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Tracing Hollywood's Legacy of Self-Censorship through a Comparative Analysis of the Film *Baby Face* (1933) in its Censored and Uncensored Forms

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Tracing Hollywood's Legacy of Self-Censorship through a Comparative Analysis of the Film
Baby Face (1933) in its Censored and Uncensored Forms

By

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Introduction

Hollywood's film history is vast and rich. Many people know about Thomas Edison and the beginnings of the film industry in 1892. Short films displayed in nickelodeons soon developed into feature films shown in movie palaces across the country. The technical revolution of sound in the movies hit Hollywood in 1927 with *The Jazz Singer*. Films, and Hollywood itself, were distinctly and forever changed by the technology and improvements which sound introduced during this time; silent films faded quickly and were virtually never seen again as "talkies" became the new norm. But around this same time, vast moral attitude shifts in the U.S., fueled by the Great Depression and intense pressure from religious groups, resulted in decisions which brought about a different kind of revolution—one dealing specifically with the content of films. In 1934, the Hollywood Production Code was officially enforced and the "Golden Age of Hollywood," the most well-known and beloved period of classic film, began; however, few people know the full story surrounding the Code and a small timeframe of film industry history known as the Pre-Code era. The analysis of Pre-Code films, and specifically *Baby Face*, can help shed light on the Production Code's direct impact on Hollywood and the reverberations which can still be seen today.

Background

Almost since the very beginning of the motion picture industry, certain moralistic groups, such as the National Council of Catholic Women and even the Boy Scouts of America, sought to censor the films being turned out by the Hollywood studios which were filled with sex, vamps, crime, and vice. In order to combat any possible federal level censorship being heaved down upon the system, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Association

(MPPDA) was formed in 1922 by movie company presidents and Postmaster General Will Hays was instituted as head of the Association. The hope and plan was for Will Hays to act as a buffer between Hollywood and those crying for censorship. In order to begin “cleaning up” the movie industry, Hays created a “Formula” for Association members to follow to ensure they made smart decisions when purchasing film rights to plays and books. Hays also headed the MPPDA’s Committee on Public Relations to advise the Association on the will of the public and the moral standards they expected. Yet instead of actually making Hollywood reflect the moral attitudes of the religious groups both on the screen and off, Hays’ initial attempts acted as a type of smoke screen behind which most of Hollywood continued to churn out films full of sexual immorality, heavy drinking, and murder. In 1927, as censor boards across the U.S. began to pop up and those still disturbed by Hollywood’s continued lack of moral standards kept calling for the federal government to step in, Hays established the Studio Relations Committee to impose self-regulation in Hollywood. A list of “Don’ts and Be Carefuls” which once again tried to act as a moral guideline for Hollywood filmmakers was endorsed by the Motion Picture Association. Still, studios continued to make films bubbling over with “sins” and people who were enjoying committing them. Thus by 1929 a new strategy was proposed to ward off the ever present threats of federal censorship (Leff and Simmons 4-6).

Martin Quigley, a Catholic and editor of the very influential *Motion Picture Herald*, proposed the idea of a code which would guide Hollywood’s morals and ultimately American culture. Quigley, along with Father Daniel Lord, who was a Jesuit priest, set about drafting the Production Code. The Code was made up of two parts: “general principles” and “particular applications.” The former proposed the moral vision of the Code while the latter was a grocery list of material that would be forbidden in films under the Code. The Code exuded Catholicism

as could be expected and ultimately upheld the notion that films had the power to influence the morals of the American population as well as the fear that said influence could be for evil more often than not thus producing detrimental effects. The reason this fear was so impending and the consensus of acceptance for the Code was so widespread came down to the simple fact that everyone, the rich, the poor, the mature, the immature, every class, criminals, and average Joes, goes to the movies. On March 31, 1930, the Production Code was officially adopted in Hollywood and endorsed by the MPPDA (Doherty 2-9).

