OFF-SCREEN SPACE AND THE FOLD: WAYS OF REPRESENTING THE UNREPRESENTABLE, SHAPED BY THE HAYS CODE IN CLASSICAL CINEMA

SANTIAGO FILLOL

I. INTRODUCTION

In broad terms, it could be argued that in the Motion Picture Production Code, popularly known as the Hays Code, everything is a question of *detail*. Particularly striking among the numerous amendments and additions made to this censorship code between 1930 and 1967 are the repeated warnings in its different sections (especially those under the headings "Crimes Against the Law", "Sex", "Vulgarity", and "Obscenity") against showing details of the most lurid acts. For example, the first point of the section dealing with murders stipulates that "brutal killings are not to be presented in detail," while point 3 of the second section, dealing with sex, orders that rape "should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot. They must never be shown by explicit method."[1]

Although in its section on "Repellent Subjects" the Code highlights the special care that must be taken in relation to scenes involving brutal killings or rape (subjects that were already addressed in the lists of "Don'ts" and "Be Carefuls" developed by the studios before the creation of the Code itself), at no point does it suggest that such extreme scenes should be eliminated from the storylines altogether. It states only that they must not be shown in detail, explicitly indicating that they should be "suggested". This essentially ambiguous warning gave rise to a series of thought-provoking narrative—and metaphysical—debates among producers, censors, scriptwriters and filmmakers about what could and could not be shown, what could and could not be seen, what was acceptable and what was not.[2] From this perspective, depictions of rape and brutal killings (which in many cases would occur in the same scene) can be analysed as the standards of a genre, shaped in parallel with the implementation of the Code.

In such depictions, two clearly differentiated formal approaches can be identified: *off-screen space* and *the fold*. Studying these two approaches may facilitate a deeper understanding of the limits of the imaginable in the classical period. The most common and recurrent use made of off-screen space in classical cinema has been as the location for abhorrent acts that are thus kept out of the spectator's view.[3] The "fold", on the other hand, is

a more elaborate and complex form that was used to bury the heinous act in the story without ever presenting it in a (particular) scene. I have taken the concept of "the fold" to describe this approach from the theory postulated by Deleuze in his book on the philosophy of Leibniz and Baroque thought.[4]

Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954) is a

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unique case because it combines off-screen space and folds to represent the most lurid scenes in the story. This makes it an exemplary case for my study, as in a certain way it effectively determined what could be represented with each of these two approaches and what kind of expressive potential was offered by each within the limits of the Code. The murder of the neighbour's bedridden wife, the scene at the heart of all the twists and turns of this film, is a good example. Jeff (Jimmy Stewart), who has been spying from his window on the constantly bickering married couple, becoming familiar with the attentive husband tyrannised by the bad temper of his ailing wife, watches curiously while the husband shuts the blinds on the windows of their apartment for the first time. Stuck in a plaster cast with nothing but time on his hands, Jeff is frustrated by this obstruction of his view into the miserable domestic life to which he'd had free access until that moment. He fixes his gaze on this off-screen space as he begins to suspect what might be happening on the other

side of the blinds. The image of the lowered blinds appears in parallel with his piqued curiosity, as if what cannot be seen intrigues him more than all the private moments to which he has enjoyed an obstructed access. This image has an important correlate in the story: in another of the apartments that Jeff has been spying on, a young pair of newlyweds has just moved in. As soon as they enter their new home they kiss passionately and lower the blinds, making it clear that they can no longer contain their desire to make love. This image, which precedes the murder scene, will be repeated: the newlyweds lower their blinds and make love every time they come into Jeff's field of vision. In this way, in strict observance of the rules of the Code, Hitchcock tells us that when the blinds go down and an off-screen space is established, there is something there that we should not see although we can easily imagine it. We are not even shown the silhouettes of the impulsive lovers because, as the Code itself stipulates, silhouettes could prove just as obscene and detailed as the scene itself. Something is happening right in front of us, but it must be withheld from our view. In this way, the off-screen space of the sexual act signals the rule, while the off-screen space of the murder obeys that rule and at the same time intensifies the intrigue. With the blinds blocking our view we cannot know for sure what it is that we have (not) seen, and to sustain this experience, Hitchcock must *fold* the most lurid hints within the film's images. In other words, while the off-screen space represents the murder on the other side of the lowered blind, the dismemberment of the wife's body is woven within the film's folds. We watch—always from Jeff's voyeuristic point of view and some time after the moment of the off-screen murder—the presumed killer leaving his apartment in the middle of the night carrying some large suitcases, wrapping up a saw in paper, cleaning the tiles in the bathroom, chasing off a dog sniffing around in the flower bed in the garden (where we can imagine that he has buried one of

