

Copyright Warning and Restrictions

Title 17, United States Code of the copyright law of the United States governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions, the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Robert W. Van Houten Library is authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction on the condition that either is not to be "*used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.*" If a person makes a request for or later uses a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use", that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Fair Use Guidelines

Notwithstanding the provisions of section 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include –

- (1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit;
- (2) the nature of the copyrighted work;
- (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
- (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

The fact that a work is unpublished shall not itself bar a finding of fair use if such finding is made upon consideration of all the above factors.

We are seriously concerned . . . with one aspect of this unusual story—the gruesome details of the several attacks by the birds on the human beings.

As we envision this action, we feel it could be presented in such a shocking, brutal, and bloody way as to be unacceptable motion picture fare. We must urge you most carefully to consider this particular aspect as you plan and eventually execute the staging of this action.

Page 65: It is unacceptable to show Melanie [Tippi Hedrin] only in a bra and a skirt. . . .

As you know, the use of the words “hell” and “damn” when restricted to one or two absolutely essential expressions is acceptable. [The code had recently been amended to this effect] But the indiscriminate and repeated casual use of such expressions becomes offensive. We would like to suggest that you reexamine the script with the idea of eliminating all but one or two of which you feel are indispensable.

In January 1962 a shooting script reached the Hays Office and Geoffrey Shurlock responded with this letter to Hitchcock:

We have received the final script dated January 26, 1962, for your proposed production *The Birds*. . . . In accordance with code requirements, please consult with Mr. James Jack of the American Humane Association as to all scenes in which animals are used. . . .

[Sadly, Hitchcock and the Hays Office showed more solicitude for the birds than for the leading lady, who suffered grievously under avian attack.]

Page 103: We again stress the importance of avoiding scenes of excessive gruesomeness. . . .

Page 168: It would be important to avoid any offensive exploitation of the girl's nudity.

Chapter 10

COMEDIES

NINOTCHKA

The primary problem of filmmakers was the Hays Office and the state censorship boards that dotted the American landscape, but there was the occasional film which, due to its innocuous subject matter, was totally acceptable to American censors, but which surprisingly infuriated the foreign censors. One of these was *Ninotchka*, an airy comedy that offended the censors of most countries with Communist regimes. When *Ninotchka*, which had originally been released by MGM in 1939, was rereleased in 1946, the Communists were striving to assume power in Italy. Since the film mocked the repressive bureaucracy and humorless mien of the Soviets, Italy's anti-Communists used the film as a political weapon, exhibiting it all over the Italian boot. The movie was displayed everywhere, in movie houses, meeting halls, storefronts, and garages. Ultimately, the Italian censors banned the film, as “offensive to Communists.” Estonia and Lithuania likewise rejected the film. Said the Lithuanian censor, in a prudent display of obsequiousness toward the power to their east: “The film reflects unfavorably on the feelings of a friendly neighbor.” Despite this respect for Soviet sensibilities, the Lithuanian sparrow was gobbled up by the Russian bear.

When *Ninotchka* was released, Hollywood wags reflected that Joe Stalin might recall his emissary from MGM. It was, after all, an impudent and malicious show, which burlesqued the Bolsheviks unmercifully, and, at that stage in the Russian Revolution, such hardliners as Molotov were not famous for their sense of humor or their ability to laugh at their own foibles.

The film tells the story of a solemn Soviet commissar, played

Perlman 155477

Also by Gerald Gardner:
Who's In Charge Here?
All the President's Wits
The Watergate Follies

THE CENSORSHIP PAPERS

Movie Censorship Letters
from the Hays Office,
1934 to 1968

by
Gerald Gardner

1987

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

New York

Chapter 5

WAR

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

The Hays Office met the challenge of fine literature the same as it met the carpentry of Hollywood hacks—with a myopic devotion to dogma. The essential mood and texture of Ernest Hemingway's triumphant novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, was somehow lost in the thickets of Joe Breen's carping letters. In the filming of Hemingway's controversial novel, the bell tolled for Ernest. The compromises that one might have expected in a translation of this brilliant account of the Spanish Civil War all occurred on schedule. The eloquence and meaning of the book, the complex characterizations, the message that democratic doctrine is irresistible—all were somehow lost in the mountains.

One of the memorable scenes in the novel had the American saboteur, Robert Jordan (Gary Cooper), sharing a sleeping bag with Maria (Ingrid Bergman). When the Hays Office was through, the scene had all the eroticism of a laundromat. Joe Breen demanded such circumspection in the photography of Cooper and Bergman embracing under the Spanish sky that the famous sleeping bag could have held nothing but air. The sleeping bag obsessed the censors, and much of their correspondence focused on the "illicit sex" being performed within its folds.

The censors were determined to present Pablo (Akim Tamiroff) and Pilar (Katina Paxinou) as married, and Jordan and Maria as just good friends—relationships that Hemingway's novel and the chemistry of the performers resisted.

For Whom the Bell Tolls was destined to become a prim, bloodless, studio-bound, mock-Spanish rendering of Heming-

way, which was a pity, given its literary bloodline, its stars, and supporting cast.

The final struggles over the screenplay for *For Whom the Bell Tolls* occurred in March of 1942. There was an irony in the efforts to sanitize this classic work at this particular time. Three months before, the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and America had declared war on Japan and Nazi Germany. Hemingway's novel was a tough, honest work that celebrated the valiant struggle of free people against fascism. It was a tale of an American who, along with a Spanish waif who has been raped and orphaned by fascists, goes behind the nationalist lines to blow up a bridge. It is perhaps not too pointed to observe that Hemingway was raped and his novel was orphaned.

Paramount optioned the Hemingway novel for the screen and messengered a copy to Joseph Breen at the Hays Office for his reflections on its vulnerability to movie censorship. On October 21, 1940, Paramount received his reply:

We have read the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway, which you submitted for our consideration, and regret to report that it contains one element which is in violation of the Production Code and, hence, is not acceptable. I refer to the illicit sex affair carried on by your two sympathetic leads, Robert [Gary Cooper] and Maria [Ingrid Bergman]. This will have to be eliminated if the finished picture is to be acceptable. . . .

By the following October, Dudley Nichols had completed a screenplay for the Hemingway novel, and Paramount had sent it to the Hays Office. Joe Breen met with the filmmakers and then, on October 17, 1941, wrote a letter summarizing their points of agreement:

As was discussed with you, it will be vitally important that in the finished picture there be no suggestion whatever of an illicit affair between . . . Jordan and Maria. In order to make certain of this, we venture to make certain suggestions . . . :

We strongly urge that you omit entirely from the picture the sleeping bag. This we believe will go far to remove any possible suggestion of a sex affair. We also recommend that some of the dialog between Pilar and Jordan be changed or omitted to get away from any possible suggestion that Pilar is trying to bring the two together for sexual purposes.

We also strongly urge that you endeavor to remove entirely from this picture the suggestion that Maria was raped [by army troops]. . . .

Furthermore, the greatest care will be needed in the shooting of all the scenes between Jordan and Maria to avoid any posture . . . that could in any way be interpreted as suggesting . . . a sexual affair.

Going through the script in detail, we call your attention to the following. . . :

Page 25: Some [state] censor boards may delete the expression "lying on her belly."

Pages 2-29: Here begins the dialog between Pilar and Jordan concerning Maria referred to above. . . . We suggest you change the expression "Be careful with this girl," because of its connotation and connection with the fact that Maria has been raped. . . .

Page 45: The expression "she-dog" is unacceptable.

Page 52: As discussed with you, we recommend getting in on this page a line definitely indicating that Pablo and Pilar are man and wife.

Page 61: In the scene where Jordan is preparing for bed, there must be no suggestion that he is expecting Maria.

Page 63: We question the advisability of the following dialog: "I am glad you came. Did Pilar send you?" "I wanted to come, but she sent me, too."

Page 108: The expression "And nuts!" must be omitted.

Page 112: The expression "Slut!" is unacceptable.

