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A Note From the Editor

David Katzman

Welcome to the Fall 2019 edition of *The English and Drama Review*. As we enter our fourth edition of the magazine and my final editorial note, I would like to take a chance to reflect on the past year's editions as well as all the hard work that the entire staff has done. From its inception, *The English and Drama Review* has set out to create a platform for students to publish their work, participate in an academic journal, and have the chance to become editors, writers, and graphic designers. Personally, I have worked with fantastic editors, writers, and graphic designers across each edition to create a product that we feel encapsulates the hard work each student exerts in creating an argument based on a familiar text that they might be approaching from an alien angle. These angles allow writers to develop their voice and project their ideas into an academic magazine. Thus, the focus of this edition is to portray meaningful individual experiences with famous pieces of writing and film ranging from Shakespeare to Kubrick, to Austen, and Fitzgerald.

Within this edition, Jules Talbot demonstrates her familiarity with Shakespeare in her essay but refocuses her approach to examine Shakespeare's *Richard II* within the context of Elizabethan law. Jade Lien explores how violence permeates through *A Clockwork Orange* through Jean Baudrillard's scholarship. Further, as this edition contains two different essays that both examine Jane Austen's work from different viewpoints—Anastasia Foley's analysis on the form of Emma and Julia Field's genealogy of dance across Austen's work—the Fall 2019 edition creates an argument that each person's interaction with a text is unique and singular. In this way, we can view two different person's interactions with famous texts and see how each person presents their interpretation of the text. In dealing with familiar subjects from a new perspective, this edition does not make individual experiences only a feature in this edition, but rather it is the thesis statement of this publication.

Best,
David Katzman

Violence and Art in *A Clockwork Orange*

Jade Lien

> *"The soul of Art—Art as adventure, Art with its power of illusion, its capacity for negating reality, for setting up an 'other scene' in opposition to reality, where things obey a higher set of rules, a transcendent figure in which beings, like line and colour on a canvas, are apt to lose their meaning, to extend themselves beyond their own raison d'être, and, in an urgent process of seduction, to rediscover their ideal form (even though this form may be that of their own destruction)—in this sense, Art is gone."*
>
> — Jean Baudrillard (14)

In Baudrillard's essay "Transaesthetics", he identifies the postmodern phenomenon of the extreme "collapse" of societal conformations—art, politics, sexuality, economics... as each loses its specificity, fusing together into one elevated form of "hyperreality." All is aestheticized, melting into images, signs, and symbols which can only "float," being "impossible to convert into real value" as they enter the "transaesthetic world of simulation" (15) (18). No more do the criteria suffice which are originally used to evaluate the beauty, value, and morality of art (or all that has now been aestheticized) as there is no more demand of these standards whatsoever. "Present-day art is beyond beautiful and ugly," Baudrillard reminds us, "there is nothing immoral here" (19).

Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*'s poster summarizes the movie's narrative in a single tagline: "Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are rape, ultra-violence, and Beethoven." The line suggests an immediate, forced fusion between the theme of violence and art having both become commodified terms for the sake of "provocative marketing" up front (Krämer 19). Indeed, violence as a heavily illustrated subject matter in the film does not stand on its own but is closely associated with the

theme of art. When focusing foremost on the motif, Steven M. Cahn notably observes that *Clockwork* is "not about violence" as social commentary but as "philosophical speculation" with the understanding that Kubrick does not condemn nor glorify it (155). All in all, he leaves us with two questions to ponder: first, what is the subject of Kubrick's comments if they do not befall actions of violence, and second, how is violence utilised by Kubrick to put forward broader societal critiques? Back to Cahn's point, I would suggest even further that in the film's "philosophical" perspective there is "no point" in differentiating between its stance towards violence as criticism or promotion, as the unique condition of violence in Kubrick's future dystopian society (which certainly reflects our present one to a certain degree) is not only morally ambiguous, but rather morality is rendered worthless as violence has become as desolate as art has become. In the following essay, I would like to examine the aestheticization of violence as the more significant critique that *Clockwork* is making, looking at the ways in which Kubrick portrays both art as violence and violence as art. I would argue against the simple perspective which often regards the violence in the film as "violence for the sake of violence" (Krämer 16). When Baudrillard writes that in the postmodern, art becomes "more beautiful than beautiful," Burgess's terming of the "[u]ltra-violence" suggests in a similar vein an escalation of violence into a form "more violent than violent" (18). I would hence like to argue that the slipping of art and violence, one into another, elevates them both as the beauty of art and the horror of violence become equivalently empty in essence and thus morally worthless. No longer is art to heal the pain of violence as the two justify each other in their unity of emptiness: violence becomes for the sake of art and art for the sake of violence. In the subsequent sections, I will be analysing art of different mediums, including music, visual art, and cinema, present in *Clockwork* and the ways in which they are coupled with the motif of violence to exemplify my argument.

