

**ANTHONY BURGESS AND GOD:
FAITH AND EVIL, LANGUAGE AND THE LUDIC
IN THE NOVELS OF A MANICHAEAN WORDBOY**

BY

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**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, a detailed study of religious and ethical themes in selected novels by the late British writer, Anthony Burgess, will be undertaken. I will demonstrate that his work contains a consistent ethical worldview, manifested both in the situations of crisis his protagonists face, and in his attitude towards the responsibility and duty of the professional writer.

His emphasis on the importance of compassion, responsibility and humor in a world of moral dualism will be shown to be consistently present in a broad range of fictional genres and literary styles, ranging from dystopian speculative fiction to biographical novels. The thesis will be organized thematically to reflect his novels about four separate areas of concern: individual responses to human suffering, personal autonomy in the face of coercive institutions, the role of the artist in society, and the problem of faith in postconciliar Roman Catholicism.

A diverse range of critics, in keeping with these various themes, will be consulted in order to give increased depth and relevance to this study. It is hoped that the conclusion will demonstrate that Burgess's work presents a coherent and consistent philosophy of moral decision making.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	ABBA ABBA
CO	A Clockwork Orange
CTEE	The Clockwork Testament or Enderby's End
DIS	The Doctor Is Sick
DMD	A Dead Man in Deptford
E	Enderby
EP	Earthly Powers
EWN	The End of the World News
LWBG	Little Wilson and Big God
NLS	Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love Life
UC	Urgent Copy
WS	The Wanting Seed
YHYT	You've Had Your Time, Being the Second Part of the Confessions of Anthony Burgess

INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHY AND FICTION

"It happened a long time ago," I said. "And I don't know whether you, Your Grace, would understand this, but writers of fiction often have difficulty in deciding between what really happened and what they imagine as having happened. That is why, in my sad trade, we can never really be devout or pious. We lie for a living. This, as you can imagine, makes us good believers -- credulous, anyway. But it has nothing to do with *faith*." [EP, p. 16]

The delineation of oneself at such length must look like egocentricity, but an autobiography has to be egocentric. On the other hand, what do we mean by the ego? It is an existential concept, I believe, and the ego I examine is multiple and somewhat different from the ego that is doing the examining. Even the ego that began the book in September 1985 is not the one that has completed it in 1986. In other words, the book is about someone else, connected by the ligature of a common track in time and space to the writer of this last segment of it, which cheats and looks like the first.... As a good deal of real life has got into my fiction, I forbear to unscramble it all into what has been fabled by the daughters of memory, though I have unscrambled some. [LWBG, p. viii]

These two caveats, the first from a novel and the second from the preface to the first volume of his autobiography, must remain in clear focus in any study of

the writings of Anthony Burgess. Like many of his contemporary fellow novelists (Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth and John Irving come to mind), Burgess ransacked his life experiences and personal obsessions for novelistic plots, incidents and characters. Unlike the authors mentioned, however, he does not explicitly let the reader know when he is insinuating himself into the text. The narrator, the "I" of the novel, is never exactly John Anthony Burgess Wilson. The incidents and characters the narrator recounts bear family resemblances to incidents and characters encountered in the author's autobiography, but similarities of name and locale can blind the reader to carefully modulated differences in emphasis and purpose.

Similarly, the reader of Burgess's two-volume autobiography receives the impression of being in the hands of an unreliable guide with ulterior motives. Although brutally candid in recounting his failures of charity, fidelity and honesty throughout a long and eventful life, Burgess is manifestly in love with the revelatory punch-line, the finely crafted *dénouement*. We are not surprised when an elderly public figure, summing up a life filled with controversies and rivalries, attempts to have the last word before approaching death ends the colloquy. But few memoirs are written by individuals with either Burgess's great narrative talent or his cantankerous moral certitude. And many of the incidents and encounters he recalls for us have

already been altered subtly by their inclusion in the plots of one or more novels. Not only has art imitated life -- art has mitigated life-writing. The Burgess we are left with is a palimpsest, partially erased and reinscribed with a blend of memory, metaphor and mimesis.

A bare-bones chronology of his life, like the one provided by John J. Stinson [1991, pp. xi-xii], at least allows us to frame this palimpsest. John Burgess Wilson, later to add the "Anthony" at his confirmation, was born February 25, 1917, in Manchester, England. He lost his mother and sister, his only sibling, to an influenza epidemic in 1919. Graduating from Manchester University with a B.A. (honors) in English literature in 1940, he served in the British Army for six years, mostly in educational posts, including three years in Gibraltar.

He married Llewela (Lynn) Isherwood Jones in 1942. Burgess worked at various teaching posts from 1946 to 1954, while beginning to write. From 1954 to 1959 he served as an education officer in Malaya and Borneo (Brunei), during which time he published *Time for a Tiger*, the first volume of his *Malayan Trilogy*, and his first published novel (1956). In 1959 he was invalided home to England with a suspected brain tumor and, given a year to live, began to write full-time. He published prolifically for the next three decades, and the brain tumor never made its presence known again.

In 1968, his first wife died of cirrhosis of the liver. Later that year he married Liliana [Liana] Macellari, an Italian scholar and translator with whom he had already conceived a son, Andrea. Burgess died of lung cancer on November 25, 1993, an accomplished and respected novelist, reviewer, composer, poet, linguistic scholar, playwright, translator, scriptwriter, librettist and essayist.

Despite a fair degree of acclaim and success, he always cast himself in the role of a marginalized figure, an outsider. A working-class Lancashire Catholic in a Britain ruled by London, Oxford, Cambridge and the Church of England; an intellectual in an army full of "the illiterate... along with the ill-nourished" [LWBG, p. 283]; a sympathetic advocate of decolonialization in a Malaya where most other British considered him a crypto-communist; a tax exile from Britain, ill at ease in Monaco, Malta, France, New York, Hollywood and Italy -- Burgess painted himself into many existential corners.

However, the marginality to which he refers with the regularity and dependability of a Wagnerian *leitmotif* is derived from his ethicophilosophical discomfort with postconciliar Roman Catholicism. Over and over again, in his fiction, his autobiography and in interviews, he rails at what he calls Pelagianism in the church as John XXIII left it. Burgess saw himself as a Manichaeian "renegade" Catholic [LWBG, p. 148], nostalgic for the certainties and

rigor of the Catholicism he had abandoned in his late teens. He missed the universality and majesty of ecclesiastical Latin, the grandeur of liturgies untrivialized by guitars and drums, the unequivocal and articulate moral teachings of a Church conscious of its historical continuity and real secular power.

His use of terms like "Pelagian," "Manichaeian" and "Augustinian" is both idiosyncratic and inconsistent, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, but he was not simply choosing imposing language to rationalize unthinking prejudices. He used these categories with both intelligence and creativity to frame and encapsulate many ethical polarities and conflicts. Pelagius and Augustine themselves appear as characters in an imaginary screenplay in one novel [CTEE], and their names are applied to phases of a cyclical theory of history in another [WS]. Their disagreements about the perfectibility of humanity and the status of evil in creation and in human society are manifest in all his novels, either explicitly or implicitly.

Many of his arguments are presented in the form of what Burgess calls "cacotopian" novels. He explains this rather unpleasant sounding neologism in a volume dedicated to the refutation of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

The term Utopia, which [Thomas] More invented, had a connotation of ease and comfort, Lotus Land, but it merely means any imaginary society, good or bad. The

Greek elements that make up the word are *ou*, meaning no or not, and *topos*, meaning a place. In many minds the *ou* has been confused with *eu* -- well, good, pleasant, beneficial. *Eupepsia* is good digestion, *dyspepsia* we all know. *Dystopia* has been opposed to *eutopia*, but both terms come under the utopian heading. I prefer to call Orwell's imaginary society a *cacotopia* -- on the lines of *cacophony* or *cacodemon*. It sounds worse than *dystopia*. [1985, p. 48]

This attitude toward language, both meticulous and playful, is for me one of the most endearing and engaging of Burgess's traits. A modern-day philologist, he was a self-taught master of many aspects of linguistics, deeply interested in dialects, slang, argots, etymology, loan-words and change over time in both vocabulary and pronunciation. He was fluent in many languages, including Russian, Malay and several Italian dialects, and was comfortable with Classical Greek, Latin and Old English. Several of his novels and stories appeared in Italian, French or Spanish before being published in English, and he and his second wife were engaged for some time in the unthinkably difficult, and ultimately unsuccessful task of translating Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* into Italian.

His nonfiction included critical and biographical works about Shakespeare, Joyce, Hemingway, D.H. Lawrence and other writers, as well as books about linguistics and the state of the novel. He published hundreds of book reviews, collected in several volumes, as well as essays about travel, film and

music. Also a composer and pianist, he created a substantial body of symphonic, chamber and choral works, mainly based on literary themes taken from his three great mentors, Shakespeare, Joyce and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Burgess will be remembered as well for some of the other literary challenges he accepted, such as his screenplay for Franco Zeffirelli's film *Jesus of Nazareth*, his verse translation of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* and the primitive language he created for the stone-age humans in the film *Quest for Fire*. Whether working in response to his own muse or lending his rare gifts to the projects of others, he was a fearless experimenter and a meticulous craftsman.

Responding to an interviewer's question in 1973, Burgess stated, perhaps tongue in cheek: "The ideal reader of my novels is a lapsed Catholic and failed musician, short-sighted, color-blind, auditorily biased, who has read the books that I have read. He should also be about my age."¹ Was he writing mainly with himself as the intended audience? Later in the same interview, he said: "The novels I've written are really mediaeval Catholic in their thinking, and people don't want that today.... If they're not read it's because the vocabulary is too big and people

¹Cullinan, John. "Interview with Anthony Burgess," reprinted from *Paris Review* 56 (1973):118-63 in Aggeler, Geoffrey. *Critical Essays on Anthony Burgess*. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986), p. 24. Hereafter cited as Cullinan.

don't like using dictionaries when they're reading mere novels. I don't give a damn, anyway." [Cullinan, p. 42]

And yet, he had a strong sense of literature's role in the development of ethics. While primarily a form of entertainment, the novel still fulfils what might be called an exemplary function: "I don't... think that the job of literature is to teach us how to behave, but I think it can make clearer the whole business of moral choice by showing what the nature of life's problems is. It's after truth, which is not goodness." [Cullinan, p. 45]

In this thesis, several of Burgess's major novels will be studied, giving due attention to his nonfiction writings, including especially his two-volume autobiography, in order to see how the issue of faith and the problem of evil is brought to bear on a selected group of prominent themes or areas of concern in his writing. The themes discussed will be human responses to unmerited suffering, the clash of personal conscience and institutional (religious or secular) power, the responsibilities of the artist to society, and the problem of faith in modern Catholicism. These themes will be discussed in light of the over-arching questions of faith and the problem of evil, the role of language in dealing with ethical problems, and the cultivation of a healthy attitude toward life. As well as the voluminous critical work about Burgess that is available in journals and monographs, major contemporary thinkers in religious

studies and ethics will be brought into the discussion. The ideas explored in this thesis will be demonstrated to be of relevance to several subdisciplines within religious studies, with clearly outlined ramifications for ethics (including bioethics), ecumenism, ecclesiology, theodicy, the sociology of religion and the psychology of religion.

It is my thesis that Burgess's writings present a consistent image of a dualistic moral universe, a "duoverse," in which the forces of evil often seem to be winning, and that he suggests compassion and humor, duty and a sense of play (the ludic element) as the only means of living lives that do not add to the sum total of evil in the world. The moral ambiguities he saw all around him and within himself created a discomfort which he found to be comic despite his best efforts to be gloomy and pessimistic, and the laughter his profoundly serious and scathingly funny novels elicit is the laughter of rueful recognition. It is easy to point to correspondences between this *Weltanschauung* and his ongoing argument with contemporary Catholicism. A morally dualistic world is found in Manichaeism, and only a Pelagian would deny, according to Burgess, that evil seems to be winning the battle.

Chapter One, "The Suffering Human Body," will deal with human responses to unmerited suffering. Burgess's novels are populated with characters beset by the multifarious evils of our time, including genocide, wars, epidemics,

cults, terrorism, racism, violent crime and cancer. The thought of the Bulgarian-French psychiatrist and literary critic Julia Kristeva, especially her development of the term "abjection," will aid in examining the religious and ethical significance of Burgess's musings about human suffering and the institutional responses it elicits. Kristeva's post-Freudian approach to the ethical content of literary texts, and her sensitivity to the interplay of style and moral seriousness, make her *Powers of Horror* especially useful in exploring these themes in Burgess's novels. What the philosophers call "natural evil" is shown to create hierarchies and structures which isolate and differentiate the sufferer from care-givers and loved ones, and often to poison the sufferer's attitude towards God and such life-affirming activities as art and sexuality. Alternatively, the compassion, heroism and acquired wisdom that sometimes come with great suffering are also warmly depicted in Burgess's novels. This chapter will deal with situations found in *The Doctor Is Sick*, *ABBA ABBA*, *Earthly Powers* and *The End of the World News*.

In Chapter Two, "Personal Conscience and the Monolith," Burgess's treatment of the clash of personal ethics and institutional power, whether religious or secular, will be examined. Sexual ethics, censorship, work ethics and the relation of religion (especially minority religions) and the state will figure prominently among the issues discussed.

Ethical thinkers Karen Lebacqz, who shares with Burgess a well-reasoned emphasis on responsibility-language, as opposed to rights-language, and Daniel Berrigan, the American priest and peace activist, who, like Burgess, is an outspoken critic of powerful and coercive institutions like the military and big government, will be consulted. Burgess has addressed this theme both in naturalistic novels about colonialism and oppression and in dystopian (cacotopian) speculative fiction. *A Clockwork Orange*, 1985 and *The Wanting Seed* will provide the majority of the primary material for this chapter.

Chapter Three, "Wordboys and Worldviews," will examine Burgess's ideas about the responsibility of the artist to society. As indicated earlier, he saw the novel as a way of demonstrating the moral ambiguity and complexity of life, and of pointing out the possibility of making free-will moral choices that are motivated by compassion, fidelity and other-centredness. Therefore, the novelist himself, though an admixture of good and evil, like all other human beings, has a sacred duty to serve the cause of order by clarifying the options for moral choice. Many of the protagonists in Burgess's novels are either fictional writers or musicians or real historical literary figures ("wordboys," as Joyce, and later Burgess, called them) like Shakespeare, Keats, Belli and Marlowe set in quasibiographical fiction. The importance of language, creativity and intellectual

playfulness (the ludic), the precarious balance between art's didactic and entertainment functions, the restrictions imposed by the necessity to write for a living, and the connection between a culture's literature and its underlying mythology will all be relevant to this chapter. Given Burgess's penchant for literary allusions, multilingual word-play, classical and mythological references and ideas from the seminal psychologists, it will be useful to bring in selected thinkers who have played prominent roles in his intellectual and artistic development, such as Shakespeare, J.G. Fraser, Freud, Joyce and Eliot. And Anthony Burgess the essayist, critic and linguist can serve quite handily as a critical voice in discussing the ethical aspects of the tension between art and reality in his own fiction. Novels relevant to this theme include especially the *Enderby* series, *Nothing Like the Sun* and *A Dead Man in Deptford*.

Chapter Four, "At War with Rome," will deal specifically with the problem of faith in modern Catholicism. In several of Burgess's novels, especially his greatest work, *Earthly Powers*, published in 1980, the issue of estrangement from the faith, caused both by life experiences and by change in the church, is explored both sensitively and passionately. As mentioned earlier, Burgess saw himself as a "renegade Catholic," a self-styled Manichaeian heretic, nostalgic for the Catholicism of his childhood and faced with a church which had been derailed by

an equally heretical Pelagianism. While briefly checking the validity of his understanding of both these heresies against the writings of Peter Brown, Elaine Pagels, W.H.C. Frend, Jaroslav Pelikan and other historians of Christianity, this chapter will also consider the arguments of Richard McBrien, a respected American writer about contemporary Catholicism and Peter Hebblethwaite, a British historian with a special interest in the Second Vatican Council, about the nature and demands of postconciliar Catholicism. Bringing these critics into the discussion will assist in determining whether Burgess is rebelling against a Church that really exists, or simply acting out of nostalgia for a Church he remembers.

In the conclusion, an attempt will be made to draw together these many threads in order to show that Burgess has constructed a coherent philosophy of life from the life-affirming qualities that characterized all of his outwardly pessimistic work: a sense of the comic discontinuity between human aspirations and the human condition in a moral duoverse, a sense of active compassion for the suffering caused by this discontinuity, and a sense of gratitude for the gift of life itself, for nature, art, language, family and human community.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SUFFERING HUMAN BODY

The taking of the pictures seemed, to confused Edwin, to involve the shouting of signals. At the loud cry of what seemed to be "Take" the heat came, and more. A pain that seemed green in color and tasted of silver oxide, that, moreover, seemed to show, by some synaesthetic miracle, what the momentarily tortured nerves looked like, shot down his face, gouging his eyes out, extracting teeth with cold pliers. Again, it was not a matter of pain: it was a matter of the sick realization of what perverse experiences lurk waiting in the body. [DIS, p. 50]

Anthony Burgess wrote this harrowing description of an arteriogram performed on philologist Dr. Edwin Spindrift, the protagonist of his 1960 novel, *The Doctor Is Sick*, with the clarity of vividly recent personal experience. After collapsing in his classroom in Brunei the year before, Burgess had been sent home to England, expecting to die from a suspected brain tumor within a year. In the process, he underwent all the indignities and painful procedures he was later to describe in the novel.

Burgess's life experiences, his religious questions and his ethical and aesthetic concerns all combined to make him

intensely interested in the nature, purpose and ramifications of human suffering. His mother and sister died in an influenza epidemic that ravaged Manchester in 1919, when he was two. His first wife was beaten by American deserters in London in 1944, during an attempted robbery. She miscarried her first and only pregnancy and spent the rest of her life with dysmenorrhoea and progressively worsening alcoholism, culminating in her death in 1968 from cirrhosis of the liver. Burgess himself was to suffer from a heart condition and periodic bouts of neuralgia before succumbing to lung cancer at the age of seventy-six.

It will be helpful to read Burgess's portrayals of human responses to unmerited suffering in the light of Julia Kristeva's concept of *abjection*, a term which resists simple definition, a "twisted braid of affects and thoughts" [Kristeva, 1982, p. 1], which unsettles and destabilizes one's sense of self when one is confronted with violence, illness, disgust or the presence of death. In her book *Powers of Horror*, dealing with modern French literature, including especially the disturbing novels of Céline, Kristeva traces the stylistic and semantic developments that accompany the increasingly uninhibited and honest portrayals of human abjection -- a trend in literature which can be recognized in the work of Burgess as well.

Also relevant, especially to the concerns addressed in *The Doctor Is Sick*, is the description by the late French philosopher Michel Foucault of the tendency in institutionalized Western medicine to see the disease rather than the patient as the centre and focus of the clinical gaze, as will be discussed shortly.

Burgess was fascinated with the connection between illness and creativity:

I became interested in syphilis when I worked for a time at a mental hospital full of GPI [General Paralysis of the Insane] cases. I discovered there was a correlation between the spirochete and mad talent. The tubercle also produces a lyrical drive. Keats had both.... Some of the tremendous skills that these patients show -- these tremendous mad abilities -- all stem out of the spirochete. I have pursued this in a couple of novels (or at least in one novel), but to do it on a larger scale would require a kind of rationale which I haven't yet worked out. I don't think it should be done purely as a documentary novel, as a naturalistic presentation of what life is like in such hospitals; but it does suggest to me that it's tied up with symbols of some kind -- tied up with an interior deeper meaning. [Cullinan, p. 37-8]

Burgess wrote several novels about historical characters whose bodily sufferings were a harsh and bitter background to the beauty of their art or the significance of their achievements, including John Keats's tuberculosis in *ABBA ABBA*, Shakespeare's putative syphilis in *Nothing Like the Sun*, Freud's jaw cancer in *The End of the World News*,

and Napoleon's chronic dyspepsia in *Napoleon Symphony*. His two most famous fictional literary protagonists, the flabby and flatulent poet F.X. Enderby, hero of an eponymous tetralogy, and the frail octogenarian gay novelist, Kenneth Marchal Toomey, who narrates *Earthly Powers*, are both victims of heart attacks, sexual impotence and that other endemic disease of our culture, violent crime. All these characters testify that creative inspiration and hard-won wisdom are inextricably linked to their suffering, which is not to suggest that Burgess in any way justifies the suffering itself in terms of the fruit it bears.

The suffering remains unexplained, unjustified and unmerited. It is as much an aesthetic as a religious problem, and the victim's reaction to his or her suffering is a complex constellation of affects in which intellect, soul and animal instinct all partake. Burgess, although in many ways a dualist, suggests that a facile equating of the binary opposites "right/wrong" and "good/evil" is simple-minded at best, and dangerous at worst:

There is a good beyond ethical good that is always existential: there is the essential good, that aspect of God that we can prefigure more in the taste of an apple or the sound of music than in mere right action or even charity. [quoted in Coale, 1981, p. 6]

Thus, apparently, it is as much a category mistake to say "It is wrong that children should suffer from cancer" as

it is to say "It is ethically praiseworthy to be moved by a Beethoven sonata." Right and wrong are ethically debatable; good and evil for Burgess are moral absolutes. Choosing to spend resources on eradicating child cancer is a decision in the realm of ethics; the brute fact of cancer, like the brute fact of human compassion, is in the realm of ontology. Burgess fleshed out this type of distinction in the second volume of his autobiography, paraphrasing comments he had made to American students in the wake of the controversy over the Stanley Kubrick film of his novel *A Clockwork Orange*, and, incidentally, at the height of the war in Vietnam:

The definition of good and evil was difficult, but those two eternal entities did not always coincide with the community's loose and mutable moral dichotomy. In other words, what was right was not necessarily good, and evil and wrong did not have to be the same thing. The state professed horror at murder but was always ready to go to war. Whatever good was, evil was certainly the wilful impairment of the right of a living organism to fulfill itself. At the bottom of the scale of evil enactments, to fart loudly during the performance of a Beethoven quartet was reprehensible because a piece of music was an organic substance made manifest by its players, and the fart was a wound malevolently, or stupidly, inflicted. Stupidity itself could be classified as an aspect of evil, since intelligence was required to work out, to the satisfaction of the individual soul, a rough and ready guide to moral action. At the top of the scale of evil, torture and murder for their own sake, *actes gratuits*, were most damnable. [YHYT, pp. 271-2]

One of the subthemes of *The Doctor Is Sick* is the total irrelevance of this type of thought to what Michel Foucault would call the clinical gaze [Foucault, 1973, *passim.*], the detached, objectivizing attitude toward the patient and his illness of the modern, Western, institutionalized medical professional. In an effort to defrost the prim impersonality of a pretty radiographer, Spindrift has made a humorous poetic reference:

"I don't go in for poetry," she said. "It was all right at school, I suppose."

"You think it's better to be a radiographer than a poet?"

"Oh yes." She spoke with vocational fervour. After all, we save lives, don't we?"

"What for?"

"What do you mean, what for?"

"What's the purpose of saving lives? What do you want people to live for?"

"That," she said primly, "is no concern of mine. That didn't come into my course. Now, if you'll just wait here, I'll get these developed." [DIS, pp. 36-7]

The radiographer knows she is doing important work, saving lives, but she is uninterested in the nature or purposes of the lives she is saving. Burgess has earlier described the entire laboratory section of the hospital as "a subterranean world of female technicians -- crisply permed, white-coated young women who were jauntily self-assured." [DIS, p. 36] This technician's world, distinguished equally from the limbo of the patient's wards

and the professional camaraderie of the medical staff, seems to Burgess to be the central locus of the clinical detachment that makes Spindrift feel helpless and imprisoned. Perhaps the relative powerlessness of the technicians, at that time almost all women, is connected with this armor of self-assured objectivity. Another technician misinterprets Spindrift's anger at the dehumanizing impersonality of yet another test as a perverse sort of pick-up line:

"I don't think you really believe we're human beings at all. A couple of X-ray plates, those bloody electrical impulses of yours -- sorry, I apologize, for the swearing. What I mean is --"

"Do you mind?" said the girl. "I've got my work to do."

"That's just it, isn't it? You've got your work to do and you assume that you're doing it with something inert, something passive. You forget that I'm a human being."

The girl looked at him in a new way. "If looking at me excites you," she said primly, "you needn't look. You can keep your eyes fixed on the ceiling." [DIS, p. 44]

Obviously, the clinical gaze is not only detached and objective, it is also unidirectional. The situation is somewhat different with the doctors, who are to some extent performers, requiring an audience. Spindrift's neurologist, Dr. Railton, was formerly a famous jazz trumpeter, just as Burgess's neurologist, Dr. Roger Bannister (later Lord

Brain!)), had been a famous athlete, the first man to run a mile in under four minutes. The bantering self-revelation that passes between Spindrift and Railton combines male competitive posturing, at which the prostrate and cuckolded academic Spindrift fails miserably, with a half-hearted attempt by Railton to make Spindrift part of the team. The novel opens with Spindrift undergoing olfactory recognition tests and responding to other diagnostic questions that make him feel totally confused and inept, as if bullied by a heartless drill sergeant:

Then, as if none of this really had to be taken too seriously, as if he were only paid to be like that and over a couple of pints you couldn't meet a nicer man, Dr Railton boyishly laughed and play-punched Edwin on the chest, tousled his hair and tried to break off a piece of his shoulder.