Page 146: The British Censor Board will delete the scene of Pablo and Pilar in the bed together.

Page 160: The following is unacceptable: "Yes . . . yes . . . it is too late."

On February 11, 1942, Dudley Nichols had revised the screenplay of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in accordance with the censors' wishes. Paramount sent the altered script to the Hays Office and, on March 20th, received a reply listing the following additional problems:

Page A-30: The line "Not fifteen minutes? Not even a quarter of an hour?" is unacceptably sex suggestive. . . .

May we call your attention to the advisability of making it evident in your picture that the word "woman" used throughout the script means "wife." . . .

Page 32: The expression, "Unspeakable son of an unmarried gypsy" is unacceptable.

Page 47: We suggest changing the expression "seed bull."

Page 69: The dialog "Ten o'clock tonight" and the accompanying wink are unacceptably sex suggestive. . . .

Page 138: These scenes of the slaughter of town officials will have to be handled with great care. . . . [The Hays Office was concerned about gruesomeness, rather than possible emulation by American audiences.]

Page 215: We suggest omitting the line "Where they put me on the couch" as being unduly pointed.

Page 216: The same applies to the line "when things were done to me." . . .

The file copy of the above letter from Breen to Paramount contains marginal notations that indicate which of the censors' demands were accepted and which were not.

"Not fifteen minutes, not a quarter of an hour" remained in the script.

"Son of an unmarried gypsy" remained.

"Seed bull" was eliminated.

The wink remained.

The slaughter of the town officials remained.

The expression "slut" was eliminated.

The expression "things were done to me" remained.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Literary critics lauded James Jones's gritty novel of prewar army life in Hawaii, *From Here to Eternity*. Some paid it the exorbitant compliment of calling it an extension of the Hemingway mystique. If Jones was not quite up to Papa Hemingway in economy and style, there was one measurement by which Jones's work was comparable to the best of Hemingway: the rage of the censors. When Columbia Pictures optioned *Eternity* for the screen, it caused every bit as much chagrin at the Hays Office as did *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *A Farewell to Arms*.

Joe Breen was especially galled at Jones's taste for four-letter words and deftly struck out all profanity from the script, giving the barrack scenes the ambience of a Scout meeting. Breen was shocked at the sexual affair between a top sergeant (Burt Lancaster) and his captain's wife (Deborah Kerr). The Pentagon may have been outraged at the violation of rank; Breen was concerned that the pair had failed to suffer for their sins.

Another disturbing element of the story (which the sanctionious and family-oriented *Life* magazine referred to as "From Here to Obscenity") was the locale of the novel's second sexual affair—a Honolulu house of prostitution. The censorship code was explicit in denying the existence of call girls and brothels, which brings to mind the man who looked at a camel and declared, "There's no such animal." The lovers in this sanitized liaison were a lonely GI (Montgomery Clift) and a whore (Donna Reed). The censors invited the moviegoers to believe that soldiers would pay money to young women for the privilege of chatting with them in private rooms. "If you believe that," said one Hollywood wag, "there's a bridge in Brooklyn I want to show you."

Eternity was one more in the string of controversial movies that Columbia's hard-headed Harry Cohn had chosen to film, in defiance of predictable protests from the censors. Though he won an occasional battle with the Hays Office in this yarn of soldiers and sex, the film lacked the depth, anger, and compassion of the original novel.

The battle was joined on August 4, 1952, when, having received a copy of the first-draft screenplay for *Eternity* from Harry Cohn, Joseph Breen dictated a pointed letter that declared the fundamental problem he foresaw in filming the smoldering novel:

We feel that the adulterous relationship between Karen [Deborah Kerr] and Warden [Burt Lancaster] in this present version of the story is handled without any recognition of the immorality of this relationship.

. . . We feel it will be necessary to have a strong voice of morality by which their immoral relationship can be denounced. . . . [Screenwriter Daniel Taradash suggested that Karen might wear a scarlet "A" throughout the movie.] . . . In all likelihood, that can be done by Karen in that part of the story where she and Warden are parting, she to go back to her husband.

In this regard, we feel that it is extremely important to indicate that Karen does not return easily from her lover to her husband, but rather that, because she has been involved in an adulterous affair, she has created a formidable barrier in any future relationship to her husband, a barrier which, it should be indicated, may

be overcome, but will nonetheless present her with serious future difficulties. [Breen would make the same demand of another character played by Deborah Kerr in *Tea and Sympathy*. As the headmaster's wife who adulterously gives herself to a student to prevent his suicide, her marriage had to be shattered.]

The second important element which will need extreme care will be the portrayal of the New Congress Club. . . . We feel that this club has all the appearances of a house of prostitution. We feel that it is of greatest importance that the stage setting, as well as all the activities of this club, be clearly and thoroughly established as a legitimate business enterprise. . . . It should be quite clearly and affirmatively established that [the girls] are not prostitutes.

We would also like to call your attention to the following . . . :

Page 14: Please eliminate Leva's line, "She knows what it's for."

Page 57: . . . We think it would be well to have these girls state exactly what it is they do at the club; that is, to say that they are paid to drink and dance with the men there.

Page 58: Lorene [Donna Reed] and Pru [Montgomery Clift] should not be lying down in this scene. . . .

Page 64: It would be well to have either Karen or Warden put on a beach robe or some other type of clothing before they go into the embrace. [This was an attempt to launder one of the most famous love scenes in cinema history. Harry Cohn's objection to this bit of censorship was as loud as the crashing waves, and the censors retreated.]

Page 86: The action of Warden breaking the beer bottle and using it as a weapon will undoubtedly be widely deleted by [state] censor boards. For this reason we would suggest you find some other bit of business not quite so startling.

Page 109: Pru's line, "This is just like bein' married, ain't it?" and Alma's reply, "It's better" are unacceptable.

Page 134: Please eliminate the line, "That girl had blowed my fuse."

Page 176: . . . Eliminate the word "even" from Alma's dialog, "We can even get married."

On December 4th, Messrs. Shurlock and Dougherty of the Hays Office met with Buddy Adler, Daniel Taradash, and Fred Zinnemann, the producer, writer, and director of the film, concerning the screenplay. Next day, Joe Breen sent Cohn a summary of the concessions his aides had wrested from the filmmakers:

Page 43: Stark's line, "They said she took up with nearly every man and his brother back there" would be changed.

Page 55: Something to the effect of "I'll ask Mrs. Kipfer if we can use her suite," would be inserted in Lorene's speech. [This was to indicate that the room that the couple was using was not a brothel bedroom, but the club owner's parlor.]

Page 57: The door leading from the room in which we find Lorene and Pru would not be shown as opening into a bedroom.

Page 58: The reference to "working for Mrs. Kipfer" would be eliminated.

Page 83: Some weapon other than a beer bottle will be substituted at this point. [Their agreement notwithstanding, the beer bottle remained.]

Pages 108-9: Pru's line, "This is better than bein' married, ain't it?" and Alma's answer, "It's even better" will be played in such a way as to avoid any suggestion of sex suggestiveness.

Page 156: The important problem remaining in the story from the code's standpoint is the lack of proper compensation for the immoral relationship between Warden and Karen. . . . [The matter was resolved by having the adulterous wife tell Burt Lancaster that what they had been doing with such joy and exhilaration was evil and that she and her corrupt officer husband "deserve each other."]

The Other Censors

The Legion of Decency assigned a "B" class to *Eternity*, calling it "morally objectionable" and asserting that it reflected "the acceptability of divorce" and tended to condone immoral actions."

Egypt cut a portion of the Lancaster/Kerr kiss on the beach.

British Columbia deleted the following dialogue: "I've had another key made for you, and you can use it any time, even if I'm not here."

Australia reduced the embrace on the beach and eliminated the sound of Sergeant Fatso releasing the blade of his spring knife.

Indonesia banned the film in its entirety and listed the following reasons:

1. Unallowed lover relations between the sergeant and the captain's wife.
2. Fightings between the private and his superiors.
3. Pester of the private by his superiors.

