

Introduction

The Joy of Censorship

THE BOOK THAT FOLLOWS is in the unseemly position of defending censorship from the central liberal allegations that are traditionally leveled against it: censorship leads to fewer and duller representations of human sexuality; censorship squelches political protest; censorship domesticates and disempowers women; censorship destroys art. The problem with this insistently destructive formulation is that it gives the censor both too much and too little credit—too much because it assumes that the censor is shrewdly omnipotent, controlling and restricting the artist's every move, too little because it assumes that the goals of the censor are necessarily at odds with the goals of the artist. The censor that I will be describing in this study is at times more fallible, at times more broad-minded than the phantom enemy of free expression so often evoked by the anticensorship cause. And the artist that I will be describing knows it. Less in contest than in collaboration, the censor and the artist of my account work together to create an allusive, subtextual style of storytelling that is, in many ways, precisely the style best suited to telling tales of sexually and socially subversive desire. To demonstrate this, I will focus my attention on the role that censorship played in the shaping of two narrative art forms that are often critiqued for their seeming acquiescence to the pressures of propriety: the mainstream Victorian novel and Production Code–era Hollywood film.

Although these genres are linked by neither time nor place nor medium, it is my contention that they were governed in very similar manners

by very similar rules and regulations—with very similar artistic results. These regulations were primarily moral in nature, intended to prevent the highly popular art forms of the novel and the cinema from corrupting the “susceptible” minds of their young, lower-class, and female audiences. But they were also, importantly, extralegal; Hollywood filmmakers chose to embrace the directives of the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (also known as the Hays Code) in order to forestall legal battles at the state and Supreme Court levels, while Victorian novelists chose to censor themselves in order to appease moral reform groups and the conservative sector of their book-buying public. Both types of artists were, then, affected not by the political censorship of tyrannical governments but by the more insidious censorship of public opinion, of middle-class morality, of the marketplace. And, in response, both sets of artists could be seen to employ comparable strategies of censorship resistance. Rather than being ruined by censorship, the novels written in nineteenth-century England and the films produced under the Production Code were stirred and stimulated by the very forces meant to restrain them.

As much as I will argue what these two censorship histories have in common, one marked difference between them is the degree to which the rules of acceptability were spelled out for the artists who were expected to play by those rules. Starting in 1930 and continuing until the late 1960s, Hollywood filmmakers were provided with an ostentatiously formal list of verbal and visual requirements and prohibitions that dictated the way their films could treat everything from crime (“Revenge in modern times shall not be justified”), to sex (“Sexual perversion or any inference to it is forbidden”), to religion (“Ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains”), to particular locations (“The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy”).¹ Victorian novelists received no such document. Theirs was a quieter, more intangible form of censorship, perceived by many to be all the more powerful because it went without saying. This intangibility was perhaps best described by Lord Thomas Macaulay who, in the course of writing his *History of England* in the mid-1850s, peevishly observed:

During a hundred and sixty years the liberty of our press has been constantly becoming more and more entire; and during those hundred and sixty years

the restraint imposed on writers by the general feeling of readers has been constantly becoming more and more strict. At length even that class of works in which it was formerly thought that a voluptuous imagination was privileged to disport itself, love songs, comedies, novels, have become more decorous than the sermons of the seventeenth century. At this day foreigners, who dare not print a word reflecting on the government under which they live, are at a loss to understand how it happens that the freest press in Europe is the most prudish.²

Like the nineteenth-century foreigners who gazed with wonder at the gratuitous prudery of the Victorian press, contemporary critics have a difficult time discussing the Victorian novel in terms of its relationship to censorship. By studying the implicit injunctions of Victorian morality alongside the explicit edicts of Hollywood's Production Code, however, we can understand more about both versions of censorship. Because Code administrators were specifically trying to bring a more "Victorian" aesthetic to the morally depraved world of popular film, their meticulously preserved correspondence with studio heads and filmmakers provide us with a concrete language to describe and discuss the Victorian censorship practices that have eluded critical inquiry for so long.