An interesting phenomenon occurred directly after the adoption of the Code – a lack of enforcement. The Studio Relations Committee, previously established as a division of the MPPDA, held the task of enforcing the Code, which basically meant they were to censor films and by an agreement, the studios were supposed to get the Committee's approval before releasing any film into distribution. Yet, if ever the Committee and a producer disagreed about a particular film and its possibly problematic "morals," an appeal process was begun. The producer could appeal to a panel made up of producers, also known as the Hollywood Jury, which almost always ruled in favor of the producer, thus making it easy to work around the Code or even completely ignore it in some instances. It was not until 1934, after films continually pushed the envelope, the Catholic Legion of Decency campaigned, and the federal government threatened regulation that the Code was finally, legitimately enforced. The Studio Relations Committee became the Production Code Administration under the leadership of Joseph Breen and the Hollywood Jury was done away with. True self-regulation of the motion picture industry was born. The censorship that hence became enforced consisted of two stages. The first stage was evaluation of films and isolating any that as a whole or in part might cause offense or further prompt the government into regulatory action. The second stage was negotiation between the

MPPDA and the producers in which the MPPDA tried to compromise on potentially offensive elements which they knew would garner complaints or cuts and which the producers steadfastly wanted to preserve (Jacobs 88-94).

It is during this period, between March 31, 1930, when the Code was adopted, and July 2, 1934, when the Code was actually enforced by the Production Code Administration, that exists a subset of films that are today known as Pre-Code films. Many films produced and distributed during this timeframe are noteworthy and deserving of exploration, but one in particular is better able to illustrate the effects of the Code. In April, 1933 *Baby Face* was released and subsequently rejected by the New York State Censorship Board (Kehr "A Wanton Woman's Ways"). Even though the Code was not technically fully enforceable, cuts were made to the picture to please the censors and Hays, and the picture was released theatrically in July 1933 (Wilson 872). *Baby Face* is often credited as being one of the top films that led to the full enforcement of the Code, and it is really no wonder (Kehr "A Wanton Woman's Ways"). For example, one of the film's tag lines reads "She played the love game with everything she had for everything they had and made 'it' work," or in more explicit terms, she used sex to get everything they had—money, power, and position. Another tag line, "A woman without a conscience, she used her power over men to get what life denied her," once again in not so many words implies that *Baby Face* uses her sexual prowess to get the wealth and position within high society that she has always craved. It is obvious *Baby Face*, also known as Lily Powers, was not the purest of souls to ever grace the silver screen (Wilson 361-362).

What makes *Baby Face* special then and an important film to study in this context is the fact that both the censored and uncensored versions are available for viewing. This is quite remarkable considering that fewer than 20% of American silent films still survive in complete

form and only half of American films produced before 1950 still exist (“Preservation Research”). In 2004, the uncensored version of *Baby Face* was found by Michael Mashon, a curator in the Library of Congress’s motion picture division. He discovered that the library had two negatives of the film, one marked original, and another marked as a duplicate that was slightly longer. It turns out that “duplicate” negative was the uncensored version containing approximately five minutes of extra film which had been cut after *Baby Face*’s initial rejection by New York censors. Mashon was probably the first person to even see those missing moments since the cuts were made in 1933 (Kehr “A Wanton Woman’s Ways”). Thus *Baby Face* offers a rare opportunity to actually see censorship from this time period in action rather than just reading about it.

Plot Overview

A brief overview of the plot of *Baby Face* will help in serving to keep the comparisons between the two versions both in context and in chronological order. Directed by Alfred E. Green, starring Barbara Stanwyck as Lily Powers or Baby Face, and produced by Warner Brothers, *Baby Face* offers up a scandalous story about one woman’s rise to the top. The film starts in Lily’s father’s speakeasy during prohibition where Lily is often prostituted out by her father. After her father’s death in the explosion of his still, Mr. Cragg, a good friend of Lily’s offers her advice on life and inspires her to head to New York City. After arriving in New York with Chico, her African-American female friend/servant, Lily takes an interest in “working” her way to the top of Gotham Trust. Starting in the hiring office, Lily makes her way up the corporate ladder, first seducing a young clerk, then Brody of the mortgage department, up to Stevens in accounting, and finally to the Vice-President of Gotham Trust, Carter. Tragedy strikes, however, when Stevens, still in love with Lily, kills Carter and himself and Lily