4. Bombardments and destructions.

5. Inadmissible scenes in bars of soldiers and women; . . . not in accordance with our ideas; the more so as we have not reached yet the desired perfection in our army.

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

Here was Ernest Hemingway's finest novel turned to film, but it set the censors' stomachs turning. To the Hays Office, David O. Selznick, the man who was famous for his fidelity to famous novels—from *David Copperfield* to *Gone With the Wind*—had not provided a faithful rendition of this classic novel. This was simply a tale of an American ambulance driver and an English nurse who paw, fondle, clasp, nuzzle, and bed down. The censors saw the script through an enormous keyhole.

Out of respect to Ernest Hemingway—and in response to the drop in movie attendance caused by the incursions of television—chief censor Geoffrey Shurlock permitted more frank sensuality than his predecessors would have countenanced. Shurlock was a man of taste and moderation. Other censors of the time found a string of scenes that left an unclean feeling, each with a gratuitous "dirty detail." State censors deplored the fact that, when the lovers go to a mirrored hotel room, Jennifer Jones surveys the room and says, "I never felt like a whore before." They complained of "an obstetrical orgy" that might send women screaming from the theater.

When not viewed through the distorted prism of the censor, Hemingway's classic love story of World War I had been transposed into a powerful and absorbing film. Paramount had made a version in 1932 that starred Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes, but the Selznick version was far superior, more faithful to the book. In retrospect, the sexual angle seems to have been managed tastefully and inoffensively.

Ernest Hemingway had little patience with Hollywood censorship—the epic struggles between bosoms and boycotts, the unflinching cowardice of the filmmakers, the nonsense and foolishness that governed movie production. Writing of novelist William Faulkner, who occasionally labored as a screenwriter, Hemingway said: "There is a question whether a nation can

survive half slave and half free. There is no question whether a writer can survive half whore and half straight."

On November 2, 1955 Geoffrey Shurlock, now head of the association, wrote to David O. Selznick to confirm a phone conversation regarding the producer's plans for a screen adaptation of *A Farewell to Arms*:

In preparing a screen version of this novel which would meet the requirements of the code, the following elements should be taken into consideration:

There should be a definite voice for morality condemning the action of the two leads living together outside of marriage.

We have an uneasy feeling that the intimate and protracted affair played in a hospital room where the man lies seriously wounded in the leg will introduce a question of flavor that might make the whole sequence unacceptable. . . .

A good deal of the dialog referring to the affair, while reading very well between the covers of a book, would, we feel, be objectionably graphic if presented to audiences from the screen. . . .

With regard to the impossibility of the couple getting married, we would like to suggest that the plausibility of this might be reinforced if it were indicated that they asked the priest to marry them and he was the one to advance the impossibility in view of military regulations. . . .

By October 29, 1956, Ben Hecht had written a screenplay based on the novel, and Selznick had submitted it for Shurlock's scrutiny. He wrote the producer to say:

This goes to you in confirmation of our conference . . . with regard to the screenplay for your production of *A Farewell to Arms*.

During this discussion, the following points were considered and agreed to as follows:

Page 12: You will consider dropping or rewriting the line "or just givin' myself to him."

Page 16: Here and throughout, please make certain that none of these embraces and kisses are too prolonged. . . .

Pages 23-24: We will consider dropping the reference to "Virgin" and "nonvirgins." . . .

Page 26: The following dialog will be modified or possibly dropped as too blunt: "Do you want me, darling?" "I don't want anything else. Tonight."

Page 51: We discussed rewriting the reference to "the illegitimate son of President Wilson."

Page 65: Consideration will be given to omitting or rewriting the following lines . . . :

"You mustn't—you're not well enough."

"Yes I am—please."

"You shouldn't. You're sick."

Page 67: We suggest omitting the underlined words in the line: "I used to think that when it happened I'd want to cry."

Page 94: The suggestion that Renaldi has suffered from venereal disease could not be approved. . . .

Page 128: . . . Please eliminate the action of Henry kneeling the officer in the groin.

Page 180: We recommend discretion in the portrayal of Catherine's [Jennifer Jones] labor pains. . . .

Page 185: It is agreed that in this scene Henry will again express his regret that he and Catherine have never been married.

Selznick demanded obedience from his subordinates, and his marathon memos kept them on a short leash. In the case of the Hays Office, Selznick was at the other end of the leash. The producer's abject surrender to the Hays Office suggestions will be seen in Geoff Shurlock's letter to Selznick on February 4, 1957:

We have read the final script of your picture *A Farewell to Arms* and are happy to note the changes and improvements therein in line with the various discussions we had before your departure [for location work in Italy]. However, there is one element in this story which still gives us real concern. In the letter from Miss Schiller [Lydia Schiller, a Selznick aide], she indicates that you feel that you have gone beyond our requests in regard to the "voice of morality" . . . so we have read the script very carefully with this in mind, but we regret to report we found not much difference in this respect. . . . There is no feeling of guilt or condemnation on the part of Catherine. . . .

Going through this new script in detail, we call your attention to the following:

Page 1: We suggest not doing anything that would stress the Casa Villa Rosa as a house of prostitution. It would be well to omit any showing of a red light. . . .

Page 48: There seem to be here some rather pointed references to sexual intercourse. . . .

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS

Page 60: The following lines by Catherine seem to be pretty strong justification of their illicit sex relationship. "I'm a very honest woman. Very happy. And very proud."

The forbidden word "damn" had triggered an acrimonious dispute for Selznick in *Gone With the Wind*. The word "whore" catapulted Selznick into another clamorous battle in *A Farewell to Arms*. In July, having read the revised final shooting script, Shurlock wrote to the producer:

... We are concerned about a possible bad reaction to the use of the word "whore." While it is absolutely valid in context, it is our impression that this expression has not been used on the screen before. Possibly, it may sound too shocking to be heard on the screen before mixed audiences.

We are, therefore, urging that you take a protection shot of this particular dialog, substituting either "harlot" or "prostitute." In this case you would be protected if, at the preview, you learn that our above-mentioned fears are justified.

When *Arms* was released with the word "whore" on its sound track, Hal B. Wallis, chief producer at Warner Brothers studios, wrote the Hays Office. He was outraged. He said sardonically that he had tried to arrive at a comparison between the scenes he witnessed in *A Farewell to Arms* and the letters he received from the Hays Office about "childishly inoffensive scenes" in his own movies. He protested that these censorial letters warned him of open-mouthed kissing and the exposure of women's breasts "and all the other silly nonsense." Then, said Wallis, he sees *A Farewell to Arms* with its "dirty jokes about rectal thermometers" and a nurse climbing in and out of bed with a wounded man who hurriedly buttons his pajamas.

In short, Wallis was not affronted by the purported immorality of *A Farewell to Arms*. Rather, he was saying "How do I get in on it?" Hal Wallis was especially irate over the girl saying she never felt like a whore before. He was doubly resentful, he said, in noting how the bars were down for Selznick, while the Hays Office continued to delete "inconsequential things" from his own scripts.

It was clear that the Hays Office censorship operated with

great flexibility in the case of different pictures, and produced extraordinarily varying results on the screen.

The Other Censors

The British changed "venereal disease" to "imaginary disease." In the hotel room scene, they removed the clerk's line, "Our mirror room, very popular," plus two shots of the clerk leering. They removed the shot of the baby feeding at its dead mother's breast, and they reduced shots of Catherine in labor. They changed "whore" to "wanton."

1. This script is filled with vulgar and suggestive scenes and dialog, which will be pointed out hereinafter.

2. The script contains innumerable jocular references to drinking and liquor; sixty scenes . . . are laid in a cocktail lounge, in addition to numerous other scenes laid in bars and saloons, all of which will have to be deleted. . . .

We call your attention to the following . . . :

Scene 2: The word "stinker" will be deleted by some [state] censor boards. Also the word "stinkeroos."

Scene 6: Here begin the numerous scenes in which Fields is seen looking at girls' legs or breasts and reacting thereto. . . .

