"WE EARNESTLY SUGGEST YOU RECONSIDER THE KILLING OF THE LITTLE CHILD": MOVIE VIOLENCE IN THE ERA OF THE PRODUCTION CODE*

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The script of *One-Eyed Jacks* (Marlon Brando, 1961), a western produced for Paramount Pictures, aimed to bring a new level of frankness and brutality to screen violence. The scripted action was harsh and detailed. The victim of a barroom beating has blood gouting from his nose, an eye is swollen shut, and several teeth have been knocked loose which he spits on the floor. An outlaw is hung and set on fire. Another outlaw is shot in the face, the bullet shattering his nose and spraying blood into his eyes. A little girl is shot dead by outlaws robbing a bank. The town sheriff ties an outlaw to a hitching post, gives him a savage whipping, and then crushes his hand with the butt of a shotgun.

For decades, screenwriters had been filling their scripts with violence that went well beyond what was allowable on screen. Doing so was a strategic maneuver in dealing with the Production Code Administration and its negotiations about what might be permissible. The script for *Bataan* (Tay Garnett, 1943), for example, a World War II drama, described a soldier tortured by the Japanese as having a face mutilated beyond rec-

ognition, something that could not be shown on camera in the period. While many of the violent details in the *One-Eyed Jacks* script did not make it to the screen, several did: these included the whipping and hand-smashing and the death of the little girl. The Production Code Administration had objected to the whipping, arguing that it went on too long and that the hand smashing was unacceptably sadistic. It informed the filmmakers that if these actions were retained in the film they would have to be handled discretely and be suggested rather than shown directly. But this response from the PCA was not a verdict or a fiat that the filmmakers were expected to follow inflexibly. For six months, the PCA exchanged letters with the studio and the filmmakers over this scene, trying to negotiate an acceptable compromise that would satisfy all parties. In the end, while the whipping goes on for a long time, most of the camera set-ups avoid showing the bloody back of the outlaw Rio (Marlon Brando), and those few that do show it do so from a distance. The hand-smashing stays off-camera. The viewer sees Sheriff Dad Longworth (Karl Malden) raise the

shotgun and bring the butt down, but Rio's hand remains off-screen so the blow itself is not seen.

While this fulfilled the letter of the PCA's concern with keeping sadistic violence off the screen, the filmmakers found a sneaky, indirect, but vivid way of portraying the painful nature of the assault. The viewer doesn't see Rio at all, but while the camera remains on Dad, the thud of the gun hitting the hand can be heard. More importantly, a woman in the crowd who is off-screen and watching the assault screams at the moment Rio's hand is struck. Her scream points to the off-camera violence, emphasizes its horrifying nature, and stands-in for the pain and suffering that Rio is undergoing and which the PCA had wanted to minimize. This audio information makes the off-camera violence more vivid, and the suffering that Dad inflicts becomes visceral and tangible. Therefore, these results go beyond suggestion and were counter to what the PCA had wanted to achieve.

Regarding the scripted killing of the little girl during the bank robbery, the PCA expressed its objection in rather elegant terms. "To avoid excessive cruelty, we earnestly suggest you reconsider the killing of the little child."[2] The filmmakers went ahead and killed the girl but compromised by casting an older actress as the character who nevertheless remains dressed on camera as child. This incongruity – a child's clothing on an evidently older actress – is a visible trace in the film (as is the scream of the off-camera witness to the hand-smashing) of negotiations with the PCA regarding the acceptable boundaries of screen violence in the period. While the popular image of the PCA sees it as ruling with an iron fist, in regards to depictions of screen violence, it counseled and cautioned filmmakers but always in a process of ongoing negotiation over how things ought to be shown, a process that remained open and flexible. As Leff and Simmons (2001) note, the PCA was less doctrinaire than is often supposed, a reality that must qualify our assessments about the era of censorship in American cinema.