the decapitated parts of his wife's body). All these images dispersed throughout the film re-compose the image of the wife's decapitation. They all combine to depict the horrific image of the killing that has no precise location (that cannot be pinpointed in any shot in particular) because it has been spread, *folded*, across multiple scenes. These kinds of images require a virtual reconstruction, which entails *unfolding* the fragments inserted into each fold, compelling us to read from one fold to the next: "the problem is not how to finish a fold, but how to continue it," Deleuze tells us, as the fold is an essentially Baroque strategy, and "the Baroque invents the infinite work or process" (Deleuze, 2015: 50). This "folded form" involves a figurative approach that is substantially different from the off-screen space discussed above. In his choice of what to show with each of these forms, Hitchcock is telling us that a murder or a sexual act can be *shown* in off-screen space, but that an action as ghastly as a dismemberment is not fit for this conventional method for getting around the censors. The act of mutilating and carving up a woman's body in *Rear Window* is thus necessarily woven into folds. In this respect, it is highly instructive to read the reports that the censors issued on *Rear Window*, as they objected to the sexual suggestiveness of the newlywed couple's behaviour, to the dancer in her underwear, and to the eroticism of Grace Kelly's character, yet they said nothing about the decapitation of a woman woven into the film's folds, or about the voyeurism of the protagonist through which it is given form (Gardner, 1987: 92-94). Through the modulation of off-screen spaces and folds, Hitchcock effectively slipped a horrific scene passed the censors.

This article offers an analysis of the off-screen spaces and folds used in classical Hollywood to represent its most lurid scenes under the Hays Code: where do these methods of depicting the horrific come from? What are their aesthetic antecedents? What narrative traditions do they enter into a dialogue with? In an effort to answer

these questions, I will take the theoretical approach of Richard Maltby, who conceives of the Hays Code as a generic model or paradigm rather than a restrictive imposition (Maltby, 2012: 245).

In the pages that follow, I will analyse a genealogy of the use of off-screen space to work around the Hays Code. I will then go onto examine "the fold" as a more effective way of approaching and expressing the representation of the lurid within the limits of censorship. To this end, the second section of the article combines the hermeneutic methodology of different authors on off-screen space in cinema, while the third section considers the model developed by Deleuze in his study on Leibniz and the Baroque.

II. OFF-SCREEN SPACE (OR THE UNREPRESENTABLE CONCEALED)

In classical cinema, the use of off-screen space became a canonical method for pushing the most abhorrent and indecent acts out of the frame without having to eliminate them from the story. The restrictive conventions of the Hays Code resulted in one of the most productive approaches to the use of off-screen space: the censors approved its use, and the filmmakers opted to elide such scenes beforehand rather than have them cut out afterwards. Off-screen space would thus serve two purposes: for the censors it was a way of ensuring propriety; for the directors, it was a form of suggestive filmmaking. As a result, the use of this technique was used so often that in many cases its imaginative potential was rendered conventional.

Noël Burch accurately identifies the probable origin, operation and reception of this precept of propriety in cinema: "For many years the silent film regarded as using off-screen space most significantly was Ewald Andre Dupont's *Variety*. [...] During a fight scene that soon became famous, Emil Jannings and his rival roll on the ground, leaving the screen momentarily empty. A hand with a knife in it then enters the frame from be-

low and immediately plunges out of frame again to deliver the fatal blow. Jannings then rises up and into frame all by himself… and several generations of historians applauded this 'magnificent understatement'. From that moment on, off-screen space came to be used almost exclusively as a way of *suggesting* events when directors felt that simply showing them directly would be too facile" (Burch, 1981: 24).

The "magnificent understatement" and the "suggestiveness" noted by Burch in the origins of off-screen space in Hollywood cinema have a clear historical antecedent. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle explains how shocking and brutal scenes are shifted offstage in Greek tragedy. However, this was intended not as a prescription but merely as a *description* of the theatrical techniques of his day (Fillol, 2016: 59-69). It was in subsequent readings of the *Poetics*, including the "Ars Poeticas" of Horace and Boileau, and in a certain sense the Hays Code, where this principle took on a prescriptive force.[5]

Detour (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945), for example, features an archetypal off-screen moment that reveals how these principles operated in classical cinema. Al Roberts, an itinerant piano player who ends up with a dead man on his hands, is arguing with Vera, a blackmailer who threatens to report the piano player's supposed crime to the police. In a drunken stupor, Vera picks up the phone and locks herself away with it in her bedroom. In desperation, Al tries to open the door. Inside the bedroom, Vera gets caught up in the phone cord, which ends up wrapped around her neck. Up to this point, Ulmer has shown the actions taking place on each side of the door in parallel. When Al notices the phone cord running under the door and begins pulling at it to stop Vera from making her call, Ulmer stops alternating the shots between Al and Vera. Now we only see Al's hands tugging at the cord with increasing force, while Vera's bedroom has been transformed into off-screen space. On hearing a dull thud, Al stops

pulling and looks towards the closed door, while the background music serves to underscore the obvious: a death has occurred, out of view, at that very moment. An instant later, Al forces the door open and confirms what we already knew: through the reflection of a distant mirror (another off-screen space), we can make out Vera's lifeless body, with the phone cord that has strangled her. Just at this moment, the scene begins to go blurry for Al. Ulmer has effectively offered a detailed depiction of a strangulation by dividing the action between screen and off-screen space. His protagonist has strangled a woman with all his might, while being unaware of what he was doing. Classical harmony; the power of meaning; the propriety of causality. This example illustrates what privileged an off-screen space of this kind. It is not suggestion that sustains this image, but an effectively transparent veil that obscures our view but not our comprehension of the moment of death: we know that Vera is being murdered; we even know the exact moment she stops breathing. The "suggestion" that the Hays Code itself encouraged in its precepts leaves nothing to the imagination in this scene: everything is explained, even if it has been withheld from our view.