subsequently loses the carefree lifestyle she has worked so hard to procure. The new President of Gotham Trust, Courtland Trenholm, sends Lily to France to work in the Paris branch where she cannot be of much trouble. The joke is on Trenholm, however, when he visits Paris, falls head over heels for Lily, and marries her. The fallout from their scandalous marriage soon catches up with Trenholm and the bank which falls into ruin. Trenholm begs Lily for the half a million dollars she has stored away. Lily, knowing how hard she has worked for it all, declines and leaves to return to Paris. At the last moment though she thinks of Trenholm and rushes back to him to find him sprawled on his office floor with a self-inflicted gun injury. The ending is a bit different in each version and will be discussed at length at a later point.

Analysis

In order to understand the comparison it must be noted that all references are made in chronological order of the film. Most of the references will be made about the uncensored version first followed by the censored version since most of the changes involve cuts rather than additions. To begin, the first difference that can be seen is in the speakeasy. Mr. Cragg pays Lily a visit and mentions a book by Nietzsche which he told her to read. Although the book is mentioned in the both versions, Nietzsche has been cut from the censored version. The next few cuts all revolve around the same scenario. Ed Sipple, a politician whom Lily's father often pays off to keep his speakeasy open comes in for a visit. A quick scene of Powers counting money is cut along with a slow pan up Lily's body. In the uncensored version we also see money exchanged between Sipple and Powers. The censored version cuts all of this to get rid of any hard evidence of Lily being prostituted. One can even surmise that the small glimpse of her father counting money was cut to ensure that no reference whatsoever was made to the fact. Next, in a scene in Lily's bedroom, Sipple grabs her and calls her the "sweetheart of the night

shift,” again alluding to her prostitution. In the censored version the words “night shift” are cut and replaced with a view of Lily’s father waiting outside for the encounter to end. Interestingly, the entire next scene between Lily and Sipple was cut in the censored version. This scene involves Lily leaving the bedroom and pouring herself a beer. As she begins to drink, Sipple comes up behind her, wraps his arms around her, and begins molesting her and trying to kiss her. Lily in an act of defiance smashes a beer bottle over his head and then proceeds to calmly drink her beer as he stumbles away. Although nothing actually happens between Lily and Sipple in the scene it is possible it was cut to negate any reference to an attempted rape. As well, Lily’s fairly calm demeanor in handling the situation is a bit unnerving if not unusual to say the least. In a fight with her father, who is worried about the fate of his speakeasy after Lily’s rejection of Sipple, a piece of dialogue Lily spews at her father is cut in the censored version. While blaming him for making her a tramp, the line “ever since I was 14 years old” is cut. This piece itself was most likely cut just due to the age at which it is suggested her father started pimping her out.

After her father’s death, in a scene similar to the beginning, Lily visits Mr. Cragg who is reading Nietzsche’s *Will to Power* (in the uncensored version). Cragg proceeds to give Lily some advice about life with the help of Nietzsche whom he quotes from the book, “All life, no matter how we idealize it, is nothing more nor less than exploitation.” Cragg then exclaims for Lily to exploit herself and use men to get what she wants in life. Not only was this reference to Nietzsche cut out, as the one earlier, but a later reference was also done away with. One of the stronger themes of Nietzsche’s philosophy is the individual above others, hence Cragg basically telling Lily that she should do what she must for herself only, and not to care about those whom she uses along the way. Such philosophy would have been seen as dangerous to human relations and morals, especially considering the fact that the country was in the midst of the Great

Depression and it would have been fairly easy to take advantage of many people's unfortunate circumstances. The reasoning behind cutting out the Nietzsche references also becomes clearer when looked at religiously. Nietzsche was often considered an enemy of Christianity because of his works in which he unfavorably depicts Christianity as being the opposite of a healthy life (Wilkerson "Friedrich Nietzsche"). In the censored version an almost entirely different conversation takes place in which Cragg tells Lily to be clean and strong. He tells her there is a right way and a wrong way. The wrong way bears a great price. This new philosophy in the censored version sets up Cragg as the one moral voice in the film trying to provide virtuous guidance to Lily. Interestingly this change also shifts the tone of the film. In the uncensored version, as the film progresses, Lily clearly takes Cragg's advice to use men to get everything she wants, namely a carefree lifestyle with plenty of money. In the censored version the changes in Cragg's guidance suggest that Lily disregards his advice completely and chooses the "wrong way."