OFTEN, FILMMAKERS THEMSELVES, INTENT ON CIRCUMVENTING PROHIBITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS, CREATED THEIR OWN VISIBLE MARKS, LIKE THE ONES THAT CAN BE FOUND IN *ONE-EYED JACKS*

This era left numerous marks on the movies. Sometimes these marks remained invisible: they were undetectable to audiences because certain scenes, characters, actions or dialogue had been judged as objectionable and therefore were not filmed. In other instances, however, the marks of censorship were visible on screen as traces left behind from material that had been filmed but excised. Often, filmmakers themselves, intent on circumventing prohibitions and restrictions, created their own visible marks, like the ones that can be found in *One-Eyed Jacks*. Often these were clever and inventive, and over the long term they helped to drive a broader shift in the industry and in the culture away from censorship. In regard to screen violence, where did the PCA fit into a cultural landscape where censorship flourished?

Film censorship began in 1907 when the city of Chicago passed the first movie censorship ordinance and tasked the municipal police department with enforcing it. It was quickly challenged by nickelodeon operators when two westerns were banned from exhibition due to their violence which the Chicago censors regarded as excessive and of unhealthy influence. The Illinois State Supreme Court upheld the ban in 1909, citing the potential of cinema to exert an evil influence on weak and immature minds. The court's reasoning about cinema – that it exerted an undue, negative influence on society which justified the efforts of social reformers to reign in morally objectionable content – established a foundation for ensuing decades of movie censorship. State boards of censorship were rapidly established in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Maryland, New

York, Virginia, and in numerous municipalities. In 1915, the U.S. Supreme Court specifically excluded cinema from the constitutional protections on freedom of the press and publication. This was the context in which the Hollywood studios and their filmmakers had to contend and which constrained and influenced the kinds of stories and images that movies would carry. It was a time in which freedom of expression for movies did not exist, nor did constitutional safeguards protecting expression in cinema.

These developments, particularly the Supreme Court decision, greatly weakened Hollywood by making it vulnerable to outside groups that could exert considerable economic pressure. Filmmakers were chronically thrust into rearguard actions, defending prerogatives that were under continual challenge by censors and social reform groups outside the industry. Henceforth, the industry had to clear its movies through numerous censor boards across the country, each of which might stipulate different cuts and deletions in order to grant a license clearing the film for exhibition in a given locale. This was an enormous headache, that gave the studios great incentive to find a solution, and the strategy they adopted was to head censors off before they could act. By studying the eliminations bulletins, the listings of specific shots and scenes that censors required in order to grant a license for exhibition, the studios formed a clear picture of the kinds of material that was getting them into trouble. They decided to preempt the censors by keeping that material out of movies in the first place.

To protect itself and to create a mechanism for interceding with the censors, the industry created the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in 1922 and placed former postmaster Will Hays at its head, accompanied by much hoopla about cleaning up the movies. In 1924 Hays introduced a general set of movie content guidelines to appease the censors, and in 1927 he created the Studio Relations Committee

to represent the industry before the regional censor boards. The SRC formulated the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls", a list of eleven topics off-limits to filmmakers and twenty-five topics that required careful attention. These were incorporated into the Production Code in 1930, which thereafter guided Hollywood filmmaking during the next three decades.

The Production Code Administration (formed in 1934 to enforce the code) and its forebears in the Hays Office and the SRC often are regarded and discussed as industry censors, which, I suggest, is not wholly accurate. The real problem faced by the industry was represented by the regional censor boards and the anti-film social pressure groups that coalesced around them. The SRC and the PCA were attempts to prevent films from being censored by these boards, based on data the industry had compiled about the kinds of scenes and behaviors that the boards were targeting. The Production Code Administration was a front-loaded operation that evaluated scripts before they went into production and sent memos to producers and directors outlining areas in the script where they anticipated trouble with the regional censors. These memos were not the last word but rather the opening of negotiations with filmmakers about

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how to satisfy and resolve the anticipated problem areas. Even when an initial letter described a script as unacceptable, this was never meant as a rejection of the proposed film but rather served as the starting grounds for negotiation. Geoffrey Shurlock, who succeeded Joseph I. Breen as head of the PCA in 1954, felt that the whole point of the Production Code was to protect filmmakers from public efforts to harm their work.