The notion of "off-screen propriety" refers to a simplification of off-screen space, which in classical Hollywood cinema was adapted to the restrictions of the Code and which, while finding some brilliant formulations in the hands of filmmakers like Lang and Hitchcock, in many other hands turned into a stereotypical solution.

Fritz Lang and Alfred Hitchcock took off-screen propriety to its furthest limits of figurative development: Lang did so by turning restraint into a perverse insinuation; Hitchcock by ramping up the suggestion to such a level that the *horror* of what was suggested subverted the propriety.

Rancho Notorious (Fritz Lang, 1952) is one of the films in which Lang pushed the restrictive precepts of the Hays Code to their furthest lim-

its: the depiction of the rape and murder of Beth Forbes shows us an action that supposedly takes place with the conventional off-screen propriety. Lang opens his film with Beth and Vern locked in an embrace: between kisses, the loving couple talk about their imminent wedding and about all the kids they're going to have: "one every August" Vern tells her, over an uplifting background of woodwinds and violins. When Vern leaves the store where his girlfriend works, two thuggish-looking cowboys see that she has been left alone, and the violins give way to the grave tones of a grim cello. One of the thieves enters the store and asks the girl in a casual, cavalier tone to show him the safe. Beth calculates with a glance the distance she would need to cover to escape, while the thug, gun in hand, leads her to the back of the store. Seeing no way out, Beth puts the key into the safe door. The thief opens his mouth and makes a vaguely obscene gesture while the safe opens. Lang revels in this moment, sublimating the impending rape with the theft, drawing out the time of a perverse pleasure. A drum roll accentuates the ominous crescendo of the background music, and Lang gives us a ribald shot/reverse-shot between the rapist's explicitly expressed lust and Beth's horrified eyes. Faced with this scene, we might well wonder whether this cryptic expression of sexual desire is really any less unbearable than the act of rape itself. Slipping past all the complex restrictions, Lang forces us to bear witness to the criminal's lust, compelling us to anticipate some disturbing images well beyond the explicit boundaries laid down by the Hays Code. Once his characters' gazes have established the tension that spells out Beth's inevitable fate, Lang cuts to a wide shot that expels us from the store: outside, a boy is quietly playing hopscotch while the other thief is keeping watch. The sound of Beth's scream echoes in the street. The boy stops his game and looks to the off-screen space of the store: an innocent gaze towards the off-screen event, serving to accentuate its cruelty. Nothing

happens after this scream, and the thief's partner seems unconcerned. The boy resumes his game until another scream, even sharper and this time preceded by a gunshot, tells us that after the rape Beth has been murdered. The thug runs out with a couple of bags of money in his hands, mounts his horse and escapes together with his companion. Apart from the highly explicit foreshadowing of the rape, up to this point the mechanism used is no different from a classical and archetypal example of off-screen propriety. Lang's particular style lies not so much in the evasive use of off-screen space, but in how he introduces what we haven't seen back into the image: "When Vern arrives on the scene of the tragedy, a doctor is attending Beth's lifeless body, and with a gesture of resignation he turns to her fiancée and explains that 'she wasn't spared anything.' Vern asks a companion to give him a gun, while he gazes on the corpse of the woman who was going to be his wife. The camera pans gently down from the close up of the girl's face to linger over her hand, still tense like a claw and with the fingers stained in blood: signs of the struggle for her dignity, but also of the brutality of the crime. The image that dignifies the scene is the same one that horrifies us" (Fillol, 2016: 65-66). The event elided in the off-screen space comes back at us like a boomerang in this image. As Lang himself suggested when discussing his elliptic depiction of the murder of the girl in *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931): "If I could show what is most horrific for me, perhaps it would not be for others. All of the spectators, even the ones who don't dare to take in what has happened to this girl, experience a feeling of horror that freezes their blood. But everyone feels things differently, and imagines that even worse things could have happened to her, and that is a feeling that I would not have been able to elicit by showing one single possibility, for example, the girl being disemboweled."[6] The propriety that drives the death into the off-screen space ultimately produces a more horrific effect than the image that it is supposed

to conceal. Lang's comments leave no room for doubt: allowing the spectator to imagine the goriest possibility shifts the effect from understatement to sadism. In this short circuit lies much of Lang's genius.