Nonetheless, in both versions Lily decides to travel to New York with Chico. When departing Pennsylvania on a train they are caught stowing away in a boxcar by a railroad bull. Lily suggests that they talk things over and this is as far as the censored version goes. However, in the uncensored version the rail man follows her to the back of the boxcar where we see his gloves come off and the lamp go out clearly implying that Lily is sleeping with him and indeed in the next scene she and Chico have arrived in New York City. It is from this point on that the two versions follow on different paths. In the uncensored version, Lily sleeps her way to the top of Gotham Trust. In the censored version, Lily flirts her way to the top. To begin, Lily goes to the Gotham Trust hiring office wherein she sweet talks the young male secretary and subsequently sleeps with him in his boss's office so that she may have a chance to get hired at

the bank. In the uncensored version we see him follow her into the office where it is easy to imagine what happens next. In the censored version however, the young man following Lily into the office is cut to dissuade the association with using sexual favors to get ahead, yet in a film where that is the main theme it is pretty difficult to get away from.

Next Lily works her wiles on Brody in the mortgage department. Her scenes with Brody are intricately cut in the censored version so, to fully compare, the uncensored version takes place as follows: Lily leans over Brody to speak with him. A close up of Brody checking Lily out is shown and then in hushed tones he asks her to stay after 5 pm. Seeing the interaction, a few female colleagues mention Brody's wife and three kids. Once the 5 pm bell rings signaling the end of the work day, Brody follows Lily into the women's restroom. A phone on his desk rings, but they do not answer. Eventually Stevens, from accounting, comes to find Brody to speak with him and finds the two in the bathroom together. Brody walks out of the restroom and is fired. Stevens speaks to Lily about the incident to which she replies, "He followed me in there," he is her boss after all, and what could she do? Now in the censored version the same scenario plays out, but it has been altered as follows (anything not stated matching the uncensored version has been cut): Lily leans over Brody to speak with him. Brody checks Lily out. Brody and Lily are possibly in the restroom together when Stevens catches them. Brody is fired and Lily who is in the restroom walks out to talk with Stevens about the incident to which she says that he is her boss, what could she do? Now although these may seem similar enough the differences can be identified. The close-up shot of Brody checking Lily out as well as his asking her to stick around are cut, possibly to make it less clear that they are having an affair. Any mention of Brody's wife and kids is cut to lessen the severity of his indiscretion to the audience, now it just looks as if he is sleeping with her out of wedlock rather than cheating on his

wife and abandoning his family. All footage which explicitly shows Brody walking into or out of the women's restroom is cut, which makes it harder to understand where exactly he is during the encounter. It may also have been cut just because he is a man in a women's restroom which would have been considered entirely indecent. Interestingly, the phone call which goes unanswered is cut in the censored version as well; this may be explained by the fact that the ignored phone call indicates a time lapse, thus without it, it is possible to conceive that Lily and Brody are caught almost immediately, rather than at the tail end of their rendezvous. The dialogue from Lily, "He followed me in there," is cut, which would work to dispel the notion of Brody actually being in the bathroom just as the cut scenes of him entering and exiting the bathroom do as well. About a minute later, in both versions of the film, Brody shows up on Baby Face's doorstep imploring her to let him see her. In this scene, Lily tells him he must think of his wife and kids, dialogue which is once again cut in the censored version for the same reason as the earlier reference.

