

Tekst 6

‘I found it hard to stay awake’

1 **T**HIS TIME, unlike the last time I saw it in 1972, Stanley Kubrick’s infamous *A Clockwork Orange* did not shock at all, which is itself a bit shocking since it suggests that in the intervening 28 years we have become much more inured than we used to be to scenes of extreme sex and violence.

2 Just how little this was so in 1972 I have cause to remember well. As a member of the Lord Longford Pornography Commission it fell to me and my first wife, Claudie, to accompany Frank to a special private showing of the film. So great was his horror at the brutal rapes, horrific beatings – not to mention the first ever reference to homosexuality in prisons – that I don’t think he would have survived without having my wife’s supportive hand to cling on to.

3 My own, scarcely-less-extreme, sense of shock and outrage was summed up later in *The Sunday Telegraph*, under the heading “Muck in name of Art”. I wrote then: “The cult of sentimentality has given way to the cult of sensuality, the dangers of hagiography to the dangers of muck-raking, the pretence that man is far better than he is to the pretence that he is far worse.”

4 Why do I have no temptation today to replay that record? Partially, as I say, because muck in films, television dramas, novels and advertisements is now so much an everyday occurrence as no longer to be worthy of note. But just as great a reason, for me, is that in the intervening years I have come to suspect that rubbing the public’s nose in muck may do more good than harm.

5 How can this be so? Has it not led to more rapes, more brutality, more violence? Statistically, yes. But that increase could quite as easily be because many more crimes of that kind are now reported and they are now reported, of course, because explicit films etc have taken those most dreadful aspects of human misbehaviour – incest and sexual abuse of children quite as much as rapes and violence – out of the sphere of the unmentionable.



Malcolm McDowell as Alex, leader of the ‘droogs’

6 The novels of Dickens are quite revealing in this respect. For although he shocked the Victorian conscience by portraying the cruelties (floggings, deprivation etc) perpetrated by masters in the charity institutions of the day, he stopped short of ever even hinting at sexual abuse, not because none took place – for it most certainly did – but because he, like his readers, could not bear to face that most dreadful of truths.

7 But was this refusal to go the whole hog desirable? Not if you bear in mind his enormous influence for good in other respects. Unquestionably his brave denunciation of cruelty to children in general did in time create a much gentler culture, from which many generations, including my own, benefited immeasurably.

8 Might, therefore, a denunciation of sexual abuse have done something comparably beneficial in that area as well? True, Dickens would have had great difficulty in finding a publisher for such shocking stuff, and had he been able to do so there would unquestionably have been critics eager to condemn it as “muck in the name of art”. But that would have been a small price to pay for bringing forward by a hundred years or so the kind of public outrage against sexual abuse of children which is only now gathering force following recent revelations of cases in this country.

9 No, I am not disregarding the

fact that explicit portrayals of sex and violence may incite a few loonies to emulate in their lives what they have seen in celluloid or in print. That does happen, and we may well soon read about some new outbreak of gang violence following this week’s reshooting of *A Clockwork Orange*. But for every loony tempted, there must be thousands of ordinary people disgusted. Seeing is believing.

10 *A Clockwork Orange* may brutalise a few, but it will also raise the consciousness – and conscience – of the many. Sex and violence have always been widespread; what has changed in recent years is that now it is more difficult to ignore them. Some are switched on; but many more, I would like to think, are switched off.

11 As to the film itself, it is – apart from the superbly crafted sex and violence bits, which are soon over – largely cliché-ridden twaddle of a standard that no reputable novelist would get away with. When caught, the leader of the “droogs” is subjected to aversion therapy, which makes him literally sick of sex and violence, thereby rendering him, against his will, entirely harmless to the public. Stanley Kubrick, very sensibly, thinks this state cure for crime by depriving a man of his free will be worse than the disease itself, and spends at least an hour and a half demonstrating the obvious.

12 No wonder, at this second viewing, I could hardly stay awake.

Andrew Hagan in
The Weekly Telegraph

■ Tekst 6 ‘I found it hard to stay awake’

- “which is itself a bit shocking” (alinea 1)
- 1p 22 Waarom, volgens Andrew Hagan?
- 1p 23 ■ What do paragraphs 2 and 3 serve to illustrate?
- A The capacity to offend that *A Clockwork Orange* had in 1972.
 - B The degree of aggression and violence in *A Clockwork Orange*.
 - C The hypocrisy of film censors in the 1970s.
 - D The way the press sensationalised the unusual aspects of *A Clockwork Orange*.
- 1p 24 ■ Which of the following is true of the writer’s present stance on what he wrote in 1972?
- A He feels that he did not do justice to the film director’s artistic achievement at the time.
 - B He has since realised there may be a point in confronting people with examples of base behaviour.
 - C He insists that the gradual acceptance of violence over the years has proved him right in the end.
 - D He regrets it because his judgment had been unfairly influenced by other people’s reactions.
- “How can this be so?” (alinea 5).
- 1p 25 Hoe beantwoordt Andrew Hagan deze vraag?
Vul de onderstaande zin aan op je antwoordblad:
Het openlijk aandacht besteden aan seks en geweld in films en dergelijke...
- 1p 26 ■ Why does the writer call Dickens’ novels “quite revealing” (paragraph 6)?
- A They exposed the hypocrisy of those who committed atrocities while pretending to be good citizens.
 - B They illustrate that the existence of certain types of brutal behaviour could not even be acknowledged.
 - C They provide insight into the historical background of serious crimes against young people.
 - D They showed Victorian readers that their world was not as secure as they wanted to believe.
- 2p 27 In welk opzicht en op welk terrein prijst de schrijver Dickens, en in welk opzicht en op welk terrein bekritiseert hij hem, in de alinea’s 7 en 8?
Vul de onderstaande zinnen aan op je antwoordblad:
Hij prijst Dickens omdat...
Hij bekritiseert hem omdat...
- 1p 28 ■ What does the writer mean by “Seeing is believing.” (paragraph 9)?
- A Any reader who does not accept the author’s view now, is bound to do so after watching *A Clockwork Orange*.
 - B Many people want to see for themselves if *A Clockwork Orange* is as violent as reported.
 - C Once people have seen *A Clockwork Orange*, they will take the issue of violence seriously.
- 1p 29 Wat maakt de schrijver duidelijk over “Some” in alinea 10?
- 1p 30 ■ What is the writer’s final judgment of *A Clockwork Orange*?
- A After a promising start it rapidly turns into a vulgar display of sex and violence.
 - B Both subject and filming technique have become outdated.
 - C Its solution to the issue presented lacks artistic and intellectual originality.