While in his off-screen spaces Lang reveals

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the relative (and sometimes indistinguishable) line between propriety and impropriety, Hitchcock exploits the very principle of propriety as a form in itself, using it to expose how that principle is constructed. Hitchcock does not use off-screen space merely to conceal something unpleasant or to indulgently suggest it, but to exhibit this rhetorical function of cinematic language with all its consequences; in other words, to show how we construct a function of concealment and propriety that often helps us to turn a blind eye to our own acts. *Lifeboat* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943) features a *social*, collectively orchestrated off-screen space: wherever a gory image might appear, the shipwreck survivors articulate a choreography that shields the spectator's view from the horror and helps the characters to share (and dilute) the harshest images among them. The amputation of Gus' leg, for example, takes place behind a wall formed by the group of survivors. And Hitchcock uses this same technique to depict the murder of the Nazi crew member: a human choreography orchestrated in the limited space of the lifeboat determines what is and is not to be seen until the enemy finally disappears behind their backs. In these off-screen spaces, Hitchcock underscores

the moral process undertaken and defined by the human group more than the brutality of their actions. These shipwreck survivors, who have wrestled with their moral beliefs and contradictions, use their own bodies to build an off-screen space that absorbs the killing and the shared responsibility for that image. A similar technique is used for the murder of the tennis player's wife in *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951), which is shown through the reflection in the victim's broken glasses after they fall to the ground, or in the conclusion to *Stage Fright* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1950), where a metal safety curtain falls on top of the murderer in the middle of a stage—a fatal fourth wall that kills the killer while at the same time preventing us from seeing his death. In Hitchcock's off-screen spaces the strategy employed and the principles of cinematic language that underpin them are always more obvious than the event of the death itself. And it is in these techniques that his *rhetorical* genius lies.

Beyond their brilliant orchestration, the off-screen spaces of Lang and Hitchcock are linked in one way or another (through reformulation or rejection) to this principle of classical propriety. Every off-screen space signals to us what a particular cinematic era or model identifies as visible and invisible. In the off-screen spaces analysed so far, the conception of invisibility is not metaphysical, but profoundly normative: the invisible is something real and clearly imaginable that cannot be shown by order of the censorship code.[7]

In Hitchcock's and Lang's most extreme formulations, despite the restrictions of the Code, we can also glimpse the beginnings of a new figurative form for showing what cannot be shown: the disturbing *folds*, like those used by Hitchcock to position the most shocking images of his *Rear Window*, involve a greater degree of complexity. This type of more elaborate and elusive depiction disperses certain details in the folds of the story; details that will enable spectators to re-construct, like a puzzle, the most horrific images of the clas-

sical imaginary. The weaving of shocking images into folds can be understood as a more ambitious and extreme form established by classical cinema, under the influence of the Hays Code, to overcome the displacement of unseemly scenes into off-screen space. The following section presents an analysis of this "folded" approach, which has been developed masterfully by some of the greatest classical filmmakers.

III. THE FOLD (OR THE UNREPRESENTABLE DISPERSED)

In 1931, William Faulkner published a novel which, by his own admission, was intended merely as a pot-boiler, yet which ended up becoming his most shocking and controversial work. *Sanctuary* tells the story of the rape of Temple Drake, a rebellious upper-class girl who is assaulted by Popeye, an old impotent gangster who rapes her with a corncob. This sordid scene takes place in a run-down farmhouse that is the home of a whisky bootlegging operation: Temple Drake has taken refuge in a stable to escape Popeye; when the gangster finds her, the rape is narrated from the point of view of an old blind farmer. As he hears the young woman's screams, Faulkner sustains the shocking scene through this description of the old man: "he turned his head and the two phlegm-clots above her where she lay tossing and thrashing on the rough, sunny boards" (Faulkner, 1993: 102). This image, inscribed in the fabric of the story through a blind man's gaze, returns with all its horrific force fifteen chapters later, at Popeye's trial, when the attorney reveals the tip of this ghastly iceberg in all its details: "The district attorney faced the jury. 'I offer as evidence this object which was found at the scene of the crime.' He held in his hand a corn-cob. It appeared to have been dipped in dark brownish paint" (Faulkner, 1985: 300). There is no ellipsis in Faulkner's novel; this is not an elliptic representation like Lang's, for example, in the assault and murder of the girl in *M*. Here we are

dealing with a different order of representation: the rape of Temple Drake is folded in the blind man's gaze, and folded again in the corncob held up by the attorney fifteen chapters later. Within the folds of these episodes is contained the ghastly rape. Popeye thus functions as a phantasmagoria, a nightmare whose sexual organ is a corncob (Bloom, 2012: 500). And Temple Drake will end up becoming an icy, monstrous young woman who chooses to live with Popeye, attracted by the narcotic sordidness that the gangster exudes. With this abhorrent couple, Faulkner created a dense and dark sexuality that was revealed not through off-screen moments, but through folds. Although in this case we are dealing with a literary work that was not subject to the Hays Code, Faulkner was nevertheless aware of the censorship of his era, and consequently crafted this technique of locating the horrific within the folds of his stories. The castration of Joe Christmas in *Light in August*, Charlotte's abortion in *The Wild Palms*, the incest in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are clear examples of this depiction that folds up the lurid scene, thereby rendering it impossible to pinpoint the ghastly images on a particular page. In this way, Faulkner forced his readers to read between the lines and weaves of the whole narrative fabric of his novels in order to reconstruct their most shocking images.