Lily subsequently woos Stevens, who previously caught Lily with Brody, away from his fiancé, Ann, who happens to be Carter's daughter. Carter as the Vice-President of Gotham Trust finds himself cleaning up after Lily and Stevens' mess when Ann finds them together and rushes to tell her father all about it. As Carter is questioning Lily in his office about her time at the bank and her relationship with Stevens, he asks her for information so that he may contact her. Carter reaches for a pen and then the scene dissolves into his hand reaching for a doorknob instead. The doorknob belongs to Lily's apartment and Carter sheds his hat and coat in the foyer. The camera maintains a shot of the foyer window and day turns to night and back to day before Carter emerges, grabs his coat and hat, and completes a walk of shame past the cleaning lady in the hallway. This entire scene, from the dissolve onward is cut in the censored version. Thus

although it later becomes clear that Lily and Carter are having an affair, it is unclear as to when the affair started. The scene was most likely cut to avoid such a direct reference to the “slumber party” Lily and Carter were having. Directly after the inquiry scene in Carter’s office, the censored version jumps to an inserted b-roll shot of a winter landscape. The quick scene seems to serve no other purpose other than to establish that it is wintertime, as Christmas is discussed in the next scene.

On Christmas day Lily receives a book from her old friend Mr. Cragg. The book in the uncensored version is Nietzsche’s *Thoughts Out of Season*. A highlighted passage reads, “Face life as you find it-defiantly and unafraid. Waste no energy yearning for the moon. Crush out all sentiment.” Cragg’s earlier, uncensored advice is thus revisited and seems to propel Lily’s actions throughout the last portion of the film. In the censored version, Lily receives a book of unknown title and author from Mr. Cragg with a note tucked inside rather than a highlighted passage. Cragg chastises Lily in the note for choosing the wrong way and adds that unless she regains her self-respect, life will defeat her. Rather than acting as a mechanism to propel Lily onward, in her heartless quest to the top, the note serves as a reminder to both Lily and the audience that she stands on the on the wrong side of morality. One interesting error in the note is the fact that it spells Lily’s name wrong as Lilly. The note was an additive alteration on the censored version made later. Film reviews from the initial release, cast lists, as well as the DVD release today all list Barbara Stanwyck in the role of Lily, not Lilly.

Bearing Mr. Cragg’s latest advice/admonishment in mind the next scenes play out very dramatically, but very differently. Stevens, still infatuated with Lily, speaks to Carter about her, not knowing Carter himself is in fact Lily’s latest lover. Stevens proclaims “some man is keeping her,” and Carter responds innocently enough asking, “Are you sure?” This bit of dialogue

exchange is cut out in the censored version. A brief while later, Stevens barges into Lily's home begging her to take him back, threatening to kill himself if she does not. He quickly realizes her newest lover is in the next room and pushes Lily out of the way to get to him. Stevens recognizes Carter and then proceeds to shoot him twice. In the uncensored version, this is blatantly depicted, Carter's collapse from his wounds is visible, and then a few seconds later a third shot is heard indicating that Stevens has taken his own life which is confirmed when Lily enters the room and finds both men dead. The censored version plays out a bit more ambiguously as Stevens recognizes Carter, but nothing is shown of him shooting Carter or Carter collapsing. Instead, two shots are heard immediately with a third shot following shortly after. When Lily enters the room it is obvious both men are dead, but the how of it is left unknown. The audience is then left to imagine how it all played out which introduces the possibility that Carter had a gun and fired back which would effectively negate Stevens' act of suicide, an act which was, and is, frowned upon by the Catholic Church. When these scenes are analyzed with Cragg's advice in mind from the scene prior, the divergence of the two versions is unmistakable. Following Mr. Cragg's advice in the uncensored version, Lily is completely without sentiment and seemingly looks upon the situation without any remorse. On the other hand, bearing Mr. Cragg's admonishment in mind, Lily could be viewed as realizing the murder as the fruition of having chosen the wrong way in life.