"Monday," he promised laughing at the door, "we really start." [DIS, pp. 8-9]

This performatory aspect of the doctor-patient relationship, within a larger situation of objectivity and depersonalization, is strongly evocative of Foucault's understanding of "a medicine that is given and accepted as positive." In discussing the development of clinical medicine in post-Revolutionary France, Foucault clearly delineates medicine's flight from metaphysics (and, ultimately, from ethics) towards technique by showing how

disease became quantified as to its location on a continuum between health and death:

Disease breaks away from the metaphysic of evil, to which it had been related for centuries; and it finds in the visibility of death the full form in which its content appears in positive terms. Conceived in relation to nature, disease was the non-assignable negative of which the causes, forms, and manifestations were offered only indirectly and against an ever-receding background; seen in relation to death, disease became exhaustively legible, open without remainder to the sovereign dissection of language and the gaze. [Foucault, 1973, p. 196]

Where is the patient in all of this? Foucault and Burgess both show that the patient's living body (or, more accurately, the traumatized portion of it) is manifestly present as the passive object of scrutiny, but the individual self as a thinking, feeling subject seems to be an inconvenience. The greater the technological virtuosity the clinic is able to bring to bear on the manifestations of disease in the suffering patient, Burgess seems to suggest, the more transparent and irrelevant the patient, seen as an autonomous human person, will become:

They resented his body, Edwin could tell that. It was in the way, a long clumsy shoot out of the potato they were trying to roll around. If only the head could be, perhaps painlessly, temporarily severed and then, with some epoxy resin or other, fitted back. [DIS, p. 57]

The great power of this image derives from the fact that Spindrift's wife feels the same way about him. A sick man, bereft of both earning potential and libido, requiring both visits and reassurance, he is simply a millstone, cramping her style. She starts sending him visitors he does not know, from among her pub-going and partying crowd, while she carries on affairs with artists and petty criminals. Either escaping from the hospital, or dreaming that he escapes (Burgess cunningly leaves us uncertain), Edwin goes in search of her through an underworld London that consciously echoes Leopold Bloom's Dublin in Joyce's *Ulysses*.

During this journey of self-discovery, which may be a sort of shamanic trance journey, Spindrift learns that he, too, has been a perpetrator of the depersonalizing clinical gaze. His philologist's obsession with language as artifact, divorced from referents in the real world of material responsibilities and personal relationships, has deadened his marriage and his sexuality:

Words, he realized, words, words, words. He had lived too long with words and not what the words stood for.... A world of words, thought Edwin, saying it aloud and liking the sound of it. "A whirling world of words." Apart from its accidents of sound, etymology and lexical definition, did he really know the meaning of any one word? Love, for instance. Interesting, that collocation of sounds: the clear allophone of the voiced divided phoneme gliding to that newest of

English vowels which Shakespeare, for instance, did not know, ending with the soft bite of the voiced labiodental. And its origin? Edwin saw the word tumble back to Anglo-Saxon and beyond, and its cognate Teutonic forms tumbling back, too, so that all forms ultimately melted in the prehistoric primitive Germanic mother. Fascinating. But there was something about the word that should be even more fascinating, to the man if not to the philologist: its real significance when used in such a locution as "Edwin loves Sheila." And Edwin realized he didn't find it fascinating.... He had never been sufficiently interested in words, that was the trouble. [DIS, p. 140]

It is Dr. Railton who confirms Edwin's self-diagnosis, in a way that is both insulting and sobering: "The trumpet to me is possibly like the study of words to you. But," said Dr Railton, "I have a profession as well." [DIS, p. 220]

The Doctor Is Sick is a hilarious novel, full of outrageous characters and comical incidents. But the many bizarre encounters that befall Spindrift during his fantastical journey all carry the same judgment upon him. His life has passed beyond his control, into a state of heteronomous abjection, because he has neglected it, replacing a realistic commitment to life with an intellectual, one might even say an anal-retentive, obsession with words stripped of their "real-world meanings," their human, interpersonal significance. Failure to strive for the good, through commitment, compassion and

community, increases the sum total of evil in the world through which Spindrift himself must travel.

In *ABBA ABBA*, the protagonist is a historical figure who shares both Dr. Railton's profession and Dr. Spindrift's (and Burgess's) obsession with words. The poet John Keats was near the end of his medical training when he caught tuberculosis from his dying brother and patient Tom. Burgess's novella deals with Keats's last few days of life in Rome, days marked by fatalistic examinations of expectorated sputum for signs of blood, by frantic wrestling with unfinished poems, and by bitter arguments about the existence and role of God in a world where talented young men die in sickness and poverty as a result of unselfish acts.

Keats is brought into contact with a Roman who is his diametric opposite in everything but their mutual devotion to the Petrarchan sonnet (whose partial rhyme scheme is one source of the novella's title), as the purest and most powerful poetic form. Giuseppe Belli is a lay Vatican functionary who is about to accept the position of censor, because of his great knowledge of both Catholic doctrine and the arts. At the same time, he is the creator of a series of over 2200 Petrarchan sonnets in the obscene and blasphemous Roman dialect, in which episodes in the life of Christ are depicted from the point of view, and in the voice, of the hard-nosed, cynical urban poor. The

historical Belli was so torn by the inner conflict engendered by the serving of two masters, the Church and the Muse, that he tried in later years to destroy his sonnets. A liberal cleric rescued them from the flames, and Burgess's own translation of about seventy of them forms an appendix to the book.

While Keats the poet sings the divine beauty of nature and the salvific role of art, Keats the dying healer rages against the irrelevance and vacuity of Christian belief. While Belli the censor struggles to contain art within a proselytic and didactic function, Belli the poet ejaculates coarse hymns to a sensual and carnal Christ, whose animality and earthiness make his suffering more real to the Roman poor. Belli, aware of both dichotomies, rails at Keats, through an interpreter, as an idolater of Nature:

"He says you free-thinking Protestant English poets have forgotten how to think, freely or otherwise.... Free thinking, he says, is anyway no thinking. You have substituted something called Nature for God, and with Nature there is nothing but Truth and Beauty and Goodness until you fall sick, and then Nature becomes lying and ugly and malevolent. You make Nature both God and devil, but it is one or the other only according to your moods. [AA, p. 53]

In many ways, Keats at this point is experiencing the abjection so powerfully characterized by Julia Kristeva:

If it is true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject. [1982, p. 5]

Kristeva has recognized that, in extremity, the human individual discovers within him/herself that which seems opposed to life, health, wholeness or unity. The seeds of corruption, entropy, the unsanctified and unidirectional organic processes of decay and collapse that we acknowledge dispassionately when we notice them outside of us in the natural world, all constitute a *memento mori* which is as much a part of us as its vital opposite. In much the same way, Keats, identifying himself with his decaying body and the bloody spit he anxiously awaits as the harbinger of his worsening condition, sees no way out of abjection except through mimesis and metaphor. He recoils from Belli's fervor, guilt and unhappiness, offering an aesthetic release:

The way out is the way out of the conception of ourselves as unified beings. We are, in fact, unities in name and appearance and voice and a set of habits only. We are nothing more, and to flesh ourselves with character we must identify ourselves, swiftly, temporarily, with one or another of our brothers and sisters of the universe. We have to dress up in the borrowed raiment of a comet, the moon, a pecking

sparrow, a snowflake, boiling water, a billiard ball rolling towards a pocket. [AA, p. 56]

This taking refuge in mimesis and metaphor seems to find a critical response in the thought of Kristeva:

Obviously, I am only *like* someone else: mimetic logic of the advent of the ego, objects, and signs. But when I *seek* (myself), *lose* (myself), or experience *jouissance* -- then "I" is *heterogeneous*. [Kristeva, 1982, p. 10]

Keats sees this heterogeneity resulting from the poetic imagination as necessary for the creation of beauty that transcends the ugliness of life. Kristeva, on the other hand, seems to see our perceptions and judgments of both the beauty and the ugliness of life as artifacts of the psyche's attempt to transcend its constraining boundedness. Not simply ways of viewing ourselves in the context of the outside world through the screen of language, mimesis and metaphor can be seen as coping mechanisms, survival skills, that remind us of our interconnectedness, of the artificiality and provisionality of the subject/object and self/other dichotomies.

In Keats's extremity, his word-play and conversation are becoming more and more coarse and cynical, as preoccupied with bodily fluids and digestive processes as

the Romans of Belli's sonnets. The poetic transcendence he seeks is perverted by his existential dilemma into gallows humor and self-loathing. After bringing up a great quantity of blood and being refused a lethal dose of laudanum by his Christian friend, the painter Severn, Keats rages against the futility of life and love:

"They do not know," he said, "any of them, what mischief they do when they bring a child into the world. They allow themselves to be driven to clasping and colling and kissing and then he is on to her, panting, to pump in a thimbleload of seed. And in the devil's due time, which is three months by three, a morris of Hecates, comes the child, and he grows and grows to hope from life, and then the smiting. It can be at any time. In my student days I saw children die at three days, and they were lucky, they had not grown to a day of hope. But I saw Tom die too, not twenty. And Chatterton died at seventeen. And here is the little poet Jack Keats dying at twenty-five, one of the luckier, for he has made bad poetry and seen something of the world. But it is the hope that is the curse, to be given hope and then hear the laughter. [AA, p. 66]

Compare this passage with these lines from Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*:

A laughing apocalypse is an apocalypse without god. Black mysticism of transcendental collapse. The resulting scription is perhaps the ultimate form of a secular attitude without morality, without judgment, without hope. [Kristeva, 1982, p. 206]

Keats seems to want to have his theology both ways. Simultaneously denying a beneficent God and acknowledging a personified and laughing power of evil, Kristeva would seem to suggest, he undercuts and relativizes the ethical component of life. Burgess does not rescue Keats from this terminal state of abjection by resorting to an ahistorical deathbed conversion. Keats dies and, according to the Roman quarantine laws, all his property is burned or destroyed. Only his poetry lives on. Belli, on the other hand, is almost forgotten, but his poems have survived the flames, in all their obscene piety. Both men are troubled by the question of evil in the world. Keats sidesteps this dilemma by denying the possibility of good. Belli acknowledges that the battle between good and evil is going on within him, that he himself is the battlefield. He faces the reality of moral ambiguity in his life. The forces of poverty and illness are too great to be transcended by Keats's aesthetic vision, and he surrenders, burning out brightly and sordidly, a self-conscious romantic hero. Belli's aesthetic vision is not at all transcendent; his sonnets are like a war correspondent's dispatches from the front. As poet and censor, blasphemer and believer, he remains an active and involved citizen of the duoverse.

In *The End of the World News*, Burgess braids together three separate and wildly diverse story-lines into a complex and deliberately scattered vision of the upheavals of the

twentieth century. Attempting to emulate the shattered, kaleidoscopic view of a person "channel-surfing" in an effort to watch three different television programs at the same time, Burgess presents a disaster/science-fiction novel about the building of a space ship designed to evacuate Earth's intellectual elite from the impending destruction of the planet by a comet; a Broadway musical, complete with song lyrics, about Trotsky visiting New York in 1917; and, our main concern in this chapter, a biographical novel about the life, career and sufferings of Sigmund Freud. Bound together by the themes of exile, the persecution and preservation of intellectual elites, and impending cataclysm, the three intertwined stories are stylistically heterogeneous. The disaster novel is rich in descriptive paragraphs and character development. The Broadway musical, although paragraphed like a novel, reads like a script, describing only scene and action, and revealing character and motivation mainly through dialogue and song lyrics. The Freud "novel" seems more like a teleplay, filled with dream sequences, flash-backs and quick dissolves from one scene to another, and is almost all dialogue.

However, included in this novel are some harrowing descriptions of the progress of Freud's cancer of the upper jaw and hard palate, of the primitive and excruciating medical procedures and prostheses with which he was treated, and of the debilitating effect of these sufferings upon his

speech, his autonomy and his attitude towards life. Parallel to the progressive deterioration of his physical health, Freud is subjected, as a representative Jew, to the rise of Viennese and Swiss antisemitism and the growth of Nazism, and on a personal level, to the defection of one after another of his disciples, as his creation, psychoanalysis, becomes so international and heteronomous that many of his own fond dogmas are abandoned by younger thinkers. This intertwining of suffering, exclusion and rejection/betrayal clearly exemplifies much of what Kristeva means by her understanding of abjection.

The paradigmatic rebellious disciple is Carl Gustav Jung. He and Freud are set in binary opposition to each other in every possible way: vigorous, athletic youth versus age, fatigue and debility, Gentile versus Jew, believer versus atheist, Calvinist ascetic versus eater, drinker and smoker, Swiss unspoiled countryside versus Viennese urban decay, ambitious entrepreneurship versus dogmatic conservatism. Their early friendship and collaboration, filled with images of adoption and succession, inundates the novel with Oedipal resonances, which are balanced by the portrayal of Freud's relationship with his daughter, Anna, his perennially virginal disciple and nurse.

The novel opens, like a Greek epic, *in medias res*. It is the late 1930's in an occupied Vienna, and the Gestapo,

having invaded the Freud household, are about to take Anna Freud away for interrogation:

Freud's speech was terribly distorted. "Take me," he said. "She knows nothing. I am the greatest slinger against the Nazi ethic."

The second man took Anna's left arm, but she shrugged his hand off.

"What do you want? A recantation of my crimes?"

"I've heard of your headquarters," Martha [Freud's wife] wailed. "You torture people there. Why did you have to come to our city? Why can't you leave decent people alone?"

"Is it a public crucifixion you want? I demand to be taken. Leave my daughter alone. She works for children. She does nothing but good."

"Don't worry," Anna said. "Come," and she made as to leave first. Freud raised his right hand to heaven. The gesture was jokingly interpreted.

"Heil Hitler." [EWN, pp. 14-5]

Having planted this distorted, labored speech in our minds, Burgess allows us to fill in the preceding stages of speech deterioration for ourselves as we go back in time to watch Freud first notice painless oral bleeding, leading to a series of examinations and surgeries, with ever-worsening prognoses. The initial diagnosis is "Leucoplakia. On the mucous part of the hard palate.... A cut and a scrape and you'll be right as rain." [EWN, p. 302] The surgery that follows, under a local anaesthetic of Freud's "old friend cocaine," is frightful:

"I'm putting a wooden wedge in to keep the mouth open. Nurse," he said. The nurse was a gaunt straight dark Swabian. She handed the little door-stopper over. "Now I have to cut -- quite a way back." The nurse took the knife from its boiling bath. Hajeck cut. Blood spurted. Freud coughed, retched, spat out the wooden wedge.

"Keep that open," cried Hajeck. "Nurse, hold it open." She held it open, blood-slippery, so that Hajeck could work fast. Hajeck probed deep. Hajeck hit an artery. Blood gushed into Hajeck's mouth and eyes. Blood flowed unstaunched. Hajeck made a desperate final cut and Freud spat out a tumour like a raspberry. Freud spat blood as well, but the flow of blood saved him the trouble. [EWN, p. 302]

The frenetic pace of this passage, with its short, jabbing sentences and the relentless repetition of the doctor's harsh, onomatopoeic name, turns a surgical procedure into an act of violence. Burgess's prose here approaches the jagged breathlessness that Kristeva pointed out in Céline's later work, the rhetoric of abjection, the literature of suffering and horror:

For, when narrated identity is shaken, and when even the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain, the narrative is what is challenged first. If it continues nevertheless, its makeup changes; its linearity is shattered, it proceeds by flashes, enigmas, short cuts [!], incompleteness, tangles, and cuts [!]. . . . The narrative yields to a crying-out theme that, when it tends to coincide with the incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity that I have called abjection, is the crying-out theme of suffering-horror. In other words, the theme of suffering-horror is the ultimate evidence of such

states of abjection within a narrative representation.
[Kristeva, 1982, p. 141]

The gushing of Freud's blood takes on resonances of Hebrew religious sacrifice and Greek tragic catharsis simultaneously, as he is compared to both Moses and Oedipus, Yahweh and the Sphinx. He haemorrhages again that night, sharing a hospital room with a "cretinous dwarf" whose gibberish adumbrates Freud's later difficulties with speech:

Freud rang the bell but nobody came. Blood galloped. Rang and rang and rang. Only blood came. The dwarf leaped out of his bed with circus agility and ran off in his stained nightshirt gargling.

Hajeck and Deutsch stood over Freud, looking gravely at him. The bleeding had stopped. The dwarf too stood, looking with a greater gravity. Freud said, weak:

"Biopsy report?"

"Negative," said Hajeck.

"Sure?"

"A benign growth. No carcinoma."

But the dwarf shook his huge empty head and said:

"Nein nein nein. *Es gibt ein verfluchtegegengewonnenen kark kark kark inomos. Dort. Dort dort und dort.*"

Freud looked at him as if he were the only one there qualified to give a prognosis. [EWN, pp. 303-4]

The dwarf's gibberish seems to contain a gnomic prophecy, including, as it does, the German words for "curse," "against," and "to come." And then he points: "There. There there and there." Could "kark inomos" be connected with "carcinoma", and "inomos" itself suggest "lawless" or "nameless?" Burgess loves to keep us guessing

and playing at the game of language. Kristeva reminds us "that the narrative web is a thin film constantly threatened with bursting." [1982, p. 141] Burgess flirts with this threat in order to convey the tenuous hold on order and sanity of the protagonist faced with suffering and mortality.

Freud, sensing impending doom, tries to deflect the curse. He is told that a new growth has developed and will have to be excised by Dr. Pichler, Vienna's finest oral surgeon:

"Whatever he does -- whatever happens -- this is the last time I speak as a free man."

"I don't understand. You'll always be a free man."

"A diseased body is as tyrannical as any upstart dictator. Let me foresee -- an indefinite period of dumbness. Dr Freud, the man with the words. Dr Freud, the slow of speech."

"Like Moses."

Freud nodded enigmatically, took a cigar from its box, sniffed it, crackled it, lighted it.

"How many a day?"

"About twenty."

"Your mouth has been a silent sufferer."

"Hardly silent. Silence, I see, belongs to the future. So let me utter to the sky and the winds and the smoke-blackened ceiling of my study my last loud curse on the generation of traitors -- Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and all their wretched epigones." [EWN, p. 304]

But the curse will not be diverted. A second radical, harrowing surgery leaves him with a hole in the hard palate blocked by a painful prosthesis he calls "the monster,"

which makes speech barely possible when he is finally able to pry open his swollen jaws. All the teeth on his right side have been removed. The soft foods he is condemned to eat dribble out through his nose. His life is filled with the whole panoply of outward signs of abjection, as Kristeva illustrates them: pain, foul odours of necrotic tissue, the confusion between eating and excreting, incorporating and expelling, bodily disfigurement, the incorporation of inorganic artifacts (the prostheses) as necessary parts of the self, debility in the powers of communication, the bursting of the thin film of narrative. And still the cancer remains, a personified demon who taunts Freud in his dreams, vowing to punish him for attempting to divorce the soul from the body:

"The golden-voiced Professor Sigmund Freud, Freudios Chrysostomos, full of wisdom, muttering like an idiot. The prosthesis they'll put in your mouth -- it won't fit very well, you know. It will press on the tissues and inflame them. An unending condition of agonizing ulceration. Prosthesis after prosthesis. The latest models from America, but none of them any good. Every word you utter a station of the cross, if you'll forgive the Christian image. And all the time I'm growing, silently, invisibly. They cut a portion of me off, but I'm still there. And at the end there's only me." [EWN, p. 306]

Kristeva, tracing the lineage from Oedipus to Freud, talks about "man's particularity as *mortal and speaking*."

"There is an abject" is henceforth stated as, "I am abject, that is mortal and speaking." ...Our eyes can remain open providing we recognize ourselves as always already altered by the symbolic -- by language. Provided we hear in language -- and not in the other, nor in the other sex -- the gouged-out eye, the wound, the basic incompleteness that conditions the indefinite quest of signifying concatenations. That amounts to joying in the truth of self-division (abjection/sacred). Here two paths open out: sublimation and perversion.

And their intersection: religion.

Freud did not need to go to Colonus for that. He had Moses, who preceded him in this reversal of defilement in subjection to symbolic law. [Kristeva, 1982, pp. 88-9]

Freud's courage and dignity in the face of his suffering, his fidelity to his dubious quest despite his grievous wound, and his continued devotion to language despite its tragic impairment make him a heroic figure, "joying in the truth of self-division." Despite his dogmatism, his proprietary refusal to let his disciples grow, his territorial denial of the provisionality and extremity of his over-simplified and over-burdened theory of infant sexuality, and his own comical package of neuroses, he continually wins our sympathy. His life is lived with compassion and humor, duty and playfulness. When his death is portrayed [EWN, p. 368] in terms of an Oedipal vision of the return to the arms and womb of his nurturing, ageless mother, nothing like the real social-climbing, unsubtle Jewish matriarch we are shown in flash-backs, we can only say, with Shakespearean ambiguity, "'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." [Hamlet, III, i, 63-4]

Earthly Powers, Burgess's longest and most ambitious novel, published in 1980, is the story of the twentieth century told through the lives of two men, connected by marriage, by their disagreements and by the terrible consequences of their compassionate acts. Kenneth Marchal Toomey is a homosexual, 81-year-old successful novelist, playwright, librettist and poet living in semiretirement in Malta. Pope Gregory XVII, born Carlo Campanati, has recently died, and the process of his canonization has been set in motion. Since Toomey's sister had been married to the pope's brother, Toomey has been asked to provide evidence of Carlo's sanctity and healing powers. As pope, he has been a rough approximation of John XXIII: a corpulent, popular pontiff who follows Pius XII and initiates a Second Vatican Council which radically liberalizes and modernizes the Church. The ecclesiastical demand for reminiscence has caused Toomey to reexamine his whole life and, in the process, the entire political, cultural and religious history of our century.

In 1937, while judging at a film festival in Nazi Germany, Toomey spontaneously pushes his host, Heinrich Himmler, out of the path of an assassin's bullet. The assailant, who is immediately shot down by the SS, turns out to be Carlo's mother Concetta, who, filled with cancer, has been working to evacuate Jews out of Germany.

A decade earlier, Carlo has prayed over a boy dying of tubercular meningitis in a Chicago hospital. Recovering, and growing up in an aura created by this apparent miracle, the boy becomes a cult leader, the novelistic equivalent of Jim Jones. The victims of the cult's eventual apocalyptic mass suicide include Toomey's and Carlo's grandniece and her newborn baby. Both protagonists, in acts of unselfish altruism, unleash horror upon the world and their own families.

Binding them together is their love and devotion for Toomey's sister Hortense, a spirited, independent sculptor who has married Domenico Campanati, Carlo's brother. Domenico is a composer, Toomey a lyricist. Together, despite their mutual antipathy, they have written Broadway and Hollywood musicals and one opera, a vehicle for a seductive and temperamental Bulgarian coloratura soprano named Julia Kristeva. Alcohol and success turn Domenico into an abusive womanizer, who abandons Hortense and their children. He is thereafter shunned by both Toomey and Carlo, now a Cardinal, and Hortense, who has always been intrigued by her brother's homosexuality, drifts into a lesbian relationship of great fidelity and compassion with a black nightclub singer named Dorothy. Hortense is a controlled alcoholic who finds new meaning in her life when Dorothy is stricken with bowel cancer:

Dorothy was, I saw, far from well. She lay in bed limp, her once glorious hair graying and without life, the once sumptuous lushness of her skin now taking on the hue and texture of an elephant's hide, her fine eyes at the mercy of tearducts which never dried....

"Oh Christ," Dorothy suddenly went. "Sorry sorry sorry. It's the not expecting it that -- Oh Jesus." The sweat of pain was frightful in its copiousness. Hortense tenderly wiped her with one of a number of towels that lay in crumpled disarray on the table by the bed. A double bed, the one I took it they still shared. "You go, Ken," Dorothy gasped, "you don't want to -- Christ, it's not --"

Dignified, she meant; she was right. Then the spasm passed. She lay very spent and said, "Hemlock," smiling weakly. [EP, pp. 526-8]

Once again we see the breakdown of syntax and rhetoric in the face of abjection so well described by Kristeva. Toomey, the narrator, seems gradually to take on the jagged, nonlinear voice of the suffering Dorothy because of his pity for her pain and the devastation of her beauty and musical gifts. It is Kenneth who provides the sleeping pills with which Hortense soon assists Dorothy's suicide.

Dorothy is one of many characters in the novel whose physical sufferings are depicted movingly and sympathetically. Carlo's father, Raffaele, is a paralytic in the later stages of syphilis. Raffaele the younger, the eldest Campanati brother, a wealthy and honest businessman in Chicago, is brutally mutilated by the Mafia when he tries to mobilize the Italo-American community against them, and dies in hospital. Toomey's mother dies of influenza, like Burgess's own mother, and his brother Tommy Toomey, a

saintly, innocent vaudeville comedian, suffers from respiratory ailments related to a war-time gasing, and dies prematurely of lung cancer.

Kenneth Toomey has tachycardia, and the crisis events in his life are often accompanied and complicated by angina attacks. One such attack occurs in a club in Malaya in the 1920's, where he has gone to write a travel book about the East. He is cared for and befriended by Dr. Philip Shawcross, who becomes the Platonic love of his life. Their deepening but chaste relationship creates a scandal among the conservative British officials and hard-bitten plantation owners that make up the area's expatriate community, and they are preparing to leave together when unadulterated evil intervenes.

Dr. Shawcross, unlike Carlo, is unable to heal the tubercular son of a Tamil civil servant named Mahalingam (literally "Great Penis" in Sanskrit, a name with deep religious significance, which Burgess loads with sarcasm). Mahalingam, nominally a Hindu, is temple master of a local black magic cult, modelled after many such cults Burgess witnessed when he served in Malaya. When the boy dies, Mahalingam curses Shawcross, who falls, grinning maniacally, into a coma, from which only death can release him, another example of Kristeva's godless, secular "laughing apocalypse." Carlo, in Malaya on a mission for the Vatican, confronts Mahalingam in an exorcism scene that combines

Stephen King horror with Grand Guignol black humor. The curse weakened, Shawcross dies peacefully. Kenneth never finds another male companion with Shawcross's nobility of spirit and unselfish honesty.