PCA staff members who read and evaluated scripts were not advocating for the censor boards or representing their interests but were aiming to help filmmakers craft their work so that it could get through the censors unscathed. The impressive speed at which staff members read scripts and evaluated them demonstrates this objective of helping films to get made. Moreover, the agency's respect for filmmakers is evident in the PCA's policy of not going on set. PCA personnel did not visit sets during filming and production, they did not supervise production and, during production, filmmakers worked unimpeded by PCA supervision. Staff members evaluated scripts and, following production, they screened a finished film to clear it for exhibition by granting a seal of approval. While an occasional trim might be recommended following a screening, this was relatively rare. The whole system was based on trust. The PCA viewed screeners: these were not completed films but were rather work-prints that had not yet been conformed to a cut negative. Thus filmmakers would be editing picture and sound beyond the point at which the PCA had signed off on the project. PCA staff members had to trust that filmmakers would follow any recommendations made from the screening, but, as noted, these remained rare and were not routine by any means. The system was front-loaded at the scripting stage, and members of the Production Code Administration envisioned their work not as suppressing movies but as helping to get them made. They believed that they were in the business of granting seals, not withholding them.

The word "violence" does not appear anywhere in the Production Code, but terms such as "brutal" do appear in connection with behaviors that today would be described under the rubric of screen violence. This tells us that the conceptual horizon operating in this earlier period was different from today. Although the Code says nothing about violence per se, it does list numerous violent behaviors about which filmmakers were cautioned to be careful. These behaviors derived from the eliminations bulletins compiled from regional censor boards. Based on its study of these bulletins, the PCA knew that scenes showing violent action with sharp bladed weapons – arrows, spears or knives sticking into people – would tend to be cut by censors. Similarly, scenes showing gangsters flaunting their weapons and killing law enforcement officers would elicit a flurry of censor activity, and gruesome action in horror movies – characters being skinned alive or tortured or burned – would be cut by the regional boards. Indeed, crime and horror films were problem genres for Hollywood, so censors regarded them as especially dangerous because of their emphasis on sadism, brutality and on characters whose overall behavior was anti-social. The PCA took a harder line with these genres than with others, such as Westerns and war films, which were seen as being more wholesome and patriotic. By the mid-1930s, the violence in horror and gangster movies had provoked such a public backlash that the studios curtailed (temporarily) production in these genres.

The PCA, then, had a fairly precise listing of problem areas it knew would be troublesome, and filmmakers were expected to handle these with discretion. Sometimes quantity itself was the problem – too many punches in a fight scene, too many shots fired in a gunfight – and filmmakers were advised to reduce the number. In many other instances, harsh violence could be softened by showing it indirectly and obliquely. The poetics of screen violence in this period uses an elaborate

system of indirect representations that point back to acts of violence that are not shown on camera. Shadows, for example, could reference actions that would be problems if shown directly. When Verdegast (Bela Lugosi) skins Poelzig (Boris Karloff) alive in *The Black Cat* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1935), we catch glimpses of it in silhouette through their shadows cast upon a wall. In *G-Men* (William Keighley, 1935), when a gangster kills a federal agent, this action ran afoul of PCA guidelines stipulating that crime films ought not to show law enforcement officers being killed by criminals. The killing is in the film, but it happens off-camera, with the viewer catching a glimpse through the characters' silhouetted shadows. Violent death could also be emblemized through significant details that pointed back to what was happening off-screen – a falling bowling pin points to the death of a gunshot victim in *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932), a sudden, harsh music cue points to an off-screen murder in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944). The network of devices for indirectly pointing at things otherwise left unseen stimulated filmmakers to be clever, sophisticated and ironic in their efforts to dodge censorship and bequeathed to this era forms of poetic expression that one finds comparatively less often in contemporary film. As Ruth Vasey (1995) noted, industry regulation encouraged the elision or effacement of problem material.

Because the PCA was evaluating scripts in light of potential censor action, the agency focused on behavior, on the scripted actions by characters in scenes. It was not in a good position to evaluate how filmmakers presented these actions using film style. Because the agency didn't supervise production and because asking for trims following a screening for clearance was not routine, the PCA had limited opportunities to comment on and evaluate film style. And yet style was tremendously important, and I believe that it represents the real developmental history and significance of violence in the movies. Since the beginnings of cinema, characters have been beating, shooting, and stabbing one another. While this range of violent behavior is fairly limited and unchanging, what has altered enormously is the stylistic dimension within which that behavior is encoded. The history of screen violence is not a story about changes in the behavior of screen characters so much as it is a story about how filmmakers came to learn more effective, visceral and vivid ways to stage violence for the cameras. This developing stock of professional knowledge lay beyond the abilities of the PCA to handle or evaluate, and because the agency didn't scrutinize style, filmmakers had lots of wiggle room to evade and even defy the agency's suggestions.