One cannot undermine the significance of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in *Clockwork* as it not only penetrates the film in weaving together the narrative of protagonist Alex DeLarge, but helps to frame the director's philosophy in which art and violence collapse to form what Burgess names as the "damnable

hybrid" (Höyng 160). Beethoven begins as the subject of Alex's corrupted fascination, but becomes in the end what ironically cripples him from making moral judgements having been used as the background music during the cinematic aversion "Ludovico treatment" he undergoes. In an early scene at the Korova milk bar, Alex first observes a woman singing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy". But as he describes the sensation upon hearing the hymn—"some great bird had flown into the milkbar and I felt all the malenky little hairs on my plott standing endwise, and the shivers crawling up like slow malenky lizards and then down again"—he is certainly not the only one who "knew what she sang" as we join in the collective experience of this cultural reference. To this Slavoj Žižek summarizes the perversion of the phenomenal "Ode to Joy":

> "It's usually perceived as a kind of ode to humanity as such to the brotherhood and freedom of all people. And what strikes the eye here is the universal adaptability of this well-known melody. It can be used by political movements which are totally opposed to each other... It works, and this is how every ideology has to work. It's never just meaning. It always also has to work as an empty container open to all possible meanings. It's, you know, that gut feeling that we feel when we experience something pathetic and we say: 'Oh my God, I am so moved, there is something so deep.' But you never know what this depth is. It's a void" (Fiennes).

It is essential to consider as well Peter Höyng's note of the moral ambiguity in the original inspiration of the piece—Friedrich Schiller's ode "An die Freude"—which "not only represents a utopian ideal of a community but that its temporal structure belies the fact that some violence, however humane its intention, had taken place before returning to the origins of natural law" (166). It is understandable how a caution for violence is embedded in a work of art which mankind embraces as a celebration of their humanity. However, this note has ever since been rendered to nihility, or at least in the dystopia of *Clockwork* which is evidently reminiscent of our present society. At the music "bootick" where Alex visits we hear the digitally synthesized version of the "Ode

to Joy" which retains its original melody yet possesses no longer the depth of Beethoven's work. This is precisely the failure of art suggested in Baudrillard's postmodernity. In being rendered to a mere representation detached from what it is supposed to represent, art perversely welcomes falsification. In his bedroom, Alex listens to the second movement of the Ninth. His description of the sensation that the music inspires in him this time deviates from that at the milk bar in becoming suffused with images of violence—"As I slooshied, I knew such lovely pictures. There were veeks and ptitsas laying on the ground screaming for mercy and I was smecking all over my rot and grinding my boot into their tortured litsos and there were naked devotchkas ripped and creeching against walls and I plunging like a shlaga into them." Indeed, we now see that he never "knew" the music in its essence but only in its "nonsense." In the final shot the film ends again with "Ode to Joy," and this time it is the full orchestrated version which is played. Yet as the music is juxtaposed against the brutal image on screen—a fantasized orgy where a group of well-dressed men and women watch and give applause to a naked couple in the centre having sexual intercourse—we see that it has failed in its totality as we join in the celebration of all that is the opposite of what it is supposed to celebrate. In this sense art not only promotes violence but "justifies" it with its all-embracing humanity which suggests benevolence yet is truly manifesting malice.

Alex and his gang raping a woman at her "Home" whilst singing "Singing in the Rain" further codify a direct correlation between art and violence. Again, the song here is purged of the original sweetness when it is sung in the 1952 musical-romantic comedy. What is left is the blatant violence on screen—an innocent man severely injured, an innocent woman brutally raped. Somehow there is a sense of purity in the presentation of the scene, as there is no middle ground whatsoever between the extreme delight of "Singing in the Rain" and the extreme horror of Alex's actions. The two are in total opposition to one another yet together they promote each other to reach a higher form of "impression." We seek to grip our chair as we behold the scene, yet at the same time we cannot help to cease our laughter. We become dumbfounded by the perfection of the presentation before our eyes as this is no violence nor art, no "reality" that we know of: it leaves us strangely with "a dizzying eclecticism of pleasure" (Baudrillard 17).

