

least for one hour a week he has for the first time in a long time a friend, somebody who will not look down on him. But somehow that is not enough, for it does not make washing dishes or smelling people's feet any nicer; the pushy landlords and all those people he sees day after day, who do not give a damn about 'that weed', are still there; the loneliness is still there. What John needs is some friends; somebody to talk to; somebody to go places with; somebody to sleep with; somebody who is kind and accepting; a way of life which is meaningful - and, how is the present type of psychotherapy giving that.

Where do we go from here? I really as yet do not know. If John came to me I know that to help him I would have to become his friend and my home his home. I know a person who owns a house and as lodgers she has ten 'patients' whose state could easily be described as 'acutely retrogressed', and for these ten she is a mother, sister, friend, housekeeper, laundress and therapist and she has performed wonders for people no one else could help. This is the type of place John needs, where he could have both a lot of love and a say in how things are done; here he would have the freedom to do what he really feels like doing. In this house there would be intense house meetings which would deal with anything from house procedures to deep personal problems. But how many people are there who have the beauty of spirit and dedication to give their own lives to help people in such a way? And still somehow the society which rejected John in the first place does not change.

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## THE PORNOGRAPHY BANDWAGON

*even if the evidence were valid - what about Nixon and the Gorbals?*

In his recent article - *The Effects of Violence and Sex in Culture* (SELF AND SOCIETY, May 1973) David Holbrook cited Christopher Chataway's reported statement that 'there is not a shred of evidence that the showing of violence on television is *responsible* for violence in the young'. He blurred this into the more ambiguous statement that 'there is no evidence of *harm* from the depiction of sex, on the screen' (in his picture of what he calls 'the *progressive dogma*') before producing his 'refutation' of both these statements. In this he stated that 'there is, in fact, evidence that sex and violence on the screen do have *some* effect on behaviour in *some* circumstances' (my italics) without apparently realising the difference between 'responsibility' and 'some effect' or the possible limiting force of that modifying 'some'.

Thus this statement about 'some effect. . . in some circumstances' (which he supports by reference to one American investigation committee's warning about the effect on emotionally disturbed children) eventually takes on the more frightening and sensational form - 'an aggressive film can induce aggressive actions by *anyone in the audience* (Mr. Holbrook's italics) where the ambiguity of 'anyone' is very misleading.

It is true that, in between these two statements there is an account of two articles about 'observing violence', but whatever the original experiment by Geen and Berkowitz may have proved, Mr. Holbrook's account of the experiments certainly does not prove 'that the observation of violence can increase the likelihood of subsequent aggression' (and any aggression mentioned in the experiments is motivated and not indiscriminate as 'anyone in the audience' might suggest.) After we have worked through the complexities of the report of the actual tests, we discover that, in fact, Mr. Holbrook's conclusions add nothing whatsoever to his argument, and are totally valueless in this context.

His first comment on the experiments is that people who have seen a 'violent' film react more aggressively to insults than to neutral treatment or task frustration. (Whether people who haven't seen the film also react more aggressively to insults than to neutral treatment or task frustration, Mr. Holbrook doesn't say.) But clearly the really important question for this discussion is whether the people who saw the 'violent' film reacted more aggressively than those who didn't. This is the question we expect him to be answering - and the question he should be answering to prove what he claims to be proving. But he says nothing at all about this.

The other conclusion he draws from the experiments is similarly irrelevant to the argument. He states that, after a boxing film connected with the name of the person who insults them, task-frustrated subjects are more aggressive than neutrally-treated subjects. This is exactly what we would expect: that people react more aggressively to insults than to task frustration - and more aggressively to task frustration than to being treated neutrally. All of this seems obvious anyway - and the tests (as David Holbrook reports them) don't prove even the *likelihood* of aggression following 'the observation of violence'. The observation of violence is totally irrelevant to these results - since there is no comparison made between the behaviour of those who saw the boxing film and the behaviour of those who saw the racing film. To discuss the effects of 'screen violence' it is obviously essential to compare a group who see a 'violent film' with the control group, who see a 'non-violent film'. And this Mr. Holbrook doesn't do.

Further, even if there were a comparison made between the behaviour of the two groups, the experimenters make some questionable basic assumptions. First of all, there seemed to be a curious underlying assumption that people *shouldn't* respond aggressively to insults (or to task frustration). Secondly, the experimenters seemed to have an arbitrary and simplistic concept of violence. It seems odd to describe a racing film as 'non-violent'. The interpersonal violence is less immediately apparent than in the boxing film - but there is obviously a deep structure of competition, aggression and violence. I will come back to this sort of 'dissociation' later - but it seems clear that the experimenters didn't seriously consider - or else closed their eyes to - the reasons why people watch racing.

Mr. Holbrook's account of the Schmidt/Sigusch experiments in the 'Pornography' section of his argument reveals a similar casual attitude to statistics and research. This argument is already weakened by the failure of proof that I've just analysed in the first part - but it

has its own shortcomings as well. On a trivial level, he tells us that '41 of the men' (was this a misprint? should it be 41%) reported more orgasms on the day after the experiments than on the previous day - which is a meaningless piece of information if we don't know how many men were involved altogether. (The more meaningful figure of '22% of the women' doesn't convincingly support his suggestion of a 'definite increase in the number of orgasms'). On a more significant level, he draws conflicting conclusions from the same data to support different parts of his argument. Thus he tells us, at one stage, that 'the feelings aroused are 'disturbed' and negative ones - associated with aggression' - but, later in the same paragraph, when he's describing masturbation as 'manic activity', he announces - 'it is therefore of great interest to me that both men and women reported being 'cheered up' as well as upset'.