I am not the first to identify a parallel between the Victorian novel and classical Hollywood film; scholars have, in fact, been remarking upon their resemblances ever since the 1944 publication of Sergei Eisenstein's seminal piece of comparative criticism, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today."³ In particular, many film historians who write about the studio era's intricate system of self-censorship point to its Victorian ancestry at some point in their analyses. Thomas Doherty, for example, argues that an "amalgam of Irish-Catholic Victorianism colors much of [the Code's] cloistered design," while Francis Couvares connects the Code's fear of "arousing strong desires and strong antipathies in an untrustworthy public" back to the concerns brought on by "the emergence of the dime novel, the penny press, and the popular theater in the nineteenth century."⁴ But if the Code is Victorian in its paranoid priggishness, it is also Victorian according to the reconceptualization of the term that began with the work of Steven Marcus in the 1960s but that is more often associated with Michel Foucault's juggernaut of cultural genealogy, *The History of Sexuality*. False,

Foucault informs us, are the modern world's presumptions about its discourse-suppressing Victorian past; what the Victorians ought really to be credited with is the institutionalization of prurience. In the world of film, similar credit may be given to the creators and enforcers of the Production Code. For in sifting through the copious Production Code Administration (PCA) files that are now accessibly housed in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, one is struck not by the Code administrators' hegemonic smothering of all controversial content but rather by what Foucault describes as "a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear [such content] spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail."⁵ Censorship, in classical Hollywood as in Victorian England, paradoxically catalyzed the overt discussion of covert desires.

Acknowledging the paradoxical nature of prohibitive practices is the unifying feature of a specific branch of censorship study to which this work clearly belongs.⁶ Yet in spite of the relative abundance of criticism that sees censorship as a productive force—insofar as it generates discourse as much as it inhibits it—there continues to be something of a critical taboo against viewing censorship as productive in a more pleasurable, beneficial sense. Even when such a view is hinted at, it tends to be presented as a qualification or subordinate point to the critic's larger argument and is often voiced in a hesitant or apologetic tone. This hesitancy is, of course, understandable, since extolling the benefits of censorship can come dangerously close to encouraging or excusing acts of oppression and silencing. Indeed, as Robert Post points out in his foreword to a collection of recent censorship essays, one of the primary pitfalls of this new scholarship is its tendency "to flatten variations among kinds of struggles, de-emphasizing the difference between, say, the agonism of poets and that of legal aid clients."⁷ I would like, therefore, to emphasize at the outset that I do appreciate this difference, and to acknowledge that the majority of my claims about the "joy" of censorship in the Victorian novel and classical Hollywood cinema hold true only because nineteenth-century England and twentieth-century America had each established foundational levels of artistic and political freedom.

In England, this foundation is typically traced back to 1695, the year in which the House of Commons opted not to renew the Licensing Act

that required books to be approved by the government before they were published. As Lord Macaulay's complaint about his nation's inexplicable reticence makes clear, however, the course of free expression in England never did run smooth. From the very beginning of the eighteenth century, the fear of Jacobite and other political insurrections resulted in a rash of sedition and libel suits, just as the battle against obscenity was declared by the various Societies for the Reformation of Manners that spread across the empire in an effort to fill the void left by the decline of the morality-monitoring church tribunals known as the "Bawdy Courts." By the end of the eighteenth century, the Evangelicals emerged as the most vociferous and influential of moral reform groups, eliciting from King George III in 1787 a "Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the Preventing and Punishing of Vice, Profaneness and Immorality," at which time the Proclamation Society (later renamed the Society for the Suppression of Vice) was born. Yet, as historian Edward Bristow has pointed out, "little of significance was accomplished [by the Society] until after 1789, when Britain's first pack of smuthounds were able to take advantage of a repressive climate in which invitations to sexual indiscipline were equated with invitations to political rebellion."⁸ According to Bristow and many other recent scholars of English morality, it was in the wake of the French Revolution that the groundwork for the conservative Victorian era was originally laid.