Faulkner's influence on classical Hollywood cinema—from his aura of wicked novelist to his reputation as a maladjusted screenwriter—is undeniable: the studios looked to Faulkner, Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald as narrative beacons and formal creators of their era. In this sense, I believe it could prove revealing to analyse canonical works of Hollywood classicism that show signs of a possible integration of this *folded form* that Faulkner introduced into the narrative of his time.

Richard Maltby identifies a "policy of ambiguity" that was tacitly adopted by classical Hollywood to work around the censorship code: "The Code forced Hollywood to be ambiguous, and gave it a

set of mechanisms for creating ambiguity, while viewers learned to imagine the acts of misconduct that the Code had made unmentionable" (Maltby, 2012: 245).[8] The *Faulknerian fold* involves a recognisable figurative procedure and form specific to this "policy of ambiguity" that Maltby identifies without exploring the specific techniques for its implementation. The folded forms constituted a new figurative typology that placed the representation of ghastly images beyond the censors' reach.

Despite—or perhaps because of—all the con-

FOR GILLES DELEUZE, ENVELOPMENT IS THE REASON FOR THE FOLD: "WHAT IS FOLDED IS THE INCLUDED, THE INHERENT. WE COULD SAY THAT WHAT IS FOLDED IS ONLY VIRTUAL AND CURRENTLY EXISTS ONLY IN AN ENVELOPE, IN SOMETHING THAT ENVELOPS IT."

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troversy it incited, *Sanctuary* became Faulkner's best-selling novel. Paramount very quickly realised that this controversy could result in a hit on the big screen and obtained the film rights to the book. When William Hays found out, he went to all lengths to stop the production of the adaptation, classifying Faulkner's novel as "inadmissible". Gregory Black describes the scandal provoked by the news, showing how the film industry press even went as far as suggesting the need for federal control over the industry if a story as "filthy and vile" as *Sanctuary* could be brought to the screen (Black, 1998: 108-109). Paramount negotiated with the Hays Office and succeeded in making its adaptation of *Sanctuary*, although only after agreeing to constant intervention by the censors in the different versions of the script. *The Story of Temple Drake* (Stephen Roberts) was released in 1933 and quickly became one of the most oft-cited films in classical Hollywood in relation to censorship. It also laid down

certain standards for how to approach the adaptation of lurid literary works. The first of these involved erasing any relationship with the original novel. Thus, in the adaptation the use of the same title was prohibited, as was any reference to the novel or to Faulkner in the credits, posters or publicity (Caïra, 2005: 45-46). The character of Popeye was eliminated, and the *inadmissible* rape with the corncob was turned into a *normal* rape: in the film version, it is a middle-aged gangster who assaults the young high-class rebel, without the use of a corncob. This rape was represented with the conventional off-screen propriety, revealed through the young woman's gaze and the rapist's shadow projected against the stable before he attacks his victim. However, the filmmaker and producers did manage to slip the most disturbing symbol from Faulkner's novel into this scene: Temple Drake (Miriam Hopkins) is lying on top of a pile of corncobs. As Freud revealed, the thing repressed always returns, and in this case is multiplied: the corncob that could not serve any purpose in the screenplay nevertheless continues to suggest a horror that pervades the story. This particular fold was woven into an explicit intertextual wink to the readers of the novel, as well as to the readers of the controversies that Faulkner's novel and its tumultuous adaptation had provoked.[9] This time the folded image was not dispersed through the film, but *between* the film and the literary work that served as its source. The corncobs planted in the rape scene thus allowed the "inadmissible" to loom like a ghost on the horizon of expectations of the spectators of the day.

For Gilles Deleuze, envelopment is the reason for the fold: "what is folded is the included, the inherent. We could say that what is folded is only virtual and currently exists only in an envelope, in something that envelops it" (Deleuze, 2006: 24). In Faulkner, the point of view of the characters is the place where the shocking images are folded, where they are *enveloped*. A shrewd reader of Jo-

seph Conrad and Henry James, Faulkner learned from both these authors how to place the most heinous images of his works in those intangible spaces of the consciousness of his characters: into their silent gazes (gazes that are often impossible, like the blind man's in *Sanctuary*, or radically strange, like that of a mentally disabled man in *The Sound and the Fury*), into what they look at that the reader does not see, Faulkner slips the most horrific elements woven into his stories.[10]

The film that applied this formulation with the greatest effect in classical Hollywood cinema is probably *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956). The scene in which Ethan discovers his family's ranch in flames encodes all the brutality that Ford folds into the gaze of this obscure character: Ethan runs around the ruins of the burning house, calling out desperately for Martha, the sister-in-law with whom he is secretly in love, as Ford reveals to us by means of certain subtle gestures at the start of the film.[11] Ethan discovers the tattered remains of Martha's dress in the dirt, and then peers inside an odd little shack where he will find the beaten body of the woman he loves. Ford, inverting the image of the film's famous opening, now shows us the backlit image of Ethan, staring at what cannot be shown from the doorway to the shack. His silhouette, with none of his features visible, faces the horror that we cannot see, so that we are unable even to identify his expression. We only see his outline, a black shadow, as he lowers his head in a gesture of impotence. As Ethan turns away from the shack, Martin, the mixed-blood boy adopted by Martha and her husband, tries to go in as well, to see his aunt's body. Ethan strikes him violently to hold him back: "Don't go in there," he orders. When Mose, an old family friend, approaches the boy, Ethan warns him: "Don't let him look in there, Mose. It won't do him any good." Ethan seems to be speaking to the spectators, as his shadowy gaze has engraved the image (or created the image) of the raped and mutilated body of his sister-

in-law, and he seems to be telling us that he alone can contain the horror, folded in his gaze.