Scene 21: The business of Fields scratching the match on the seat of the man's pants will have to be handled carefully. . . .

Scene 28: Here begin the unacceptable scenes and dialog dealing with drinking. . . .

Scene 29: If [Franklin] Pangborn plays his role in any way suggestive of a "pansy" we cannot approve. . . . It will be acceptable to play the Pangborn character as a fussbudget. . . . In Pangborn's speech, the name "Fuchawantz" is not acceptable. . . .

Page 22: Pangborn's reference to "tighter than Dick's hatband" is questionable. . . .

Scene 168: In Fields's speech, the word "physiology" should be deleted or changed.

Scene 276: The Indian's remark, "My name Falling Water O'Toole" is unacceptable. . . .

Scene 281 et seq: All of this business dealing with the "chamber pot gag" is completely unacceptable. . . .

Scene 367: . . . Fields's remark "Did you ever gondola?" and Mrs. Hemoglobin's answer are unacceptably suggestive. . . .

Scene 411 et seq: You will have in mind that we cannot approve scenes of comedy in connection with marriage ceremonies. . . . It is permissible to have some comedy before a marriage ceremony begins, but, once it begins, the ceremony must be played straight. . . .

Chapter 14

MAE WEST

I'M NO ANGEL

Hollywood historians have propounded the theory that the Legion of Decency was established primarily to remove Mae West from the screen. It was scarcely six months after the release of her salacious *She Done Him Wrong* that the most virulent form of censorship took hold in the movie colony. Undoubtedly, the clerical reformers had more to be disturbed about than the buxom Miss West, but the theory of cause and effect has much to commend it.

What so outraged the churchly moralists, the congressional critics, and the journalistic muckrakers was Mae West's habit of mocking the repressive sexual attitudes of the public and the censors. It is a moot point whether the well-padded temptress should be applauded or attacked for triggering the most restrictive form of censorship that Hollywood had ever encountered.

From the day in 1932 when Mae West brought her risqué comedy and bosomy body from Broadway to Hollywood, those who were charged with protecting the public morals were up in arms. What most affronted the censors was the fact that Mae West was asserting a radical thesis—that a woman's sexual appetite was as great as a man's. It was not until Dr. Alfred Kinsey published the fruits of his research in 1948 that Miss West's theory was given substantial support. In the meantime, her degradation of a woman's sexual needs seemed blasphemous.

Everything about Mae West agitated the censors—her languid, undulating walk; the vulgar poetry with which she could mount a staircase or come to rest on a piano bench. The censors were unaccustomed to such frank sensuality on the screen.

I'm No Angel was the high-water mark of Mae West's assaults

on the moral establishment. It appeared in 1933—before the Legion of Decency gave teeth to the Hays Office. The Legion arrived too late to exercise any restraint on *I'm No Angel*. The film's comedic mixture of suggestive songs and banter passed through the Hays Office before Joe Breen had settled in with his strengthened Production Code and his mandatory Seal of Approval, but the Mae West movies that were still to come would lose their bawdy edge.

On June 23, 1933, James Wingate of the Production Code Administration wrote to A.M. Botsford about Mae West's forthcoming feature:

We have read the script of *I'm No Angel*. . . . As to theme, the story seems to present no difficulty, but, of course, it will depend very largely on the way in which many of the scenes are treated as to whether or not it will be satisfactory under the code. . . . Consequently, we wish to reserve our final opinion on the story till we have a chance to see it on the screen. There are a number of details which seem questionable and to which we believe some further consideration should be given.

Page A-5: . . . Portions of the barker's speech seem questionable and ought to be omitted. The lines:

"A dance of the mid-way"

". . . the old biological urge"

". . . the only girl who has satisfied more patrons than Chesterfields."

Page A-6: That portion of the barker's speech in which he says, ". . . and see her rollin' . . ." should be omitted.

Page A-25: The titles of Tira's [Mae West] various records seem to be in violation of the code because of their suggestive meaning. [Mae West wrote most of her own lines and they were often suggestive.]

The line in which the chump says "You bet your life, no one does it like that Dallas man" should be changed. . . .

Page A-35: . . . We feel that you should delete from this scene that portion of the line in which Tira says ". . . Will he or won't he?"

Page A-36: . . . The shot of a feminine arm handing the phone to Benny when he is in bed, is overly suggestive. . . .

Page A-59: . . . The barker's statement that ". . . she's safer in that cage than she is in bed." . . .

Page B-12: The line in which Tira says "I am—one man at a

time" in reply to the manicurist's statement of her being a one-man woman. . . .

It would be wise to eliminate the underscored word in Clayton's line, "In that case, how about coming up to my bed room?"

Some of the [state] censors may regard the scene in which Tira spits a stream of water that lands on Alicia's back as distasteful. . . .

You should omit that portion of the line in which Slick says, "I took her away from a Polack weightlifter and he got her from a —."

Mae West's songs were often as risqué as her badinage. On July 5th, James Wingate of the Hays Office wrote to Paramount to cavil at some suggested lyrics:

We have read the six lyrics written for your production *I'm No Angel*. In the lyric "There's No One Like My Dallas Man," the following lines seem to us to be dangerous:

Fourth stanza: "With a special whip . . ."

Fifth stanza: "He can ride . . ."

In the song "They Call My Sister Honkytonk," [eliminate] the fourth stanza in its entirety.

In the song "I'm No Angel," it seems to us that the following lines will prove overly suggestive . . . :

Second stanza: "But baby, I can warm you with this love of mine."

Third stanza: "Love me, love me, love me, honey, love until I just don't care."

Fourth and fifth stanzas: In their entirety.

In "I've Found a New Way to Go to Town," it seems to us that the fourth line in the third stanza "It takes a good man to make me" is overly suggestive. . . .

The lyrics of Mae West exercised a special fascination on a generation of Americans. Horowitz and Collier write in their revisionist history of *The Kennedys* how teenager John F. Kennedy bribed a friend to strip naked and sing a Mae West ditty to old Joe Kennedy, for the pleasure of seeing his father grow apoplectic. Of course, these lyrics seem laughably innocuous when compared with the explicit sexuality of some of today's rock tunes, which have called to arms a covey of congressional wives. Doubtless today's rock lyrics will seem innocuous to some future generation of reformers.

On July 11, 1933, James Wingate wrote to Paramount with some additional objections to *I'm No Angel*:

Page A-8: In this speech of the barker's, we believe that the line "She'd give the old biological urge to a Civil War veteran" should be modified. . . .

Page A-11: We believe the underlined words "Make 'em wait for it" should be deleted. . . .

Page A-12: We believe the following lines in this lyric should be modified . . . : "All you need's the price," "Come on and pay," and "If you buy, she'll sell."

Page A-17: Care will be needed with this scene of Tira undressing. . . .

Page A-24: It is possible that the line "Take a lot, and give as little as possible" will be censorable.

Page C-21: We suggest care with Tira's line "You'll like what I've got in mind . . ."

Page C-24: We believe the underlined words "I'm always wonderful at night" should be deleted. . . . [This line was part of a steamy seduction scene in which Mae West vamps a youthful Cary Grant.]

Page C-25: We believe the underlined words "When I'm good I'm very good, but when I'm bad I'm better" should be deleted. . . . [This dialogue remained in the film and became one of the most famous lines in film history.]

The Other Censors

Denmark deleted scenes of suggestive dancing in Reel 1 and eliminated "distasteful love scenes" in Reel 2.

Norway marked the film "for adults only" and deleted the scene of Mae spitting at the woman and the steamy flirtation scene between Mae West and Cary Grant in the hotel room. It also deleted "bad and immoral content of dialog."

Singapore at first banned the film and later passed it.

Japan deleted "objectionable dialog." In Reel 2 it killed the line: "No, no, give me the pillows." It deleted kisses in Reels 2, 3, and 7, and the line in Reel 5: "I am—one man at a time."

England eliminated Mae West's dance in Reel 1.