Raw Deal (Anthony Mann, 1948), for example, contains a scene where a gangster who is angry at his girlfriend throws a flaming fondue into her face. Evaluating the script, the PCA took an unusually hard and rigid stance, telling the filmmakers that the action was unacceptable and could not be approved under any circumstances. The studio producing the picture wrote to the PCA to say the filmmakers were going to shoot the scene but would keep the action off-camera and not show the fondue hitting the victim. While it is true that the victim is not shown on camera, the filmmak-

WHILE CENSORSHIP WAS A CONSTRAINING FORCE, IT FAILED TO INHIBIT THE MOTIVATION OF FILMMAKERS TO PUSH THE MEDIUM EVER FURTHER. THROUGHOUT THE ERA OF CENSORSHIP, THEY EXPLORED EFFECTIVE WAYS OF STAGING VIOLENCE FOR THE CAMERA, IN THE PROCESS CONTRIBUTING TO AN EXPANDING LEVEL OF CRAFT KNOWLEDGE THAT COULD NOT BE UNDONE BY CENSORSHIP AND WAS AVAILABLE TO OTHER FILMMAKERS TO BUILD UPON

ers used style very creatively to evade the PCA and get what they wanted, which was a shocking scene of hard violence. The camera stays on the gangster as he picks up the fondue. The victim is not on screen, but the shot is a subjective one. The camera has become the victim; what it sees, she sees. When the gangster hurls the flaming fondue, he throws it directly at the camera. Its flaming contents hit the eye of the camera (actually, a glass pane in front of the camera), and the shot lingers for a moment so the viewer can see the burning liquid drip down the pane, visualizing the incineration of the character's face. Although the filmmakers had placed the violence off-camera, they used style to intensify it and to place the viewer inside the attack, experiencing it visually as the victim did.

While censorship was a constraining force, it failed to inhibit the motivation of filmmakers to push the medium ever further. Throughout the era of censorship, they explored effective ways of staging violence for the camera, in the process contributing to an expanding level of craft knowledge that could not be undone by censorship and was available to other filmmakers to build upon. Older films contain numerous examples of specific figurative devices that subsequent filmmakers would elaborate upon and expand. *Scarface* (1931), a collaboration between producer Howard Hughes and director Howard Hawks, aimed to surpass earlier gangster movies with more abundant and more vicious depictions of gangland shootings. Their efforts evoked a torrent of censor activity, and as a sop to the censors, the last scene shows Tony Camonte (Paul Muni), the film's gangster hero, turning coward and dying in a hail of police gunfire. In the words of one of the cops, he dies "like a yellow rat", a turn of events that was meant to illustrate the pro-social message that crime doesn't pay. But the filmmakers had no real interest in promoting this message, they concentrated on staging a vivid and memorable death scene. Camonte runs out of his fortified mansion into the glare of a spotlight and the guns of the police. When they open fire, Camonte's body jerks and convulses spasmodically to simulate the bullet hits that are slamming into him. No squibs are used to visualize the bullet strikes because, in this era, the human body remained inviolate on screen despite whatever violence might be inflicted upon it in the story: characters that were shot typically clutched their chest and sank slowly, rather peacefully out of the frame, and blood was rarely visible.

In contrast to the unwritten prohibition on visualizing bodily harm and damage, however, bullet hits on sets and props were depicted quite liberally and often these stood in for and represented symbolically what wasn't being shown on the body itself. When Tony is hit by machine-gun fire and begins jerking spasmodically, bullet hits strike the masonry of the building façade behind and on both sides of him. These visible hits illustrate by extension what is happening to his body. After Tony is riddled by the first round of gunfire, the scene cuts back to the police who pause, then fire again. When the scene cuts back to Tony, he is still on his feet and thrashing violently under the hail of bullets. Then a third shot of Tony shows him plunging to the ground and lying still.