It is neither an off-screen space nor an ellipsis: Ethan has looked upon Martha's horribly beaten body right before our eyes, and a few scenes later it will even be hinted that Scar, the Comanche chief, has scalped her. All of this happens in this fold contained in Ethan's silhouette.

Ford will use this same mechanism a few sequences later to *show us* the death of Lucy, Ethan's eldest niece. Ethan, Martin and Brad, Lucy's boyfriend, have come to the arid terrain of Monument Valley to rescue Lucy and the young girl Debbie, who have been captured by the Indians. Brad, excited over his discovery of a settlement of "redskins" tells his companions: "I saw Lucy alright… She was wearin' that blue dress." Ethan eyes him bitterly and tells him that it wasn't Lucy that he saw, but an Indian wearing Lucy's dress. "I found Lucy back there in that canyon. I wrapped her in my blanket and buried her with my own hands. I thought it best to keep it from you," he tells Brad and Martin, speaking in the language of the fold: *I wrapped* her in my blanket, *I buried her* with my hands, *I kept it from you*. These procedures are what have engraved the sight of his niece's naked and assaulted body into his gaze. All the wretchedness has been folded away in a canyon that we didn't even see from a distance. The scene in which Ethan discovers the mutilated body of his niece does not exist; only its aftermath is shown: when they followed the trail of the kidnappers they discovered at the canyon's edge that the trail of the Indians split into two. Brad and Martin mused over why they would have separated at that point. But Ethan, who intuited the worst, ordered Martin and Brad to wait for him on the other side of the gorge, saying he wants to go alone to take a look around the canyon. Ford thus forces us to stay with the young men. But in this case it is not an off-screen space like Lang's in *Rancho Notorious*, which throws us out into the street while the young woman is raped inside the store. The scene in which Ethan

sees Lucy's body in the canyon only exists as a fold. When Ethan returns to Brad and Martin he says nothing, but he behaves strangely, climbing down from his horse and digging in the sand with his knife. Is he miming the actions of the burial? Or foreshadowing the vengeance he will take with that same knife? We cannot know, and nor can the two young men, although they feel (as do we) that something is being folded again inside Ethan before our eyes. Martin asks him whether he is feeling alright and then points out that his blanket is gone. Ethan replies that he must have lost it, but that he won't be going back to look for it. A few scenes later, when Brad says that he thinks he saw Lucy, everything folded within Ethan's incomprehensible behaviour in the earlier scene will come back with full force. After Ethan's folded revelation, Brad, with a shaky tone in his voice, babbles out a few incomplete questions: "Did they...? Was she...?" And Ethan shouts aggressively in reply: "What've I got to do? Draw you a picture? Spell it out? Don't ever ask me! Long as you live don't ever ask me more!" In these dialogues, Ford was unfolding the logic that governs the whole coding process of the horrific moments in *The Searchers*. In Ethan's violent shouts the Hays Code is subverted by a Faulknerian fold that is more ghastly than any graphic detail of a brutal murder. In his rage we can see the beaten bodies of Martha and Lucy that he cannot get out of his head. He is a sacrificial hero who takes the sight of the horror upon himself so that nobody else has to witness it. These Fordian techniques take us fully into a figurative system that is completely different from off-screen propriety: much more elaborate, dense and pregnant with meaning.

Deleuze shows us that with Leibniz the Baroque space is not constructed from one point to the next, as if we were following a line, but from one fold to the next, as if there were no centre. (Deleuze, 2015: 32-33). The Baroque marks a new type of harmony for works that have no centre within them and must project it (seek it) outsi-

FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, *THE SEARCHERS* IS REVEALED TO BE PROFOUNDLY FAULKNERIAN: A MURKY SOUTHERN SOUL THAT HAS NO PLACE IN THE NEW NATIONAL FABRIC AND MUST BE FOLDED TO HAVE A PLACE IN THAT FRAMEWORK, IN THE NATION'S STORY