Early in their relationship, Shawcross takes Toomey on a tour of his hospital. Toomey sees the yaws patients:

"Oh my God."

"Precisely. Or rather not precisely. How can you believe in a God, looking at this gang of innocents?"

Innocent Malays mostly, mostly smiling with hand-to-breast gestures of courteous greeting. *Tabek, tuan*. A monstrous raspberry grew from a youth's ankle, glistening as it oozed, a primary chancre. A boy of six or seven was warted all over with secondary yaws. Tertiary ulcerations on a forearm, crab yaws on a pair of Chinese feet. "The women," Philip said, "are behind that curtain thing."

"Oh Jesus Christ."

"Goundou. Tumors have eaten his eyes. The hard palate's gone too. Bone lesions. You can touch if you like. All that skin's healthy. It's just the deformity that puts you off. He can go out now, nothing more we can do. But nobody wants him, he's cursed, he has no eyes. Gangosa or ulcerous rhinopharyngitis. The smell was insupportable, but that's all over. God in his infinite mercy has done with him. No eyes, palate, nose. Otherwise he's all right." [EP, pp. 224-5]

We will deal briefly in Chapter Four with Burgess's purpose in placing this anger against God in the mouth of one of the most sympathetic characters in any of his novels. Shawcross's reaction to all this suffering has emerged as an aversion to physical love:

"I'll tell you," he said, somewhat fiercely. "I haven't been with a woman since I was a student in Manchester. Of course, it's the big thing for medicals to be screaming womanizers, big and tough, bonechoppers, assault the staff nurse when matron's not looking.... I did my share. But then I saw the sexual act as a snare, a hairy net. A confidence trick, sort of. I've grown scared of the body. Oh, not as a dysfunctioning organism to be cured, if it can be, but as a bloody trap. I'm not explaining myself well."

"Well enough. What you mean is you have been put off the act of love. Ulcerating whateveritis of the pudenda."

"When the urge strikes, and it doesn't often, I go and take a look at Asma binte Ismail's pudenda, with her little sister there waving a paper *kipas* to keep the flying ants off. I can do without it and I have to do without it. [EP, p. 225-6]

It is from this state of self-protective aloofness that Philip is rescued by the arrival of Toomey. Their short-lived and chaste cohabitation will later represent a golden period in Toomey's life, which he will only rediscover in his mid-eighties. Long after Hortense, now doubly bereaved because of Domenico's death, has stood death-bed vigil for her beloved brother-in-law, Pope Gregory XVII, she and Kenneth retire together to a quiet English village and a safe, uncommitted Anglicanism, enlivened by furtive visits to illegal, underground Tridentine liturgies. Both are in declining health, bereft of their physical powers and far from the earthly powers in whose high and implicated circles they have moved. They have retained only their memories, both nightmarish and consoling, and their loving compassion for each other.

In the last chapter of *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva, only a coloratura soprano in Burgess's wicked imagination, makes a sweeping, yet fertile generalization:

On close inspection, all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its sociohistorical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so - - double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject. [Kristeva, 1982, p. 207]

In examining the novels discussed in this chapter, I have demonstrated that Burgess sees the suffering human body as the vehicle for a version of such an apocalypse, an unveiling, a revealing, perhaps a revelation. Under the duress of cancer or tuberculosis, exposed to the brute, inexplicable evil of human physical suffering, sufferers and their care-givers undergo metamorphoses of identity involving both abjection and transcendence. Family ties, friendships and other types of community are tested and strained, strengthened or broken. Suffering is unmerited and unpredictable; sometimes it teaches and sometimes it blights. Compassion can be as double-edged as suffering. Because of evil's power and wiliness, the consequences of compassionate acts can sometimes be horrendous, but Burgess

tells us that, as an act of free will, an identification with the other, compassion is the right choice.

CHAPTER TWO

PERSONAL CONSCIENCE AND THE MONOLITH

I want to suggest a strong note of reserve, of pessimism, of the ambiguous which it seems to me are of the very nature of life today.... And then to ask: In spite of all, what are we to do with our lives? A question which seems to me a peerless source of freedom to the one who dares pose it with seriousness. [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 4]

"What's it going to be then, eh?" [CO, pp. 5, 61, 103, 140]

The creative mutual friction of pessimism and freedom of the will, so clearly enunciated in the above quotation from Daniel Berrigan, runs throughout Anthony Burgess's writings and pronouncements. A firm believer in original sin and the basic imperfectability of human beings, Burgess scorned any ecclesiastical or secular forms of coercion aimed at limiting human freedoms. He rarely used the more politically correct term "rights," and usually put it into the mouths of the coercive power-figures themselves, often with ironic undertones. In many ways a radical adherent of the cult of the individual, he opposed syndicalism, the

social welfare state, and the dehumanizing aspects of military discipline.

He recognized the impracticality of out-and-out anarchism, but considered a vigilant, adversarial attitude toward the government in power to be the duty of every thinking person:

Anarchy is a man's own thing, and I think it's too late in the day to think of it as a viable system or non-system in a country as large as America. It was all right for Blake or for Thoreau, both of whom I admire immensely, but we'll never get it so full-blooded again. All we can do is keep pricking our government all the time, disobeying all we dare (after all, we have livings to earn), asking why, maintaining a habit of distrust. [Cullinan, p. 50]

This advocacy of "a habit of distrust" is echoed by Berrigan:

Every vision ought to have doubt cast on it, to keep it visionary. Otherwise we end up with flags and messiahs -- and murder. The old game all over again; nothing accomplished for human beings. Don't you ever have doubts about your life, your friends, your acts? [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 120]

Burgess was equally uncomfortable with many of the popular movements which partially shared his anarchist sympathies. He found the youth culture of the sixties and early seventies to be vulgar, anti-intellectual and ephemeral. He distrusted the motives of the ecumenical

movement and the proponents of Eastern religions in Western societies. He was disturbed by the rage and desire for vengeance he found in many representatives of the women's liberation and civil rights movements. At the same time, he ardently opposed censorship of any sort, and was one of the first and most vociferous defenders of Salman Rushdie.

In this chapter, Burgess's three most famous "cacotopian" novels [See Introduction] will be read in order to examine the author's ideas about personal responsibility and the way in which power structures, such as the state, the military and large labor unions, can impinge on individual freedom of moral choice. Burgess differentiates quite clearly between the absolute concept of duty and the coerced obedience to authority enjoined upon his protagonists, and he especially holds up the whole behavior-modification method of social control as demonic.

The critics who will be brought into dialogue with his ideas will allow the testing of Burgess's pronouncements against both real-life experience and academic systematization. Daniel Berrigan, an American priest, writer and antiwar activist, was imprisoned for destroying draft records during the Vietnam War. Karen Lebacqz, a Christian ethicist, is in agreement with Burgess in finding rights-language to be a problematical way of discussing ethical questions, and in preferring to highlight human interdependence, duty and responsibility.

The issue of censorship, mentioned above as one of his great concerns, impinged most closely upon Burgess himself subsequent to the release of the Stanley Kubrick film of *A Clockwork Orange*. Burgess repeatedly expressed his frustration with the fact that millions who knew nothing about him, and had never actually read a line that he wrote, linked his name exclusively with a motion picture based upon one of his least favorite of his novels: "not, in my view, a very good novel -- too didactic, too linguistically exhibitionist...." [1985, p. 94] Nevertheless, when the storm of controversy raged in response to Kubrick's lurid visualization of the violence and degradation of the novel, the director refused all comment, leaving Burgess and lead actor Malcolm McDowell to face the media, the talk-show hosts and the university lecture audiences alone. This burden of responsibility was especially ironic because Burgess made very little money from the film, having sold the film rights to a third party years before.

The novel had its genesis in two social trends which Burgess found equally disturbing: the rise of youth violence in Western society, and the increasing use of behavior modification techniques, especially "aversion therapy" in the "rehabilitation" of offenders and other "antisocial" types:

Before the days of so-called Gay Liberation, certain homosexuals had voluntarily submitted to a mixture of

negative and positive conditioning, so that a cinema screen showed naked boys and girls alternately and at the same time electric shocks were administered or else a soothing sensation of genital massage was contrived, according to the picture shown. I imagined an experimental institution in which a generic young delinquent, guilty of every crime from rape to murder, was given aversion therapy and rendered incapable of contemplating, let alone perpetrating, an antisocial act without a sensation of profound nausea. [1985, pp. 94-5]

A Clockwork Orange is set in an unidentified locale sometime in the future, a time marked by a world government, universal employment and the capitulation of culture to the entertainment industry. The protagonist and narrator, a fifteen-year-old gang-leader named Alex (without law?, without words?), is intelligent, reflective and scornful of the surrender of his faceless parents ("pee and em") to an unrelieved round of work and television. He is blessed with a great love and knowledge of classical music. He speaks an argot called *nadsat* (Russian for the suffix "-teen"), consisting of a mixture of modified Russian loan-words and cockney constructions, which, after a few pages of confusion, the reader is able to understand quite clearly (Burgess was an experienced second language teacher). Sharing this youth language with Alex gives the reader a feeling of complicity and even sympathy with his worldview, while simultaneously giving the descriptions of violence both a sheen of surrealism and a greater vividness. Alex

and his droogs (friends, followers) accost an old man bearing library books:

Pete held his rookers and Georgie sort of hooked his rot wide open for him and Dim yanked out his false zoobies, upper and lower. He threw these down on the pavement and then I treated them to the old boot-crush, though they were hard bastards like, being made of some new horrorshow plastic stuff. The old veck began to make sort of chumbling shooms - "wuf waf wof" - so Georgie let go of holding his goobers apart and just let him have one in the toothless rot with his ringy fist, and that made the old veck start moaning a lot then, then out comes the blood my brothers, real beautiful. [CO, pp. 9-10]

The worst, and most fateful of Alex's crimes occurs when he and his droogs invade the home of a writer and his wife. The writer, who is working on the manuscript of a pompous, long-winded manifesto called *A Clockwork Orange*, is badly beaten and forced to watch the gang-rape of his wife. [CO, pp. 19-23]

After assorted other crimes, and his betrayal by his followers, Alex is arrested and imprisoned by a police and judicial system rendered brutal by its very laxness. In a prison filled with ill-trained and unsupervised guards, random assaults and corruption are as frequent as on the night-time streets of the youth gangs. It is with a sense of being rescued that Alex volunteers to trade his sentence for the role of guinea pig in a new experimental criminal rehabilitation procedure, Ludovico's Technique.

Given a private suite, clean clothes and good food,
Alex is informed that he will be shown films:

"They'll be special films," said this Dr Branom. "Very special films. You'll be having the first session this afternoon. Yes," he said, getting up from bending over me, "you seem to be quite a fit young boy. A bit under-nourished, perhaps. That will be the fault of the prison food. Put your pajama top back on. After every meal," he said, sitting on the edge of the bed, "we shall be giving you a shot in the arm. That should help." I felt really grateful to this very nice Dr Branom. I said:

"Vitamins, sir, will it be?"

"Something like that," he said, smiling real horrorshow and friendly. "Just a jab in the arm after every meal." [CO, p. 78]

But the injections are nothing like vitamins. They are designed to induce nausea and terrible headaches, as Alex watches films depicting violent acts of ever-increasing atrocity. Some of the films are made for this purpose; others are documentary pieces showing Nazi and Japanese tortures and executions from World War II. The process works quickly and inexorably. Soon, in a well-publicized demonstration, the first graduate of Ludovico's Technique exhibits a total inability to respond to a violent attack, or to be sexually aggressive with a tempting young woman who offers herself to him:

"He will be your true Christian," Dr Brodsky was creeching out, "ready to turn the other cheek, ready to

be crucified rather than crucify, sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly." And that was right, brothers, because when he said that I thought of killing a fly and felt just that tiny bit sick, but I pushed the sickness and pain back by thinking of the fly being fed with bits of sugar and looked after like a bleeding pet and all that cal. "Reclamation," he creeched. "Joy before the Angels of God." [CO, p. 101]

The obvious religious fervor of Dr. Brodsky's presentation, heightened by Burgess's neologism "creech (to cry and preach simultaneously?) is deeply ironic. Burgess tells us elsewhere that Alex's only chance of real salvation has been taken from him. Alex is horrified to discover that, because of the background music of the films, he is now incapable of listening to his beloved classical music without manifesting the same symptoms:

It was not the intention of his State manipulators to induce this bonus or malus: it is purely an accident that, from now on, he will automatically react to Mozart or Beethoven as he will to rape or murder. The State has succeeded in its primary aim: to deny Alex free moral choice, which, to the State, means choice of evil. But it has added an unforeseen punishment: the gates of heaven are closed to the boy, since music is a figure of celestial bliss. The State has committed a double sin: it has destroyed a human being, since humanity is defined by freedom of moral choice; it has also destroyed an angel. [1985, pp. 95-6]

Released, Alex is a lamb among wolves. His parents have disowned him and taken in a boarder who berates and threatens him for shaming them. His former gang members,

now part of a new semiofficial police force, beat him into unconsciousness and abandon him in a field. He crawls to the nearest building, a cottage called HOME, which is the residence of F. Alexander, the fictional author of *A Clockwork Orange*. Now paralyzed and widowed (his wife has died as a result of injuries sustained in the gang-rape), F. Alexander can be seen as a type both of Alex, psychically crippled and alone in the world, and of Burgess, himself, also the author of a book called *A Clockwork Orange*, whose wife was seriously injured in a brutal beating (and would later die). F. Alexander is a complex character, a social critic and anarchist who is protesting the new aversion therapies in an archaic and self-consciously literary style:

"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 - " [CO, p. 21]

He does not recognize Alex at first, and upon hearing his story of Ludovico's Technique, he decides to make Alex into a sort of martyr by publicizing his wretched condition. When he eventually does recognize Alex as the leading perpetrator of his wife's rape and his own paralysis, he decides to complete Alex's martyrdom. With his confederates' assistance, he ensconces Alex in a "safe"

apartment high in a new urban block. Alex is locked in and classical music is pumped in, until, in desperation, Alex jumps from the window.

He awakens from a coma in a hospital, with his conditioning against violence undone. He propositions the nurse and threatens his parents with violence when they visit him. Alex is later informed that, while unconscious, he has been the unwitting subject of yet another experimental technique (no "informed consent" in this society!), a "deep hypnopaedia" [CO, p. 137] designed to remove his aversive conditioning. The public outcry against the aversion therapies, bolstered by the sensationalism of Alex's apparent suicide attempt, has caused the government to fall. Alex is a free moral agent once again.

He eventually recovers from his injuries, and in the final chapter, we see him, now eighteen, with a new gang of followers. They are eager to participate in criminal adventures with this hero of the night, but he is beginning to lose interest. Alex is growing up. He starts to think about settling down, marrying and having a son. At this point, he starts to wonder if he ever really had any choice at all, whether adolescence is a kind of determinism in itself. He is sure that he will never be able to prevent his son from making the same mistakes he has made:

Yes yes yes, there it was. Youth must go, ah yes. But youth is only being in a way like it might be an animal. No, it is not just like being an animal so much as being like one of those malenky toys you viddy being sold in the streets, like little chellovecks made out of tin and with a spring inside and then a winding handle on the outside and you wind it up grrr grrr grrr and off it itties, like walking, O my brothers. But it itties in a straight line and bangs straight into things bang bang and it cannot help what it is doing. Being young is like being one of these malenky machines. [CO, p. 148]

This apparent denial of responsibility for his actions while a teenager is the final irony. In "growing up," is Alex yielding intellectually to the deterministic and behavioristic ideas that the majority of television-sedated adults have come to accept, and that his own experiences have all but over-turned? Burgess leaves us to puzzle out an answer.

What is clear is that freedom of the will must be a given in order for questions of moral choice, compassion and duty to have any relevance whatsoever. Alex loses his freedom of the will for a time, and later doubts that he ever possessed it. His doubt is as pathological as the choices he made before the behaviorists worked their will upon him.

The theological aspects of the ethical questions raised in this novel are addressed by the prison charlie [=chaplain], a compassionate Graham Greene-style whisky

priest who has taken Alex under his wing and is deeply disturbed by Ludovico's Technique:

It may not be nice to be good, little 6655321 [Alex's prison number]. It may be horrible to be good. And when I say that to you I realize how self-contradictory that sounds. I know I shall have many sleepless nights about this. What does God want? Does God want woodness or the choice of goodness? Is a man who chooses the bad perhaps in some way better than a man who has the good imposed upon him? Deep and hard questions, little 6655321. [CO, p. 76]

Daniel Berrigan, the Jesuit anti-war activist and writer, dealt at length with these "deep and hard questions" in such works as *The Dark Night of Resistance*, an extended meditation on the poetry of John of the Cross. Although he and Burgess would probably have clashed harshly in their views on youth culture, contemporary Catholicism and other issues, they shared a profound respect for individual political choice, personal responsibility and commitment to justice. It may seem odd to juxtapose the pacifistic Jesuit with the "ultraviolence" of Alex, but the other protagonists we will be examining in this chapter share with Berrigan the experience of being hunted and imprisoned for their refusal to submit their principles to the demands of authority. Berrigan spoke, in a way that Burgess would have approved, of the cost of freedom in an unfree society:

If you are a slave, become conscious of slavery by tasting it; no deliberation is required, most men are in that state, by birth or choice. Taste it for a while, deliberately, through others, brothers and guards and owners. Let your eyes roam over the whole landscape; see how human (?) life is arranged around that one project; the enslavement of men, narcotizing or forbidding them to become conscious of the truth of their lives.... There is going to be little freedom until certain men have experienced prison. There is going to be little newness of life until good men have suffered -- and a few of them have died. There will be few men (or none at all) capable of reading the Gospel, until men become skilled in reading the texts of events -- and ordering their lives accordingly.... It has to do with a purposeful entry into the realities of life, revealed in its oppositions and absurdities, within and without, in the spirit, in politics, in professions, in the churches. [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 70]

Berrigan's use of the phrase "purposeful entry" brings us into the realm of teleology, of free-will choices made for the sake of a cause greater than one's own comfort or safety, and acted upon in the face of institutional disapproval -- in other words, rebellion, resistance, revolt, revolution. Now that we have observed how, in *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess demonstrates his insistence on the primacy of freedom of moral choice, we will examine two novels which discuss the role of the rebel seeking justice. Both Berrigan and, in the final part of the chapter, Lebacqz, will be helpful in clarifying the ethical questions raised.

The protagonist of *The Wanting Seed*, Burgess's second most famous cacotopian novel, published in the same year as

A Clockwork Orange (1962), is a gifted and controversial history teacher, a man skilled in "reading the texts of events," in Berrigan's phrase, but his ability to order his life accordingly is circumscribed by a rapid and irresistible cyclical historical process.

Overpopulation and worldwide food shortages have created a world constantly vacillating between different methods of controlling population growth. As Tristram Foxe, the protagonist, tells his class, the opposed political ideologies have been subsumed under "theologico-mythical concepts" [WS, p. 9]:

"[Pelagius] denied the doctrine of Original Sin and said that man was capable of working out his own salvation.... What you have to remember is that all this suggests human perfectibility. Pelagianism was thus seen to be at the heart of liberalism and its derived doctrines, especially Socialism and Communism.... Augustine, on the other hand, had insisted on man's inherent sinfulness and the need for his redemption through divine grace. This was seen to be at the bottom of Conservatism and other laissez-faire and non-progressive political beliefs." [WS, p. 10]

Thus, three phases of history cycle in inexorable repetition: Pelphase, Interphase and Gusphase. (Tristram hurriedly assures his students that, in this time of state disapproval of religion, the terminology has lost all

theological significance and merely serves as metaphor for opposing ideologies.)

"A government functioning in its Pelagian phase commits itself to the belief that man is perfectible, that perfection can be achieved by its own efforts.... The citizens of a community want to co-operate with their rulers, and so there is no real need to have devices of coercion, sanctions, which will force them to co-operate.... The private capitalist, for instance, a figure of top-hatted greed, has no place in a Pelagian society." [WS, pp. 17-8]

The government's disappointment when its expectations are not met, when the populace exhibits self-interest and antisocial behaviors, causes a shift into Interphase, a time of *ad hoc* and hastily contrived laws and sanctions, like the draft that Berrigan opposed. Chaos, panic and brutality ensue:

"Beatings-up. Secret police. Torture in brightly lighted cellars. Condemnation without trial. Fingernails pulled out with pincers. The rack. The cold-water treatment. The gouging-out of eyes. The firing-squad in the cold dawn. And all this because of disappointment. The Interphase." [WS, p. 19]

When members of the government become horrified at what it has become, it shifts by a process of internal revolution into the Gusphase, a time of Augustinian pessimism about human sinfulness, including the impossibility of good

government. This phase is usually short-lived, since the pessimist is always being pleasantly surprised by the fact that people are not that bad after all. The citizens manifest increasingly positive social behavior as the horrors of the Interphase recede in memory, leading to an increase in public optimism about human perfectibility, resulting in a renewed Pelphase, and the circle begins again. Optimism disappointed and pessimism pleasantly surprised provide a dynamic for an endless cycle.

The book opens at the beginning of an Interphase. Among the new, draconian laws now in place are two desperate sanctions meant to curtail population growth. Homosexuality is actively encouraged by government propaganda ("It's Sapiens to be Homo." [WS, p. 6]), and is an implicit prerequisite to any high-paying job. As well, the government, through its new Ministry of Infertility, has instituted a generous "condolence" payment to anyone bringing in a death certificate for one of their children, and the bodies are composted by the Ministry of Agriculture (Phosphorus Reclamation Department).

Tristram and his wife, Beatrice-Joanna, have just lost their infant son, Roger, to an easily treatable childhood ailment. Apparently the definition of "heroic measures" has undergone a politically motivated expansion, and medical personnel are unenthusiastic about rescuing what the government sees as just another mouth to feed:

"We do care about human life," said Dr Acheson, stern. "We care about stabiity. We care about not letting the earth get overrun. We care about everybody getting enough to eat...." He patted her on the shoulder. "You must try to be sensible. Try to be modern. An intelligent woman like you. Leave motherhood to the lower orders, as nature intended. Now, of course," he smiled, "according to the rules, that's what you're supposed to do. You've had your recommended ration. No more motherhood for you. Try to stop feeling like a mother." [WS, p. 5]

As Michel Foucault said, "There is... a spontaneous and deeply rooted convergence between the requirements of *political ideology* and those of *medical technology*."

[Foucault, 1973, p. 38, emphasis in original] One of the overriding themes of *The Wanting Seed* is the way in which all institutions -- medical, educational, religious, juridical, economic and military -- seem spontaneously to flow into the paths of least resistance in response to changes in government philosophy. With few exceptions, Burgess portrays the people in power -- the Prime Minister, generals, headmasters and others -- as decent, well-meaning people, who firmly believe they are serving the public good. Daniel Berrigan would call this belief a problem of vision, recognizing, despite his intractibly adversarial relationship with the American government, that the people in power only rarely set out deliberately to do evil:

Some visions are rotten and rot the mind which contains them. Did you ever reflect, for example, that the Attorney General too is ruled somberly by a vision? and the Pentagon also? [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 116]

One glaring exception to this portrayal of bureaucratic benignancy is Derek Foxe, Tristram's brother. A fast-rising functionary of the Ministry of Infertility's Propaganda Department, Derek has the whole world convinced of his homosexuality, while he is in fact carrying on a clandestine love affair with Beatrice-Joanna, his sister-in-law. Tristram, like Edwin Spindrift in *The Doctor Is Sick*, combines scholarliness with a lethargic libido, and the romantic and opportunistically celibate Derek has a willing relaxant of sexual tension in the fertile, earth-motherly (Burgess would say "bathycolpous") Beatrice-Joanna. Of course, when she becomes illegally pregnant once again, with Derek's child, he avoids her and Tristram thinks himself the father, until a jealous subordinate of Derek's informs him of the affair.

Tristram gets drunk and confronts Beatrice-Joanna on a busy street. After ordering her to leave their apartment, he staggers unwittingly into a labor rally and is arrested along with the strike leaders. Derek uses this serendipitous detention to keep him out of the way, arranging for Tristram to be locked up indefinitely as an enemy of the state. Meanwhile, Beatrice-Joanna has sought refuge at the isolated farm of her sister Mavis in the far

north. Mavis's Celtic husband, Shonny, is a life-affirming crypto-Christian, hiding fugitive priests and hosting secret liturgies in defiance of the law. A trained veterinarian, he offers to care for Beatrice-Joanna during her pregnancy and labor. Shonny and Mavis have two children themselves -- almost an open act of revolution.

The chaos of the Interphase rages on. Crops fail due to poor organization of labor, leading to food riots and cannibalism. We are given a peek into the nightmares of the British Prime Minister, as his dreams continue the flood of bad news he hears all day:

"Here," said the voice, "we see a fine specimen of a diet riot, all the way from yellow Mozambique. The rice-store at Chovica was raided, with what results you here see. Black man's blood, red as your own. And now comes starvation in Northern Rhodesia, broken men at Broken Hill, Kabulwebulwe a lament in itself. Finally, for a *bonne bouche*, cannibalism in -- guess where? You'll never guess, so I'll tell you. In Banff, Alberta. Incredible, isn't it? A very small carcass, as you see, a boy's rabbit-body. A few good stews out of that, though, and there's one lad who'll never go hungry again." [WS, p. 115]

With cannibalism comes the breakdown of other taboos. The old orgiastic fertility cults reappear. When Tristram escapes from prison and travels north in search of Beatrice-Joanna, he wanders through an England straight out of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, with couples chosen by lot

copulating in the fields to heal the blighted soil, with agapes of human flesh, and with improvised sects and liturgies appearing out of hiding.