As regards Mr. Holbrook's main argument, however, the experiments seem to suggest that watching 'pornographic films' had very little effect on interpersonal sexual activity. He writes:

*'Very few had imitated the film in interpersonal sexual acts. The increased activation, the experimenters say, was 'slight' and so does not in their case confirm that pornography is likely to cause a 'reduction in effective controlling mechanisms' or 'disinhibition'.*

He tries to cast some doubt on this result by suggesting 'of course, words like 'love', 'tenderness' or even 'passion' do not appear in such a sexological experiment' - by which he presumably (but unjustifiably) implies that, if these things could be measured, then we'd see that 'pornography' really had a damaging effect. For he goes on to make 'certain deductions' from the experiment - the first of which is that 'pornography contributes little or nothing to sexual acts between men and women'. At first glance, this seems to be the experimenters' own conclusion that 'pornography' had very little effect - but, in fact, it means something very different - with distinct 'negative' overtones (which again don't seem necessarily justified by the experiments) - because it leads into - 'the so-called 'sex-education' film is likely to do little for people's sexual enrichment' which, in turn, shades into the even more loaded, already-discussed statement - 'the feelings aroused are 'disturbed' and negative ones'. Thus, since the experiments showed there was very little effect on interpersonal sexual *activity* he turned his attention first to the immeasurable inner feelings - which he claimed were 'disturbed', 'negative', 'aggressive'. For similar reasons he next turned his attention to *solitary* sexual activity - which he again tries to relate to his earlier comments on aggression. But the basis for both these lines of approach is obviously the reports on subjective responses - and his comment on those was - 'The subjective reports certainly do seem to indicate that the response of the subjects was a *self-encapsulated response*'

But 'a self-encapsulated response' to films of sex, a 'solipsistic engagement with an electronically supplied fantasy', is obviously at complete odds with his earlier suggestion that 'an aggressive film can induce aggressive *actions*' and his picture of the viewer 'ready to attack people'. A complete contrast of passive and active, in-turned and outgoing responses.

In fact, '**Clockwork Orange**' has a far subtler grasp of the effects of 'cinema' on an audience. Mr. Holbrook cites it in his list of 'films glamourising violence and sadism' but his obsession with sex and violence has prevented him from seeing what '**Clockwork Orange**' is really about. It is really a very self-conscious film about film as a medium. (The

key to the film is found in the aversion therapy scenes where films are used for conditioning purposes). Kubrick is concerned with the effects implicit in the medium itself - effects like fragmentation (the dissociation of what really belongs together - like 'clockwork' and 'orange') which are obviously two sides of the same coin. In the conditioning sessions, Alex is sensitised to violence via films of violence. Though the drugs make him find any violence nauseating, his real moment of horror comes with the 'blasphemy' of using Beethoven's Ninth as background music for a concentration camp film. The irony here is that the scientists of the film, and we, the audience, easily accepted this inconsistent juxtaposition. We are not sensitised to this kind of false association, because it's part of the conventions of the medium, whereas we would notice it if it were in writing. Thus 'ultra-violence and Beethoven' on the posters seemed puzzlingly inconsistent. Similarly, George Steiner's article in 'The Listener', '*Civilising our Gentlemen*', sparked off a debate on how the German people could have produced both concentration camps and Beethoven. But throughout '*A Clockwork Orange*' the background music is Beethoven's 9th, and we have no sense of inconsistency.

There is a further irony here too: the scientists, besides being unaware of this false association (because they dissociate the conflicting implications of the separate elements), at the same time blank out the fact that it is not just films and drugs that are working on Alex - but also their own violence. They are blind to the fact that the violence they condemn in Alex, they are tackling with equal violence of their own. They dissociate Alex's sickness from their own actions which cause it - which is precisely the moral lesion they are trying to cure in Alex - which is clearly also the moral lesion in the society that sends Alex to prison.

There is a similar act of 'dissociation' in Mr. Holbrook's article. In his opening paragraph, he is ironic at the expense of '*progressive*' dogma'. He suggests: 'Society' causes violence - and 'Society' is not (apparently) to include commercial culture'. The violence of society is bound to be reflected in the commercial culture - but there is a lot of difference between saying this - and saying that commercial culture is responsible for 'violence' - and clearly, in this context, it is immoral and almost hypocritical to concentrate on violence in films. Mr. Holbrook puts a lot of stress on the idea of 'children' 'slipping into' X films -

*'If young children see repeatedly that screen heroes gain their ends through aggressive actions, they may conclude that aggression is desirable behavior'*. He also puts great stress on adults taking from X-films: '*An endorsement of ruthless male aggressiveness as the only possible solution to the problem of life*'.

But Nixon with his carpet-bombing of Vietnam - and now of Cambodia - has done far more to endorse this than any number of films - and has produced violence and destruction on an unimaginable and unfilmable scale. Nearer home, the violence of Glasgow street gangs isn't going to be affected either by 'violence' on film - or by 'gang-busting' policeman. As the reviewer (in the Times Literary Supplement) of James Patrick's recent study pointed out, we have to start with the life-style society provides for them - and the limitations it imposes on any real hope of improvement. When more than 15% of Glaswegians live in overcrowded conditions; when 41% of its dwellings are classed as sub-standard and 3% totally unfit for habitation; when the squalid old Gorbals have been replaced by vast soulless housing estates like Easterhouse and Drumchapel - and unemployment is high and rising - it seems totally unrealistic to talk of the brutalising effect of films.