Australia made numerous deletions including the line, "If I weren't a married man, I could go for you, lady." It also eliminated underlined portion of Tira's dialogue: "I'm tired from tossing my hips," and it eliminated Tira saying to the other girl,

"Take all you can get and give as little as possible," and the famous Mae West line, "When I'm good I'm very good . . ."

Australia also eliminated the dialogue between West and Grant on the piano bench:

GRANT: "Move over, honey. Don't stop.

WEST: "I never stop."

Quebec had numerous eliminations including Mae West's line, "If you're half the man I think you are, you'll do." Alberta eliminated various lines including, "With the right kind of encouragement, she'll throw discretion to the winds."

It also eliminated the line, "She's safer in that cage than she is in bed," and the reply, "I don't doubt it." Mae's famous line, "It isn't the men in your life, it's the life in your men," was also cut out.

Maryland, Virginia, Kansas, Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania made substantial deletions.

KLONDIKE ANNIE

After the creation of the Legion of Decency and the power it gave the Hays Office, Mae West's films grew increasingly chaste. Nonetheless, Mae became the perennial target of William Randolph Hearst, the Rupert Murdoch of his time. The publishing magnate heaped all manner of abuse on the lush blonde. Despite the blandness of her current vehicle, Hearst banned the mention of her name in all his papers—just as he had banned Orson Welles's after *Citizen Kane*. (On that occasion, Hearst was rabid over the fictional presentation of his life and livid that the film began with the word "Rosebud," the name Hearst had given to his mistress's, Marian Davies's, genitalia.)

When the innocuous *Klondike Annie* appeared, Hearst himself wrote a shrieking jeremiad that appeared in bold type in his numerous papers. "Are we again to have placed before us . . . motion pictures that exalt disreputable living and glorify vice?" asked Hearst. The question arose, said the publisher, upon viewing Mae West's *Klondike Annie*. "It is an immoral and indecent film," declared Hearst. He asked what Will Hays and his censors were doing when this film crossed their desks. "Were they asleep?" The publisher reminded Hays and his minions

that it was their duty to assure that films were wholesome and healthy. Hearst had little faith in the state censors as backstop. "Censors in some states," he said, "may cut a few of the worst scenes, but they cannot cleanse it." Hearst was intemperate in his attack. "The story, scenes, and dialog are basically libidinous and sensual." He observed that decent people were certain to protest the vulgarity and lust that spilled from the screen and howled that Mae portrayed "a white woman in the role . . . of consort to a Chinese vice lord." Hearst lobbied the churchmen of the nation to mount a boycott of Klondike Annie and concluded his diatribe by declaring that movie producers obviously have no fear of public indignation. Therefore, the public had no choice but to withhold its patronage from such films as this, which "pander to the lewd elements of the community."

The day after this attack appeared, Hearst struck again with another angry editorial aimed at Annie. This time Hearst focused on Mae West's history, with emphasis on the police blotter. The editorial pointed out that in 1927 Mae West wrote and produced a play called *Sex in New York City*. The play was raided as obscene by the New York police, and her producer and members of the cast were indicted. Mae was convicted and sentenced to ten days in the workhouse. With this record of police raids, conviction, and a term on Welfare Island in her past, said Hearst, Mae West had been approached by the movie industry as a fresh subject to "introduce into the wholesome homes of the country and present to people with clean moral families." The sweetness of the American home, as seen through the sanctimonious pages of the Hearst press, is enough to decay the teeth. Hearst observed that Mae West's movie scripts were largely responsible for the uprising of the Church against filth in film that resulted in the "temporary improvement" of the morals of the movies.

The sudden and savage Hearst campaign against Miss West was apparently inspired not by *Klondike Annie*, which was like a fifth carbon of Mae at her best, but by a slighting remark she had made about movie actress Marion Davies, Hearst's protégé and mistress.

This campaign of vilification did not put an end to Mae West's career. She continued undaunted, though her movies became more and more sanitized, and her film career continued until 1943. Despite Hearst's scorn, all Miss West ever showed of her-

self on the screen was a fair amount of cleavage and some bawdy humor from her own pen. It was unjust that Mae West should be so pilloried, by tainted publishers and puritanical censors, for mocking the repressive attitudes toward sex that characterized the times. With her ample bosom and insinuating speech, she laughed at the hypocrisies of Hollywood morals, and she left as her epitaph the exaggerated suggestiveness of her trademark line: "Come up and see me some time."

On June 29, 1935, John Hammell of Paramount Pictures wrote a letter to Will Hays outlining the story lines for Mae West's forthcoming picture, *Klondike Annie*. General Hays, as he preferred to be addressed in recognition of his former responsibilities as Postmaster General, replied on July 2nd. Wrote Hays:

I have just received and read carefully the outline . . . for your next Mae West picture. After careful consideration and discussion, we believe the outline contains one element which is very questionable. We judge from your letter that, during part of this picture, Miss West will be masquerading as an exponent of religion or a religious worker. . . . It is our belief that it would be imperative that you make clear throughout the script that Miss West is not masquerading as a preacher, revivalist, or any other character known and accepted as a minister of religion, ordained or otherwise. Rather, her assumed character should be that of a social service worker, rescuing unfortunate girls, along the lines of numerous rescue missions.

Second, there should be no feeling of burlesque of this social worker. There should be no tongue-in-cheek portrayal of any scenes or dialog in this connection, although Miss West will be seen as entering this work in order to escape the law. Her activity should be shown as genuine to the point where eventually she herself becomes a changed woman.

Your outline contained no indication that the matter of Miss West killing the Chinese gambler would be satisfactorily cleared up. This approach will be vitally necessary. We assume there will be no suspicion of a loose or illicit sexual relationship between Miss West and the Chinese gambler, or any of the other characters in the your story. Rather . . . it will be definitely indicated that the woman Miss West represents is basically good.

Two months later, the story line had blossomed into a screenplay, entirely written by Mae West, down to the last line of saucy

dialogue. The scenario was messengered to the Hays Office and prompted the following letter from Joe Breen on September 3rd:

We have read the incomplete script dated August 27, 1935, for your proposed production titled *The Frisco Doll*.

The action in this play in which Doll [Mae West] masquerades as an exponent of religion . . . is in our judgment of sufficient importance to make the entire story unacceptable. . . .

The following day, Breen augmented his general criticism in a lengthy letter to Paramount:

With further reference to the incomplete script for *Frisco Doll* . . . we respectfully submit for your consideration the following details:

Page C-10: Doll's line, "Say, I can tell you what King Solomon knew but didn't tell!" should be entirely deleted.

" . . . It's a terrible cold sheet that only one person sleeps under," may be deleted. . . .

Page D-1: Please be careful not to characterize the "painted women" as prostitutes.

Page D-4: . . . Doll's speech, "You can't save a man's soul unless you get close to him. It's the personal touch that counts," has a double meaning. . . .

Scene B-2 et seq: We presume that the statue in the captain's cabin will not be a nude statue.

Scene B-8: The underlined portion of the following line [will be deleted]: "No, he's just one of these guys that gets you in a corner and breathes in your face."

Scene C-12: Doll's line, "Yes, men are at their best when women are at their worst" [will be deleted] . . .

Under the general heading of good welfare, we would like to suggest the possibility of working into the script as part of the activity of the settlement worker, shots of Doll playing games with the rough miners, possibly teaching them Mother Goose rhymes.

Mae West's insinuating songs continued to raise the censors' eyebrows. Joe Breen wrote to Paramount about one of the songs in the film:

We have the lyrics for "I Hear You Knocking" . . . and believe that three of the lines should be rewritten before the lyric could

be acceptable. . . . To this end, we suggest that you rewrite the expression "But I can't give in" in the sixth line of the chorus; "Does me so much good" in the first line of the second chorus; and the line "He does his lovin' like a daddy should" in the third line of the second chorus.