Meanwhile, Derek's enemies have gone north to find Beatrice-Joanna and bring her back to confront him with proof of his heterosexuality and fecundity. When they locate her and her newborn twin sons, Derek and Tristram, she surrenders in order to protect Shonny and Mavis from punishment. By the time Tristram reaches the farm, she and the babies are on their way back to the capital in a military vehicle, and he faces another harrowing journey through the chaos of Interphase England.

On his way south, he is pressed into a newly formed army, a sign that the Gusphase is beginning. New powers have gained control of the battered government, and are following the age-old pattern of institutionalizing the excesses of the people into controllable and profitable policies. Both the army and the tinned human meat industry are run by private corporations with government contracts.

Tristram is at first given a teaching post with the army, but when he starts to breed suspicion and rebellion, he is transferred to an infantry unit about to go into combat, after being lectured on his insubordination for asking too many questions:

"As far as these two questions of who and why are concerned, those are -- and you must take it from me apodictically -- no business of soldiers. The enemy is the enemy. The enemy is the people we're fighting. We must leave it to our rulers to decide which is the particular body of people that will be.... Why are we fighting? We're fighting because we're soldiers. That's simple enough, isn't it? For what cause are we fighting? Simple again. We're fighting to protect our country and, in a wider sense, the whole of the English-Speaking Union. From whom? No concern of ours. Where? Wherever we're sent." [WS, p. 226]

Meanwhile, the opportunistic Derek has survived the change in government, with its laxer attitude towards philoprogenitiveness, and he and Beatrice-Joanna are living openly together, although she is beginning to feel remorse about her betrayal of Tristram. She secretly writes to him in care of the British Army, offering to rejoin him if he will accept the twins. Rejoicing, he determines to survive whatever happens. He soon finds himself "on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night." [Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"] He is part of an army of British males unwittingly facing an army of British females in an "Extermination Session" in a remote part of Ireland. The illusion of warfare, he discovers, is purely a means of draining off excess population and augmenting the food supply. The similarities to Berrigan's scathing description of American action in Vietnam are unnerving:

An extraordinary achievement! guns paid for, soldiers trained by US authority, crossed a border, rounded up these men and women, executed them, flung them in the river by the hundreds.... What is of interest... [is] how men can be isolated by a synthesis of fear, hatred, indifference and selfishness. So that the retention of privilege (the guns, the teeth of the Doberman) is at center eye, center brain; and actual starvation, waste, looting, murder, violation, exiling, political domination of others, is reduced to the moral value of a myth, the obsession of a minority of troublemakers and misfits.... Who heard from the slaves, who cared? They were part of the public arrangement, executors of the public will; honored thereby, drawn into an enterprise forever beyond their realizing. [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 24]

The "slaves" referred to in the last sentence of the above quotation from *The Dark Night of Resistance* could easily be the two armies who faced each other in this novel -- both executors and victims of the public will, playing roles the ramifications of which they will never recognize and winning, as we shall see below, a perverse sort of posthumous honor and glory. Berrigan makes a comment elsewhere which resonates eerily with the scenario under discussion:

Acculturation to violence as the ordinary way to conduct one's business. In proportion as this occurs, other options open to men, other ways of settling their differences become extra curricular [sic]; the main diet being human meat. [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 78]

Tristram does survive. Unconscious under a pile of corpses, he eludes the career soldiers assigned to administer the *coup de grace* to the wounded. He furtively makes his way back to London and stays in hiding until his term of military service lapses. He goes to the military headquarters, eager to confront and denounce those responsible for this barbaric policy, only to receive another lecture from a well-meaning and tired bureaucrat:

"They were well trained and well armed and they died gloriously, believing they were dying in a great cause. And, you know, they really were.... You see, what other way is there of keeping the population down?... Contraception is cruel and unnatural: everybody has a right to be born. But, similarly, everybody's got to die sooner or later.... Everybody must die, and history seems to show (you're a historian, so you'll agree with me here), history seems to show that the soldier's death is the best death." [WS, p. 274-5]

Overwhelmed by a sense of futility, Tristram accepts his back pay, finds a new teaching post and an apartment, and returns to Beatrice-Joanna and the twins. He will wait, fatalistically, for the next turning of the wheel. As the population pressure eases, society will become less chaotic, signalling the return of Pelphase. And the cycle will continue.²

²This type of dynamic circularity of human affairs is clearly and pessimistically portrayed by Karl Barth:

The net effect of a cyclical theory of history seems to be the triumph of the Augustinian *Weltanschauung*: a pessimism about the permanence of progress and the improvement of humanity by human efforts. There is nothing new under the sun. Despite this apparent futility, Burgess and Berrigan tell us, freedom is found in action. Moral choices made with compassion, other-centredness and a sense of responsibility, like the courageous rebellion of Shonny and Mavis, or the forgiveness and reconciliation of Tristram and Beatrice-Joanna, enable people to survive and endure their cacotopian surroundings.

Burgess did not produce another cacotopian novel until 1978, and his return to this cynical genre was quite deliberately didactic. The volume entitled 1985 is a unique amalgam of fiction and criticism. The first half [pp. 1-106] is a study of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, part homage and part refutation, written in an amusing and sometimes cranky mixture of essays, dialogues with imaginary interlocutors and even a "Catechism" designed to refresh the reader's memory about the world Orwell portrayed. The bulk

Revolution has... the net effect of restoring the old after its downfall in a new and more powerful form.... State, Church, Society, Positive Right, Family, Organized Research, &c., &c., live of the credulity of those who have been nurtured upon vigorous sermons-delivered-on-the-field-of-battle and upon other suchlike solemn humbug. Deprive them of their PATHOS, and they will be starved out; but stir up revolution against them, and their PATHOS is provided with fresh fodder. [*The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Edwyn C. Hoskins. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 483].

of the second half [pp. 107-246] is an original novella, itself entitled 1985, in which Burgess presents what he considers a more plausible worst-case scenario for Britain in the mid-1980's. Following this novella is a brief critical "Interview" dealing with his own work, as well as an essay on the changes in demotic speech reflected in the working-class dialogue his characters are made to use.

1985 is a story about a United Kingdom in which the unions are all-powerful. "The UK" has become "Tucland" (for Trades Union Congress) in common parlance. Every occupational group except poets is a nation-wide closed shop, and each labor dispute is one step closer to being a general strike. The government, an unbroken parade of various stripes of socialism for the last forty years, has nationalized almost every business, except for the increasing number of firms that have been bought up by Islamic oil interests. King Charles III (whose short, brunette wife proves that Burgess was not an infallible prophet, although they do name their first son Bill) is the figurehead of state, surrounded by faceless and interchangeable political functionaries, elected, since the state is almost the only employer, by their employees. Any labor demand that is met by more than a face-saving token of resistance results in a strike, followed by a concatenation of sympathy strikes. The government always capitulates, raises salaries, raises taxes, and prints more money,

resulting in runaway inflation, followed by more labor unrest.

In short, the society of 1985 is one in which the proletariat is both oppressor and oppressed, burying the need for justice in a never-ceasing quest for rights. Karen Lebacqz, in *Justice in an Unjust World*, deals primarily with situations of injustice in which the oppressors and the oppressed are two clearly distinguishable groups, but her ideas about the nature of justice, and the nature of covenant, harmonize strongly with those of Burgess, as shall become clear below.

Bev Jones, another Burgess protagonist who has been a teacher of history, now works (for much better money) on an assembly line in a candy factory. His disturbing questions about the status quo have cost him his teaching job. He has a thirteen-year-old daughter, Bessie, whose sexual precocity and mental retardation can both be traced to an inadequately tested medication his wife, Ellen, had taken during her pregnancy. Ellen is in hospital the week before Christmas of 1984, when the hospital catches fire. Since the fire-fighters are on strike, and both the armed forces and the police have refused to scab for them, the hospital is destroyed, with great loss of life. Bev rushes to the scene, searching for her among the laden stretchers outside the ruin:

"Don't let them get away with it," breathed a known voice.

"Oh, my God, Ellie, Ellie." Bev knelt to the stretcher that awaited loading. His wife and not his wife. There are parts of the human body reluctant to be combusted, but they are mostly bone. He was on his knees beside her and then, desperately sobbing, lying across her, seeking to embrace, picking up a handful of scorched skin and, under it, cooked meat. She could not feel anything now. But that had been her voice. The last thing she said had not been love, I love, look after Bessie, God what a waste, we'll meet. It had been: Don't let them -- "My dear poor beloved," he sobbed. [1985, p. 113]

After mourning with his daughter, who is barely able to understand what her mother's death means, and mulling over in his mind the full impact of Ellen's last words, he realizes that they have galvanized a latent streak of rebellion in him that he had quietly acknowledged for a long time:

Bev sighed over the near-empty bottle of Australian brandy as he foresaw himself at last translating a long-rumbling disaffection into action. He did not want to be a martyr for a freedom that, anyway, few believed in any more or even understood. But he felt himself, as it were, buying a ticket for a train whose destination he could not know, the sole passenger. All he knew was that the journey was necessary. [1985, pp. 118-9]

We are instantly plunged into that journey. Bev becomes, in a tentative and clumsy way, a revolutionary. He could say with Daniel Berrigan:

[W]e have done something more downright than turn our backs on bad politics or the evil of men. We are trying to get reborn. Or to put the matter more exactly, to allow the conditions of rebirth free play. To stand apart from the crushing weight of distraction, affluence and corrupt reward which is the reward and vengeance of the world on those who fight the world with its own weapons or scramble up its pointless ladders. [D. Berrigan, 1970, p. 178]

Lebacqz also provides a helpful definition of the nature of resistance to injustice, which closely characterizes Bev's attitude at this time:

This resistance may take the form of rage and anger. It may take the form of repudiation of the oppressor, including a refusal to accept facile reconciliation and the demand for a "room of one's own" wherein the oppressed community can define its own identity and agenda. Resistance requires resolve and determination to fight injustice. It leads to rebellion and subversion of the system in the interests of serving life. [Lebacqz, 1987, p. 149]

In the next scene, Bev is in the midst of a debate with Devlin, the general secretary of his own union. He accuses Bev of atavism, of trying to reverse the course of history and go back to a more primitive time, when the lot of the common worker was left up to the beneficence of the individual employer. Bev keeps his side of the conversation on the level of ethics, which Devlin sneeringly calls

theology. Bev insists that he is not looking for revenge, since that would only add to the sum of evil in the world. In Lebacqz's terminology, revenge is not "in the interests of serving life." He says that people, like the firefighters, army and police, who stand by and let a disaster or a crime happen deserve as much punishment as the original perpetrator. Devlin counters: "You blame people for doing things, not not doing them."

"Wrong," said Bev. "You probably blame them more. Because the evildoers are a permanent part of the human condition, proving that evil exists and can't be legislated or reformed or punished out of existence. But the others have a duty to stop evil being enacted. They're defined as human beings by possession of that duty. If they fail to do that duty, they have to be blamed. Blamed and punished."

"There's no such thing as duty any more," said Devlin. "You know that. There are only rights. Commission for Human Rights -- that makes sense. Commission for Human Duty -- bloody nonsense, isn't it? It was always bloody nonsense, and you know it."

"Duty to family," said Bev. "Duty to one's art or craft. Duty to one's country. Bloody nonsense. I see."

"Duty to see that one's rights are respected," said Devlin. "I'll grant that. But if you say 'right to see that one's rights et cetera,' well, it doesn't seem to mean anything different. No, I throw out your duty." [1985, pp. 121-2]

The dualistic opposition of rights/duty which arises in this debate seems to be an attempt to resurrect what has become almost a dirty word in this era of rights-language. "Duty" to many thinkers implies an unthinking and

unquestioning obedience to authority, or, conversely, the reciprocal term in any agreement of rights and duties, the requirements one must fulfill out of gratitude for the freedoms one has been granted by authority. In context, however, it seems clear that Burgess is talking about what Karen Lebacqz calls "covenantal responsibilities" [Lebacqz, 1987, p. 158], a mutuality based on respect, interdependence and belonging. The rights-language of Devlin and his society is the vocabulary of a society in which union solidarity has become a cloak for unthinking and insatiable greed.

Lebacqz, in a survey of various philosophical theories of justice, notices a similar one-sidedness in the rights-language of fellow ethicist Robert Nozick. While Nozick assumes blithely that individuals making free-will choices are genuinely free within their society to make such choices, she suggests, he ignores the interrelationships and interdependence of individuals which cause Lebacqz to prefer the use of terms denoting covenant and mutuality, rather than rights. [Lebacqz, 1987, p. 158]

Bev is warned that a millers' strike is planned for Christmas Eve, and that he had better be ready, along with other confectionery workers, to strike in sympathy. Alerting a fellow former teacher who is now a television journalist, he crosses the picket line and demands to be allowed to work. His employer, Mr. Penn, remonstrates with

him over his awkward and embarrassing behavior and finally has no choice but to dismiss him for not living up to the terms of his employment in a closed shop environment.

Interviewed for the television newscast, Bev is compelled to face the ramifications of the stand he has taken:

"So this, Mr. Jones, is your way of denouncing the principle of strike action. Don't you consider you're being rather old-fashioned?"

"Is justice old-fashioned? Is compassion? Is duty? If the modern way approves the burning to death of innocent people with firemen standing by and claiming their worker's rights, then I'm glad to be old-fashioned."

"You realize, Mr. Jones, that you're inviting your dismissal from your job? That, moreover, no other job can possibly be available to you? That the closed shop is a fact of life and applies to every single gainful activity?"

"The individual worker has the right to decide whether or not to withhold his labour. My curse on syndicalism."

"You've just condemned yourself to permanent unemployment."

"So be it." [1985, p. 131]

He then empties his bank account and does the Christmas shopping. On December 27, he tries to register at the Labour Exchange, and is reminded that he has refused to abide by the conditions of employment of "all imaginable trades except that of poet." [1985, p. 136] He is denied unemployment benefits for the same reason. He goes to the office of his Member of Parliament, who tells him to stop fighting history. Since Bev has deliberately placed himself

outside the law, his M.P. cannot even be considered to represent him.

This scenario is the diametric opposite to the situations of oppression usually studied by ethicists like Lebacqz, situations in which the right to organize labor unions is denied an overworked and subjugated lower class. Burgess is warning us that too much of a good thing can become catastrophic. Given enough power and no counterbalancing opposition, organized labor can become just another heteronomous oppressor.

Bev manages to get Bessie into a state-run Girl's Home before his rent comes due. Evicted, he sleeps in hostels and train stations, where he attracts the attention of youth gangs. These violent adolescents have become involved in the most countercultural behavior imaginable in a proletarian state: the study of the humanities. Since Bev can quote the classics in Greek and Latin, he becomes a sort of hero to them. They introduce him to the concept of the Underground University, an international and clandestine network of itinerant lecturers and students supported by robbery. The youths ask Bev why society has turned out the way it has. He tries to give them a balanced presentation of labor history, but they interrupt and ask what went wrong with the culture. Bev's response deserves to be quoted at length, since it seems to encapsulate Burgess's own ideas with great vividness:

"The worker's struggle in the nineteenth century was not solely economic -- it was cultural too. Why should the bourgeoisie have the monopoly of taste and beauty? People like Ruskin and William Morris wanted the workers to be enlightened. With the Marxist stress on the basic reality of culture and of history being economic, well -- well, pretty wallpaper and free reading rooms didn't seem so important. Discriminate consumption disappeared as a doctrine. The thing to do was to consume --but what? Whatever gave or gives the easiest gratification. Diluted taste. The manufacturers are always ready with some watered-down parody of a genuine individual creation. To buy should be to gratify. You buy a book you can't understand and you get angry. You ought to understand it, you've paid for it, haven't you? Things have to be made simple, easy sources of gratification, and that means levelling down. Every worker with money is entitled to the best that money can buy, so the best has to be redefined as what gives gratification with the least effort. Everybody has the same cultural and educational entitlement, so levelling begins. Why should somebody be cleverer than somebody else? That's inequality.... Hence your lousy school curriculum. Hence the dullness. [1985, pp. 146-7]

Bev meets the roving bands of scholars whose lectures are paid for by these young criminals, but who must nonetheless shoplift to stay alive. He sees copies of an underground newspaper called the *Free Briton*, which announces the formation of a private army to keep the peace and ensure the safety of the citizens during labor disruptions. The commander is a "Colonel Lawrence," which provides a satisfying irony when it becomes clear that the Free Britons are financed by Islam. Lawrence of Arabia united the Arabs in the service of British military

interests during World War I; now the Islamic commercial world is returning the favor.

While learning to shoplift, Bev is caught in the act and arrested. In jail awaiting trial, he confronts a fireman locked up for intoxication. He blames him for the death of his wife, and they argue about individual responsibility until the fireman gives Bev a picture of what it is to be trapped by the system:

"Listen," said Harry, now rather sober, "you got to jump when they say, right? You hear the bells going down and you shin down the pole and don't ask questions. Same when they blow the whistle. You're going on strike, they say. Right, so that's what you do. If you don't, you're out of it, right? I've got five kids. I've got a missus that'll play screaming buggery when I get home tomorrow morning. I've got a job, and it's the thing I can do. I got to do it. I need the money, and what with prices shooting I need more all the time. So you put the fear of Jesus into everybody by going on strike, and then you get what you want. What's wrong with that? Besides, it's not me and my mates that says right we'll strike. It's what they tell us to do and we have to do it." [1985, p. 164]

Bev weeps when he is forced to realize that the situation is too complicated to be resolved into "good guys and bad guys." At his trial, where he reveals the political motives behind his actions, he is sentenced to a session at a "rehabilitation centre" called Crawford Manor. Along with twenty other unemployables, he is conducted there by an

armed official, whose frustration when the rail employees strike and the remainder of the journey has to be completed on foot provides some comic relief.

Bev is amazed and even flattered to discover that the rehabilitation program is to be conducted by Mr. Pettigrew, "the great TUC theorist, the permanent chairman of the TUC Presidium." [1985, p. 173] This charming, urbane and idealistic leader, who, we are later to discover, is kept innocently unaware of some of the brutality enacted in his cause, uses sweet reasonableness and self-deprecating humor to win over most of the disaffected. He tells them that they are suffering from an inability to compartmentalize two antagonistic drives in their psyches (In the process, Burgess sneaks in a potshot or two at the current obsession with inclusive language):

"What is the nature of the dilemma? It is this. That humanity craves two values that are impossible of reconciliation. Man -- or, to use the term recommended by the Women's Liberation Movement, Wo Man -- desires to live on his, sorry, zer own terms and at the same time on the terms imposed by society. There is an inner world and there is an outer world. The inner world feeds itself with dreams and visions, and one of these visions is called God, the enshriner of values, the goal of the striving single soul's endeavours. It is good, nay it is human, to cherish this inner, private, world: without it we are creatures of straw, unhappy, unfulfilled. But, and I must emphasize this but, the inner world must never be allowed to encroach on the outer world. History is full of the wretchedness, the tyranny, oppression, the pain occasioned by the imposition of an inner vision on the generality. It began, perhaps, with Moses, who had a vision of God in a burning bush, and, through it, initiated the long trial of the Israelites. Saint Paul

sought to impose his idiosyncratic vision of the resurrected Christ on an entire world. So with Calvin, Luther, Savonarola -- need I go on? And in the secular field, we have seen, or read of, the agony caused by the enforcement of some mystical conception of the State on millions in Europe, on untold millions in Asia." [1985, p. 174]

The entire course of Bev's rehabilitation program is as thought-provoking and quotable as Pettigrew's welcoming speech. Few pieces of modern literature illustrate the term "novel of ideas" as insistently or as concisely as 1985. Suffice it to say that, remaining incorrigible, Bev is outlawed. He cannot work, and his daughter is no longer welcome at the Girl's Home. He picks her up and goes to join the Free Britons. Bessie attracts the attention of a visiting oil sheikh, who offers to take her in as a "probationary concubine," guaranteeing her safety, food and unlimited access to Western television. Reluctantly deciding he can offer her nothing better, Bev accepts this arrangement and is now responsible only for himself. Colonel Lawrence takes him on as a propaganda officer, and Bev starts to see the Free Britons from the inside. Their profession of nonviolence becomes increasingly hollow, as they become one more group contesting for power in the chaos unleashed by a general strike.

Just as a major riot is about to commence in Trafalgar Square, King Charles III arrives to speak to the crowd. In

his bumbling, self-deprecating way, he orders the armed forces and police to return to duty and the Free Britons disarmed and disbanded. A well-timed interruption, announcing the birth of his son and heir, unites the crowd in a transport of affection and patriotism. The crisis is defused, but syndicalism remains as the *status quo*. Arrested and tried once again for shoplifting, Bev is sent to an insane asylum, the proletarian society's closest approximation to a prison.

Writing to Bessie, he receives a letter from the sheikh's secretary informing him that no one by that name is known of in the sheikh's household. After brooding on the futility of all of his attempts to change his world, Bev walks out through the asylum's crabapple orchard towards the electric fence:

But, of course, they all got away with it; they always would. History was a record of the long slow trek from Eden towards the land of Nod, with nothing but the deserts of injustice on the way. Nod. Nod off. Sleep. He nodded a farewell to the moon. Then he bared his fleshless breast to the terrible pain of the electrified fence, puzzling an instant about why you had to resign from the union of the living in order to join the strike of the dead. He then felt his heart jump out of his mouth and tumble among the windfalls.
[1985, p. 246]

This bleakest of Burgess's cacotopian visions is also the most clearly Christian. Bev's insistence on the primacy

of duty and responsibility over rights and privileges finds its ultimate source in the Judaeo-Christian understanding of the nature of human community. Karen Lebacqz traces this understanding back to the Noachic covenant:

The covenant of mutual responsibility of which the rainbow is a sign gives clues to a theory of justice. The covenant implies care of one for another. The covenant suggests that the welfare of each depends on the other. Thus, justice will be located in responsibilities and mutuality, not in "rights" that are asserted against one another. [Lebacqz, 1987, p. 155]

Bev has been an ineffectual, but faithful witness to this understanding of justice. His suffering has destroyed his good sense and tempted him into one unacceptable solution after another: petty crime, abdication of responsibility for his helpless daughter, and a private army. He has struggled to maintain a distinction between justice and revenge, and ends by taking revenge on himself for his own failures. His martyrdom will not change his society; unlike the Britain of *The Wanting Seed*, Tucland has no historical cycles, only the spiral of inflation, driven by greed. And unlike Bev's and Lebacqz's vision of a society based on covenantal responsibility, Tucland's apparent solidarity is a mask for fierce competitiveness and

avarice. Burgess's nightmare vision of 1985 is all too plausible.

In the novels discussed in this chapter, Burgess has dealt with the conflict, inevitable, but necessary, between the inner and outer worlds that Mr. Pettigrew so adamantly insisted should be kept separate. Burgess denies that any separation is possible. Humans are defined by their ability to act upon the dictates of their consciences. Freedom of choice, for good or ill, is intrinsic to the ultimate nature of the human person. Aversion conditioning, historical determinism and closed-shop syndicalism all have the same final effect. They turn the human being into an organic mechanism -- a clockwork orange.

CHAPTER THREE

WORDBOYS AND WORLDVIEWS: THE WRITER AND SOCIETY

When people ask me, as they sometimes do, for a nice, quick, easy, capsule definition of Art, I usually say something like this: "Art is the organization of base matter into an illusory image of universal order." ... I maintain the belief that Art... wouldn't exist if we were sure that the universe was really a universe and not a duoverse, a unity and not a duality. What, I'm afraid, sounds portentous is really quite simple. The thing we're most aware of in life is division, the conflict of opposites -- good, evil; black, white; rich, poor -- and so on. We don't like to live in the middle of this conflict (it's rather like trying to picnic in the centre of a football field) and we rush eagerly to any saint or pundit or prophet who will convince us that all this conflict is really so much illusion, that behind it all exists a great shining ultimate unity which is eternal and real. The trouble is that this ultimate unity, whether it be God or the Classless Society, is always presented as being a long way off or away or above. I like my pie here and now. That's why I trust the artist more than the Marxist or the theologian. That's why I regard the artist's trade as not merely the most honourable but also the most holy. The vision of unity, which is what the artist sells, is preferable to any mere religious or metaphysical manifesto. [UC, pp. 265-6]

When the artist, the mythmaker, the poet, and the word-player become the focus of a novel -- when love and language become inseparable -- Burgess's art triumphs.... When the single dogged consciousness of the artist occupies Burgess's energies in a novel, the vision of restorative, redemptive powers of art and language blossom [sic] fully, no matter how brutal the world which surrounds it continues to be. [Coale, 1981, p. 199]

What is the purpose of the novel? Is it an entertainment, a nonthreatening way of passing time or escaping from the demands of reality? Is it an experiment in structure, form and the manipulation of language? Is it an inexpensive substitute for travel, a means of vicariously visiting exotic locales and eras? Is it a paedagogical device, painlessly educating its reader about other times, places and lifestyles? Is it a way of confronting the moral issues and debates of modernity in a sort of controlled thought experiment in which hypothetical subjects are faced with simulacra of real problems and the various possible responses are evaluated?

Judging by the novels of Anthony Burgess, the answer to all these questions is "Yes." His novels never fail to be entertaining, educational and experimental. He mixes genres and styles with fearless abandon, exposes his readers to exotic parts of the world that he knows intimately, and uses everything from Levi-Strauss's structuralism to Beethoven's "Eroica Symphony" to provide organizing principles for individual novels. He demonstrates a great fascination with foreign languages, archaic slang and argots, regional dialects and specialist jargons, so that anyone who reads a great deal of Burgess cannot help picking up snatches of Malayan, Russian, Italian and Arabic, among many other languages, and technical terms from such fields as music and

linguistics. He gives his readers piano lessons, art appreciation classes and even recipes.