The cutaway from Tony and the cut back to him as the police resume firing elongates the action, prolonging his death agonies, which are extended into a third shot as he falls to the ground. The editing constructs the scene in a manner that uses style to amplify the depicted violence and extend it in time so that it assumes a fuller, more elaborate dimension than it otherwise would have. This accomplishment certainly ran counter to the objectives of the PCA in regulating and reducing the amount of violence on screen. It illustrates how filmmakers were finding ways of amplifying and pumping up screen violence while the PCA was looking in another direction entirely, concerned with content, behaviors, ideas and messages.

More importantly, this small moment at the end of *Scarface* was tremendously suggestive. Editing could be used to enhance and extend intervals of violence, meaning that the behaviors of characters might be less salient for questions about the impact of screen violence than how those behaviors were showcased using cinema style. In George Stevens' *Shane* (1953), the climatic showdown between Shane and the gunfighter Wilson (Jack Palance) builds on this use of editing to extend time. Wilson draws first, but Shane is faster and fires first. When he does, a cut to Wilson shows him flying backwards, knocked off his feet by the impact of Shane's bullet. The scene cuts back to Shane who fires a second time, then turns and shoots the range boss who hired Wilson and who has been sitting behind Shane. At that point, the scene cuts back to Wilson *who is still hurtling backwards* where he collides with some barrels stacked against the wall and collapses to the ground. Stevens has used cutaways to extend the screen time of an action, as occurred in *Scarface*, except that in this case time has become more elastic and has been stretched further. Stevens, of course, famously added another detail to the shootings in *Shane* by showing characters knocked backwards and off their feet by the impact of bullets.

The stylistic insights that guided the construction of these scenes in *Scarface* and *Shane* helped to inform the heritage that Arthur Penn drew from in designing the memorable deaths of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) in a scene that became a watershed moment for American screen violence. The film was in production after the MPAA had scrapped the Production Code, and Penn accordingly took screen violence much farther and with more intensity, rendering in detail the manner in which Bonnie and Clyde are torn apart by machine-gun fire. He used multiple cameras running at different speeds, and made abundant use of squibs to simulate bullet hits. While it was not possible for earlier filmmakers to use such tech-

niques, the elaborate montage of death by gunfire that concludes *Bonnie and Clyde* does build directly upon the principles that were already grasped by the filmmakers of *Scarface* and *Shane*. These involved the ways that editing can extend a line of action through time, making time elastic and distended, and thereby heightening the interval in which violent action occurs. Indeed, this usage of editing has proven to be a basic property of cinema and is susceptible to discovery by filmmakers working independently of one another, as Akira Kurosawa demonstrated in *Seven Samurai* when he used multi-camera filming, slow motion, and extensive cross-cutting to extend and emphasize the violent death of a kidnapper. Once Arthur Penn had demonstrated to American audiences the power of this design, Sam Peckinpah promptly took it much further in *The Wild Bunch* (1969) (Prince, 1998).

If we compare scenes dramatizing essentially the same event in *G-Men* (1935) and *Dillinger* (John Milius, 1973), we will derive a clear picture of the boundaries and restrictions imposed on screen violence by the regional censors and the PCA. *G-Men* belonged to a new wave of crime films that sought to defuse the controversies surrounding gangster movies by shifting the focus from gangsters to federal agents fighting crime. There was still plenty of machine-gun action, but the automatic weapons were in the hands of the feds, not the gangsters, making this screen violence (the studios hoped) less offensive and more palatable to critics and censors. *Dillinger* is a post-Code film, produced after censorship had fallen and the regional boards had been disbanded. The scenes that interest us in both films were inspired by the disastrous FBI raid on John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson and three other gangsters who were staying at the Little Bohemia Lodge in Wisconsin in 1934. The FBI bungled the raid, killed one civilian, wounded another, and managed to allow all of the gangsters to escape (Burrough, 2004). Both films, by contrast, show the federal agents carrying out

a carefully planned and effective raid, accompanied by a tremendous amount of gunfire (unlike the actual case that inspired the movies)[3].

