

Morality and the Movies Week 7.

Andrew Graves

John Trevelyan

- BBFC Chief Censor – 1958-1971

Victim (1961) and The Wolfenden Report

- A study containing recommendations for laws governing sexual behaviour, published in 1957 by the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution in Great Britain.
- It was named for Sir John Wolfenden, the chairman of the committee.
- Using the findings of psychoanalysis and social science, the report urged that public statutes avoid the attempt to legislate morality and that they concern themselves only with sexual acts that offend public decency or disrupt order.
- The committee therefore recommended that private homosexual liaisons between consenting adults be removed from the domain of criminal law.
- Legislation implementing these recommendations was enacted in the Sexual Offences Act (1967).

‘[according to the filmmakers] The intention of the script was to validate the recommendations of the - Wolfenden Report’ – **Tom Dewe Matthews**

“I can’t help feeling that the acceptance of homosexuality is too ready in this script...I feel that the majority of people in this country are not in argument that the law is the culprit. I for one don’t care a fig what homosexuals do in private. But in ninety per cent of such men there is a curious recklessness in the choice of their companions and often in their public behaviour.” - **Newton Branch (Senior Censor, BBFC)**

‘It is very oppressive. To be confronted with a world peopled with practically no one but “queers”; and there are precious few other characters in this synopsis. Great tact and discretion will be needed if this project is to come off, and the “queerness” must not be laid on with a trowel. The more we can see of the various characters going about their daily life in association with other people who are not “queers” and the less we need of “covens” of queers lurking about in pubs and clubs the better.’ – **Audrey Field (Senior Censor, BBFC)**

The Devils (1971)

Directed by Ken Russell

“Before the production had even finished shooting at Pinewood towards the end of 1970, the tabloids opened hostilities with a report from the set that five actresses who had been required to walk naked through a crowd had been assaulted by nude male extras. The following month another paper reported that a fourteen-year-old child actor had appeared in a bedroom scene with a naked actress playing a nun...both allegations proved to be false but...” - **Tom Dewe Matthews**

“The Devils plumbs really filthy depths. This relish for the putrid starts here with maggots falling out of the eye sockets of a skull and ends with the nun using the freshly charred tibia of her ‘lover’ as a dildo...My object here is to demolish any argument by Ken Russell that his film is a serious work of art.” - **Newton Branch**

- In order to gain an X certificate Russell made minor cuts to the more explicit nudity
- Some shots of Grandier’s legs being crushed were cut
- The biggest cuts were made by the studio prior to submission to the BBFC
- These included a two-and-a-half-minute sequence of naked nuns sexually assaulting a statue of Christ and the masturbating scene
- ‘My only political film’ – Ken Russell
- Common sense and honesty (in the form of Grandier) is demonised and presented to the masses as ‘the other’ before literally being sacrificed by a hypocritical elite. Once he’s out the way the elite turn on the same masses. It’s like a bonkers and beautifully realised critique of every Tory/UKIP/Trump style manifesto

“On 18 May 1971, the BBFC awarded an X certificate to the cut version of the film. Because of the scale of the changes made to the film (including the deletion of one entire scene) it is difficult to calculate accurately how much was removed from the film between January and May 1971. However, it is safe to say that several minutes were removed...Unfortunately, the opening of the film in summer 1971 coincided with John Trevelyan’s departure as Secretary of the BBFC and the appointment of his successor, Stephen Murphy. Murphy was therefore left to pick up the flak for what was not really his decision. Controversy had been whipped up by Mary Whitehouse’s Festival of Light campaign and there were calls for the film to be banned. A number of local authorities indeed responded to the controversy by banning the film in their areas.” - **BBFC**

Straw Dogs (1971)

Sam Peckinpah

- The ‘Man Trap’ analogy
- ‘They used to use it for catching poachers’
- David is seen as an intruder ‘poaching’ their women
- From the moment the film begins David’s (Hoffman) masculinity is questioned
- He is a teacher, traditionally a feminine career
- He lacks physical skills
- He is goaded not just by the workmen but also by Amy – who is bored and begins to see him as less than adequate

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- Cinematography particularly in the final 30 minutes is beautifully realised, creating a real sense of brooding gothic horror
 - The editing, as in other Peckinpah films is masterful
 - The performances are solid, consistent throughout, which help to create a real sense of what the town is really all about
 - The action, in the final scenes, is well paced and the violence is relentless yet perfectly presented
 - The on-location filming help with the film's unending grittiness. This is a close up, uneasy and claustrophobic story
 - The 'rape' scene remains controversial
 - It's glamorization and eroticism of sexual assault led to wide spread criticism
 - The fact that Amy (George) appears to resist then 'enjoy' the seduction sits uncomfortably

Censorship

- The rape scene was shortened for the initial US release
- The film was banned in UK in 1984, under the Video Recordings Act
- The film finally received a VHS/DVD release in 2002

A Clockwork Orange (1971)

"His film is boisterous, intimate, explicit and gaudy, owing nothing to the aseptic architectures of 2001. The exteriors are glassy, box like and cluttered with rubbish; the interiors are lurid, inelegant and uneasily angular with contemporary furniture that looks like tomorrow's suburban leftovers. Inhabiting these inhospitable cells are the aging exponents of today's fashions, locked as though icebound in their trendy gear." - **Philip Strick**

- Kubrick's film appears to offer strong visual clues which tell us that this view is being challenged
- Alex is evil but society is equally as evil

"Burgess's novel champions man's God-given free will, using Alex as an extreme case to make the argument, but in the film Alex does not really have 'free will'. His actions are performed under the influence of Milk Plus, of Serum 114 and of a society where the rich (on the right and left) despise and manipulate 'the common people', who can only acquire the goods they are programmed to want, including the drugs they are addicted to through crime." - Bill Krohn