By early February of 1936, Klondike Annie was in the can and had been screened for the censors. On February 7th, Charles Metzger made a list of criticisms assembled from the observations of all the Hays Office censors who attended the screening. The points were reviewed with the film producers, and a series of checks and crosses indicated which points the studio was willing to alter:

Reel 3: Scene of Lou [Mae West] on couch wiggling her body and evidently deciding to inflame Bull [Victor McLaglen] so that he won't turn her over to police. [Check—agree to cut.]

Scene of Lou in Bull's arms. [Cross—unwilling to cut.]

Scene of Lou combing Bull's hair, and his shirt is open at the neck. [cross.]

Delete shot of Bull with his hand on Lou's knee. . . . [Check.]

Reel 4: Cut Lou's line, "Give a man a free hand and he puts it all over you." . . . [Check.]

Reel 8: Lustful look in Bull's eyes when Lou sits on the arm of his chair and he looks down at her breasts. [Cross.]

Lou's line that, "when she is caught between two evils, she likes to take the one she never tried before." [Check.]

Probably as a result of the fulminations of Hearst and the Catholic Church, Paramount subsequently notified the Hays Office that all the desired changes would be made. An edited film was shown to the censors with all the objectionable scenes and lines removed, but when the Hays Office issued its Seal of Approval and the film opened commercially, members of the Hays Office staff went to see the movie in a local theater—either distrusting Paramount or wishing to satisfy their appetite for the West charm. Whatever their motive, they found to their horror that the lines that had ostensibly been removed from the film were still on display. Outraged, Breen wrote to Paramount declaring that the seal was being revoked until the demanded changes had been made in all prints. The changes were made and the seal was reissued. Good try, Mae.

Chapter 9

THRILLERS

REBECCA

One would suppose that Alfred Hitchcock would have little trouble with the censors. After all, his theory of filmmaking is pointedly antiviolent. His thesis is that one need not see violent and horrific acts. Real suspense, in the Hitchcock credo, comes from the audience's fear for their heroes. Not for Hitchcock were the monsters, werewolves, gargantuan gorillas, and cat people. The censors could seldom tax him with violence and brutal crimes. Why then was director Hitchcock hounded so by the moral guardians? It will be observed in *Rebecca*—as well as the other films in the Hitchcock oeuvre—that, if he had no need for violence, he was devoted to sex, and generally an aberrant form of sex, at that. One of Hitchcock's biographers noted: "His people make love like they're committing murder, and they commit murder like they're making love." With such a confusion of homicide and passion, it is small wonder that the master of suspense should be dogged by the censors—more often for salacity than for horror.

In *Rebecca*, Robert E. Sherwood's screen adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's haunting novel, the censor landed hard on the Hitchcock version. The novel tells a suspenseful tale of a young woman (Joan Fontaine) who marries a distinguished Englishman (Laurence Olivier), but is cowed by consciousness of his first wife's perfections. Gradually, she learns that Rebecca was actually a fiend whom her husband had murdered. Altogether it is a neat film with a menacing mood, full of hidden meanings; but that was the very element that the censors tried to destroy.

No murderer could go free in a Hollywood movie, whatever the provocations of his fiendish wife. Indeed, the loathsome perversions of the first wife were also forbidden. A clear case of double casino and Catch-22.

To their credit, Hitchcock—and producer David O. Selznick, who had brought the director to America—managed to maintain the malignant mortmain theme of the original, even with the crime of the husband removed and the repugnance of Rebecca somewhat sanitized. Thanks to Hitchcock's flair for evoking tension, this saturnine tale of tortured love became a viable entry in the *Wuthering Heights* school of dour, somber, ultra-British melodramas.

Doubleday had published Miss du Maurier's mystery romance in 1938, and Selznick, the master of marrying the right directors and stars to best-selling fiction, lost no time in optioning *Rebecca* for the screen. By the following summer, he had sent a temporary script to the censors, and on August 24, 1939, Joe Breen wrote Selznick to give him the bad news:

We are in receipt of the script . . . for your production entitled *Rebecca*, and I regret to be compelled to advise you that the material, in our judgment, is definitely and specifically in violation of the Production Code. . . .

The specific objections to this material is threefold:

1. As now written, it is the story of a murderer who is permitted to go off scot-free.
2. The quite inescapable inferences of sex perversion.
3. The repeated references in the dialog to the alleged illicit relationship—between Flavell and the first Mrs. de Winter [*Rebecca*]. . . .

Before this story can be approved by us, it will be necessary either that you establish . . . that the first Mrs. de Winter died as a result of an accident . . . or that the murderer, de Winter [Laurence Olivier], be punished for his crime. It will also be necessary that you remove entirely from the script the suggestion of sex perversion. . . .

Going through the script page by page, we respectfully direct your attention to the following . . . :

Scenes 293 et seq.: Here are the scenes in which we get the quite definite suggestion that the first Mrs. de Winter was a sex pervert. Note please Maxim's [Olivier] speech beginning with the line ". . . You'd have been more frightened if you had known

the whole truth. . . . I wanted to kill her then. It was four days after we were married. . . . She was incapable of love. . . . She wasn't even normal!"

Also note in Scene 394, Maxim's line, "She . . . told me things I could never repeat to a living soul . . ."

NOTORIOUS

The Hollywood censors, with the arrogance of a monarchical decree, had arbitrarily set thirty seconds as the maximum length of a screen kiss. When the stopwatch touched thirty, you passed from the romantic to the obscene. With his customary ingenuity, Hitchcock stymied the censors with a marathon kiss in *Notorious* that went well beyond the thirty-second limit. As Cary Grant takes a phone call from his FBI chief, Ingrid Bergman is nibbling away nonstop at her lover. The osculation goes on for nearly three minutes, as Hitch mocks the limits of the code and Bergman grazes on Grant.

Indeed, Hitchcock managed to inject a healthy dose of sex into a genre where it seldom found a home—the counterspy adventure. There is little brutality in the film—the usual source of audience terror in the spy genre. There is instead a pervading atmosphere of menace, as Ingrid Bergman uses her sex appeal to invade a den of Nazis in Rio.

The Madonna-faced Bergman seems an odd choice for a tramp; but then, the saintly Jennifer Jones seems an odd choice for a half-breed sexpot in *Duel in the Sun*. Even though Bergman seems miscast as a call girl in *Notorious*'s opening scenes, the Hays Office saw to it that virtually nothing of the call-girl characterization remained in the Ben Hecht screenplay. Hecht had created what the censors called "a grossly immoral woman," for good cause, but the character was scrubbed clean before the script passed muster. She was turned from a prostitute into a gold digger; from a woman who lived by her body to one who lived by her wits.

In addition to his marathon kiss, Hitchcock managed one other bit of moral flummery at the censors' expense. The code declares that love outside of marriage, which it righteously calls "impure love," cannot be presented as worthy of emulation. Yet any mature members of the audience know, without seeing rumpled bed sheets, that Grant and Bergman have passed the

hand-holding stage. Breen and Hays had dictated that promiscuity had to produce guilt and remorse, followed by death. In *Notorious*, Bergman's impure love was followed by a suggestion of endless love with Cary Grant, hardly a tortuous punishment.

On May 9, 1945, producer David O. Selznick sent Joe Breen a copy of Ben Hecht's screenplay for *Notorious*, based on a story concocted by Hecht and Hitchcock. On May 25th, Breen replied with evident disapproval:

We have read with considerable care the temporary script . . . for your proposed production titled *Notorious* and I regret to be compelled to advise you the material in its present form seems to us to be definitely unacceptable. . . .

This unacceptability is suggested principally by the characterization of your lead, Alicia [Ingrid Bergman], as a grossly immoral woman, whose immorality is accepted "in stride" in the development of the story, and who eventually is portrayed as dying a glorious heroine. [In the final film she does not die, but is carried off to a fate somewhat better than death, by Cary Grant.]

There is, too, in contrast with her immoral characterization, an almost complete absence of what might be called "compensating moral values."