de their frames (Deleuze, 2015: 160-165). In *The Searchers*, the key (central) scenes that record the brutal assaults of Martha and Lucy are placed off-centre. These central scenes, which cannot be positioned inside the fame due to the restrictions of the Hays Code, necessarily have to be projected into the off-screen space. What this means is that instead of being located at a precise point in a shot, in a particular scene, they are *projected* onto Ethan's point of view. These horrific corpses are woven into the fabric that progresses from fold to fold, from point of view to point of view. Deleuze suggests that these principles of construction are recognisable on a simple level in the style of textile: "If there is an inherently Baroque costume, it is broad, in distending waves, billowing and flaring, surrounding the body with its independent folds, ever-multiplying" (Deleuze, 2015: 155). It is telling that Ethan should find the tattered remains of Martha's dress before the horrific confirmation of her murder, in the same way that Debbie's kidnapping is revealed by means of an old rag doll left on the dusty ground of the graveyard, or that Lucy's blue dress should be glimpsed by her boyfriend on another body that he mistakes for hers. In all these articles of woven cloth scattered in the dust of Monument Valley appear the terrible fates of Martha's and Lucy's abused and beaten bodies, and the unknown whereabouts of Debbie's. As Deleuze tells us, "perceiving in the folds means capturing figures without an object. I see the fold of things through the dust they raise, and whose folds I separate" (Deleuze, 2015: 122).

Read in these terms, *The Searchers* is Ford's most Baroque work: it is not Baroque in its appearance, but, as shown here, in its internal constitution. It is Baroque by necessity, as was Faulkner's work in describing the horrors of the South, which the unifying new imaginary of the "American dream" attempted to exclude. From this perspective, *The Searchers* is revealed to be profoundly Faulknerian: a murky Southern soul that has no place in the new national fabric and must be folded to have a place in that framework, in the nation's story.

IV. BEYOND THE CENSORSHIP CODE

As we examine the written precepts of the Hays Code, one question hovers over their interpretation: Apart from checking whether the films adhered to the precepts, what did a censor analyse? Or, more precisely, what did a censor look for to determine whether to grant or withhold the stamp of approval? For Joseph I. Breen, the strict Catholic who was appointed by Hays as director of his office, the key factor was how he thought the audience would interpret a scene, a character, or a film: "If Breen was convinced that the audience would sympathise with the criminal or the sinner, he would force the studio to reconstruct the scene or character until he was sure that the audience would leave the theatre certain that evil in whatever form was wrong" (Black, 1996: 296). In other words, what the strictest censor in the Hays Office analysed was the perspective from which the offensive image was viewed. For Breen, the most important factor was not the degree or type of brutality, but the point of view from which the actions were depicted. The censors analysed how characters reacted to the most lurid events, and how the audience was made to identify with the characters. This criterion, which governed every aspect of the Code, and which was a guarantee not only of morality but also of the classical style, was threatened by the figurative form

sustained in folds. With off-screen space we can see the characters looking at something that we cannot see, and we can see or sense how they are feeling. With a fold, often we do not even see the moment when the characters *see* what is enveloped between scenes: by folding the horrific events in points of view that are often beyond the reach of our gaze, as in *The Searchers*, the possibility of analysing a character's judgment becomes seriously complicated (with an indeterminacy that Faulkner took to the extreme in narrating horrors from the perspective of the blind or the mentally disabled).

In this sense, Ethan's point of view is possibly one of the most opaque in classical cinema: we never know whether he seeks to avenge his loved ones against the Indians or to kill his niece so that she cannot become one of them. The ghastly images held within the folds of his gaze speak not of innocence but of a dense obscurity. Jeff, Hitchcock's indiscreet *voyeur*, becomes a guarantor of what we should think and feel. Ethan, on the other hand, far from being an innocent bystander, opens the door to thoughts and folds that are more obscure, projecting this type of figuration onto film history, not to mask brutality in accordance with the Hays Code but to tell more complex stories. *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963), for example, graphically shows the most literally horrific images—seagulls pecking at children's heads, a man whose eyes have been plucked out, birds torturing the female protagonist, etc.—as a means of enfolding even more disturbing images, like those related to the embittered sexuality of Mitch's mother: the more threatened she feels by the young Melanie, the more birds multiply, expressing the threat externally, like corncobs, within the shots. Mitch's mother's point of view is opaque and produces more birds in the scenes every time she sees signs of her son's relationship with Melanie. In *The Birds* we are no longer dealing with a technique aimed merely at skirting around the Hays Code, but an unsettling *spiral* of

meaning (a concept associated with Hitchcock's Baroque mannerist style) that is gradually constructed through the gazes of his characters.[12]

The use of the fold as described here could be studied as a larger figurative form which, having grown to maturity under censorship, has carried on beyond it. The films of David Lynch, and all the seasons of the series *Twin Peaks* (D. Lynch, M. Frost, ABC-Showtime: 1990-2017), make up a comprehensive example that demonstrates the continued existence of this type of depiction in contemporary audiovisual production.[13] ∎

NOTES

1 The books of Gregory Black (1998: 324-331) and Olivier Caïra (2005: 37-39) include the text of the Code with all its points as appendices. The website "The Production Code of the Motion Pictures Industry (1930-1967)" offers a more detailed analysis of the Code, examining the different additions and amendments made to it during the years it was in effect: http://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes_productioncode.php

2 In this respect, the letters between censors and filmmakers offer a meaningful field of study. An excellent sample and analysis of such documents can be found in Gerald Gardner (1987).