But underlying this encyclopaedic virtuosity -- indeed, informing it -- is a gloomy moral earnestness wedded to an indomitable comic spirit. This tragicomic amalgam, on the surface simply another juxtaposition of binary opposites, is, in a deeper sense, the unification of opposites that Burgess seeks. Life lived to the full is always *chiaroscuro*, a mixture of darkness and light, sorrow and joy, guilt and innocence. Burgess distrusted anyone whose solution for the problem of evil was to deny evil's existence or our freedom to choose it. In the same way, he decried the denial of ambiguities in life and in art.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Burgess shows that the role of the professional writer is closely bound up with the ethical issues I believe are central to his thought. As the long quote at the beginning of the chapter states, Burgess felt that the artist's task was a holy one, the creation of a vision of unity. My thesis is that this vision, for Burgess, contains a human interrelatedness and interdependence based on compassion, duty and humor, which can assist people faced with the evils and ambiguities of life to live meaningfully and productively.

This chapter is significantly longer than the others. Although I apologize for trying the patience of my already overburdened readers, I feel that this length is necessary

for two reasons. Firstly, letting Burgess speak at length through protagonists who are his fellow "wordboys" (Joyce's name for language-obsessed writers, which Burgess often applied to Joyce and to himself) will give us an opportunity to observe the blurring between fiction and autobiography, the presentation of self through the novel, to which I alluded in the introduction of this thesis. And, secondly, since such an overwhelming majority of Burgess's protagonists are writers, including some who are dealt with in other chapters, it is clear that rumination about the ethical role of the writer occupied a proportionate majority of his adult life. I will endeavor to give this theme a comparable emphasis.

For similar reasons, I will use Burgess, himself, as the primary critical voice in responding to the crises and moments of enlightenment of his protagonists, which often reflect similar episodes in his own life. References to his essays, reviews, autobiographical writings and author's notes or afterwords attached to the various novels will be juxtaposed to passages from the novels in order to highlight the working out of his ethical arguments.

One of the earliest book-length studies of Burgess's novels is called *The Consolations of Ambiguity*. Its author, Robert K. Morris, uses this pregnant phrase to describe what he finds to be unique about Burgess among modern novelists:

A hero encounters choices that, on the surface, can be met by his slipping into one familiar role or another or that he can avoid completely. But underneath, by slow degrees, the choice finally forces a naked confrontation with the self alone. No longer a matter of how one imagines himself, it is now only a question of what one is and can be. The moment when illusion is finally stripped away becomes the moment of "comic" truth wrested from the beautiful losses, deceptions, evasions, and lies that we, in folly, use to comfort ourselves. The comedy is no less than the comedy of life itself, and the truth is in taking it on its own terms. With few exceptions, Burgess' heroes choose to live less securely, ideally, insulated, or feverishly than before, but, nevertheless, to live, accepting imperfections and divisions and consoling themselves with the ambiguities built into life and human nature. [Morris, 1971, pp. 3-4]

One great arena of ambiguity that Burgess continually acknowledged, both in his fiction and in his own life, was the role of the working writer. Seer, professional liar, prostitute, prophet, artist, tradesman, flunky -- one who writes for a living fluctuates between these various self-images. He ironically characterized his occupation in the preface to the second volume of his autobiography, using words that might serve as prologue to each of the novels dealt with in this chapter:

I present the life of a professional writer. The term professional, I say again and again, is not intended to imply high skill and large attainment, as with a tennis player. It means commitment to a means of earning a living. In the writer's occupation, action is reserved to fingers that transfer verbal constructs to paper, except for the groaning pacing, the irritable

crumpling, the Audenesque analeptic swig, the relighting of a foul cheroot. The writer's life seethes within but not without. Nevertheless, it has to be recorded. This is so that mild wonder may be excited by the fact that the profession can be practised at all. Here then is an account of failures and humiliations but also of qualified triumphs.
[YHYT, p. xi]

His biographical novel, *Nothing Like the Sun*, presents a William Shakespeare tortured by many conflicting drives and problems: an unhappy marriage, obsessive affairs with both a Malayan courtesan (the Dark Lady of the sonnets) and the young Earl of Southampton, the syphilis resulting from these affairs, his great love and need to provide for his children, the fierce competition between writers and theatre companies for noble patronage, and, tangled up with and interpenetrating all of these, his love affair with language.

The novel begins with a framing inscription describing it as the last lecture of "Mr. Burgess" to a multiracial class in a Malaysian college. The instructor, given two bottles of Chinese rice wine as a farewell present, becomes progressively drunker throughout the lecture, with the result that his and his protagonist's personalities begin to merge until, at the novel's conclusion, they are one in their debility, nostalgia and logomania. Burgess the author uses Burgess the character to illustrate the intimacy of the writer's engagement with his characters. The plot is

heavily influenced by the discussion in the library scene of Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which Stephen Dedalus describes Shakespeare's cuckolding by his own brother, Richard.

The novel is written in Burgess's own approximation of Elizabethan English. The different characters, from nobles to farm-laborers, geniuses to the dull-witted, Londoners, rustics and foreigners, all speak believable and convincing gradations of a flexible, colorful language that seems in the process of creating itself, so that the colloquialisms of the pub and the intimacies of the bed-chamber are all visitations of the Muse to the poet's greedy ears. Chance words and phrases heard in passing ignite bursts of blank verse that send WS (as Shakespeare is called in the novel) into creative ecstasies.

Balancing and tarnishing this artistic fervor and transparency to the Muse is a calculating, greedy opportunism, an avidity in both the romantic and economic spheres. His wooing of Southampton is powered simultaneously by an impetuous erotic obsession and by hunger for wealth and social standing. WS is so eager to please noble patrons that he accedes to Southampton's mother's request that he write sonnets idealizing marriage and conjugal fidelity, in order to convince the young earl to find a wife and produce an heir, rather than carrying on a homosexual affair with an impoverished poet. When

confronted about this hypocrisy, he extemporizes (and temporizes):

"A friend should speak what is in his heart, a poet even more so. It is waste I fear. Should I die now at least I have a son. The name Shakespeare will not die," he said confidently. But, saying the rest, he felt the old self-disgust of the actor; he was earning gold through eloquent pleading. It was for lying, he saw hopelessly, that words had been made. In the beginning was the word and the word was with the Father of Lies. [NLS, p. 108]

WS's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* create a sensation among the nobles, opening doors, but not purses to the poet. The combination of his need for wealth, his apparent abandonment by the Muse and increasing gossip about his affair with the young Earl causes him to throw himself more heavily into the coarser world of actors and theatre owners, while Southampton takes on a more active role in political intrigues with his mentor, the Earl of Essex.

It is now that WS meets Fatimah, a beautiful Malay woman who was brought to England as an infant by Sir Francis Drake after his sailors killed her parents. Raised in a kind adoptive home until orphaned again, she now augments her dwindling inheritance by functioning as an exotic escort and hostess for wealthy merchants. While beginning to attract her attention, WS is also quickly rising in theatrical circles. He begins a journal while simultaneously preparing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for

production, trying to borrow a thousand pounds from Southampton to buy a share in a new theatre, and improvising his way into Fatimah's heart. The play is a success and Southampton offers him the money. With equal ease, he acquires a mistress, a source of intoxicating and exhausting distractions:

In a fever I take to my play-making and theatre business. I write my few lines of *Richard* in despair of the power of words. I force myself to a mood of hatred of her and of what we do together, making myself believe that I am brought low and must soon come to ruin. I cleave my brain, writing of England's past, a cold chronicler that sees how all this will fit the nation's present temper, and at the same time a silken Turk on a divan.... Her smell, rank and sweet, repels my sense and drives me to madness. And all the time poor *Richard* jogs on toward his foul death.... She poutsays [sic] I must take her to fine places, go to feast as others do. But I am jealous; not even to the Theatre am I willing that she come, though masked and curtained from men's viewing. [NLS, pp. 150-2]

He starts to identify his erotic obsession with Fatimah with his creative power, evoking a royal sacrifice metaphor that echoes passages in J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*:

[I]f we are to hold a mirror to nature... we must see all in one. Thus, gibbering in my nakedness and approaching her with my cock-crowing yard, I see I am a clown, I see I am a great king that will possess a

golden kingdom. Tragedy is a goat and comedy a village Priapus and dying is the word that links both. Cut your great king's head off and thrust him in the earth that new life may spring. [NLS, pp. 152-3]

This complex net of metaphor and symbolism takes us back to a mythical world of unity and wholeness, before theoreticians like Aristotle taxonomized human experience into categories. Tragedy [Greek *tragoidia*, literally "the song of the goat" *Webster's New World Dictionary*], is about misguided sacrifice, fatal character flaws and waste. Comedy is about human folly, lust and lack of social restraint. *Dying* in Elizabethan poetic diction often referred to ejaculation and orgasm. The meeting point of sacrifice and lust is fertility. The old rituals of the ploughed field that were revived in *The Wanting Seed* were still practiced in rural England in Shakespeare's time. In fact, Burgess would have us accept WS's marriage to Anne Hathaway as a result of an unexpectedly fertile random coupling accompanying the bringing in of the Maypole.

WS's predicament, in his own estimation, is both tragic and comic. He is both actor and creator. He acts the parts of rising rural gentleman and family man and of chivalrous urban romantic, while creating a body of literary work which he already senses to be his true legacy. He creates several different worlds and tries hubristically to live in all of them at once. His life begins to acquire the structure of

Hamlet or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with plays nested within plays, featuring players cast in roles they do not know they are playing. Let us not forget that *Nothing Like the Sun* is itself a complexly layered series of narratives, including a journal and fragments of plays and poems within a novel within a fictitious lecture. Burgess is telling us that this is the way life is really lived, that we cast ourselves in different roles to fit different situations, while performing a whole other interior monologue we rarely share with others.

At the heart of all these layers, WS is an exhausted and bitter man. The political chaos of the late stages of Elizabeth I's reign rages around him, a macrocosmic equivalent of his personal malaise:

I can hardly move, sick not in my body but only in my soul, centre of my sinful earth. I lie on my unmade bed listening to time's ruin, threats of Antichrist, new galleons on the sea, the Queen's grand climacteric, portents in the heavens, a horse eating its foal, ghosts gliding on a buttered pavement. Were I some great prince I could lie thus forever, my body washed for me, a little sustenance brought, cut off from the need to act. But there are plays to be written, images of order and beauty to be coaxed out of wrack, filth, sin, chaos. I take my pen, sighing, and sit to my work. But work I cannot. [NLS, p. 159]

Already at this stage of despair, he begins to be batted back and forth between Stratford and London like the

ball in some cosmic tennis game. He must rush home because of the serious illness of his beloved son, Hamnet. He does not arrive in time to watch him die. Grieving and feeling the coldness of his wife, Anne, who has heard from travellers about his affairs, he returns to London and another blow from fate. Southampton has taken Fatimah as his own mistress, perhaps as a return for the loan of a thousand pounds. Hearing that the Earl has returned ill from a campaign in France, WS visits him and learns that Fatimah is pregnant and has been sent away to live at the Earl's expense until her baby is born. WS is most likely the father. His poetic vision begins to darken and turn bleak. Returning to Stratford in shame and defeat, he enters the new home he has purchased for his wife and daughters, and finds Anne in *flagrante delicto* with his brother Richard:

White slack nakedness gathering itself, in shock, together. "It was, she was, that is to say," twitched Richard, in his unbuttoned shirt, grinning, ingratiatingly smirking, trying to hide his, though it was fast sinking in its own bestial shame, instrument of. [sic] WS stood there, beginning to glow and shiver with the cuckold's unspeakable satisfaction, the satisfaction of confirmation, the great rage which justifies murder and the firing of cities and makes a man rise into his whimpering strong citadel of self-pitying aloneness.... "It was she," [Richard] said. "It was she that made me." He began to whine. "I did not want to, but she -- " He even pointed a trembling finger at her, standing, arms folded, bold as brass by the second-best bed of New Place.

"Aye, aye," said WS, almost comfortingly, "it was the woman." [NLS, p. 191]

He rides back to London in a calm numbness, reflecting that cuckoldry "is a kind of gift of money to spend on one's own sins." [NLS, p. 192] The political situation has become more polarized and Southampton importunes WS to create propaganda for Essex. WS proclaims his disdain for politics and his loyalty to the Queen. Southampton angrily says that WS owes him obedience out of duty:

"Duty," repeated WS with some bitterness. "Ever since I was a tiny boy I have been told gravely of my duty -- to my family, church, country, wife. I am old enough now to know that the only self-evident duty is to that image of order we all carry in our brains. That the keeping of chaos under with stern occasional kicks or permanent tough floorboards is man's duty, and that all the rest is solemn hypocrite's words to justify self-interest. To emboss a stamp of order on time's flux is an impossibility I must try to make possible through my art, such as it is. For the rest, I fear the waking of dragons. [NLS, p. 198]

Another improvisation on the resonances behind the word "duty," to place beside Bev's argument with Devlin in 1985. [See Chapter Two] Stung by all his entanglements with other persons, WS relegates the concept of duty to the abstract, to his art, the only obsession which has never failed him.

The chaos he dreads has its victory over him when, with Southampton imprisoned in the Tower of London, Fatimah returns to WS, abandoned and in need. He cares for her and is rewarded by being infected with the syphilis she has caught from the Earl. The three lovers are united in their illness. For Shakespeare, the disease is a dark and horrible visitation of the Muse, in keeping with what Burgess has said about syphilis and "mad talent." [See Chapter One] The deterioration of his already aging body and psyche bears fruit in the brooding, tragic plays of his later life:

The hopelessness of man's condition was revealed in odours that came direct, in a kind of innocent Eden freshness, from that prime and original well. The rest of my life, such as it might be, must be spent in making those effluvia real to all. For the first time it was made clear to me that language was no vehicle of soothing prettiness to warm cold castles that waited for spring, no ornament for ladies or great lords, chiming, beguiling, but a potency of sharp knives and brutal hammers. I understood what she herself was -- no angel of evil but an uncovenanted power. But, so desperate was the enemy, she had been drawn by an irresistible force to become, if not herself evil, yet contracted to be the articulatrix of evil.... My disease was a modern disease; it was the same disease as that which cracked order in State and Church and the institutions of both. We have had the best of our time. [NLS, p. 230]

In his pessimism and certainty of the power of evil in the world, in his world-weariness and sense of personal

guilt, WS is a modern man, and his disease a modern disease. Abandoning the quest for ennoblement, both secular and spiritual, he imitates his Muse, becoming an articulator of evil. "We have had the best of our time" is a close approximation to *You've Had Your Time*, the title of the second volume of Burgess's autobiography. Just as Burgess the fictional lecturer in the novel becomes self-identified with WS, Burgess the author seems strongly sympathetic to such *Weltschmerz*. There is no escape from ambiguity and evil; there is only the sacred duty to communicate and to create.

Burgess revisited the Elizabethan era in his final novel. In *A Dead Man in Deptford*, published in 1993, the year of his death, the story of Shakespeare's contemporary and respected rival, Christopher (Kit) Marlowe, 1564-1593, is told by a minor actor and occasional catamite to playwrights who adopts the guise of omniscient narrator. The narrator begins by parrying the hypothetical reader's scepticism about his omniscience, using cheap sophistry and playful language:

I must suppose that what I suppose of his doings behind the back of my viewings is of the nature of a stout link in the chain of his being, lost to my seeing, not palpable but of necessity existent. I know little. I was but a small actor and smaller play-botcher who observed him intermittently though indeed knew him in a very palpable sense (the Holy Bible speaks or speaketh of such unlawful knowing), that is to say on the

margent of his life, though time is proving that dim eyes and dimmer wits confounded the periphery with the centre. [DMD, p. 3]

These rather unsatisfying assurances by an admittedly unreliable "omniscient" narrator are both echoed and ameliorated in Burgess's "Author's Note," which follows the novel and returns to word-play about the nature of knowledge and truth:

All the historical facts are verifiable. [He goes on to identify his main sources.] The scholarly delving will go on, and other novels will be written, but the true truth -- the *verita verissima* of the Neapolitans -- can never be known. The virtue of a historical novel is its vice -- the flatfooted affirmation of possibility as fact. [DMD, pp. 271-2]

Burgess had written his "university thesis" on Marlowe in 1940, just before being inducted into the army. The thesis and Burgess's library were destroyed in the bombing of Manchester, but his fascination and affection for Marlowe burned steadily for the fifty-three years that elapsed between the thesis and this novel.

The historical framework upon which the novel is based is sketchy enough. Having been both an outspoken atheist and an occasional spy for the British government, Marlowe must have made many powerful enemies. His violent death at

a shockingly early age may have been connected with either or both of these problematic aspects of his life.

Marlowe is a feline, sensuous young man much given to cursing and blasphemy. A cobbler's son, he is one of the most poorly dressed students at Cambridge, which he is attending on a scholarship. Surrounded by pious aspirants to the ministry, he has fallen willingly under the influence of the sceptical, unstable Francis Kett, his theology tutor, later to be burned at the stake, who advocates the subjection of Holy Writ to "the anatomising knife of the sincere enquirer." [DMD, p. 6] Marlowe habitually applies the same scepticism to his own identity, introducing himself using all the variations of his surname that a poor, heretofore illiterate family have had to tolerate:

"Christopher. The other name is unsure. Marlin, Merlin, Marley, Morley. Marlowe will do. [DMD, p. 9]

This onomastic fluidity fits well his future roles as undercover agent and class-crossing artist. The resonances of the cognate name Merlin, especially, are recalled with relish by friends and foes, as he becomes enmeshed in both forbidden scientific researches, under the tutelage of Sir Walter Raleigh, and statecraft. Burgess himself has played this name game, inserting himself as commentator, authority

or character in many novels: John B. Wilson, B.A., the "literary executor" of the fictional author of *The End of the World News* [p. vii]; Mr. Burgess, the lecturer in the frame narrative of *Nothing Like the Sun* [passim.]; Joseph Joachim Wilson, the preserver of Belli's sonnets in *ABBA ABBA* [p. 101]; Professor Borghese, a linguistics expert quoted during an anthropology class in *Earthly Powers* [p. 467]; and several others. As Burgess has often reminded us, the professional writer wears many masks, all of them revelatory in one way or another.

Marlowe meets Tom Watson, a minor playwright, who, reading Kit's translation of passages from Ovid, encourages him to come to London and try his luck in the theatre. He also invites him to make extra money working for the Service, a spying agency set up by the Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, to support the Protestant cause in France and Scotland and to fight those who would return a Catholic monarch to the throne of England.

Kit comes to London on his holiday and impresses the actors and writers of Watson's circle with his quick wits and his quick fists in a pub brawl. He has an idea for a play about Niccolo Machiavelli. When some question the Italian thinker's supposed anti-Christian beliefs, Kit defends him:

- Machiavel is no Satan, Kit said. It is his honesty

that astounds. We have seen in our time men sent to the flames or the hangman's hands on the grounds of their rejecting the holy word of God as our prelates interpret it. These prelates have lifted up their eyes as they were swooning with joy at the salvation of the sinner through deeply regretted agony inflicted. But they were and are hypocritical. They love the pain of others for in it their own power is made manifest. It is the one thing men want. Not knowledge, not virtue, but power. This Machiavel knew, this he has taught us. And so the show of holiness is in the service of the love of power. But our prelates would be shocked to be told it is but a show. They do not gaze deep into themselves. Machiavel counsels this and sees virtue in dissimulation if it be exercised in the pursuit of power. You yourselves look shocked so I will say no more. [DMD, pp. 23-4]

This precocious cynicism seems less than natural to him when he is standing in Walsingham's presence and is coerced to sign an "oath of secrecy and lifelong fealty." [DMD, p. 27] He pleads the need to complete his education, which Walsingham welcomes as a useful cover, asserting that anyone who would refuse such an oath must be a traitor. Kit signs and is immediately ordered to visit the "English College" in Rheims on his next holiday. This establishment is a training school for priests who will enter England in disguise and work to strengthen the faith of crypto-Catholics. Kit is to pose as an Anglican student who has had a crisis of faith and wants to learn about Catholicism, and meanwhile to gather names and descriptions of priests and spies who will be sent to England.

Leaving the Secretary's office he meets Thomas Walsingham, Sir Francis's young cousin, "the most discardable of the Walsinghams. A younger son who does not inherit. Thomas, whose name taught him to doubt." [DMD, p. 31] They are instantly attracted to each other, emotionally and physically, and Thomas proves to be Kit's equal in his disdain for any dogmatism of absolutes:

- In youth is pleasure. (Kit started: someone, perhaps he himself, had said that that previous day or night that seemed now much in the past.) I mean that thought is the enemy of doing. My grave cousin is always saying that thought both makes and undoes life's fabric. If, he says, he thinks too much on racks and thumbscrews and what he calls the apparatus of the finding of truth then he grows sick. And yet, he says, what is the big conflict but a grinding of thought against thought. Some think that bread can be God and some that bread is bread and God but a hovering thought over it. And some that the Pope is the devil. It was different a hundred years back. Thoughts change and become perilous. What, then, are the things that do not change? In youth is pleasure. [DMD, pp. 33-4]

In a daze of infatuation and bemused by the new complications in his life, Kit visits his family in Canterbury en route to taking ship from Dover for France. He has three sisters, of whom the youngest, twelve-year-old Dorothy, is severely mentally handicapped:

Kit looked in pity and anger at her idiocy. He said:

- It is sometimes hard to give praise to God. Dorothy is always the same, we thought it was a prolonged childishness, but she is almost a woman and she wets the floor still and says nothing.

- She says a word or so, his mother said. She has learned some words since you left. She knows the names of her sisters but she uses them turn and turn about. Sky she knows, and sun, also rain.

- And, his father said as he cored a pippin, she knows that God is in the sky. But she thinks that God is the sun.

- So did we, so did the Emperor Constantine, Kit said out of his learning. Sunday is the Sabbath. The theological question is whether she has a soul to be saved. If yes, then she shall burn for the heresy of saying God is the sun. If no, she's dissolved into elements when she dies, like any beast of the field.

- This is terrible, Meg said. Is this what they teach you at Cambridge?

- Oh, we're taught a lot about the soul and who is saved and who damned. It seems everyone is damned who does not belong to the English Church, and there are times I grow sick of it. [DMD, pp. 39-40]

At Dover, he meets Robert Poley, Walsingham's chief spy, and Nick Skeres, his filthy bodyguard and assassin. Kit is instructed to pose as a waverer and to gain as much information, especially names, as he can. After an arduous journey, he is interviewed by the head of the college, who asks him point-blank: "Are you a Walsingham man?" [DMD, p. 45] Because of his theological training, Kit is able to pose as what, in a sense, he really is: a divinity student undergoing a crisis of faith. He is given permission to stay a week, attending lectures and services and meditating upon what he hears. Pretending to pray during a liturgy, he enters into an internal dialogue with a God he denies:

I cannot pray to you because you do not exist. A small matter. I contain both existence and its opposite. You cancel yourself out. You condone too many murders in your name. I condone nothing. I am above such things. My name is not myself. When men use my name this means they do not know me. What shall I do? What you are driven to do. And if I refuse to believe in you? My existence does not depend on your belief. You are then detached from men. What then is meant by God's love? The passionate acceptance of myself as my own highest achievement, manifested to senses live and yet unborn in the universe as my palpable garment. Men are a strand in that garment. Why did you have to come down to earth as a man? I do what I will. Men must be taught. The loving community of men must figure the perfection of the divine order. Men have learned nothing. Does not this argue a flaw in the divine substance? When men have destroyed themselves utterly there will be left one man who has learnt. That will be enough. And I can wait. This is not you who speak. It is only a voice among the many voices that dart like wind about the crevices of my brain. Did you expect it to be otherwise? [DMD, p. 47]

This is a disturbing paragraph. The deity Kit engages in dialogue is as ancient and all-encompassing as the Hindu Atman, as modern and elusive as the "God beyond God" of Paul Tillich or Nikos Kazantzakis. But yet it is apparently the same deity who was incarnated as Jesus in order to establish a kingdom of God on earth. In a sense, Kit can be seen to be playing the old game of moving targets, of denying randomly selected images or attributes of God, constantly shifting his ground and aim, rather than denying the concept of God in toto.

His argument, obviously, is not with God, but with what he has been taught about God. He has no positive image of

God with which to replace the unsatisfactory and heavily laden theologies of the papists and the reformers, except for the incipient poet's image of unity and wholeness which is beginning to take over his consciousness.

This image of unity and wholeness, which Burgess describes in the essay quoted at the beginning of this chapter as the sacred task of the artist, will be perverted and thwarted by Marlowe's life experiences. Burgess paints a picture in this final novel of a great talent whose potential for the sacred task is corrupted by politics and power.

Returning to England and making his report, he tries to put the Service behind him, continuing his studies and beginning a play about the king of Persia. An agent of the Service visits him at Cambridge and asks him what the theme of his play will be:

-Power. Pitiless, merciless, absolute.

-So power appeals to you, young as you are? How young?

-I am of age. Power, yes, power cut up and anatomised. I want the power of chronicling power. I have read my Machiavelli.