In the United States, 1789 was an equally pivotal year in the history of moral censorship. It was the year that the Bill of Rights, with its First Amendment guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of the press, was submitted to the states for ratification. But it was only a matter of nine years before the authority of that amendment was to be limited by the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. As in England, civic and religious protest groups voiced their concerns about dirty words, images, and ideas throughout the nineteenth century, most famously under the pugnacious leadership of the turn-of-the-century moral watchdog Anthony Comstock. With the advent of motion pictures in the early twentieth century, an even greater sense of urgency was brought to the moral reform cause. Because the cinema was so appealing to young, lower-class, and (I will argue) female audiences, it served as a source of enormous anxiety for those who believed in the power of popular culture to corrupt susceptible, im-

pressionable minds. Pressures to regulate film content mounted over the course of the 1910s and '20s until, in 1930, Hollywood struck upon a solution to its censorship problems in the form of a pseudolegal document that promised to disinfect the morally depraved world of film. The purpose of adhering to the dictates of this document, from the studios' perspective, was to keep the question of film censorship out of the courts as much as possible, just as the purpose of writing inoffensive literature in Victorian England had been, at least in part, to keep the novel "safe" from the law.

This is not to say that Victorian writers and Production Code-era filmmakers were wholly successful in their attempts to avoid legal confrontations. In the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, Parliament signed into law the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, which most legal scholars consider to be the first modern obscenity statute. In it, English magistrates were authorized to seize "works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in any well-regulated mind."⁹ A decade later, the definition of obscenity was altered in a slight but important way. According to the verdict of *Regina v. Hicklin* (1868), the original "purpose" or "intent" of the material was no longer what mattered; instead, "The test of obscenity is whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall."¹⁰ The Hicklin standard was soon adopted on the other side of the Atlantic and remained in effect in the United States until it was superseded by *Roth v. United States* in 1957, at which point the Supreme Court modified it to include only that material whose "dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest"¹¹—a step forward from the Hicklin test, which had allowed controversial passages to be judged out of context so that a novel like James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, could be deemed legally pornographic.

The Hollywood film industry, meanwhile, was subjected to an even steeper set of legal regulations than the literature of its time. In *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio* (1915), the Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment could not be used to defend the content of motion pictures. Because the movie industry was "a business, pure and simple" and could so easily "be used for evil," the Court de-

clared, it did not consider the censorship of the cinema to be “beyond the power of government.”¹² As a result, state and local censor boards were legally permitted to trim, truncate, and ban classical Hollywood films to their heart’s content. This decision would not be overturned until *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson* (1952), commonly known as the “Miracle Decision” because it dealt with the banning of Roberto Rossellini’s “sacrilegious” short film *The Miracle* (1948).¹³ In this decision, film was finally determined to be a “significant medium for the communication of ideas” that deserved to be granted the Constitutional right of free speech.¹⁴ Over the course of the following decade, the proscriptive powers of state and local censors were gradually dissolved by a series of Supreme Court verdicts until, in the mid-1960s, the motion picture industry was effectively freed from the shackles of legal censorship altogether.

As important as these juridical developments were to the construction of the artistically forbidden, the books and films that I will be discussing in this study were in little danger of being seized or banned on legal grounds. There is, however, another form of censorship that has the ability to affect even the most mainstream and respectable of texts—the de facto censorship of the marketplace. The more that industrialization and capitalism flourished in nineteenth-century England, the more a book’s perceived literary merit came to be dependent upon its anticipated bottom line. Moreover, as literacy began to extend to the working classes who could not afford to purchase their novels, library owners like Charles Mudie were given an even more specific type of censorious power: if the “notoriously straight-laced, hymn-writing Mudie”¹⁵ did not approve of a given novel’s moral tone, he could withhold it from general circulation and more or less ensure its financial failure (as he did with George Meredith’s *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* [1859], for example). The most outspoken attack on this branch of censorship can be found in George Moore’s 1885 polemical pamphlet, *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals*. In it, Moore heatedly condemns the restrictive policies of Mudie’s literary “monopoly,” and insists that “the old literary tradition coming down to us through a long line of glorious ancestors, is being gradually obliterated to suit the commercial views of a narrow-minded tradesman. Instead of being allowed to fight, with and amid, the thoughts and aspirations of men, literature is now rocked to an ignoble rest in the motherly arms of the librarian.”¹⁶