A few steps in the storyline forward, as both versions coincide for a while, Lily proceeds to woo her newest lover, Trenholm the new president of Gotham Trust. On a yacht along a river in France, they share a moment in which Trenholm professes that he would give Lily anything in the world. Lily tells him she wants a "Mrs." on her tombstone. As further initiative for him to marry her, Lily suggests to Trenholm that the marriage "needn't last forever" and that he could

divorce her two weeks later. Lily's proposal is cut from the censored version for the obvious reason that Lily suggests they treat marriage as a means to an end rather than as a sacred bond between man and wife. A few more steps forward finds Gotham Trust in collapse due to the scandal of Lily and Trenholm's marriage. Lily plans to take her fortune and flee back to Paris leaving Trenholm to pick up the pieces. On the ship, Lily turns on her phonograph and daydreams or hallucinates a procession of faces of the men she has used to get to the top and acquire her fortune, beginning with the railroad worker and ending with Trenholm. While Trenholm's face is suspended above the spinning record, Lily hears his voice saying, "I know you've known men before me, probably more than one, but I don't care. It doesn't make any difference. I love you and someday I'm going to make you love me." This revelation prompts Lily to take her money and go find Trenholm. In the censored version, however, things play out a bit differently. Lily plays the record but only sees Trenholm's face. The dialogue in the uncensored version has been cut out as well. Any reference to Lily's affairs with other men is completely eliminated at this point to help set up the fantasy perpetuated in the censored version's ending that Lily loves Trenholm, has only ever loved Trenholm, and is willing to give up everything for him. It is most likely also omitted to get rid of the idea of Trenholm condoning her past love affairs, even embracing them as a part of Lily.

As stated earlier, the ending of each version is fairly different. Lily, having returned to find Trenholm and offer him her collective fortune, finds him making a suicide attempt by shooting himself. Lily tells the doorman to call for a doctor and in the next shot, she and Trenholm are in the back of an ambulance. Lily having professed her love and devotion to Trenholm looks on anxiously. Her case of money and jewels falls to the floor, opens, and her things spread out on the ambulance floor. However to Lily, in this moment it does not matter as

she is solely focused on Trenholm who looks up at her with a smile. And that is how the uncensored version ends, with Lily seemingly choosing love over money, and yet the ending is still ambiguous enough to leave the audience wondering whether or not Trenholm will even make it through as well as whether or not Lily will change her mind and scoop up her fortune the moment they make it to the hospital. The censored version cuts Trenholm's last smile, and instead dissolves into a scene inside Gotham Trust where the bank directors are discussing a check they have received from Lily and Trenholm as payment for their share of getting the bank back on its feet. One of the directors states that Mr. and Mrs. Trenholm sacrificed everything for the bank. He also notes that he received a letter from them stating that while they have no money, Trenholm is working in a steel mill in Pittsburgh and they are working out their happiness. An establishing shot of smoke stacks in the Pittsburgh skyline plays for a few seconds just before the credits roll. The problem with this ending is that it asks the audience to believe that after everything that has happened, Lily not only willingly, but happily gives up her fortune and life of comfort for love. While it may be plausible that she would stick by Trenholm after his recovery, and even with all of the tonal shifts in the film made by the previous cuts, it still seems to be a stretch that she would be happy in love and poverty as her husband works in a steel mill. This ending was tacked on to try to appease the censors by making Lily "learn her lesson" and realize the errors of her ways.

Conclusion

Upon its release, *Baby Face* had immediate consequences as well as long term ramifications still detectable today. One of the first casualties, Darryl F. Zanuck, a talented filmmaker and writer who had been highly invested in *Baby Face*, resigned his position as production head at Warner Bros. Studios (Wilson 352). He and star Barbara Stanwyck had

collaborated on the story, both in agreement that Lily's circumstances should be portrayed in less than appealing light. Some of their collaborative suggestions included an idea in which Baby Face's father purposely forces her into a room after beating her and locking her inside, all the while knowing a man is waiting in the room to spend the night with Lily (Leff and Simmons 28-29). Thus when it came to censoring *Baby Face* to appease Will Hays and the censors, Zanuck protested, insisting that the film remain intact as it was originally intended. Jack and Harry Warner therefore accepted Zanuck's resignation after assuring Hays the film would undergo the necessary cuts to make it acceptable (Wilson 353).