-Doubtless, all young men read it. Well, you think yourself not to be in the outer lanes of the labyrinth of power, but you are, you are. You wear Sir Francis's money on your back. [DMD, p. 68]

The agent gives Kit another assignment, this time as a courier to Paris. Riding to London, Kit learns that Tom Watson has published one of his poems, which has attracted the admiring response in verse of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Back in London after his Paris assignment, Kit is compelled to join the crowd watching gleefully the hanging, drawing and quartering of conspirators he has named to the Service. Burgess describes the procedure and the crowd's delight in graphic and gory detail before showing us Kit's reaction:

Of this Kit could stomach no more, so he shoved his way out..., seeing himself in an overwhelming measure as the hangman by proxy, riding from Tom Walsingham's bed to sign that he had witnessed conspiracy and here were the names, he had taken bloody money before blood was spilt and converted it to bloodhued satin for his back. [DMD, p. 92]

Later in a tavern, trying to wash away the figurative taste of blood with ale, he rages against what he perceives to be the cause of such horror:

-If religion does this to men's bodies, then let us have no more religion. We shall all be happier without God and his black crows of ministers. I do not forget what was done under bloody Mary and know it will happen again if the Spanish take us over. It is all one, true reformed or true papish. It is religion itself that is our enemy. Who is there that needs it save those that relish the blood it lets or grow fat on benefices and

advowsons and tithes and Peter's pence? Cast down God like a wooden puppet. He and his angels and saints are fit only for oaths. [DMD, p. 94]

He rides drunkenly back to Cambridge and immerses himself in his studies and his play, which, inevitably, is full of the flowing of blood and the severing of limbs. Back again in London, he tells Sir Francis he is through with the Service. He is threatened with the blocking of his degree if he does not take on another mission -- to learn, through an intermediary, the political intentions of the Duke of Parma. His response will be the key to whether there will be war between England and Spain. He travels to the appointed location and waits for several days, but is unable to make the contact. Cynically, he returns to London and gives Walsingham the message he wants to hear. There will be war.

Well paid for this welcome message, he is able to rent decent lodgings and complete his play. The Service has freed him from studies by compelling the authorities at Cambridge to grant his degree despite his frequent, lengthy absences on government business.

The graphic, unrelieved brutality of his first play, *Tamburlaine*, is a shock and a sensation to the public. The narrator describes it:

It was all Kit lusting, a male body augmented to a world his prey and no retribution. In a dream of lust all is permitted, tear his throat out, madden him that he batter his brains to a pulp, harness him like a horse, lay on the whip. Some thought the beastliness went too far, when Tamburlaine offered captive Bajazeth meat on his sword-point with Here, eat sir, take it or I'll thrust the blade to thy heart, and Bajazeth taking it only to stamp on it, and then Tamburlaine crying Take it up villain and eat it or I will make thee slice the brawns of thy arms into carbonadoes and eat them. [DMD, p. 120]

Kit's art is a foretaste of the abjection and enacted perversity that Julia Kristeva perceived in the work of Céline and others. [See Chapter One] Some auditors are upset that the play seems to offer no moral. Tamburlaine's cruelty and rapacity engender no divine retribution. The triumph of evil in the play overflows the stage when a ballistic effect turns out to be a live charge instead of a blank and a pregnant woman, her unborn child and a child standing next to her all die in the resulting explosion.

This disaster is the background against which Kit meets Sir Walter Raleigh, who has watched and enjoyed the play. He invites Kit to his home, where he is introduced to tobacco and to a circle of free-thinkers, whose scientific and political discussions are as heretical and revolutionary as Kit's drama. Kit is now able to place the ideas of Giordano Bruno (proleptically called "the Nolan," a pun from the writings of Joyce, turning the Italian thinker born in Nola into a kind of honorary Irishman) next to those of

Machiavelli. Raleigh admiringly situates Kit's drama in the mainstream of this radicalism:

I propose that we accept as a needful proposition the existence of a God and ignore what the old schoolmen call the ontological. Ontological confronts hypothetical. Or may one happily live with atheism? Our new friend Merlin has pounded London ears with the atheistical ravings of his Tamburlaine. I am no dramaturge, but it would seem to me that what the creator aims to create is no more than himself through an optic....

- No, Sir Walter [Kit replies]. There may be a directive will, Plato's charioteer, but there are many horses and they pull diverse ways. I may dream atheism and solidify that dream in personae that stock the stage, but it follows not that I proclaim a damnable *non credo*....

- And do you believe? Raleigh asked bluntly.

- Does belief or disbelief affect God's substance? I would put it this way, that there may be an unmoved mover. But this is not of necessity of intelligible make, no primary model of ourselves. What is termed God may well be a force as inhuman as the sun, and as indifferent whether to bless by warming or curse by burning. It may be a force progressing through change, whose faculty is built into its essence, and coming through the transformation of matter into spirit to a final realization of what it is. At the end of time, so to say, there may be God realised, but God is till then no more than a *conceptus hominis*. We are in advance of God in possession of the concept. He or it must wait. [DMD, pp. 137-8]

Burgess thus places a primitive but recognizable sort of process theology in Marlowe's mouth. Of course, the reader has learned by now not to take at face value anything Kit says when he is trying to impress. A complex theological heterodoxy is much more attractive to Raleigh

and his circle than the emotive, knee-jerk, ranting atheism with which Kit responds to the cruelties of life. At the same time, we are treated to more coy disclaimers about the presence of the author in the protagonist. Later we will see Burgess, in his autobiography, making an almost identical statement about his distinctness from the protagonist of the Enderby novels. In both Marlowe's and Burgess's cases, however, the line between autobiography and fiction becomes more fluid and permeable as their careers continue.

Kit is by now inextricably implicated in many conflicting networks of power and obligation. Each attempt to break free of the Service is met with threats, bribes and further missions. His homosexual liaison with Thomas Walsingham has earned him the enmity of Thomas's puritanical, ruthlessly protective servant, Ingram Frizer. His outspoken atheism causes him to be watched by agents of the Church of England. His professional competitiveness and sensationalism make him as unpopular with other actors and playwrights as he is popular with the audiences. Raleigh's fall from the queen's favor has put his entire circle, including Marlowe, under a shadow of distrust and disapproval. Meanwhile Kit's parents have discovered him in bed with Thomas and have tearfully disowned him.

In this embattled, abandoned state, he accepts another mission. Sent to Deptford to await a ship, he is joined at

an inn by Poley, Skeres and Frizer, each of whom has strong reasons for wanting Kit out of the way. They fabricate an argument about money, which ends in his execution:

Frizer and Poley wheeled Kit so that he faced the light from the garden. Frizer stood before him with the dagger.

- It is, Skeres said, a target permitted in fencing, though the sword's length does not always allow the accurate thrust. Ugly hell, gape not, come not, Lucifer. [quoted from the climax of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, sc. 19, l. 178]

- There is nothing in truth, Poley said. The blowing out of a candle. They tell me he was a good poet.

Kit's mind rose above all, observing, noting. The fear belonged all to his body. The dagger-point was too close to his eye for his eye to see it. Frizer spoke very foully:

- Filthy sodomite. Filthy buggering seducer of men and boys. Nasty Godless fleering bastard....

So he thrust. The eye's smoothness deflected the blade to what lay above under the bone. Kit felt at first nothing. Then dissolution, the swooning of the brain, great agony. He heard the scream in his throat and saw with his left eye Poley, recoiling from him, making the *signum crucis*. Dying, he knew the scream would not die with him, not yet. It lived for a time its own life. He even knew, marvelling, looking down on it that his body had fallen, thudding. Then he knew no more. [DMD, p. 267]

Burgess was near the end of his life when he wrote these words. His portrait of Marlowe as a brilliant, compassionate, but bitterly cynical man could almost characterize Burgess himself, were it not for the fact that the Marlowe in this novel is apparently a man without ethics. His pity for his sister's imbecility and his

revulsion at the executions he witnesses do not move him to actions promoting justice and mercy. His art is, as the narrator described it, "all Kit lusting," the passionate working out of the corollaries of his cynical views about power, religion and human nature. Nonetheless, Burgess was deeply involved and touched by Marlowe's story. In the last paragraph of the novel, Burgess thrusts aside the problematically omniscient narrator, whose existence we keep forgetting about, and speaks for himself, providing a critique, an apology and a tribute in one poignant paragraph:

Your true author speaks now, I that die these deaths,
that feed this flame. I put off the ill-made disguise
and, four hundred years after that death at Deptford,
mourn as if it all happened yesterday. The disguise is
ill-made not out of incompetence but of necessity,
since the earnestness of the past becomes the joke of
the present, a once living language is turned into the
stiff archaism of puppets. Only the continuity of a
name rides above a grumbling compromise. But as the
dagger pierces the optic nerve, blinding light is seen
not to be the monopoly of the sun. That dagger
continues to pierce, and it will never be blunted.
[DMD, p. 269]

In this difficult and almost embarrassingly emotional paragraph, Burgess seems to be saying many things at once about the role of the author -- both Marlowe and himself. Both the dagger and the blinding light transcend their

narrative functions as phenomena related to the death of Marlowe, becoming symbols of the author's piercing, enlightening task. Superadded to this symbolism, we are told that "the continuity of a name" (Christopher MARLOWE) "rides above a grumbling compromise" (Morley, Merlin, Marley, et al.). These iconic and onomastic victories seem almost to make Marlowe into a kind of Christ figure, who is the light of the world, who came to bring a sword, and whose name is praised. The implement of his execution has become his symbol.

Recall what Burgess said, in the quotation from an essay which begins this chapter, about the sacred task of the artist, especially the writer. Far from simply idealizing Marlowe into some sort of divine figure, it seems that Burgess is using him as a particularly tough example to demonstrate, as, indeed, Burgess demonstrated with his life, and his life-writing, that a writer does not need to be morally unimpeachable to raise moral questions in a thoughtful and challenging way. Marlowe's audience objected to the lack of clear retribution for evil deeds in his plays. Is not this lack in itself a powerful question about the way the world works? The flourishing of the evildoer has troubled ethical thinkers for all of recorded history, but dramatists before Marlowe had most typically presented a cosmos in which the evildoer ultimately falls, publicly and catastrophically, beneath the judgment of God, the gods, or

Nemesis. Marlowe presented his audience with situations of power feeding on itself, building and concentrating -- power as its own justification. Burgess has shown us that Marlowe was as much a victim as a chronicler of this type of power, even while he served as its unwilling accessory.

It might be argued that this novel undercuts or weakens the thesis under discussion. Marlowe can be seen as a man whose compassion consists only of anger at God for human suffering -- a man without a sense of duty to anything larger than himself, and, unless one stretches the definition to include blasphemy and thoughtless sensuality, without a sense of the ludic. Indeed, he is as distasteful an antihero as Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, narcissistic, hedonistic, arrogant and lustful. If he wins our sympathy, as he is obviously meant to do, it is largely because of the magnitude and multiplicity of the forces arrayed against him.

The compassion, the dutifulness and the sense of play we hoped to find in Burgess's last novel are still there, nonetheless. The narrator, Burgess's "ill-made disguise," manifests these traits in his dedication to the telling of Marlowe's story. We have seen how his playful use of language, his coy flaunting of the mantle of omniscience, and his darting in and out of our field of vision contribute a sense of the ludic that none of the other characters possesses. The compassion elicited in us by Dorothy's

imbecility is a pale reflection of the long-suffering acceptance and love for her demonstrated by her parents and sisters. Their fidelity to her is paralleled by Frizer's fierce duty to Thomas Walsingham and, on a larger scale, by the tireless duty to their country of Sir Francis and other agents of the Service.

The fact that these different manifestations of compassion and duty cannot coexist without clashing painfully -- the discontinuities, the ambiguities and the many types of abjection engendered by good people working at cross purposes -- is as much the subject of the novel as the meteoric career of Christopher Marlowe. As has been illustrated by all the novels discussed in this thesis, life is lived in ambiguity and implicatedness, which can only be survived productively by commitment to the very virtues which increase life's complexity -- compassion, duty and humor.

Between 1963 and 1984, Anthony Burgess wrote four short novels which chronicle the misadventures of a pathetic and lovably naïve poet named F.X. Enderby. Creator of several volumes of rather traditional poetry, Enderby is a withdrawn, repressed forty-five-year-old adolescent, who lives alone on a small inheritance. He does most of his writing seated on the toilet next to a bathtub full of manuscripts and discarded toilet paper rolls. He is chronically dyspeptic due to his sedentary habits and

execrable cooking, resulting in uncontrollable belching and flatulence at the most inopportune times. These embarrassing epiphenomena, which confirm him in his preference for celibate solitude, link him to his detested late step-mother, a woman of slovenly habits and unbelievable grossness, whose influence has left him horrified at the thought of closeness to women.

It would exhaust the patience of the reader to synopsise the intricate plots of all four novels, filled as they are with hectic adventures on three continents, involving a huge cast of characters. Suffice it to say that in *Inside Mr. Enderby*, Enderby enters into a doomed marriage with a woman who wants to redeem (i.e., remould) him, suffers the loss of the Muse, attempts suicide and falls into the hands of behaviorists who give him a new, nonpoetic personality as a bartender in London. At this point, *Enderby Outside* begins. Hearing a rock star with literary pretensions claim authorship of one of his unpublished poems, Enderby is about to confront him when the musician is assassinated by another poet from whom he has plagiarized. In the scuffle, Enderby ends up with the gun in his hand and flees to escape arrest. Joining a tour to Spain and North Africa, he is courted by a dowdy but coquettish fellow tourist, who inadvertently helps him regain his old personality and poetic gifts. In Tangiers, he renews his acquaintance with another failed poet named Rawcliffe, who

has also stolen ideas from him. This shady character, now running a bar, is dying of cancer. Although bent on revenge, Enderby cares for Rawcliffe through his last days, and becomes heir to the bar and Rawcliffe's identity. At this point, he is visited by the Muse in the guise of a beautiful young girl, who works with him on his poems and offers herself to him sexually. When he hesitates, ashamed of his aging, shapeless body, she tells him he will always be a lesser poet because of his unwillingness to transcend his life habits. These two volumes, which Burgess considered in retrospect to be one large novel, were published and paginated as such under the title *Enderby* in the United States, and will be cited as such in this thesis.

The third volume, *The Clockwork Testament, or Enderby's End*, has a much more complicated chronology. The sequence is roughly as follows. The rock star's real assassin having confessed, Enderby has been able to reassert his identity. In discussion with American film people in his Tangiers bar, he excites their interest in a film version of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. He is invited to submit a "treatment," which Hollywood turns into an exploitive, sensationalistic stew of sex and violence. (Shades of *A Clockwork Orange*!) Enderby, instantly a media darling, is simultaneously a visiting professor at "the University of Manhattan" (as Burgess had been at City College of New York), consulting with producers about more

movies, doing the talk-show circuit and defending himself against charges of advocating violence, misogyny and rape. Meanwhile, he is at work on an epic poem about our old friends, Pelagius and Augustine. At the end of this volume, while a teleplay based on the unfinished poem [See Chapter Four] is running on the television set in his head, he dies of a heart attack.

Burgess had thought he was finished with Enderby, but outraged readers insisted that Burgess give him an alternate future. He is, after all, a fictional character, all of whose life events are virtual. In *Enderby's Dark Lady*, Enderby is in "Terre Basse," Indiana, involved in the production of a preposterously popularized and vulgar musical based on Shakespeare's love for the dark lady of the sonnets [See *Nothing Like the Sun*]. He falls hopelessly in love with the female lead, a stunning black cabaret singer [See *Earthly Powers*], and learns something of American racial tensions through his clumsy courting of her. When the male lead is injured in a traffic accident, Enderby must play Shakespeare on opening night. On stage he improvises, out of a mixture of nervousness, unrequited lust and outraged aesthetic sensibility, a hilarious tirade, which, combined with complaints about his nonunion status [See 1985], causes the production to collapse into anarchy. Clearly, the last volume involved for Burgess a sort of mental house-cleaning, in which characters and themes from

earlier novels and from his own life were recycled in order to test their significances against each other.

Although shy and socially inept, Enderby takes on dignity and nobility when discussing the importance of literature, and in the frequent displays of selfless kindness and even heroism that make him so benign and sympathetic a character. It is as if Enderby inhabits a better world, in which people are left alone to live their lives, but strangers are always ready to help each other. He is Burgess's equivalent of Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, an exasperating innocent surrounded by importuning crazy people. His fearful awe of beautiful women infects him with a sort of antiquated chivalry, imparting a little of Don Quixote to him as well.

Early in *Enderby*, we are given a poignant description of him:

Well, there it was. His stepmother had killed women for him, emerging in a ladylike belch or a matchstick picking of teeth from behind the most cool and delectable façade. He had got on quite nicely on his own, locked in the bathroom, cooking his own meals (ensuring first that the fat was tepid), living on his dividends and the pound or two a year his poems earned. But, as middle-age advanced, his stepmother seemed to be entering slyly into him more and more. His back ached, his feet hurt, he had a tidy paunch, all his teeth out, he belched. He had tried to be careful about laundry and cleaning the saucepans, but poetry got in the way, raising him above worry about squalor. Yet dyspepsia would cut disconcertingly in more and more, blasting like a tuba through the solo string tracteries of his delicate creations. [E, p. 27]

And, indeed, he does seem to be a genuinely good poet. We are treated, in a whimsical first chapter involving the time-travelling visit to his apartment of a class of students from the far future, to a vision of how posterity will treasure his art. And we are told in Burgess's autobiography that no less a critic than T.S. Eliot "mildly approved" of several of the poems scattered throughout the novels, all of which, of course, were written by Burgess. The author, like Marlowe, naturally denied any facile identification of the protagonist with himself:

I share with him a nostalgia for a kind of dualism in which the freedom of the spirit is better confirmed by the filth of the body. Enderby, like myself, is a lapsed Catholic but also a holy anchorite aspiring above the fumes of his filth. His visceral obsession used to be my own. Up to the time of my writing[,] the novel, with the exception of *Ulysses*, where Mr Bloom spends more than a page in his outdoor jakes, preferred to ignore the bowels. Rabelais did not ignore them, and Rabelais was right. Even sweetest Shakespeare names his melancholy character in *As You Like It* after a water closet [Jacques] and seems to equate depression with constipation. The Reformation had much to do with Luther's costiveness. Also, at the time of writing about Enderby, I suffered from profound dyspepsia. Enderby's stomach is bad, but he brings this on himself with ghastly home cooking. He is ill clad and badly shaven and, since his bathtub is full of poetic drafts, old sandwiches and mice, he is very dirty. I, however, had a tidy Welsh wife who kept me clean and gave me good plain meals. [YHYT, pp. 14-5]

The Enderby novels allowed Burgess to use humor to exorcise some of the trials and frustrations of being a working writer in a society where the practice of literature was seen as a hobby. Burgess himself created his early novels under quite stressful conditions. At first under a medical sentence of death, he was later to suffer, as we have seen, many health problems. His life was complicated further by his first wife's debilitating alcoholism and frequent suicide attempts, seizures and hospitalizations. Enderby, by retreating from the outside world of relationships and commitments to the point of locking himself in the womblike solitude of his bathroom, no doubt embodied a degree of wish fulfilment for his beleaguered creator.

Enderby's inevitable identification of poetry with purgation imparts a deep ambivalence to his character. His poetry, manifestly linked with the most private of activities, masturbation and defecation, is also the most public thing about him. Science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein once had one of his more irascible characters say something like "There's nothing wrong with writing poetry, so long as you do it in the privacy of your own room and wash your hands afterwards." ["The Notebooks of Lazarus Long"] While Enderby and Burgess would certainly recoil from the scorn for the poet's art implied in this dictum, Enderby has occasion again and again throughout the series

to remark on the similarities in urgency and cathartic potential between the three mimetically linked phenomena of tumescence, colonic repletion and the call of the Muse, all requiring privacy. And yet, to his small reading public, Enderby the man is an undefined entity, known only through his poetry. Vesta Bainbridge, to whom he is briefly married, can recite one of his better sonnets from memory, but has no idea what he even looks like before meeting him.

Burgess highlights the almost biological urgency of Enderby's response to the calling of the Muse by describing it as intruding upon the safe, habitual repetitiveness of his daily life:

Sometimes the caprices of the Muse would disrupt this pattern by hurling poems -- fragmentary or fully-formed -- at Enderby; then, in mid-whisky, in bed, cooking, toiling at the structure of non-lyrical works, he would have to write down at once to her hysterical or coldly vatic or telegraphic dictation. He respected his Muse but was frightened of her whims: she could be playful kitten or tiger fully-clawed, finger-sucking idiot child or haughty goddess in Regency ball-gown; her moods, like her visits, were unpredictable. [E, p. 81]

Clearly, Enderby's attitude towards his Muse, personified as female, is bound up with his attitude towards women in general. He courts what he fears; he dreads her presence as much as her absence, and he does not understand why he has been chosen as her vehicle. His neurotic

avoidance of romance and sexual relationships, we are told, owes as much to Schopenhauer as to the abhorred step-mother. His intellectual formation and his adolescent environment have synergized to confirm him in his life choices:

Love, Schopenhauer had seemed to say, was one of the perpetual cinema performances or *Vorstellungen* organized by the evil Will, projectionist as well as manager, and these slack bodies of gum-chewing gigglers were made into stiff shining screens for the projection of what looked like reality, value. But the deflation, the reeling to earth after coitus, was frightful, and one saw the inflated words of desire -- so soon after their utterance -- for what they really were. The casual images of onanism could not be hurt, could not be lied to. [E, p. 87-8]

His comfortable, autoerotic autonomy comes to an end when the tough, entrepreneurial Vesta Bainbridge marries him in order to rescue him from himself. His meagre savings are dissipated in her attempt to make him over in her image. Enderby is especially horrified when he discovers, *en route* to their honeymoon in Rome, that Vesta is a Catholic who intends to win him back to the repudiated faith of his childhood and his detested step-mother. In Rome, while Vesta is sleeping off the effects of air-sickness, Enderby meets Rawcliffe, who, having already stolen the premise of Enderby's poem in progress, "The Pet Beast," a melding of the Christ story with that of the Minotaur in the Labyrinth,

tries to cover his tracks by telling Enderby that they are both too old to write poetry:

"I haven't written a line of verse, Enderby, since I was twenty-seven.... [H]ow long does the lyric urge last? No bloody time at all, my boy, ten years at the most.... What I mean is, Enderby, that you're bloody lucky to be writing poetry at all at the age of -- what is your age?"

"Forty-five."

"At the age of forty-five, Enderby. What I mean is, what are you looking forward to now? Eh?... Don't kid yourself, my dear boy, about long bloody narrative poems, or plays, or any of that nonsense. You're a lyric poet, and the time is coming for the lyric gift to die. Who knows? Perhaps it's died already.... Don't expect any more epiphanies, any more mad dawn inspirations, Enderby.... Haven't you felt, Enderby, that your gift is dying? It's a gift appropriate to youth, you know, owing nothing to experience or learning. An athletic gift really, a *sportif* gift.... What are you going to do, Enderby, what are you going to do?" [E, pp. 129-30]

While the seeds of self-doubt planted by Rawcliffe take root in Enderby's mind, he and Vesta are arguing about religion. He is horrified at the thought of returning to the Catholicism of his youth, as symbolized for him by his step-mother's superstitious veneration of holy pictures, rosaries and the pope. He identifies this return with the whole middle-class world into which Vesta has tried to coax him:

"There's no obligation to accept society or women or religion or anything else, not for anyone there isn't. And as for poetry, that's a job for anarchists. Poetry's made by rebels and exiles and outsiders, it's made by people on their own, not by sheep baaing bravo to the Pope. Poets don't need religion and they don't need bloody little cocktail-party gossip either; it's they who make language and make myths. Poets don't need anybody except themselves." [E, p. 158]

Meanwhile, Vesta has been spending his money recklessly, certain that she will be able to turn him into a contributing and highly-paid member of society. Back in the bar with Rawcliffe, whose words he has taken shudderingly to heart, he asks him how it had felt to know his poetic gifts were dying. Rawcliffe's reply is Enderby's worst nightmare:

"It was like everything going all dead," said Rawcliffe. "It was like going dumb. I could see quite clearly what had to be said, but I couldn't say it. I could perceive that an imaginative relationship existed between disparate objects, but I couldn't tell what the relationship was. I used to sit for hours with paper in front of me, hours and hours, Enderby, and then I would at last get something down. But what I got down somehow -- don't laugh at me -- had a smell of decay about it. What I got down was evil, and I used to shudder when I crumpled it up and threw it in the fire. And then, at night in bed, I used to wake up to hear mocking laughter. And then," tottered Rawcliffe, "one night there was the sound of an awful click, and then everything in the bedroom seemed cold, somehow, cold and obscene. I knew, Enderby, it was all over. Thenceforward I should be outside the Garden, useless to anyone, a mess, and, moreover, Enderby, in some undefinable way evil. Like an unfrocked priest, Enderby. The unfrocked priest does not become a mere neuter harmless human being; he becomes evil. He has to be used by something, for supernatural abhors a supervacuum, so he becomes evil, Enderby.... And all

that is left for the poet, Enderby, when the inspiration is departed, Enderby, is the travesty, the plagiarism, the popularisation, the debasement, the curse. He has drunk the milk of paradise, but it has long since passed through his system, Enderby, and, unfortunately for him, he remembers the taste." [E, pp. 164-5]

Once again, Burgess parallels the poet and the priest, as practitioners of sacred tasks, which can be perverted by the forces of evil. The pathos of this baring of Rawcliffe's bruised soul is quickly undercut when we discover that his theft of Enderby's idea for "The Pet Beast" has progressed to the point that an Italian art movie, *L'Animal Binato* [the two-natured animal, a phrase from Dante's *Inferno*] has already been completed, based on Rawcliffe's stolen premise. Watching the movie, Enderby goes through a series of emotions. As the lights come up, he seems to accept defeat as inevitable:

Enderby prepared twelve obscene English words as a ground-row (variations and embellishments to follow), but, like a blow on the occiput, it suddenly came to him that he had had enough of words, obscene or otherwise. He smiled with fierce saccharinity on Vesta and said, so that she searched his whole face for sarcasm, "Shall we be going now, dear?" [E, p. 170]

He leaves his Vesta and flies back to England, only to find himself unable to write. Attempting suicide by taking

a whole bottle of aspirins, he has a horrific vision of his step-mother welcoming him to hell. He screams for help, and his landlady discovers him in time to call an ambulance. After the stomach pump and a few days of recuperation in hospital, he is confronted by the staff psychologist. Enderby claims he has nothing to live for, and that his death would inconvenience no one. The psychologist's reply hilariously conveys the common disregard for the poet's art in a positivistic society:

"You are," said Dr Greenslade sternly, "a man of education and culture who can be of great value to the community. When you're made fit again, that is.... Poets," he near-sneered. "Those days are past, those wide-eyed romantic days. We're living in a realistic age now," he said. "Science is making giant strides. And as for poets," he said, with sudden bubbling intimacy, "I met a poet once. He was a nice decent fellow with no big ideas about himself. He wrote very nice poetry, too, which was not too difficult to understand." He looked at Enderby as though Enderby's poetry was both not nice and not intelligible. "This man... didn't have your advantages. No private income for him, no cozy little flat in a seaside resort. He had a wife and family, and he wasn't ashamed of working for them. He wrote his poetry at weekends." He nodded at Enderby, week-day poet. "And there was nothing abnormal about him, nothing at all. He didn't go about with a lobster on a string or marry his own sister or eat pepper before drinking claret. He was a decent family man whom nobody would have taken for a poet at all." [E, p. 198]

Enderby is sent to a sanitorium, where a behavioral psychologist, Dr. Wapenshaw, begins to strip away his identity and create a new one for him. He becomes first

Enderby-Hogg, and then simply Hogg, his mother's maiden name. He grows a beard and replaces the contact lenses Vesta made him buy with glasses. Names, masks and identity are once again seen to be at the heart of Burgess's concern. We are not shown the techniques that have wrought these changes in him, but we witness Wapenshaw's gloating at the total conversion Enderby has undergone:

"Enderby," said Hogg, "was the name of a prolonged adolescence. The characteristics of adolescence were well-developed and seemed likely to go on for ever. There was, for instance, this obsession with poetry. There was masturbation, liking to be shut up in the lavatory, rebelliousness towards religion and society."