In early Hollywood, the most influential set of “motherly arms” belonged to a small cohort of Catholic men, who gathered together in the fall of 1929 to compose a formal document that would lay out definitive moral rules for Hollywood filmmakers to follow. Responding to the complaints of religious and secular protest groups that had increasingly been lodged against the motion picture industry, Father Daniel Lord, Father FitzGeorge Dineen, and the Catholic newspaper publisher Martin Quigley wrote up a list of three “General Principles,” twelve “Particular Applications”—with forty-three even more “particular” subcategories woven among them—followed by pages upon pages of “Reasons Supporting the Preamble of the Code,” “Reasons Underlying the General Principles,” and “Reasons Underlying the Particular Applications.” It is a fascinating document to read through, rife with the most grandiose of moralistic claims (“If motion pictures consistently hold up for admiration high types of characters and present stories that will affect lives for the better, they can become the most powerful natural force for the improvement of mankind”) and the most precise of prudish proscriptions (“Dances with movement of the breasts, excessive body movements while the feet are stationary, violate decency and are wrong”).¹⁷ In its length and in its careful attention to sordid detail, the Production Code is an exemplary model of the “discursive explosion” outlined by Foucault.

But even though, as Leonard Leff and Jerold Simmons have pointed out, the content of the Code “concerned morals, the *adoption* of [the] Code . . . concern[ed] money.”¹⁸ For it was no coincidence that the Code was formally adopted by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) less than six months after the stock market crash of 1929. Hollywood studios had been borrowing large sums of money from New York investment bankers ever since 1919, primarily for the purpose of expanding their exhibition empires. When the bankers lost almost everything a decade later, they suddenly became highly motivated to protect their Hollywood investments at all costs. One way that they attempted to do this was by putting pressure on the studios to create products that would be as broadly appealing (and fiscally lucrative) as possible. Since the self-proclaimed goal of the Production Code was to make movies harmless and appropriate for everyone—“for the masses, for the cultivated and the rude, the mature and the immature, the self-

respecting and the criminal"¹⁹—its implementation was Hollywood's way of assuring New York and the rest of the country that they were going to make a change for the better, both morally and financially. At the time, the moguls believed that publicizing their compliance with this new system of self-imposed censorship would satisfy the demands of their opponents without requiring them to make any significant changes to the way they ran their businesses. By 1934, however, moral protesters were on the offense again, insisting that the Code was not being sufficiently enforced and that Hollywood films were as indecent as ever. In an attempt to evade proposed boycotts, MPPDA president Will Hays changed the name of his censorship division to the Production Code Administration and brought on a new, more pugnacious leader to tighten the division's reins: Joseph Breen. Under Breen's direction, the Code became a more conservative and effectual censorship tool, and what is now regarded to be the most stringent epoch of cinematic purity began in earnest.

With so many legal and extralegal forces working against them, one would imagine Victorian novels and classical Hollywood films to have been creatively stymied to the point of suffocation. And, in truth, there were some characters and ideas that the two genres were forced to censor virtually out of existence. As compellingly as postcolonial and queer studies scholars have explored the undercurrents of multiculturalism and homosociality that trickled through such novels and films, for example, it cannot be denied that the world presented within them was, for the most part, a blindingly white, compulsorily heterosexual place. But there were other ways in which the moral censor's attempts to regulate the genres failed—or, at least, resulted in some highly unexpected permutations. Following the basic model of Freud's "return of the repressed," these permutations bobbed up from below the surface at regular and irregular intervals, in various guises and with various effects. It is the goal of this book to trace the curves and contours of censorship's unintended consequences, both as they apply to internal textual elements (plot, character, language, imagery, tone) and to the external production and reception of the text.

My chapters are arranged thematically, each using one British novelist and one Hollywood director to investigate the theme at hand. By configuring my analyses in this way, I realize that I am setting up something of a false symmetry between the authorship of the novelist and

the authorship of the film director. To be sure, filmmaking is a far more collaborative process than the relatively private act of writing a novel, and I do not mean to elide or ignore the artistic contributions made by film producers, writers, cinematographers, editors, composers, costumers, actors, et al. But the directors of the films that I have chosen to discuss were the individuals who dealt most directly with the mandates issued by the Hays Office, and they were the ones responsible for combining all the various cinematic threads together in an effort to satisfy the moral censor's demands and fulfill the film's artistic promise at one and the same time. I also purposely selected directors who tend to be identified with one particular film style and whose names carry with them certain specific cinematic connotations. "Sturges," "Cukor," "Capra," and "Kazan" are shorthand for more elaborate ideas about films and filmmaking, just as "Thackeray," "Austen," "Dickens," and "Brontë" are shorthand for more elaborate ideas about novels and novel writing.

