a more general post-war phenomenon in Europe. E.g. Karl Bednarik, *Der Junge Arbeiter von Heute: Ein Neuer Type* [The Young Worker of To-day: A New Type] (Stuttgart: Gustav Klipper, 1953), which was translated into both English and Dutch in 1955. In fact, in the United States too, there was a growing fear about youth and mass culture in the immediate post-war era. See James Gilbert, *Cycles of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

³⁹ Van Alkemade-Kwakkelstein et al., *Rapport*, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Idem, 3.

⁴¹ Idem, 27.

⁴² Idem, 36-45

⁴³ Idem, 39, question 52.

⁴⁴ Idem, 41.

⁴⁵ Idem, 48.

⁴⁶ Idem, 43.

⁴⁷ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), *Vrije-tijdsbesteding in Nederland. Winter 1955/'56. Deel 9: Kerkelijke gezindte en vrijetijdsbesteding* (W. de Haan N.V.: Zeist, 1959), 21

⁴⁸ References to the devil are frequent in the anti-cinema discourse. Satan's peepshow is the term used for the cinema by a minister writing in a regional Orthodox newspaper ('Weer de film,' *Eilanden-nieuws. Christelijk streekblad op gereformeerde grondslag*, 21 april 1948). See also R. Schippers, *De gereformeerde zede* (Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V., 1955), 171; Joh. C. Francken, *Veel vragen... één antwoord* (Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V., 1940), 242-243.

⁴⁹ The results of this large-scale survey were discussed in a series of ten reports that were published between 1957 and 1959. The first seven volumes were devoted to one specific form of leisure, including the cinema (volume 3). The remaining volumes each focused on the influence of a particular facet of society on various forms of leisure. Volume nine is devoted to the influence of the churches and includes a quantitative analysis of the recreational patterns within the different confessional groups and a comparison between religious believers and atheists. Along with the volume devoted to cinema attendance and film preferences, this volume provides many detailed insights in the ways in which Orthodox Protestants spent their leisure time. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), *Vrije-tijdsbesteding in Nederland. Winter 1955/'56*. Ten volumes (W. de Haan N.V.: Zeist, 1957-1959).

⁵⁰ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 9*, 14. It is important to realize that the CBS statistics only differentiate between the two largest Protestant churches: Nederlandse Hervormden Kerk (NHK) and the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GNK). The smaller conservative and ultra-conservative congregations fell in the category 'other' (including also Jews, Muslims, Evangelical Christians etc.). Hence, the statistical data regarding Orthodox Protestant leisure practices are limited to the GNK. However, in the qualitative parts, the reports point out that members of the smaller (ultra)-conservative congregations as well as the ultra-conservative faction of the NHK showed similar recreational patterns and preferences as the members of the GNK.

⁵¹ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 9*, 14.

⁵² *Idem*, 14-15.

⁵³ *Idem*, 31-32.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, 22, 31-32.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, 27-28.

⁵⁶ Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 37.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding in Nederland. Winter 1955/'56. Deel 3*, 40.

⁵⁹ This antagonism to the cinema was not a new phenomenon in Dutch society. In the early twentieth century, when permanent movie theatres were gaining a foothold in the Netherlands, the growing popularity of the movies provoked heated debates about their allegedly corrupting influence, especially upon children and adolescents. It is well-known that debates about the deleterious effects of cinemagoing on youths broke out in many countries, often closely tied to demands for local or national censorship. In fact, since the emergence of mass consumer culture, we can witness similar concerns in relation to other forms of commercialized popular culture as well (e.g. commercial dances, variety, dime novels etc.). For a long-term media-historical perspective, see for instance Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶⁰ M.J. Langeveld, *Maatschappelijke verwildering der jeugd; Rapport betreffende de geestesgesteldheid van de massajeugd* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij en Uitgeverijbedrijf, 1952), 9.

⁶¹ Langeveld, *Maatschappelijke verwildering*, 14. The report uses the German term.