In *G-Men*, the federal agents attack the lodge using machine guns, whereas the gangsters fire back with shotguns, rifles and pistols but not with automatic weapons, consistent with the PCA's efforts to roll-back the incendiary outcry that had surrounded the violence in earlier gangster movies. The stylistic presentation of machine-gun violence – the flashing, strobing muzzle fire, the clouds of gun smoke, the growling chatter of the guns – is exactly like earlier gangster movies had shown when the guns were in the hands of hoodlums. The feds in *G-Men* flaunt their weapons, and the event makes for exciting visual spectacle. The way that action is choreographed plays up the spectacle, especially the dramatic contrast between the darkness of the woods and the bright flashes of gunfire. All this provides another example of how film style eluded censors and PCA staff members – what counted for them is that no gangster used an automatic weapon. Giving the weapons to the good guy federal agents legitimated their usage and the visual spectacle devoted to that usage.

Inside the lodge, gunfire shatters lamps, furniture, and windows, wreaking abundant visual damage on sets and props but not on human bodies, which remain intact and relatively unmarked. This sanitized violence is especially striking when Brick Davis (James Cagney), the G-man hero, guns down some of the fleeing gangsters. The shootings are presented as most are in this period, with the shooter and the victim shown in separate shots rather than occupying the same frame[4]. Brick fires a burst of lead from his gun, and the action cuts to the victim who abruptly freezes and stiffens, his sudden rigidity visualizing the impact of the bullets which is otherwise not shown, and then sinks slowly to the ground. The victims are physically and emotionally undisturbed, making these deaths appear very peaceful. This incongru-

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ity results from the elaborate visual attention given to the mechanics, the sights and the sounds of machine-gun action compared with the complete lack of attention to their effects on the victims.

In *Dillinger*, however, the effects of bullets on their victims are presented in detail. Characters are shot in the head, are blown off their feet, are squibbed for bullet hits and blood effects, and they register the pain of being wounded by screaming or crying. Indeed, one of the major changes distinguishing violence in the PCA period with what followed is this attention to visualizing the effects of gun violence on the human body, which includes not just the physical damage but the pain and suffering that accompany it. During the gunfight in *Dillinger* one member of the gang lies on a bed in the lodge, bleeding out from an earlier wound incurred during a bank robbery. His chest is covered with blood and he cries and contorts in pain. Not only the ample bloodshed but the audible suffering is an element that was unavailable to filmmakers in the earlier period: these elements – vocalizations of pain and suffering, resulting

from violence – were treated as being especially dangerous and were suppressed by the PCA because of the regional censor activity they invariably aroused. The unintended irony was that sanitizing movie violence tended to make it more entertaining and enjoyable.

Although regional censors continued to scrutinize films submitted to them for clearance, the PCA was not unwaveringly vigilant, and following World War II, screen violence became progressively harder and increasingly explicit, although it would take the end of censorship in the 1960s to bring about the level of explicitness that defines our modern period. Amazingly violent films for their time began to appear, signaling that pressure from filmmakers interested in pursuing harder violence was taking its toll on the PCA. *The Phenix City Story* (Phil Karlson, 1955), for example, portrays a wave of mob-instigated violence in the titular Alabama town. In a litany of on-camera violence, women are beaten bloody, a child is abducted, murdered off-camera, and her bloody corpse is dumped from a speeding car, a mother and her children are blown up by dynamite while at home watching television, and an elderly lawyer is murdered with a handgun. This last killing is significant because, breaking with tradition, the shooter and victim appear in the same frame, the gun and the victim's face emphasized in extreme close-up, and the victim grimaces with pain as the gun is fired. The film is scorching in its violence, with everything staged for maximum visual impact, and while this is atypical for the period, it points toward the future and signals that major shifts in the era of censorship were underway that would bring about its end.

As courts around the country declared the regional censor boards to be unconstitutional and the MPAA retired the Production Code, American filmmaking entered a new period of freedom in what it could depict and how. Inevitably, while some things were gained, other things were lost:

chiefly, these were the levels of sophistication, cleverness and irony to which filmmakers were compelled to resort under the constraints of censorship. By finding ways to tell their stories using imagery and sounds that were indirect, oblique, suggestive, and poetic rather than bluntly direct or explicit, films in that era expanded their expressive devices and invited viewers to use their imaginations at those pivotal moments when the violent behaviors referenced in the story exceeded the threshold of what was possible to show. *Frenzy* (1972) was the first film in which Alfred Hitchcock took advantage of the new freedoms available to him. This story about a serial killer has two major murder scenes. In the first, the murder takes place on camera as part of a rape, and Hitchcock shows it in unrelenting, gruesome detail. It is the most horrific scene in all of his work. The second murder, however, is staged in a way that looks back in time to the elegant evasions that Hitchcock had used throughout his career in earlier decades where censorship was operative. The victim unwittingly takes the killer (whom she knows) to her flat, and Hitchcock's camera follows them to the door. As they go inside, the killer makes a remark that signals to the audience what is about to happen, but the camera stays outside the flat. When he closes the door, the camera does a slow pull back, away from the flat, down the stairs, to the street outside where everything is banal, normal and placid, an unnerving contrast to what viewers are seeing in their minds-eye: in their head, they are still upstairs in the flat picturing what is happening; although nothing horrifying has been shown, viewers see it in their imagination where Hitchcock has poetically elicited it.

Of the two murders in *Frenzy*, one is blunt and repellent, the other is oblique, evasive and haunting; it lingers in the mind. This contrast says much about the representational differences that characterize the era of censorship and our own time and about the ambitions and achievements of the filmmakers working in those periods. ■

NOTES

* The present text is an original paper that also synthesizes and develops the ideas and analyses asserted by the author in his monograph *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968*, which remains unpublished in Spanish.

2 Letter, Geoffrey Shurlock to Luigi Luraischi, December 1, 1958, *One Eyed Jacks* case file, Production Code Administration Case Files, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.

3 *G-Men* is not about John Dillinger, but the raid on the lodge in the woods is inspired by the Dillinger raid, even down to the detail about the barking dogs alerting the gangsters to the presence of federal agents. The Little Bohemia raid had occurred the year before the film went into production.

4 Although widely adhered to, this was evidently an unwritten rule of filming.

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"WE EARNESTLY SUGGEST YOU RECONSIDER THE KILLING OF THE LITTLE CHILD": MOVIE VIOLENCE IN THE ERA OF THE PRODUCTION CODE

Abstract

On the subject of screen violence, where did the Production Code Administration fit into a cultural environment where censorship flourished? Despite its notorious reputation, PCA was less dogmatic than is usually assumed, a fact that should temper the most widespread considerations about the era of censorship in Hollywood cinema. In this article we delve into the numerous marks on the movies of the negotiation between the PCA and the filmmakers. At times, these marks remained shrouded as they were untraceable to audiences because certain aspects – scenes, characters, actions or dialogue – had been deemed as offensive and consequently were not shot. In other examples, however, the effects of censorship were noticeable on screen as evidence left behind from footage that had been filmed but cut out. Commonly, filmmakers themselves, determined to bypass prescriptions and bans, conceived their own evident marks. Usually these were ingenious and imaginative, and for a while they helped to drive a more expansive transformation in the business and in the culture away from censorship.

Key words

Classical film; Violence representation; Hollywood cinema; Production Code Administration; American cinema.

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«LE RECOMENDAMOS ENCARECIDAMENTE QUE RECONSIDERE EL ASESINATO DE LA NIÑA PEQUEÑA»: VIOLENCIA FÍLMICA EN LA ERA DEL CÓDIGO DE PRODUCCIÓN

Resumen

Con relación a la violencia fílmica, ¿dónde encaja la Production Code Administration (PCA) en el contexto cultural donde se desarrolló la censura? A pesar de su infame reputación, la PCA fue menos dogmática de lo que se suele admitir, un hecho que ha de suavizar las consideraciones más extendidas y asumidas sobre la era de la censura del cine de Hollywood. Este artículo se centra en las numerosas marcas que la negociación entre los cineastas y la PCA dejaba en los films. En ocasiones, estas marcas quedaban ocultas y resultaban indetectables en pantalla como prueba del material que había sido rodado y luego cortado. Habitualmente, los propios cineastas, determinados a sortear las indicaciones y prohibiciones, creaban sus propias marcas evidentes, que solían ser recursos ingeniosos e imaginativos y en su momento pusieron en marcha la amplia transformación en la industria y en la cultura que permitiría superar la censura.

Palabras clave

Cine clásico; representación de la violencia; cine de Hollywood; Código de Producción Cinematográfica; cine estadounidense.

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