Laughably, not only is *Baby Face* credited as putting the teeth into the Production Code which went into full effect in 1934, it was also pulled from theaters by the Production Code almost immediately despite the censorship cuts made earlier and marked to never be rereleased as no amount of clean-up or cuts could make the film suitable enough to be released under the Code (Leff and Simmons 58-62). The Production Code would persist in Hollywood until 1966 at which time it was phased out and subsequently replaced. In 1968 the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) instituted the first iteration of the voluntary ratings system, still used today, which had the support of the MPPDA and theater owners. Indeed, the ratings system employed then, and abided by today, is not government mandated or enforced, but is actually another adaptation of self-censorship in efforts to keep the government from intervening in production and censorship, despite the fact that in 1952 the Supreme Court held that "expression by means of motion pictures is included within the free speech and free press guarantee of the First and Fourteenth Amendments" (Hwang 381-382). By examining *Baby Face*, the history of self-censorship in Hollywood can be traced to its roots. Hollywood's penchant for self-censorship and filmmakers' continual embracement of such practices have led to the current film censorship

climate today. Many filmmakers find themselves in a delicate situation trying to produce authentic films while still receiving the MPAA rating that ensures significant film distribution thus maximizing their audience as well as their profit. . The question then becomes are filmmakers staying true to their films, or has the taint of self-censorship and the MPAA system had a hand in changing many of the films known and loved today. In the end, as society and culture continues to change and evolve, obviously *Baby Face* would not be considered nearly as scandalous today, Hollywood may eventually find a way to move past their continual practices of self-censorship into a new dawn of filmmaking without fear.

Appendix

The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930

General Principles

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

Particular Applications

I—Crimes Against the Law

These shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

1. Murder

- a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.
- b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
- c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.

2. Methods of Crime should not be explicitly presented.

- a. Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc., should not be detailed in method.
- b. Arson must be subject to the same safeguards.
- c. The use of firearms should be restricted to essentials.
- d. Methods of smuggling should not be presented.

3. *Illegal drug traffic* must never be presented.

4. *The use of liquor* in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization will not be shown.

II—Sex

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

1. *Adultery*, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively.

2. *Scenes of Passion*

a. They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.

b. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown.

c. In general passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element.

3. *Seduction or Rape*

a. They should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method.

b. They are never the proper subject for comedy.

4. *Sex perversion* or any inference to it is forbidden.

5. *White-slavery* shall not be treated.

6. *Miscegenation* (sex relationships between the white and black races) is forbidden.

7. *Sex hygiene* and venereal diseases are not subjects for motion pictures.

8. Scenes of *actual child birth*, in fact or in silhouette, are never to be presented.

9. *Children's sex organs* are never to be exposed.

III—Vulgarity

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should be subject always to the dictates of good taste and a regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

IV—Obscenity

Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

V—Profanity

Pointed profanity (this includes the words, God, Lord, Jesus, Christ—unless used reverently—Hell, S.O.B. damn, Gawd), or every other profane or vulgar expression, however used, is forbidden.

VI—Costume

1. *Complete nudity* is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.
2. *Undressing scenes* should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.
3. *Indecent or undue exposure* is forbidden.
4. *Dancing costumes* intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

VII—Dances

1. Dances suggesting or representing sexual actions or indecent passion are forbidden.
2. Dances which emphasize indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.

VIII—Religion

1. No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.

2. *Ministers of religion* in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains.

3. *Ceremonies* of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

IX—Locations

The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

X—National Feelings

1. *The use of the Flag* shall be consistently respectful.

2. *The history*, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly.

XI—Titles

Salacious, indecent, or obscene titles shall not be used.

XII—Repellent Subjects

The following subjects must be treated within the careful limits of good taste:

1. *Actual hangings* or electrocutions as legal punishments for crime.

2. *Third Degree* methods.

3. *Brutality* and possible gruesomeness.

4. *Branding* of people or animals.

5. *Apparent cruelty* to children or animals.

6. *The sale of women* or a woman selling her virtue.

7. *Surgical operations*

Source: "The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930," as quoted in Leonard J. Jeff and Jerold Simmons, eds., *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (New York: Grove Wiedenfeld, 1990), 283–286.

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