⁶² The reports are listed in Langeveld, *Maatschappelijke verwildering*, 11-12. There was a manual for case studies, which listed the issues that the sociologists were to discuss ('strictly confidential and personal') with their local partners (presumably social workers, doctors, ministers etc.) regarding specific families. They address a very wide range of social issues from health to housing conditions, from religious behaviour to friendships and sexual relations. *Handleiding voor het case-study onderzoek. Voor het onderzoek naar de geestesgesteldheid van de massajeugd* (n.p., n.d.).

⁶³ In this period, most unmarried workers were still living with their parents. Because of the housing shortage, even young married couples sometimes had no other choice. In most working-class families, it was the tradition that home-based children who worked paid board money, which reduced their discretionary income considerably. However, as economic conditions improved during the 1950s, their contribution to the household income was less needed and hence parents often increased the personal 'pocket money' of their working sons and daughters.

⁶⁴ Langeveld, *Maatschappelijke verwildering*, 20-22. It is likely that middle-class adolescents were more tied to their parents' financial purse strings because they did not work and this may partly explain why they were less engaged with commercial popular entertainment (in addition to principles of bourgeois taste and distinction).

⁶⁵ A year after the publication of the final report in which Langeveld summarized the results of the local studies, the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences decided to publish a selection of the underlying source materials. M.J. Langeveld, *Bronnenboek bevattende gegevens ten grondslag liggend aan rapport Maatschappelijke verwildering der jeugd* ('s-Gravenhage : Staatsdrukkerij en Uitgeverijbedrijf, 1953). This so-called 'source-book' in particular needs to be used with a lot of caution. For a discussion of the reception of this book and other publications in the mass youth survey project, see Frans Meijers and Manuela du Bois-Reymond, 'Het massajeugdonderzoek – inleiding,' in *Op zoek naar een moderne pedagogische norm. Beeldvorming over de jeugd in de jaren vijftig: het massajeugdonderzoek (1948-1952)*, edited by Frans Meijers en Manuela du Bois-Reymond (Amersfoort/Leuven: Acco, 1987), 20-38.

⁶⁶ See for instance, *Bronnenboek*, 157-159 (Stolwijk), 175-176 (Ede), 206 (Veenendaal), 271 (Ureterp), 286 (Harkema-Opeinde).

⁶⁷ Herma Beuving, "Dat was een filmhuis. En je moest naar Gods huis.' Herinneringen aan de bioscoop, de film en het gereformeerde verzet tegen 'de wereld' in naoorlogs Nederland,' MA-thesis, Utrecht University (2015).

⁶⁸ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 3*, 32.

⁶⁹ Idem 34.

⁷⁰ Thissen, 'Film Consumers in the Country,' 89-91; Thunnis van Oort, "'Coming up This Weekend": Ambulant Film Exhibition in the Netherlands,' in *Cinema Beyond the City: Small-Town & Rural Film Culture in Europe*, edited by Judith Thissen and Clemens Zimmermann (London: BFI Publishing 2016), 149-164.

⁷¹ E.g. Beuvink, 19; 'Bioscoop oefent niet steeds een invloed ten goede uit,' *Leeuwarder Courant*, 2 maart 1957.

⁷² *Bronnenboek*, 206.

⁷³ The area where the cinema was situated was officially part of the neighbouring municipality. The reason for this was simple: the mayor and aldermen of Veenendaal had refused to give a building

permit for the construction of a movie theatre on the land that fell under their jurisdiction. In other words, in this case, the cinema itself was literally pushed out of town.

⁷⁴ Oral history interview, Martine Schellevis with G.J. Westland (15 February 2007), quoted in Schellevis, 'Bioscopen in Veenendaal van 1913 tot 1970 en de invloed van sociaal-economische kenmerken op hun succes,' MA-thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam (2008), 46. Tellingly, the Luxor Theater in Veenendaal was located on the outskirts of the town, which was officially part of the neighbouring municipality. The reason for this was simple: the mayor and aldermen of Veenendaal had refused to give a building permit for the construction of a movie theatre on the land that fell under their jurisdiction. In other words, in this case, the cinema itself was literally pushed out of town.