The wide variety of visual art prevalent throughout the film ranging from paintings to sculptures to the architecture of *Clockwork*'s set designs further embody Baudrillard's observation of the "general aestheticization of all forms of culture" (16). The first instance where art is fused into the worldview of the film would be in the opening scene at Korova milk bar where naked "female mannequins" designed by Liz Moore are the main make-up of the compartment not only as decoration but as the furniture and milk stand of the bar. These figures are reminiscent of the climactic scene in Kubrick's second feature, Killer's Kiss (1955), where the protagonist and antagonist of the film fight each other at a mannequin storeroom filled with female models which have been noted by James Naremore to function "as a comment on the tendency of commercial modernity to fragment and fetischise the body parts of women" (65). Naremore argues however that there is a sense of joking irony in the imagery of mannequins as they are "made spooky" while the characters are alternatively "dehumanised[,]" "alienated and a bit robotic" (65). Therefore, as the protagonist defends himself from the antagonist's hatchet, violence in the scene is heightened, estranged, and offset by the mannequin's presence. Applying this perspective to *Clockwork*, one observes likewise that the uncanny quality of the female mannequins is no less so than the customers at the milk bar, as the models seem perhaps "more real" when we are reminded of their original fakeness while the stereotypical and flatly portrayed characters are "far stranger" than men and women we know of in real life. The visuals on screen then create a tension where through its camera it animates the objectified mannequins and kills the alive characters. As *Clockwork* tries to show the inanimate objects have more life than the people in the story. Thus, the glasses in the protagonists' hands become ironic. Milk, a liquid that mothers produce to promote growth in their children, cannot help facilitate growth in these protagonists as the movie already views them as dead. Therefore, when we behold in the subsequent two scene an old homeless man severely injured by Alex and his gangs and a girl raped by four other young men, the extreme violence (though undeniably intense) is immediately rendered desolate and "plastically" inanimate.

Notably I recall as well the scene which takes place at the residence of the Catlady, as it heavily points towards the theme of visual art with the presence of various pornographic paintings hanging on its walls depicting naked sexualised women. When Alex enters the place in an attempt to rape the Catlady, on a shelf sits Herman Makkink's 1969 kinetic sculpture "Rocking Machine," a gigantic white fibreglass phallus. Amused by it, Alex rocks the sculpture with one hand, causing it to swing up and down as if in the midst of sexual intercourse. The Catlady throws at him a small Beethoven head sculpture and shouts in rage: "No! No! Don't touch it. That's a very important work of art. What the bloody hell do you want?" Alex ignores her and picks up the sculpted phallus, using it as a weapon to stab her repeatedly. Ultimately, she falls to the ground, her mouth and eyes wide open. Alex pounces on her one final time, killing her in the act. To signify her death, the screen quickly flashes by several close-up shots of women's body parts from the paintings in the room—a mouth wide open containing another mouth within it, a breast hung up surrealistically on a clothesline, a hand covering a woman's bottom. Indeed, the violence in the scene is extremely absurd having been reduced exclusively to illustrative images. While Alex does not literally rape the Catlady, his symbolic play with the sculpture signifies the act figuratively commited. The artworks within the room come to display on the other hand the perverse sexual desire of the Catlady corresponding to her cultural stereotype which often signifies twisted social attitudes. In their fight, Alex and the Catlady become Baudrillard's "irrepressible creators of images," who are secretly "iconoclasts—not in the sense that [they] destroy images, but in the sense that [they] manufacture a profusion of images in which there is nothing to see" (17). The Catlady's "very important works of art" have failed in everything other than iconising the thematic sex and violence in the scene. We behold again a reality which has morphed into nothing but a weapon. It is horrifyingly laughable that the Catlady is killed by a plastic phallus—certainly it does not have the capability to harm.

I would hereby like to move onto examining the film's portrayal of the art form of cinema by looking specifically at the scenes of the "Ludovico treatment." During the "therapy"

sessions, Alex is strapped to an extermination chair, his head wrapped in wires and his eyes propped wide open with clamps. A medical technician is seated beside him, constantly dripping eye drops into his eyes. Before him is a big screen playing footage of violence, rape, warfare and marching soldiers during the Nazi regime. It is also here that the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth is unintentionally played by the executioners of the treatment as the background instrumental. Gradually, Alex has developed a thorough "disgust" towards the images on the screen, a sensation which he describes as a kind of sickness "like not feeling all that well". It is then this link of a nauseating feeling of death to violence (which Alex would later on always seek to "snuff it") that succeeds in preventing him from committing any further crimes. Dr. Branom tells him in a deadpan, calm manner: "Violence is a very horrible thing. That's what you're learning now. Your body is learning it."