Another factor that I took into consideration when determining which artists to single out in my chapter analyses was the extent to which their works narrativize, either directly or indirectly, the issue of moral censorship. Though the four novels and four films that will serve as the primary textual subjects of this study are by no means the only (or even the most obvious) examples of Victorian and classical Hollywood narratives concerning themselves with the rules and regulations of social acceptability, each of them does so in a way that is of particular interest to me. My chapter pairings are based largely on the connections that I see between specific novels and films, and between the personal attitudes of the artists who created them. What is lost in using this organizational approach, of course, is a sense of chronology; the story of censorship that I am telling has no distinct beginning, middle, or end. As appealing as a progressive structural framework might be, I believe that forcing such a framework onto the history of cultural censorship would be reductive and misleading. The censorship practices and evasion techniques that I will be analyzing do not belong exclusively to the Victorian or Production Code eras, and they are marked more by fluidity than by abrupt or systematic change. Yet it is still the case that Victorian novelists and classical Hollywood filmmakers have come to occupy similar positions within our literary and cinematic imaginations, especially in

terms of their perceived willingness to abide by what John Stuart Mill termed the “tyranny of the prevailing opinion.”²⁰ In the chapters that follow, I do not entirely refute this view of the popular artists under consideration. But I do question the assumption that the artists’ acts of direct and indirect obeisance were solely (or even predominantly) harmful to their ideological and aesthetic designs.

My story with no beginning begins with scandal. Not a particular historical or fictional scandal, but the paradoxical logic of scandal according to which discourse is increased by feelings like shock and moral indignation rather than silenced by them. To understand the ramifications of this logic in Victorian literature and classical Hollywood film, I look at the works of William Makepeace Thackeray and Preston Sturges, two artists who share a penchant for thematizing the subject of scandal (and, by extension, the subject of censorship) throughout the course of their storytelling. Indeed, the plots of Thackeray’s novels and Sturges’s films are routinely, almost compulsively concerned with the public response to the private taboo. Focusing on two of the artists’ most scandal-ridden texts, Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848) and Sturges’s *The Lady Eve* (1941), I discuss the ways in which the authors harness the perverse powers of the logic of scandal to their own artistic advantage. By repeatedly pointing out to their audiences all the things that they, in the name of propriety, should not and will not say, Thackeray and Sturges are simultaneously able to condemn, ridicule, and appease the more squeamish and conservative members of those audiences. One narrative trick that this chapter examines in particular is that of manipulating the connections between a text’s visual and verbal elements in order to circumvent the rules of moral censorship. Thackeray and Sturges are the ideal artists to demonstrate this trick, Thackeray being the rare novelist to draw all his own illustrations and Sturges being the first director of the Hollywood sound era to write all his own screenplays. Throughout their respective works, words and images are played off of one another in a well-orchestrated juggling act that allows the artists to show us that which they “cannot” tell us, and to tell us that which they “cannot” show.

My second chapter considers the relationship between censorship, sophistication, and gender. Film censors have traditionally defined sophisticated content to be that which can only be understood by the adult,

urban, and male members of the audience, and have encouraged writers and filmmakers to speak in a carefully bifurcated language “from which,” as one Code administrator put it, “conclusions might be drawn by the sophisticated mind, but which would mean nothing to the unsophisticated and inexperienced.”²¹ In this chapter, I draw connections between this gendered form of film censorship and the desire to protect the “young and virtuous female reader” that permeated discussions of the nineteenth-century British novel. Following Joseph Litvak’s lead in declaring Jane Austen to be “the first ‘Victorian’ novelist,”²² my discussion of sophistication is framed around the archetypically sophisticated romantic comedies of Austen’s *Emma* (1815) and George Cukor’s *The Philadelphia Story* (1940)—two stories in which the censor’s presumptions about the inexperienced, vulnerable female mind are pointedly undercut by the feminized inflection of the texts’ most allusive, suggestive discourse. Each of these works is, in its own way, a *bildungsroman* of sophistication—Emma Woodhouse must learn, over the course of her narrative, how to target her communications in a more sophisticated manner, while Tracy Lord must learn how *not* to be an unsophisticated, judgmental prude. Ultimately, in these works, sophistication becomes more than a strategy to make controversial content more palatable; it becomes a means of freeing the female protagonist (and, by extension, the female reader/viewer) from the social expectation of moral perfection.