⁷⁵ *Bronnenboek*, 175.

⁷⁶ E.g. *Bronnenboek*, 194-198 on Veenendaal.

⁷⁷ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 9*, 37. A study of recreational habits among Protestant youths in the village of Wapenveld even devoted an entire paragraph to the subject of cafeteria-going, including statistics. Veldhuisen-Hiltjesdam, *Onderzoek naar de vrije-tijdsbesteding van de Wapenveldse jeugd*, 74-75.

⁷⁸ CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 9*, 40; Van Alkemade-Kwakkelstein et al., *Rapport van de deputaten der Generale Synode van 1949*, 54.

⁷⁹ Herma Beuving, "'Dat was een filmhuis. En je moest naar Gods huis.'"

⁸⁰ See also, CBS, *Vrije-tijdsbesteding. Deel 9*, 39.

⁸¹ Beuving, 'Dat was een filmhuis,' 16.

⁸² Interview with female respondent (born 1938), Beuving, 18.

⁸³ Interview with female respondent (born 1927), Beuving, 12. Another respondent was afraid of 'being in a dance hall when the Lord returns to earth,' idem 56.

⁸⁴ Beuving, 14, 18, 55.

⁸⁵ André van der Velden, interview with Henk Berg, operator for the Excelsior travelling cinema (26 March 2013).

⁸⁶ *Bronnenboek*, 196 and 198.

⁸⁷ Report of town hall meeting in Ooltgensplaat (Zeeland), *Eilanden-nieuws*, 12 april 1952, 5.

⁸⁸ Quoted by Schellevis, 'Bioscopen in Veenendaal van 1913 tot 1970,' 41.

⁸⁹ Idem, 42.

⁹⁰ Idem, 58-60.

⁹¹ Biography of Vroegindewey on Digibron, an online knowledge data base about Reformed Protestantism. Accessed April 8, 2019. Url:

<https://www.digibron.nl/search/detail/4c3fbfaa6c0b32238e4c2fbf38e8591e/de-domineesfamilie-vroegindewey-i>

⁹² *De Vaandrager* was published by the *Bond van Nederlands Hervormde Jongelingsverenigingen op Gereformeerde grondslag* (the ultra-conservative fraction within the moderate Hervormde Kerk). The association also organized social clubs, youth conference, summer camps etc.

⁹³ L. Vroegindewey, *Vader mag ik naar de bioscoop: Een beschouwing over de waarde van de film voor jong en oud* (Huizen N.H., J. Bout, 1948).

⁹⁴ Idem, 25.

⁹⁵ There is an interesting comparison to make with the contemporary function of alcohol in the Netherlands. Alcohol plays a very important part in social life, including in the work sphere. Beer

and wine in particular are omnipresent during public and private events of all sorts and their consumption is closely associated with the very Dutch notion of *gezelligheid* (conviviality). A person who does not drink for reasons of principle puts him/herself in the position of an outsider vis-à-vis the mainstream of Dutch society. This socio-cultural dynamic reinforces the politics of exclusion of Muslim migrants, which we see in all realms of social life, but in particular on the work floor. On the other hand, the anti-alcohol attitude fosters bonds between Muslims from different ethnic background. While we cannot yet speak of a single Muslim milieu, it begins to develop in the sphere of commercial leisure practices.

⁹⁶ Thissen, 'Next year at the Moving Pictures: Cinema and social change in the Jewish immigrant community,' notably 125-129.

⁹⁷ Cf. Daniel Soyer, 'Class Conscious Workers as Immigrant Entrepreneurs: The Ambiguity of Class among Eastern European Jewish Immigrants to the United States at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,' *Labor History*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (2001), 45-59.

⁹⁸ Morgan Courriou, ed., *Publics et spectacles cinématographique en situation coloniale* (Tunis : Cahiers du Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Economiques et Sociales, 2012). For a synchronic media-comparative approach see Arthur Asseraf, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* (Oxford University Press, 2019).