"Excellent," said Dr Wapenshaw."

"The poetry was a flower of that adolescence," said Hogg. "It still remains good poetry, some of it, but it was a product of an adolescent character. I shall look back with some pride on Enderby's achievement. Life, however, has to be lived." [E, p. 202]

After a month more of this type of indoctrination, he is sent to an "agricultural station," where hard work and sunshine finish the cure. We next see him in his new role as a London bartender, quick with literary allusions and appropriate turns of phrase. His old personality keeps trying to reassert itself, and his sense of his new identity is shattered by the plagiarizing rock star whose assassination sends him on the intercontinental adventures summarized above.

It is only near the end of *Enderby*, in the Tangiers bar he has inherited from Rawcliffe, that he encounters the young woman who personifies the return of the Muse to his life. He is struggling with a new poem when she comes in from swimming. Despite her youth and beauty, her first glance at his poem in progress sets up what Burgess calls "a curiously tutorial aura." [E, p. 383] While she eats a meal and critiques the poem line by line, Burgess is at his most stylistically playful, as if to set off, by contrast, Enderby's reawakened artistic urgency and earnestness:

"This is terrible," she said. "Such bloody clumsiness." She breathed on him (though a young lady should not eat, because of the known redolence of onions, onions) onions....

"Would you also like," asked Enderby humbly, "some very strong tea? We do a very good line in that?"

"It must be really strong, though. I'm glad there's something you do a very good line in. These lines are a bloody disgrace. And you call yourself a poet."

"I didn't -- I never --" But she smiled when she said it. [E, pp. 384-5]

Later she lectures him on his tentativeness, which he will soon confirm by his inability to accept her sexual offer. She says his fear of growth is what makes his poetry trivial and keeps him from making a real contribution to his time:

"You lack courage. You've been softened by somebody or something. You're frightened of the young and the experimental and the way-out and the black dog. When Shelley said what he said about poets being the unacknowledged legislators of the world, he wasn't really using fancy language. It's only by the exact use of words that people can begin to understand themselves. Poetry isn't a silly little hobby to be practised in the smallest room of the house." [E, pp. 389-90]

She leaves him with more loving words of advice. She tells him simply to do the best he can and continue to grow. In his fumbling attempts to grow and try new things, he gets involved with movie people. His adventures in the third volume with the Hollywood opportunists who make a violent pornographic movie based on Hopkins's poem, for all their absurdity, are almost a step-by-step recapitulation of Burgess's trials and frustrations consequent upon the Kubrick film of *A Clockwork Orange*, as Burgess hints by entitling this volume *The Clockwork Testament*. Meanwhile, as visiting professor at "the University of Manhattan," a thinly disguised lampoon of Burgess's City College of New York, Enderby is teaching creative writing and Elizabethan drama to politicized, promiscuous, pot-smoking teenagers, including hate-filled Black Panthers.

When one such black student submits a venomous poem graphically depicting the castration of some representative white man, Enderby shocks his class by ignoring the subject

matter and concentrating his critique on semantic and rhythmical points of interest:

"You have the makings of a word man. You'll be a poet someday when you've got over this nonsense." Then he began to repeat *nigger-whipper* swiftly and quietly like a tongue-twister. "Prosodic analysis," he said. "Do any of you know anything about that? A British linguistic movement, I believe, so it may not have gotten to you. *Nigger* and *whipper*, you see, have two vowels in common. Now note the opposition of the consonants -- a rich nasal against a voiceless semivowel, a voiced stop against a voiceless. Suppose you tried *nigger-killer*. Not so effective. Why not? The *g* doesn't oppose well to the *l*. They're both voiced, you see, and so --"

"Maaaaaan," drawled Lloyd Utterage [the black poet], leaning back in simulated ease, smiling crocodilewise. "You play your little games with yourself. All this shit about words. Closing your eyes to what's going on in the big big world."

Enderby got angry. "Don't call me maaaaaan," he said. "I've got a bloody name and I've got a bloody handle to it. And don't hand me any of that shit, to use your own term, about the importance of cutting the white man's balls off. All that's going to save your immortal soul, maaaaaan, if you have one, is words. Words words words, you bastard," he crescendoed, perhaps going too far." [CTEE, p. 74]

We are reminded ("words words words") of Edwin Spindrift's moment of self-discovery in *The Doctor Is Sick*, as was discussed in Chapter One. Spindrift discovered that his obsession with the study of language had blinded him to his responsibilities and duties to others, especially to his wife. Enderby is accused by his student of a similar myopia, but, for several reasons, does not even pause to

consider whether the accusation has any validity. His political innocence makes the activism and racial hypersensitivity of American youth seem to be just a passing fad. Also, he is genuinely committed to the traditional understanding of the role of art as pointing to eternal truths, not propagandizing ephemeral viewpoints.

Of course, Utterage's accusation has more truth to it than he can guess. Enderby has tried, albeit with woefully little success, to avoid "what's going on in the big big world." He has been through a war and a disastrous marriage, attempted suicide and been an unjustly accused fugitive from the law. He has experienced life as a businessman and as a psychiatric patient, but his instincts have always dragged him back to a life of poetry and solitude. In all his interactions with "the big big world," he has felt inept, alien and misunderstood. His faith in the transcendence of art is both a delusion and an ideal, his only security and his tragicomic flaw.

His sense of the discontinuity between his world and that of the students is given an absurdist twist during a lecture in his other course, on Minor Elizabethan dramatists. Distracted by other concerns, his mind goes blank, and he covers his mental lapse by spontaneously inventing a fictitious dramatist: Gervase Whitelady, 1559-1591. In a rush of reckless creativity, he improvises a *curriculum vitae* and representative lines of verse for this

nonexistent character, while the students dutifully take notes and ask questions. One student, a Kickapoo Native American, who either wants to appear smarter than his professors or is instantly and intuitively in on the game, helps Enderby embellish Whitelady's biography:

[Enderby says] "One cannot exaggerate the importance of er his contribution to the medium, as an influence that is, the influence of his rhythm is quite apparent in the earlier plays of er --"

"Mangold Smotherwild," the Kickapoo said, no longer sneeringly outside the creative process but almost sweatily in the middle of it. Enderby saw that he could always say that he had been trying out a new subject called Creative Literary History. They might even write articles about it: *The Use of the Fictive Alternative World in the Teaching of Literature*. [CTEE, p. 62-3]

Enderby catches himself identifying with Gervase Whitelady, who possesses an identity, but no sensation, and at the same time feeling compassion for his students, whose lives are full of sensation, and who are bullied by advertising and propaganda into futile worries about identity. For the rest of *The Clockwork Testament*, his life will be overburdened with sensation, in both senses of the word. Not only will he experience frequent angina, culminating in a fatal heart attack, but he will be the focus of an abortive media sensation. He is to appear that evening on a talk-show, which is prerecorded for later

telecast. He and a prominent behavioral psychologist, Man Balaglas, whose comments are almost all direct quotations from the writings of B.F. Skinner, Burgess's *bête noire*, will debate the influence of media on behavior. The debate is a shambles, both hilarious and maddening. The talk-show host's desire to get cheap laughs by misunderstanding and lampooning Enderby's vocabulary and Britishness, the frequent interruptions at inopportune times for commercials, Enderby's occasionally obscene rage at Balaglas's behaviorist doctrines -- all these distractions combine to ensure the breakdown of any meaningful dialogue. Ultimately the taping is scrapped and Enderby is shown the door by network security people. This fiasco is an exaggerated but not inaccurate version of Burgess's own talk-show adventures related to *A Clockwork Orange*, as recounted in *You've Had Your Time*.

On the subway home, a fatigued and disheartened Enderby transcends his persona and his physical limitations by successfully foiling a sexual assault on a woman by three young men. They run off, bleeding and cursing, leaving him in great distress from chest pains.

His adventures are by no means over. He arrives at his suite only to be confronted by a woman intent on killing him for purveying obscenity and gratuitous violence, an encounter similar to one Burgess narrowly evaded during his time in New York. She demands that Enderby disrobe and

urinate on copies of his own books. Feigning compliance, he is able to wrest the gun from her hands. What follows, disturbingly enough, can only be called a rape:

"Oh, this is all too American," Enderby said. "Sex and violence. What angel of regeneration sent you here?" For there was no question of mumbling and begging now. *Enderbius triumphans, exultans.* [CTEE, p. 142]

This burst of sex and violence comes at the climax of a harmless celibate life. Hours later, Enderby dies of a heart attack while he fantasizes that his television set is playing a dramatized version of his unfinished poem about Pelagius and Augustine. In two acts of violence in his last evening, he transcends an entire adult life of repression and meekness. He prevents one rape and performs another, thereby identifying himself in some way with the would-be rapists on the subway. He loses his virginity and his moral innocence, and if the ghostly teleplay is any indication, he has regained the Muse.

In the teleplay, of which excerpts will be reproduced at the beginning of Chapter Four, the guilt-ridden Augustine is shown to have a much firmer grasp on reality than the optimistic, rational Pelagius. This viewpoint is clearly Burgess's, and, in invoking the name of Oswald Spengler in passing, he seems to be directing us back to the conclusion

that was drawn from the alternation of Pelagianism ("Pelphase") and Augustinianism ("Gusphase") in *The Wanting Seed*. [See Chapter Two] Augustinian pessimism and a cyclical theory of history seem to go hand in hand.

But the cyclical approach to history does have a positive side to it. Nostalgia for a better, morally clearer time, for a lost childhood faith or a lost ethical unanimity, also implies a hopeful looking ahead to the return of the desirable memory in the next cycle.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Burgess's worldview in his later years was heavily ruled by nostalgia. His increasing cynicism and bitterness as he aged, culminating in the bleak and fatalistic *A Dead Man in Deptford*, may have grown from the realization that his nostalgia was not accompanied by any possibility of return to innocence or childhood, or faith.

Enderby is born, lives, works and dies in a time when the poet is scorned and unappreciated. The visits by "Educational Time Trips, Inc." [CTEE, p. 159] that frame the original three Enderby volumes assure us that a time will come when posterity will treat him with reverence and appreciation.

Enderby is a tragic protagonist in a comic tetralogy. His whole life is a progress from one trap or snare into another: from cradle Catholicism to apostasy; from the disgusting proximity of his detested step-mother to a life

of mateless "onanism"; from a doomed marriage to a suicidal sense of failure; from the role of asylum-dweller to that of incognito outlaw; and so on -- ultimately from the role of victim to that of violator. However, it somehow transpires that, in death, he gains some measure of triumph. The teleplay, imaginary though it may be, reassures him that his art will survive, his story be told.

The protagonists in the novels discussed in this chapter, WS, Christopher Marlowe, and Enderby, are all radically incomplete human beings, shattered by conflicting drives, anomie, and a sense of alienation in their cultural surroundings. All three are "wordboys," addicts and adepts of the game of language, obsessed with the potential and mystery of verbal communication. All three become embroiled with the political, religious and artistic power struggles of their eras, entering thereby the realm of moral ambiguity and adult human guilt. All three react to this forced psychological maturation by creating, in great difficulty and despite great distractions, dark and pessimistic meditations on free will and the problem of evil in the world. For all three, it is not enough to inscribe these messages. The truth must be communicated and remembered by posterity. The role of the artist is not the performance of self-gratifying acts in "the smallest room in the house," but rather the proclamation, in a voice made beautiful by craft, play and polished skill, and strengthened by

compassion, duty and commitment, of eternal truths about the human condition and human aspirations.

Burgess shared these drives, goals and concerns. WS, Marlowe and Enderby are all to some extent self-portraits, and portraits of each other. The novels discussed in this chapter, along with Burgess's autobiographical writings, can all be read as mutual commentaries, as an interconvertible series of palimpsests.

CHAPTER FOUR

AT WAR WITH ROME

52. INTERIOR DAY A CONVOCATION OF BISHOPS
Augustine speaks while the camera pans along a line of grave bishops. Pelagius is out of shot.

AUGUSTINE: Quite quite useless to deny that you have been spreading heresy.

53. THE SAME PELAGIUS
Pelagius is sitting on a kind of creepystool, humble and tranquil during his episcopal investigation.

PELAGIUS: I do not deny that I have been spreading gospel, but that it is heresy I do most emphatically deny.

54. GROUP SHOT
A number of beetle-browed bishops beetle at him.

AUGUSTINE (OS): Heresy -- heresy -- heresy.

55. RESUME 52.
Augustine strides up and down the line of bishops while he speaks. His mitre frequently goes awry with the passion of his utterance, but he straightens it ever and anon.

AUGUSTINE: Yes, sir. You deny that man was born in evil and lives in evil. That he needs God's grace before he may be good. The very cornerstone of our faith is original sin. That is doctrine.

56. RESUME 54.
The bishops nod vigorously.

BISHOPS: Originalsinoriginalsinrignalsn.

57. PELAGIUS
He gets up lithely from his creepystool.

PELAGIUS: Man is neither good nor evil. Man is rational.

58. AUGUSTINE

In CU the writhing mouth, rich-bearded, of Augustine sneers.

AUGUSTINE: Rational.

59. EXTERIOR DAY A SCENE OF RIOT

The Goths have arrived and are busy at their work of destruction. They pillage, burn, kill in sport, rape. A statue of Jesus Christ goes tumbling, breaking, pulverising itself on helpless screaming citizens. The Goths, laughing, nail an old man to a cross. Some come out of a church, bearing a holy chalice. One micturates into it. Then a pretty girl is made to drink ugh of the ugh.

60. EXTERIOR NIGHTFALL A WINDY HILL

Augustine and Pelagius stand together on the hill, looking grimly down.

AUGUSTINE: Rational, eh, my son?

PELAGIUS: *(hardly perturbed)* It is the growing pains of history. Man will learn, man must learn, man wants to learn.

AUGUSTINE: Ah, you and your British innocence --

61. THEIR POV

A view of the burning city. Cheers and dirty songs. Screams.

AUGUSTINE (OS): Evil evil evil -- the whole of history is written in blood. There is, believe me, much much more blood to come. The evil is only beginning to manifest itself in the history of our Christian West. Man is bad bad bad, and is damned for his badness -- unless God, in his infinite mercy, grants him grace. And God foresees all, foresees the evil, foredamns, forepunishes.

62. RESUME 60.

Augustine takes Pelagius by his shoulders and shakes him. But Pelagius gently and humorously removes the shaking hands. He laughs.

PELAGIUS: Man is free. Free to choose. Unforeordained to go either to heaven or to hell,

despite the Almighty's allforeknowingness. Free free free.

63. THE BURNING CITY

A vicious scene of mixed rape and torture and cannibalism. The song of a drunk is heard.

DRUNK: (OS) (*singing*)

Free free free,
We're free to be free...

64. GROUP SHOT

The drunk, surrounded by dead-drunks and genuine corpses, spills pilfered wine, singing.

DRUNK: Free to be scotfree,
But
Not free to be not free
Free free fr

There is a tremendous earthquake. A tear in the shape of a Spenglerian tragic parabola lightnings across the screen. [CTEE, pp. 153-6]

The fantasized screenplay from the climax of *The Clockwork Testament, or Enderby's End*, which is here quoted in part, portrays Burgess's understanding of the clash between Pelagianism and Augustinian Catholicism in such a way as to load the dice heavily in Augustine's favor. Burgess, a firm believer in the doctrine of original sin, found most of the philosophical impetus behind his thoughtful novels in the tensions and ambiguities created by the collision of human imperfectibility and radical freedom of the will. As we have seen in discussing *A Clockwork Orange* [See Chapter Two], Burgess certainly believed that neither good nor evil acts are possible for an agent who has

no freedom to make ethical choices, and that a moral agent who chooses evil is preferable to a choiceless agent. In an essay called *Clockwork Marmalade*, he inveighed wittily against the behaviorists who would deprive malefactors and other inconvenient citizens of their freedom of moral choice:

Hitler was, unfortunately, a human being, and if we could have countenanced the conditioning of one human being we would have to accept it for all. Hitler was a great nuisance, but history has known others disruptive enough to make the state's fingers itch -- Christ, Luther, Bruno, even D.H. Lawrence. One has to be genuinely philosophical about this, however much one has suffered. I don't know how much free will man really possess (Wagner's Hans Sachs said: *Wir sind ein wenig frei* -- "we are a little free") but I do know that what little he seems to have is too precious to encroach on, however good the intentions of the encroacher may be. [quoted in Aggeler, 1979, p. 181]

At the same time, he also believed, with Augustine, that human free-will choices are most likely to be evil or inappropriate or unfortunate choices. According to Burgess's understanding of Pelagius, the British ascetic believed precisely the opposite -- "Man will learn, man must learn, man wants to learn." In his *reductio ad absurdum* of this position, Burgess generalizes it into a theory of human progress, placing Pelagius at the source of a historical lineage that might include such diverse "liberal" reformers

as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill and Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Arrayed against this ethics of human progress, Burgess places the atrocities and horrors of history, from the Gothic despoliation of Rome to the Holocaust, from Stalin to Pol Pot. He also highlights the individual, personal sins, such as selfishness, greed and intolerance, which are the fuel for so much literary plot and character development.

We have seen that this Augustinian pessimism about humanity's apparent inability to learn from the mistakes of past societies seems to lead to a "Spenglerian" cyclical view of history. Human morality ebbs and flows. All technological, medical and socioeconomic advances are double-edged, creating both solutions and new dilemmas. Yesterday's martyrs become today's persecutors. Power corrupts, affluence corrupts, leisure corrupts, success is failure.

This bleak, cynical worldview is rescued from the final plunge into nihilism by Burgess's insight into the comedy inherent in such a state of affairs. Akin to the "absurdity" of Sartre and Camus, Burgess's sense of the comic nonetheless has something redemptive about it. His protagonists realize that they can be better than they are, and they earnestly wish to grow. Their fumbling efforts to make good choices, added to the similar efforts of other well-meaning characters around them, set up whole new

maelstroms of chaos and crisis, as a result of which other free-will choices must be made. When people learn from their mistakes, they develop the capacity to make higher-level mistakes -- a sort of progress after all. The Spenglerian ellipse becomes a spiral.

The motivating force behind this fumbling, inchoate growth of the human spirit, as I have suggested, is the striving for the linked virtues of responsibility, duty and compassion that Burgess seems to recommend in the face of the world's evils and ambiguities. Without these virtues, freedom becomes license and choice becomes whim.

The ethical musings underpinning Burgess's novels are connected to a complex, somewhat self-contradictory and certainly elitist critique of postconciliar Roman Catholicism, which was implicit in much of Burgess's work and became overt in his greatest and longest novel, *Earthly Powers*. His treatment of the ethical ramifications of human suffering in this novel has already been discussed in Chapter One, which also featured a sketchy outline of the novel's plot and concerns. In this chapter, we will reread the novel as a study of faith, apostasy and the nature of modern Roman Catholicism. Our exploration of these themes will be assisted by two different types of scholars. Church historians Jaroslav Pelikan, Peter Brown, W.H.C. Frend and Elaine Pagels will be consulted to test the understanding and use of the terms "Manichaeism" and "Pelagian," which

Burgess employs so freely. As well, two respected modern writers about postconciliar Roman Catholicism, Richard McBrien and Peter Hebblethwaite, will contribute to our understanding of the nature and demands of contemporary Catholicism.

As usual, Burgess's choice of a protagonist seems to involve a test of his own imaginative gifts and empathic capacity. Burgess has stated that he has "always been afflicted with a powerful but banal heterosexual drive, unmodified by the sight of Greek or African boys lying naked in the sun." [YHYT, p. 116] One gets the impression throughout *Earthly Powers* that the author suspects that homosexuality is a manifestation of humanity's fallenness. While the protagonist, Kenneth Marchal Toomey, insists that God has made him the way he is, he also sees the whole gay lifestyle, especially in the earlier part of the century, when it lacked much of today's social acceptability, as rife with moral difficulties.

It is his sexual orientation that causes Kenneth's estrangement from his mother's Catholicism. A published novelist in his early twenties, he is sent by his friend, Ford Madox Ford, to a relatively literate priest when his conscience can no longer reconcile his lifestyle with participation in the mass and sacraments. The counselling session soon degenerates into mutual ultimata:

Father Frobisher spoke loud words now. "God does care. Man bears in himself the miracle of the seed planted there by the Creator. The power of generating new human souls for God's kingdom. The wanton spilling of the seed in the sin of Onan, or in the pseudo-Hellenic embraces of your your your." Then:..."You must give up this deadly sin. You must vow never to commit it again. Do you hear me?"

"I have," with equal loudness, "regularly vowed to give it up. I have gone dutifully to confession once a month, sometimes more, and repented of impure thoughts or impure acts. And then I have regularly fallen again. This cannot go on forever."

"It certainly cannot. It certainly."

"So I have to make a choice. It is not easy.... But now I face the breaking of my mother's heart, since I cannot both be true to my nature as God made it and a faithful son of the Church. For even if I committed myself, as you have done, to a life of celibacy, where would be my spiritual reward? I lack your vocation. I have another vocation, at least I consider it to be that, but it can't be fulfilled in priestly seclusion from the life of the flesh. To which God do I listen - the God who made me what I am or the God whose voice is filtered through the edicts of the Church?" [EP, p. 49]

His prediction is correct. He goes home for Christmas and, too scrupulous to receive communion in his state of apostasy, he arouses his devout French mother's suspicions. He privately confesses everything to her. Horrified, she makes him swear never to tell his father or siblings, and devotes her remaining few years, before her death, like Burgess's own mother, in the 1919 influenza epidemic, to prayers and beseeching letters to Kenneth, begging him to try to change.

His teenage sister, Hortense, insists on visiting him alone in London, and discovers his secret. Her reaction is

a mixture of shock, adolescent titillation and frank curiosity: "What exactly is it that men do together?" [EP, p. 79] Her teasing, protective friendship will be the most stable and secure force in his alienated and eventful life.

After another failed romance, he travels to war-torn Paris, where he tries once again to confess to a priest, with the same result as he experienced with Fr. Frobisher. Bereft of his boyhood faith, in this city which was one of the birthplaces of the Enlightenment, he feels himself prodded in the direction of more permanent art than the light entertainment he has so far produced:

I felt myself to be gently fingered by the savants of the Enlightenment. Tap tap, they tapped. Do more than write farces and sensational fiction. Construct something in which to believe. Love and beauty are not enough. [EP, p. 92]

He continues travelling south, as if trying to escape his dilemma, and it is in Cagliari, Sardinia, that he meets the Campanati brothers, the two younger sons of a wealthy Milanese cheese manufacturer, whose lives will entwine so eventfully with his: Carlo, a young and ambitious priest, and Domenico, a composer in search of an Anglophone librettist. Carlo, especially, will be a sort of complementary opposite for Kenneth -- gluttonous, hard-

nosed, opportunistic and optimistic, with no aesthetic interests and no apparent sexuality. He shocks Kenneth with an almost Nietzschean gratitude for the strengthening and purifying purgation that Europe has undergone in the recently completed great war:

"I was a chaplain. I gave the comforts of the Church to the Austrians as well as the Italians.... What I learned was less of the badness of war than of the goodness of men.... My brother was in the artillery. He knows what I say is true. The death of the body. Man is a living soul who must be tested in suffering and death.... The war has been a means of bringing out men's goodness. Self-sacrifice, courage, love of comrades."

"So let us start another war?"