It is worth considering foremost that many have accused *Clockwork* of "promoting a nihilistic worldview which might encourage, in the world outside the movie theatre, both violent behaviour by members of the audience and political support for repressive state measures against such behaviour" (Krämer 12). From this, one can see the surface layer of significance in the sequence, reading it as a meta-comment on the effect of cinema on actual violence in the real world, as *Clockwork* itself has been seen to have the same consequences. However, the film mediates on the direct opposite windup of this "thought experiment" wherein cinema promotes, or rather enforces that violent behaviour should be suppressed. To understand this contrast, one has to see that the footage shown to Alex are essentially different from *Clockwork*'s own standpoint as an art-house, Hollywood distributed movie "consisting" of many disturbing images of violence. The former are generally realistic, documentary-like depictions of the social reality. Contrastingly, the lurid visuals in Clockwork are framed through aestheticization and *defamiliarization* to elevate violence "to the second power" (Baudrillard 18). Therefore the "Real" depicted on screen is able to petrify Alex because these images are not cloaked in artistry nor do they feign charm through the magic of cinema. As Alex's eyes are propped wide open, he is now unable to escape the reality of his society through the gaps

between blinking—The Spectacle termed by Guy Debord has been forcibly taken away.

To this I find Alexander Cohen's examination of *Clockwork* which takes into account the relevance of some of Walter Benjamin's thinkings especially compelling, where the latter writes, "There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle" (1). Cohen points out Benjamin's distinction between two kinds of experience—Erfahrung as "something integrated as experience" and Erlebnis as "something merely lived through"— and comparably the differing roles between the painter and the cameraman in which "the painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web" (1). In this perspective, visual art made by the painter (or films which work as visual art) is unable to penetrate Mark Fisher's "pervasive atmosphere" of late capitalism and is merely able to provide to its audiences a surface level of Erlebnis (16). On the other hand, cinema through the eyes of the cameraman is actually capable of creating a four-dimensional sensation which recreates the Erfahrung that our society has lost to postmodernity. Ultimately, regardless of the moral ambiguity of the "therapy," the Ludorico treatment certainly succeeds in the sense that its method has poked a peephole through the seamless "hyperreal" in revealing a brutal truth. However, as Cohen notes, "Alex like us, is a willing victim" still as he beholds the reality, reconstituted on the big screen (3). It is hence essential to ask whether he has actually "seen" the truth behind that reality, or has the reality simply been rendered to another layer of images in his eyes which, as it is played before him (and us), "conceal nothing[,]" "reveal nothing[,]" and has only still, "a kind of negative intensity" (Baudrillard 17). This is, indeed, a deeply pessimistic viewpoint seeing that there is no escape from the extreme totalisation of the iconised reality, as men and women themselves have been "trained" to see the world from this position. And here we arrive at the heart of the film's morale in its investigation of mankind's free will which marks our humanity. I would like to suggest that Alex's will has failed long before the completion of the Ludovico treatment. Rather, he has lost his humanity at the very point when he is unable to see for himself violence as violence, to understand

that “violence is a very horrible thing.” Yes, this he has not been able to achieve both before and after the treatment, as I do not believe that he has actually “chosen” to commit either violence or rape or to do what is essentially morally wrong at the beginning of the film. His behaviours are instead to him more like a form of artistic “play” which is empty in essence and hence justifiably morally inconsequential.

As Baudrillard writes, “the only feeling one gets from [present day images] is that behind each one there is something that has disappeared” (17). Ultimately, Alex has become just one among the many images in the film. When confronted with this symbol, however, we are incapable of seeing that behind its representation is what Burgess essentially describes as “the attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen” (25). Rather, we are forefront allured by the “fruit’s” supposed “capability of juiciness[,]” despite seeing with our own eyes that clearly it is rotten. Indeed, in insisting that it is fresh, it somehow becomes so illusively. In the final shot of the film illustrating the fantasized orgy, Alex utters to us his famous last line—”I was cured all right.” We horrifyingly come to comprehend that he has found an alternative to the life offered or if not, enforced and conditioned upon him by society. He understands that there is one unique method to live as a law-abiding citizen whilst still enjoying the pleasures of violence and immorality: it is to do so in a purely image-based reality. Strangely, it is through this that Alex has first achieved in creating any acts of violence or artistic vision of real substance as they ultimately come to restore his free will—there as Beethoven becomes the celebratory anthem of violence he peacefully finds a purely true facade.

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