In addition, the frequent references throughout the story to Alicia's gross immorality, even when the references are intended to point up and emphasize her attempted regeneration, add . . . considerably to the unacceptability of this story.

It is our thought that it might be possible to tell the story if you were to establish early that Alicia is possibly a lady who lives by her wits—a gold digger possibly, but not a prostitute.

It might be indicated that motivation for this character is prompted by her total loss of faith in her father [who has been convicted of treason], which leads her to sour on society in general, and, instead of becoming a kept woman of loose morals, such souring process might be evidenced by her determination to get what she can of life, without paying any personal price for it.

In addition, you will have in mind . . . the need for taking some counsel about this story with representatives of the FBI, the Navy Department, [and] the Brazilian Government [the Nazis were ensconced in Rio]. I think you know the industry has had a kind of "gentlemen's agreement" with Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, wherein we have practically obligated ourselves to submit to him for his consideration and approval stories which importantly involve the

activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. [It is interesting to speculate on the incentives that brought the motion picture industry to reach a "gentlemen's agreement" with J. Edgar Hoover, whereby his approval was required every time an FBI man appeared on the screen. Could it be that movie moguls—like America's recent presidents—feared the possible existence of an FBI file on their clandestine affairs which might be made public if the bureau was slighted?]

Under the provisions of the code, we have the responsibility to "represent fairly" the history, institutions, and citizenry of friendly foreign nations. Because of this, we suggest you consult with some responsible representative of the Brazilian government—possibly the Ambassador in Washington. [Everyone knows that there were no former Nazis living in quiet splendor in South America!]

In a memo to the files, Mr. Geoffrey Shurlock, then a junior official at the Hays Office, wrote:

Messrs. Shurlock and Lynch met with Messrs. Hitchcock and Hecht . . . re *Notorious*. In general it was agreed that the characterization of the female lead would be changed in such a way to avoid any direct inference that she was a woman of loose sexual morals. . . . Mr. Hecht indicated that they now expect to have the girl not die at the end, but live and marry the hero. It was made clear that in that case it would be absolutely necessary to avoid any suggestion of sexual promiscuity or looseness on her part. . . .

On July 25th, Breen wrote to William Golden of RKO-Radio, the releasing company for this Selznick production. His goal was to proceed from the general to the specific in whitewashing the Bergman character:

This goes to you in confirmation of our conference yesterday with regard to your script *Notorious*. [It has been agreed that] the characterization of the girl as a woman of loose morals is unacceptable. . . .

The following suggestions were discussed with a view toward correcting this objection:

Page 8: In this drunken party [where Grant meets Bergman for the first time] we suggest, first of all, not overdoing the drinking and drunkenness. Second, we suggest that the *whole party* is going to Havana, and not just Alicia and the old man.

Page 11: . . . We suggest rewriting the following dialog: "What this party needs is a little gland treatment."

Page 12: We suggest omitting the line "Once aboard the lugger, the gal is mine!"

Page 28: We suggest the advisability of having Alicia definitely deny Devlin's [Cary Grant] insinuations—even though he will not believe her.

We also suggest cutting down the frequent use of the word "tramp" as applied to Alicia. . . .

Page 157: We suggest the possibility at this point of a definite statement from Devlin that he has misjudged Alicia. It might be possible to rewrite the last line of his speech to read: "I'm going to follow you around on my hands and knees begging your pardon for what I thought of you."

By September 18th, Ben Hecht had revised the screenplay in accordance with Breen's demands, and on September 21st, the chief censor wrote to the studio:

We have read the script dated September 18th for the motion picture *Notorious*. . . . It might be possible to save a lot of rewriting if at some point your heroine were to definitely deny all these imputations [of promiscuity]; but, inasmuch as, in the present version she doesn't do this, the flavor remains that she is an immoral woman.

Page 4 et seq: We get the inescapable flavor that she and Ernest are living together.

Pages 16–17: Please change the line "Who . . . undressed me?" and the further line, "I rubbed you down—you were soaked." . . .

Page 41: We suggest rewriting this sequence to get away from the present flavor that these officials [Louis Calhern, Grant, etc.] know they are hiring a promiscuous woman. It might be possible to rewrite to indicate that they decide to hire her because they know that Sebastian [Claude Rains] was once very much in love with her, omitting all innuendo as to her immoral character. [This was done.] Please omit the underline words in the line, "Miss Huberman [Bergman], morals aside, was chosen because . . ."

The Other Censors

Ireland banned the film for "ignoring the moral law by the casual treatment of marriage. . . . Ingrid Bergman marries a man

in order to obtain from him military secrets and, at the same time, is carrying on an amorous intrigue with her lover."

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN

It has become a truism to assert that Alfred Hitchcock taught us to share the terror of the world that he admittedly suffered from himself. The tension in Hitchcock films springs from the confrontation between sanity and insanity, of the middle-class victim and the demented villain. *Strangers on a Train*, one of the director's most riveting films, presents this juxtaposition. It is intriguing that the architects of the censorship code, in forbidding nearly every social and sexual aberration—from drug addiction to perversion—failed to prohibit a depiction of madness. This oversight opened a rich vein for Hitchcock. The director's victims are almost invariably unbalanced, as in *Psycho* or *Vertigo*, and the melodrama flows from their dementia. In *Strangers on a Train*, the charming madman, Robert Walker, traps the boring tennis player, Farley Granger, and sucks us into his manic world.

The Hays Office had no objection to the distorted vision of Robert Walker. Many would find the sociopathic playboy obscene in his plan and perspective, but the censors were more concerned with the manifestations of his madness, not its roots. Hence, their niggling complaints were leveled at the scene where he demonstrates the art of murder at a cocktail party to the amusement of a wealthy matron. They bridled at the idea that he might be spending the weekend with a woman. They carped over the hero's wish to divorce his trampish wife; marriage was a sacrament, even when one's wife was carrying a lover's child. So, while the censors occupied themselves with relative trivialities, Hitchcock palmed the ace.

Like many of his other thrillers, *Strangers* is an imaginative suspense drama in which the palms grow moist. Raymond Chandler, the prolific creator of Philip Marlowe, combined with the director to write this tale of a neurotic playboy, Bruno Anthony, who wants to kill his father. On a train he meets a young man, Guy Cunningham, who is saddled with a promiscuous wife. He proposes trading murders so that neither will have an ostensible motive. The madman commits his half of the weird bar-

gain, then tries to force his innocent partner to deliver his share of the deal by threatening to frame him.

In *Strangers on a Train*, more than in most of Hitchcock's films, we see the director as a brilliant deviser of thumbscrews, who delights in demonstrating for us our infinite capacity for inflicting pain. It is ironic that the movie censors, whose job it was to filter out scenes of sadism, brutality, and torture, should have made so little effort and had so little success in eliminating these psychological agonies from Hitchcock's film.

On October 9, 1950, Joe Breen wrote Jack L. Warner to tell him of his misgivings on the Raymond Chandler/Alfred Hitchcock screenplay he had just received:

We have read the script . . . for your proposed production *Strangers on a Train*. . . . We feel there is an important element in the story that does not meet the code requirements. . . . This unacceptable element is the treatment of Guy's [Farley Granger] marriage to Miriam [his trampish wife]. As presently written, we feel this is an unacceptably light treatment of marriage. . . .

We feel also that the element of Miriam's extra-marital pregnancy should be eliminated. [It was not.] Such a delicate situation would require the most extreme care in its treatment on the screen if it were to be acceptable. . . . We believe the story motivation is this plot would be sufficiently strong without the element of the illegitimate pregnancy.

Going through the script page by page, we call your attention to [the following]:

Page 27: Please rewrite Mrs. Anthony's [Bruno's mother] speech. . . . She seems to suspect that her son is going away for the weekend with a girl.

Page 57: Please eliminate Anne's [Ruth Roman] speech: "Even if you had done it, I'd have stuck by you. If you'd had anything to do with it, I would have gone into hiding with you anywhere." This speech has about it a condonation of wrongdoing. . . .