3 Among the different works that analyse off-screen space and its different functions are the benchmark studies by Noël Burch (1981), Pascal Bonitzer (1995) and Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín (2006), as well as my own study of the phenomenon (Fillol, 2016).

4 "The Baroque does not refer to an essence, but rather to an operative function, to a characteristic. It endlessly creates folds." In these folds it inscribes the source of its images, which is why to interpret the Baroque a "cryptography" is needed, which can "see into the coils of matter and read in the folds of the soul" (Deleuze, 2015: 11).

5 Something similar could be said of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson: a work of historical analysis that could be read as a prescription for classical cinema rather than merely a description of the style of this period.

6 Quoted in Rollet (2002: 90).

7 Some great filmmakers of the fantasy genre and of B-grade movies made a different use of off-screen space in classical cinema, aimed more at revealing the otherness of the monstrous than concealing the impropriety. Jacques Tourneur, Tod Browning, Rouben Mamoulian, Merian Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, are a few good examples of this different figurative approach. On this point, see Fillol (2016).

8 See also Maltby (1993: 65).

9 For a detailed reconstruction of the controversy and the reception of *The Story of Temple Drake* in the context of the Hays Code, see Black (1998: 109-113) and Mitry (1986: 329-338). Richard Maltby (1993: 57-58) also deals with this case in his benchmark work "The Production Code and the Hays Office", including a stillframe of the rape scene in the film, where we see Temple Drake (Miriam Hopkins) lying on the pile of corncobs. Olivier Caïra (2005: 45-46) also identifies the adaptation of *Sanctuary* as a milestone that had a big impact on the Hays Office.

10 There is a noteworthy unpublished thesis (Pérez Pamies, 2017), written for the Master's in Contemporary Film and Audiovisual Studies at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, about the representation of the taboo of paedophilia in contemporary cinema, which considers the importance of *Sanctuary* in its representation.

11 Fran Benavente and Glòria Salvadó (2013: 13-15) offer an exemplary analysis of how Ford inscribes Martha and Ethan's unspoken love story in their body language at the start of the film.

12 In relation to Hitchcock's mannerist style, see González Requena (2006).

13 The famous ear in *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986) or the investigation into the death of Laura Palmer (who herself is a kind of reworking of Temple Drake) in *Twin Peaks* are good examples of the enduring nature of this tradition.

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OFF-SCREEN SPACE AND THE FOLD: WAYS OF REPRESENTING THE UNREPRESENTABLE, SHAPED BY THE HAYS CODE IN CLASSICAL CINEMA

Abstract

In this article I propose to analyse the off-screen spaces and folds used in classical Hollywood to represent its most lurid scenes under the Hays Code. The first part of this article discusses off-screen space, interpreting the conventional uses and narrative limits that characterised this concept during the period of the Code. In the final sections, the concept of "the fold", taken from Gilles Deleuze's studies on Leibniz and the Baroque, is proposed as a way of naming and analysing a new, more elaborate and complex notion which, having grown to maturity during the era of censorship, has carried on beyond it.

Key words

Hays Code; Off-screen space; Fold; Narrative Structure; Visible; Invisible; Representable; Unrepresentable.

Author

Santiago Fillol is a researcher and senior lecturer in film and literary studies, film direction and film study methods at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, and a member of the CINEMA Research Group at the same university. He is the author of *Historias de la desaparición* (Shangrila, 2016) and has published articles on film and literature in scientific journals such as *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, *Communication & Society* and *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, as well as several chapters in books issued by prestigious publishers.
Contact: santiago.fillol@upf.edu

EL PLIEGUE Y EL FUERA DE CAMPO. FORMAS DE REPRESENTAR LO IRREPRESENTABLE, MOLDEADAS POR EL CÓDIGO HAYS EN EL CINE CLÁSICO

Resumen

El presente artículo se propone analizar los fuera de campo y los pliegues con los que el Hollywood clásico dio forma a sus escenas más escabrosas bajo el código de censura Hays. En la primera parte del mismo se estudia el uso del fuera de campo, interpretando los límites narrativos y los usos convencionales que esta forma tuvo durante la vigencia de dicho código. En los capítulos finales, se propone el concepto de «pliegue», tomado de Gilles Deleuze y sus estudios sobre la filosofía de Leibniz y el barroco, para nombrar y analizar un tipo de figuración más elaborada y compleja que, habiendo madurado igualmente bajo la censura, ha ido más allá de ella.

Palabras clave

Código de censura Hays; fuera de campo; pliegue; estructura narrativa; visible; invisible; representable; irrepresentable.

Autor/a

Santiago Fillol es investigador y profesor de Cine y Literatura, Dirección Cinematográfica y Metodologías en estudios cinematográficos en la Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Forma parte del grupo de investigación CINEMA de la mencionada universidad. Autor de *Historias de la desaparición* (Shangrila, 2016), ha publicado artículos sobre cine y literatura en revistas científicas como *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, *Communication & Society* o *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, y capítulos de libro en diferentes editoriales de prestigio.
Contacto: santiago.fillol@upf.edu