As seminal as Eisenstein’s comparative analysis of Charles Dickens and D. W. Griffith may be, in my third chapter I locate more parallels between Charles Dickens and Frank Capra. In addition to the many formal and stylistic similarities that I see in and among their best-known works, I also see a striking resemblance between their narrative treatments of controversial material. More, perhaps, than any of the other figures I am examining, Dickens and Capra valued popular success and the idea of artistic respectability. But they also shared lofty ideas about the importance of social truth in art, and worked hard to create texts that would carefully walk the line between pleasing innocuousness and gritty realism. To that end, both artists created stories that were sharply critical of social and political ills but that still managed to exude an impression of soft-hearted idealism, even sentimentalism. As conflicting as the impulse to critique and the impulse to idealize may seem to be, I read the latter impulse as

a calculated strategy for achieving the former—in other words, I believe that Dickens and Capra intentionally infused their texts with an exaggerated aura of innocence and purity in order to make their most challenging notions acceptable and marketable to as large an audience as possible. This is especially true of Dickens and Capra’s iconically wholesome holiday classics, *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), each of which offers the audience a warm, inviting, Christmassy façade that artfully overshadows the darker, more pessimistic implications at its core.

For my fourth chapter, I delve into the psychological and libidinal pleasures of the forbidden fruit by examining the highly charged romantic encounters in Charlotte Brontë’s and Elia Kazan’s texts to see how barriers of resistance work to perpetuate and propel interest and desire. The final works that I examine in my project are, therefore, two intensely psychological stories of women whose lives appear to be damaged and even destroyed by the forces of sexual repression: Brontë’s *Villette* (1853) and Kazan’s film adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). The latter stands apart from the other texts I am analyzing in that it does have a reputation for being a “censored” work of art, primarily due to the four minutes of footage the Catholic Legion of Decency excised from the final cut of the film without Kazan’s compliance or consent. But I am interested less in those four missing minutes than in the 122 minutes that did manage to make their way into movie theaters in 1951, and in Kazan’s unexpectedly productive dealings with the Hays Office as he worked to bring Tennessee Williams’s unexpected portrayal of sexual repression to the silver screen. For Blanche DuBois and her “old-maid-school-teacher-ish” compatriot Lucy Snowe are not only shown to be victimized by the repressive forces that surround them; they are also shown, repeatedly and emphatically, to construct and reinforce sexual barriers themselves in an effort to heighten their own sensations of desire. Similarly, I argue, Brontë’s and Kazan’s interactions with their respective moral censors were marked less by victimization and oppression than by stimulation and inspiration. Both artists were, in the end, paradoxically motivated by the moral complaints lodged against them to communicate their ideas in subtler, richer, and more powerful ways.

In an often-cited story from Charlotte Brontë’s childhood, we are given a key to understanding the paradoxical nature of the restraint im-

posed upon Victorian writers and their classical Hollywood counterparts. Describing his unconventional child-rearing techniques to biographer Elizabeth Gaskell, Patrick Brontë recounts:

When my children were very young, when, as far as I can remember, the oldest was about ten years of age, and the youngest about four, thinking that they knew more than I had yet discovered, in order to make them speak with less timidity, I deemed that if they were put under a sort of cover I might gain my end; and happening to have a mask in the house, I told them all to stand and speak boldly from under cover of the mask.²³

Though the goal of such moral censors as Charles Mudie and Joseph Breen was certainly *not* “to make [artists] speak with less timidity,” the metaphoric mask that their censorship efforts placed upon Victorian and classical Hollywood artists inadvertently helped to achieve that goal nonetheless. The novels and films that I will examine in this project still resonate today because they speak so boldly and eloquently from “under the mask,” because they make such cunning use of the cultural restrictions imposed upon them, because they require their readers and viewers to think and question as they read and view. And that, in effect, is the gift of censorship: by forcing certain narrative impulses underground, censorship creates an open space, between text and subtext, where the agile interpreter within each one of us can come out to play.