Page 93: Please eliminate the reference to arsenic. We would like to suggest that you substitute the word poison. . . .

Page 181A et seq: This fight scene must be handled with care to avoid unacceptable brutality. Specifically, there should be no kicking or kneeling. . . .

By November 7th, Chandler and Hitchcock had made revisions in their script, and Breen forwarded his complaints:

Page 39: We assume that Professor Collins will not be offensively drunk. . . .

Page 89–90: Care will be needed with this scene in which Bruno demonstrates how he could strangle Mrs. Cunningham. Specifically, the close-up scene . . . should not be such as to show any *questionable detail of the strangling*. It should be handled largely by suggestion. [Of course, suggestion rather than explication was Hitchcock's forte.]

The Other Censors

Maryland censors eliminated the scene of Bruno strangling Miriam, as revealed in a reflector. They also deleted a line spoken by Barbara [Anne's kid sister] to her family and Guy: "I think it would be wonderful to have a man love you so much he'd kill for you"; and in the discussion of murder, by Bruno to Mrs. Cunningham, Maryland removed Bruno's speech: "Poison could take anywhere from ten to twelve weeks, if poor Mr. Cunningham is going to die from natural causes. I could take him out on the common, and when we get to a lonely spot, knock him on the head with a hammer, pour gasoline over him and over the car, and set the whole thing ablaze." [The Maryland censors were apparently afraid that, given these explicit instructions, Baltimore would be aglow with fiery cars.]

Maryland also eliminated the scene of Bruno strangling Mrs. Cunningham, including all close-ups of his thumb and fingers as he pressed them against her throat, causing her to gasp.

REAR WINDOW

The Hays Office was hypersensitive to displays of voyeurism. In films from *Gold Diggers of 1933* to *Baby Doll*, they have chastised filmmakers over the scenes of leering sexual curiosity. Yet to a remarkable degree, Alfred Hitchcock's work has dealt with voyeurism and suffered minimal restraint. Indeed the director has turned his audiences into a pack of voyeurs in the dark, shyly inspecting the lives of others. Nowhere is this practice more evident than in *Rear Window*; and yet, with all the complaints leveled at the script, never do the censors protest the fundamental voyeurism of the film.

Rear Window is like a metaphor of all Hitchcock's thrillers.

To some it is a slice of life; to others a slice of murder. Hitch's camera roams a courtyard in Greenwich Village. In his apartment, a magazine photographer [James Stewart] sits and examines his neighbors. Immobilized by a broken leg, he has nothing but his binoculars and his voyeuristic impulses to occupy him. He observes Miss Lonelyhearts, a man-hungry woman, an energetic ballet dancer, a honeymoon couple, and a murder in the making—a coarse jewelry salesman and his invalid wife. Tension grows as the photographer sees the salesman make several excursions with a suitcase, wrap a saw, and kill a dog who has been digging in the courtyard garden. The dog's curiosity is as lethal as the photographer's. Hitchcock joyfully shows us the violent, psychotic side of life, challenges us to peek in at it, and then traps us amidst the terror—as he traps the curious cameraman.

Hitchcock gave the censors plenty to protest about in the revealed lives of Miss Lonelyhearts, the ballet dancer, and the honeymooners. He also raised some hackles with the intimacies of photographer Stewart and his girlfriend, Grace Kelly. Nor did the censors appreciate the calculated coarseness of Stewart's housekeeper (Thelma Ritter). Indeed, they protested everything but the voyeuristic curiosity of the hero—and the audience that joined him at his binoculars. In a larger sense, *Rear Window* is an exemplary comment on the voyeurism of going to the movies.

On October 20, 1953, Paramount Pictures sent Joe Breen a copy of *Rear Window*, the John Michael Hayes script based on a short story by Cornell Woolrich. Breen responded on November 1st with a letter to Paramount's Luigi Luraschi:

We have read the script . . . for your proposed production *Rear Window*. . . .

Page 2: The picturization of the young girl who is described as wearing only black panties is unacceptable. It is apparent that she is nude above the waist. . . . We feel that this gives the entire section the flavor of a peep show, which is unacceptable. Moreover, I am sure you know we cannot approve scenes of girls clad only in panties and bra. They should be wearing at least a full slip.

Page 16: Stella's [Thelma Ritter] line: ". . . When General Motors has to go to the bathroom ten times a day, the whole coun-

try's ready to let go," should be rewritten to get away from its present impression of being toilet humor.

Page 21: Stella's line ". . . until you can't tell a petting party from an army physical. . . ."

Page 23 et seq: The entire element of the newly married couple, as seen through the window of their apartment, from time to time, is unacceptable as a play on the sexual aspects of a honeymoon.

Page 34: The action described as ". . . which shows off her figure to great advantage, especially when she leans toward three assorted men," would seem to indicate an unacceptable exposure of this girl's breasts.

Page 51: The undressing scene at this point seems to be unacceptably suggestive. . . . Specifically, we should not see the girl beginning to remove her brassiere.

Page 62: Lisa's [Grace Kelly] line, "Homework. It's more interesting," is unacceptably sex suggestive. . . .

Page 74: The laundry that the young girl is hanging out should not include any intimate feminine garments. . . .

Page 99 et seq: We think too much emphasis is given to the fact that Lisa is moving into Jeff's apartment . . . and the display of her pajamas, underwear, and other paraphernalia [should be] eliminated.

Page 115: The action of a man attempting to seduce Miss Lonelyhearts appears to become excessively sex suggestive. . . .

The Other Censors

India deleted a scene in which Grace Kelly is sitting on the thigh of James Stewart, "in which they are cuddling and kissing." They deleted one foot of film, and also the close embrace of Kelly and Stewart, another two feet.

THE BIRDS

Hitchcock's horror usually has a psychological flavor. He flaunts the conventional wisdom of Hollywood that violence and brutality lift an audience from its seat. He creates his effects by making the audience fearful for the screen character with whom they empathize. There are no bamboo shoots under the fingernails. Hitchcock rarely departs from this formula for terror through anticipation. An exception that proved the rule—and

brought down on him the wrath of the censors—was *The Birds*. Here the director was very direct—he showed a gull swooping down to carve a chunk out of Tippi Hedrin's scalp. In another scene, we cringe at the gruesome details, as a flock of crows go gouging their way through a group of fleeing children. This was a more brutal, bloody presentation than Hitchcock fans, in or out of the Hays Office, were accustomed to seeing.

Censors rarely had to warn Hitchcock about undue gruesomeness. Not for him were giant apes devouring extras. True, in *Strangers on a Train* Robert Walker stomps on Farley Granger's knuckles, and in *Psycho* there was the memorable shower scene; but, generally, Hitchcock was less physical in his terror. With Hitchcock there was always a pattern of cumulative menace rising to an unbearable crescendo. In *The Birds* the threat was more palpable. The monsters were more diminutive than King Kong, but just as threatening, as when a flock of finches come flooding into a living room through the fireplace.

In his startling biography of Hitchcock, *The Dark Side of Genius*, Donald Spoto writes of how the director drove Tippi Hedrin to the brink of breakdown by exposing her to the attack of birds in the horrific attic scene, tying the hysterical birds to her supine body. The Hays Office frequently commanded filmmakers to seek the cooperation of the ASPCA to prevent the torture of animals. Under the circumstances, they might have summoned some other ASPCA—the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Actresses.

In *The Birds*, Hitchcock created a genuine monster film, a tale of horror and a dramatic tour de force. His source was Daphne du Maurier's novella about a flock of birds who adopt the hunt-and-peck system with their mass attack on a village's horrified inhabitants. He created an unusual problem for the censors, who were unaccustomed to a marriage of Hitchcock and brutality. In *The Birds* they cried fowl.

In November 1961 Hitchcock sent the Hays Office a screenplay by Evan Hunter based on the du Maurier novella. Censor chief Geoffrey Shurlock replied with a letter to Peggy Robertson of Hitchcock's company:

We have read the script dated November 14, 1961, for your proposed production *The Birds*. . . .