He rolled his head in good humor. "No. The devil has his work to do. God permits him to do his work.... It is all in your English Bible. In Genesis. The fallen Lucifer was permitted to implant the spirit of evil in the souls of men. Where is evil? Not in God's creation. There is a great mystery but the mystery sometimes becomes less of a mystery. For the devil brings war, and out of the war comes goodness. [EP, pp. 100-1]

Kenneth's weak heart has kept him out of the army, and he has spent the war years boosting home-front morale with light and frivolous novels and musical comedies, which have begun to bring him a degree of wealth and fame. His mother's death from influenza and the resulting dissolution of his family, as his father moves to Canada with a new wife, will be the wounds the war leaves on him. He and Domenico, collaborating on an opera, have moved to Monaco

when the telegram arrives informing him of his mother's impending death. He arrives home moments after she dies. He brings his teenaged sister back to Monaco with him, and she and Domenico soon seduce each other. A hastily arranged wedding follows, and Kenneth finds himself with a "brother-in-law" who is rapidly climbing the church hierarchy, and who will keep reappearing in his life, preventing the closing of the wound of his apostasy.

At the Campanati home near Milan, after the wedding guests have left, Kenneth is called into the library by Raffaele, the eldest brother, an austere and puritanical Italo-American businessman who will later be martyred at the hands of the Chicago Mafia for his incorruptibility. He expresses his concern that Kenneth's homosexuality will bring scandal upon the family, and especially upon Carlo's priestly career. Kenneth's habitual discretion is abandoned in a burst of indignation:

"So what does the head of the Campanati family wish me to do? To seek some other career? To dissimulate my true nature? To drown myself in the Lago Maggiore?" Then the heat broke through. "I never in my life heard such sanctimonious impertinence. I'm a free man and I'll do what I damned well please. Within," so as not to appear totally anarchic and thus to some extent justify his view of me, "the limits imposed by my own nature and by the laws of society and literary ethics. The Campanati family," I added, sneering, "*una famiglia catissima, religiosissima, purissima, santissima*. With your brother Domenico shagging everything that offered and likely to do so again, despite the state of holy matrimony.... Your holy

brother Carlo, a waddling banner for the deadly sin of gluttony -- at least he's realistic and charitable and has no time for the first deadly sin. The pride," I said, "of a putrefier of lactic solids. A pride that stinks like the commodity itself." [EP, pp. 163-4]

Back in Paris, and still smarting from this encounter, he writes a short story which will become a cult classic in the homosexual underworld. An anonymously published retelling of the book of Genesis, it tells how Adam's original partner was a male who was made female by God as a punishment for the sin of the forbidden fruit, thereby initiating the cycle of pregnancy, birth and death that is the lot of fallen humanity. In his old age, Kenneth will be shocked to hear excerpts of this story read as part of an ad hoc gay wedding rite.

In 1924, both Kenneth and Carlo are sent to Asia. Kenneth has been commissioned to write a travel book and a series of short stories about Malaya, and Carlo, now a monsignor, has been ordered to visit churches and missions throughout South-East Asia, in order to determine the progress of proselytization to the "heathens." *En route*, Kenneth meets an old acquaintance, the Anglican bishop of Gibraltar. Clearly homosexual, and, like his friend Carlo, a devoted gambler and gourmand, this character seems blithely untroubled by any of the ambiguities that disturb Kenneth. He is charming, articulate, and a pioneer in

ecumenism, a movement to which he has converted the ambitious Carlo. Kenneth, whose religious scruples and conservatism have directly caused his apostasy, is somewhat disturbed by the willingness of the two clerics to sacrifice ancient and long-cherished points of dogma on the altar of unity and compromise.

Kenneth finds a temporary resting place, and the great Platonic love of his life, in Kuala Kangsar, Malaya. Collapsing in a planter's club with a mild heart attack, he is attended by Dr. Philip Shawcross, whom we have already discussed in Chapter One. Shawcross, a reader of Kenneth's novels, is described as "a young man in white shirt and shorts and white long stockings, very brown and panned, I could tell, by duty and heat and an athletic or certainly ascetic mode of living." [EP, p. 213]. In this short description, we are given several clear reasons for Kenneth's attraction to him: youth, purity, duty and asceticism. Both aesthetically and ethically, Philip is irresistible to the lonely and vulnerable writer. But later, Toomey informs us that his love for Philip has grown into something purer and more spiritual than he has ever known:

There was nothing remarkable in Philip's body or brain; I had to resurrect and dust off a concept long discarded by the humanists whom I believed I had joined, namely the *spiritus* of the theologians, the

entity you could define only negatively and yet love positively, more, love ardently, with and to the final fire. So, however reluctantly, a man may be brought back to God. There was no free will, we must accept, with love, the imposed pattern. [EP, p. 243]

When Philip gives Kenneth the tour of his hospital discussed in Chapter One, we learn of his atheism, a result of his compassionate horror at the physical suffering he has seen during his medical service in the east. Soon, as we have seen, Philip joins the ranks of the suffering, when Mahalingam curses the doctor for his inability to heal his son. Carlo arrives, a fat avenging angel, and his exorcism of Mahalingam is a farcical and horrifying dualistic battle for the soul of Philip, whose body is beyond rescue.

Despite the comic aspects of this scene, the manifestation of frighteningly real supernatural powers of both good and evil reassures Kenneth that Philip's atheism is not a viable option for him. This tragic and scarring encounter instead confirms Kenneth in his suspicion, adumbrated in his parting question to Fr. Frobisher years before, that, rather than no god, there are in fact two gods, one who creates and approves and one who demands and punishes.

This "bitheism," for want of a better term, is a metaphorical verbalization of the "Manichaeism" that Burgess has often claimed as his own avowed heresy. In the John Cullinan interview which has already been cited

frequently, Burgess clarifies the qualified sense in which he applies such a label to himself:

INTERVIEWER: Several years ago you wrote, "I believe the wrong God is temporarily ruling the world and that the true God has gone under," and added that the novelist's vocation predisposes him to this Manichean [sic] view. Do you still believe this?

BURGESS: I still hold this belief.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think the novelist is predisposed to regard the world in terms of "essential opposition"? Unlike the Manicheans you seem to maintain a traditional Christian belief in original sin.

BURGESS: Novels are about conflicts. The novelist's world is one of essential oppositions of character, aspiration and so on. I'm only a Manichee in the widest sense of believing that duality is the ultimate reality; the original sin bit is not really a contradiction, though it does lead one to depressingly French heresies, like Graham Greene's own Jansenism, as well as Albigensianism (Joan of Arc's religion), Catharism, and so on. I'm entitled to an eclectic theology as a novelist, if not as a human being. [Cullinan, p. 44]

Burgess's somewhat inexperienced knowledge of these "depressingly French heresies,"¹ should caution us to be vigilant when he uses other terms, such as Manichaeism, Pelagian and Augustinian. Polymath though he was, Burgess

¹ According to Gordon Leff in his *Encyclopedia of Religion* article on "Cathari," the Albigensians were merely a geographical variant of the Cathari, not a separate heresy. [ER, Vol. 3, pp. 115-7] Also, Burgess's identification of Joan with that particular heresy seems rather arbitrary and unsupported.

was neither a theologian nor a church historian, and his "eclectic theology," much like the present author's, was largely derived from a lifetime of undirected and idiosyncratically chosen reading. On a tactical level, Burgess himself admitted, "In our age it's a weakness to make Catholic theology the basis of a novel, since it means everything's cut and dried and the author doesn't have to rethink things out." [Cullinan, p. 42]

It will be helpful at this point to consult the four scholars mentioned above, who can clarify the accepted understanding of the heresies Burgess has used to underpin his fiction. Jaroslav Pelikan, for example, in the first volume of his magisterial *The Christian Tradition*, hinges the whole Pelagian-Augustinian debate upon different understandings of the nature and meaning of grace:

Both positions spoke of grace as necessary for perfection; but Augustine saw in grace the knowledge of the good, the joy in doing the good, and the capacity to will the good, while for Pelagius "the ability [posse]" came from God, but both "willing [velle]" and "acting [esse]" depended on the free decision of man. [Pelikan, 1971 (Vol. 1), p. 315]

Pelagius's understanding of grace, therefore, rendered the doctrine of original sin absurd, unjust and self-contradictory. Pelikan quotes Augustine quoting Pelagius's disciple, Julian of Eclanum: "If sin is natural, it is not

voluntary; if it is voluntary, it is not inborn." Another disciple, Celestius, outlined the Pelagian doctrine of sin in six cogent and concise propositions:

Adam was created mortal and would have died whether he had sinned or not sinned; the sin of Adam injured only him, not the human race; the law leads to the kingdom [of heaven], just as the gospel does; even before the coming of Christ there were men without sin; newborn infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression; the whole human race does not die through the death and transgression of Adam, nor does it rise again through the resurrection of Christ. [quoted in Pelikan, 1971 (Vol. 1), pp. 315-6]

Peter Brown, in *The Body and Society*, a study of asceticism and sexual renunciation in the early church, highlights Pelagius's emphasis on the potential of human free will. At a time when the choice of a Christian lifestyle was seen as a total renunciation of "the heavy rust of corrupt social habits associated with the cruel and deeply profane society of the Roman governing classes," Pelagius could not accept the idea that God would command the impossible:

No insuperable, inherited frailty stood between modern Christians and the capacity first bestowed on Adam and Eve to follow God's commands to the full. Pelagius and his followers refused to believe that religious men and women were at the mercy of forces beyond the will's control. Such a view struck Pelagius and his

supporters as tantamount to condoning moral torpor. Once such views gained a hold on the Church, Julian asserted, all vices would be shrugged off as no more than the inevitable foibles of a human nature that had fallen beyond recall. [Brown, 1988, p. 411]

Pelagius begins to sound like a much more complex thinker than the blindly optimistic Pollyanna portrayed in Enderby's dream teleplay. He and his followers seemed to understand the principle of the self-fulfilling prophecy: tell people they are bound to fail and they will not try to succeed; tell them they can succeed by their own efforts and they will try.

Elaine Pagels, in *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, introduces a distinction highly relevant to our concerns here. Pelagius and Augustine disagreed on the relation between what the philosophers call "natural evil" and the moral evil of sinfulness. Augustine, and Anthony Burgess, seem to conflate the two, placing both beyond the control of human will unaided by grace, and implying that human suffering must in some way result from human sinfulness. Pelagius and Julian saw natural evils -- the pangs of childbirth, mortality, earthquakes -- as brute facts causally unrelated to sin, and, like Carlo, felt that human suffering created opportunities for noble moral choices:

Although death is necessary and universal, each of us has the means --- indeed, the responsibility -- to choose the response we take to our mortal condition. Rather than resisting death as a mortal enemy, Julian says, the sinner may welcome death or even seek it as a relief from the sufferings induced by sin, while the saint may receive death as a spiritual victory. No one, saint or sinner, escapes suffering, which remains unavoidable in nature. Yet each of us holds in our hands our spiritual destiny, which depends upon the choices we make. [Pagels, 1988, p. 142]

This viewpoint might easily be imagined coming out of the mouth or pen of Carlo Campanati, in any of the many homilies, interviews or essays by him that appear in *Earthly Powers*. True, Carlo does speak often of the role of the devil in bringing evil into the world, but he denies any suggestion of human virtue's inability to overcome the devil's efforts at temptation or possession. His work as an exorcist, for which he is famed and much in demand, would be a sham if he did not believe in the devil's vulnerability. Ironically, the only time Carlo fails in an attempted exorcism is immediately before his election as pope. The devil is the first to call him "Holy Father" ("vale sancte pater" [EP, p. 507]). Burgess's point seems to be that Carlo's election is a victory for the forces of evil.

Toomey, on the other hand, sees the devil (or, in his quasi-Manichaeian terms, the evil God) as victorious more often than not. Carlo's miraculous healing of young Godfrey Manning in a Chicago hospital in the 1920's bears corrupt

fruit in the 1960's, when the beleaguered cult leader, God Manning, dispenses a fatal eucharist of cyanide pills to his thousands of devotees, including Carlo's and Kenneth's grand-niece and her infant child. Carlo's mother's heroic death while fighting the Nazis, Raffaele's gangland torture and death, Philip Shawcross's horrific possession -- all are seeming rehearsals for the last and most grotesque of demonic victories. Hortense's son John, an anthropologist, and his wife are in Africa researching aspects of native languages. Kenneth's generosity has augmented John's slender funding to enable her to accompany him. Among a tribe only recently converted from cannibalistic human sacrifice to a regional form of Roman Catholicism, they are killed and consumed as the elements of an unsanctioned modified eucharist.

This far-fetched and rather shrill tragedy is another polemical *reductio ad absurdum* in Burgess's war against Vatican II. Conciliar permission to adapt the nature of the liturgy to suit local conditions and customs, he suggests, can lead to such horrors. His argument here seems unworthy of him and of the rest of the novel, both in its hysteria and in its implied racism. Burgess's attitude towards other races, as may have become apparent, is complex and [our favorite word] ambiguous. While he tends to treat the autochthons of the former British colonies with affection, respect and even envy (not to mention lust, as in *Nothing*

Like the Sun and Enderby's Dark Lady), Burgess seems to have a triumphalistic and untroubled sense of European culture's superiority in all spheres of endeavor, ethical and aesthetic, as well as scientific and technical. A whole other in-depth study of his writings could be devoted to dealing with this dichotomy.⁴ Let us now turn our attention to the question of Burgess's accuracy in identifying himself as a "Manichee."

W.H.C. Frend is especially helpful in summarizing the reasons for Manichaeism's popularity among the North African Christian intelligentsia of Augustine's youth and the apparent ease with which the two traditions could be syncretized:

All life was to be interpreted in terms of a struggle between good and evil or light and darkness, and the spark of light within each one of us had to be purged from the evil body that encased it by the most rigorous moral practices. There was a streak of the revolutionary about the creed, for from Diocletian onward it had been proscribed by successive emperors and alone among the religious deviations of the period had never been tolerated. Yet it made converts, particularly among the intellectuals and also the Catholic clergy. In Africa the Manichaeans passed as Christians. They had absorbed the former Gnostic and perhaps Marcionite communities and based their teachings not only upon the apocryphal lives of the Apostles, but on the dualist elements found in the Pauline Epistles.... Augustine did not intend to cease to be a Christian. He accepted Manichaean teaching as

* A significant beginning in this direction is Geoffrey Aggeler's chapter entitled "In Quest of a Darker Culture." [Aggeler, 1978, pp. 30-67]

As Carlo rises in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, his discretion and caution fade by degrees, until, as Pope Gregory XVII, he is openly proclaiming human perfectibility and down-playing all but metaphorical interpretations of the doctrine of original sin. Pope Gregory is Pope John XXIII taken to the nth degree, a savage caricature gleefully skiing down the slippery slope of *aggiornamento* and populist appeal. Kenneth describes his metamorphosis from behind-the-scenes string-puller to cultural icon:

On that early October evening in 1958 Carlo Campanati left my life and his ample flesh spilled over from the confines of memoirs into the arena of history. You know as much about Pope Gregory XVII as I. Henceforth I was to see him only blessing fatly in the media, kissing the feet of the poor, weeping with earthquake widows, treading the Via Crucis, embracing criminals and communist leaders, inaugurating the Vatican Council which, under his leadership, his goading and coaxing and bullying rather, was to modernize the Church and bring it closer to the needs of the people. He was, as you know, everywhere: in Montevideo and Santiago and Caracas, pleading inviolate the rights of man against corrupt and tyrannical regimes; in Kampala, encouraging the formation of the African Church; in Canterbury, fraternally embracing an Archbishop who presided over the morganatic legacy of an uxoricide; in Sydney, responding to cries of Good on ya. [EP, pp. 515-6]

Pope Gregory is obviously a conflation of John XXIII and Paul VI. John never left Italy during his papacy. Nor

did he live to see the end of the council, or to begin putting its ideas into practice. And it was Paul, speaking in Kampala, Uganda, in 1969, who opened the door wide for a fully African Catholicism:

"An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may, and you must, have an African Christianity. Indeed, you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to such perfection as to find in Christianity and for Christianity a true superior fullness, and prove to be capable of a richness of expression all its own, and genuinely African." [quoted in Hebblethwaite, 1978, p. 91]

Other aspects of the career of Pope Gregory, such as his unyielding opposition to artificial contraception or to married or female clergy, strengthen his resemblance to the latter pope, although physically and in terms of personality he is clearly meant to caricature *Papa Giovanni*.

Kenneth watches a televised stadium mass using the new vernacular liturgy when the Pope visits America. His aesthetic dismay at what he sees is quite clearly shared by Burgess:

The mass was in English, an English direct and businesslike rather than arcane and mysterious. There was no nobility, which was in order, but there was a certain ineptitude of phrasing. "The Lord be with you" had to be answered by "And with you," but the need to

stress that second you produced a kind of petulant squeaking. There were gimmicks of audience participation like the kiss of peace. The altar had taken on the look of a lacy conjuror's table or even butcher's block. But you got the full round face of Carlo, with his huge complicated nose and his shrewd eyes glazed in devoutness, swigging the chalice in unabashed view, instead of his broad back engrossed with the cross. The host was administered by a host of delegates.... I was sourly moved. [EP, pp. 516-7]

Next we are treated to the unlikely spectacle of the Pope on a talk-show, fielding questions from the audience in perfectly inflected, colloquial American English. Burgess presents Carlo as a competent simplifier of difficult concepts, Bishop Sheen on steroids, with a concise and quotable answer for every doubt. Discussing Carlo's television persona with their shared nephew, John, the doomed anthropologist, Kenneth predicts accurately the direction in which Carlo's papacy is moving:

"You wait. As his tour of the Americas continues he'll talk more of love and less of dogma. He'll shelve more and more of the hard questions. He'll talk of love because he wants to be loved himself. Gregory the beloved. [EP, p. 525]

The reference here is specifically to postconciliar hints about the importance of individual conscience in matters of contraception, despite the firmness of *Humanae*

Vitae, but the viewpoint is clearly generalizable to all ethical and moral issues under the new dispensation.

Burgess portrays a modern Catholicism with no backbone, no real membership requirements and no specifically unique descriptors other than the institution of the papacy itself and the limitation of clerical ordination to male celibates, both of which seem blatantly anachronistic in the context of the vast array of changes the Church has undergone.

It seems profoundly ironic that a self-described anarchist who advocates a morality based upon personal responsibility and free-will ethical choice [see Chapter Two] can resent so bitterly the changes Vatican II has wrought in a Church he no longer even considers his.

Richard P. McBrien, a respected American Catholic columnist, provides us with a handy list of what he considers to be some of the real achievements of the Council, against which we can measure Burgess's critique. McBrien states that the Council:

- Renewed the liturgy of the Church, increasing congregational participation and insuring a much fuller understanding of the rites.
- Expanded our understanding of what it means to be Church, not simply to "belong to" the Church, with its concept of the Church as People of God.
- Recognized that every baptized Christian, lay, cleric, and religious alike, shares directly in the mission Christ gave the Church: to teach, to worship, and to transform the world.

- Acknowledged the bonds of faith, hope, and charity we Catholics share with all other Christians, as well as our common brotherhood and sisterhood under God with the other religious bodies of the world.

- Summoned us to assume, with renewed vigor and dedication, our duty to evangelize the world, not only through preaching and catechesis but also through the struggle for social justice, human rights, and peace.

- Reminded us that the Church itself is always in need of repentance and purification and that the strongest argument for the truth of the gospel is the Church's own living of it.

- Reaffirmed the importance of the local church and, therefore, the right and duty of each local church to incarnate the gospel in ways that are consistent with local cultures.

- Declared the radical equality of all human beings before God and their right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. [McBrien, 1992, p. 17]

The renewed emphasis on personal freedom of conscience and responsibility, rather than on the laity being dragged kicking and screaming through the gates of heaven by saintly and charismatic clergy, seems to be exactly what the author of *A Clockwork Orange* would advocate. The encouragement of diverse viewpoints and modes of expression, including especially the elevation of the vernacular to a liturgical function, thereby opening up creative opportunities for writers and lyricists of all ethnic groups, should be thrilling for an artist and critic interested in linguistics and the interplay of various artforms. The idea that the Church is the "People of God," rather than some faceless, self-perpetuating, bureaucratic and hierarchical juggernaut,

should appeal to the writer who made the same sort of point about the military in *The Wanting Seed* and about unions in 1985.

Of course, much of Burgess's discomfort with postconciliar Catholicism stemmed from an intellectual and aesthetic elitism that had more of the antiquarian than of the conservative about it. Fluent in Latin and Greek, and possessing a refined awareness of music and art, he seemed to fear that a great heritage was being abandoned. Clearly, the changes the Church was undergoing immediately after the Council seemed to Burgess to be just another manifestation of the "sixties," a decade in which he felt ill at ease. It seemed to him a time of facile answers to difficult questions in the political sphere, a time of barbarous and untutored music, literature and art, a time of obsessive navel-gazing and self-righteousness.

Of course, the architects and sponsors of Vatican II were not hippies or Jesus freaks; they were Burgess's contemporaries or seniors, men of learning and culture steeped in the same tradition whose supposed abandonment he lamented. But, unlike Burgess, they did not see the Church as a frozen memento of a lost golden age of the mind and spirit. They had lived with an organic and dynamic Church for all their adult lives. They knew its strengths and frailties, its greatness and its sinfulness. They knew the time was ripe for a leap of faith.

Burgess did not know the Church from the inside. He remembered it as a part of his childhood, the cradle of his aesthetic and intellectual formation. While his novels portrayed the Church quite accurately as growing and changing with the tides of history, as inextricably implicated in and contaminated by the political fortunes of Europe and its colonies, he still cherished an image of an extrahistorical, untainted, paradigmatic Catholicism, which he believed had been blown away when John XXIII had opened the windows of the Church. In his more cantankerous and incautious public pronouncements, he actually went so far as to assert that the pope was in the service of the devil:

It was while living in Rome that I asked the Church, in the press, on radio, on television, to consider Christ's statement, "By their fruits shall ye know them." If Pope John XXIII had been so saintly, why was Catholicism falling to pieces? He may not have been responsible for all the innovations of the Second Vatican Council, but he had let them go through. The vernacular Mass was a disgrace. I had met priests in America who no longer knew what they believed in. It was considered virtuous for a cardinal to have forgotten his penny catechism and say that love and love alone counted. The cult of a fat personality [!] had driven out the old intellectual rigour of the faith. [YHYT, pp. 349-50]

Such subjective, unsubstantiated complaints are hard to discuss in a rational manner. The pope's corpulence, for example, does not have moral significance in itself, but in *Earthly Powers*, Carlo's gluttony and avidity are inextricably linked with his Pelagian views. Other turns of

phrase in the above quotation -- "falling to pieces... a disgrace" -- sound like the tired griping of an inarticulate reactionary who has lived too long (You've Had Your Time!), rather than the rapier-like subtleties of the master polemicist Burgess was. "I had met priests..." Who hasn't, and what does it prove? "It was considered virtuous..." By whom, and why?

The reader will have noticed a much more critical tone in this chapter than in the previous three. As this thesis has slowly and haltingly evolved, Burgess's inconsistency in this one area has seemed ever more glaring. His career-long quest for an ethical system based upon duty, compassion and freedom of moral choice, which has animated so vast a range of novelistic styles and themes, was still in progress when he wrote *Earthly Powers*. But, as has been demonstrated, he was blind to the fact that Roman Catholicism had moved in the same direction. Distracted by a sort of cognitive dissonance caused by the clash between his nostalgia for a church that really never existed except in his own mind, on the one hand, and the admittedly messy growing pains of a living Church undergoing an ongoing process of rebirth, he failed to see the similarities between his values and those of the postconciliar Church.

Earthly Powers is a flawed masterpiece, but a masterpiece nonetheless. We were warned at the beginning of both the novel and this thesis that its narrator was

CONCLUSION

Throughout the many novels discussed in this thesis, (twelve or thirteen, depending upon whether the Enderby novels are treated as a trilogy or a tetralogy), several common themes have emerged. I decided to do a religious studies thesis on Anthony Burgess in the first place because his fiction seemed to me to ask serious and relevant religious questions, questions about the reality of evil in the world, the nature and significance of free will, the meaning of such virtues as fidelity, compassion and duty, and the problem of suffering.

As I continued to read Burgess, and to read him more critically and searchingly, I began to recognize themes and recurring motifs that carried over from novel to novel. The iconic figures of Pelagius and Augustine, continuing their ancient debate about human perfectibility and the need for divine grace, kept materializing in one guise or another. Illness and death, madness and violence, exile and flight, names and masks, ecstasy and abjection -- Burgess's characters always seem to be breaking through the boundaries of comfort and safety, into an unknown territory where the meaning behind their lives is tested and explored.

These irruptions, for the most part, are caused by forces so great that the characters could easily be dwarfed if they were not so fully drawn. Having lived through wars, epidemics, the birth of countries and the putative death of God, Burgess understood the history of his time and its potential for creating havoc in the orderly, settled lives of ordinary people. Even the extraordinary -- characters like Freud, Keats or Shakespeare -- are often swept up by movements or situations beyond their control. In these times of social chaos, unmerited physical suffering or exile, the characters in his novels must always make choices, and there are no guarantees that what appears to be the right choice will turn out well. Often the opposite occurs. Choices made out of compassion, heroism and altruism unleash horrible consequences.

But Burgess argues consistently that such decisions, despite their consequences, are nonetheless ethically praiseworthy. The real evil, for Burgess, is any system or regime or technique that attempts to take the power of making choices away from the individual. Behaviorist social control, closed-shop unionism, religious exclusivism and military discipline all share this same potential for arrogating to themselves the individual's right and responsibility of moral choice.

In order to demonstrate this consistency in his thought, and, *a fortiori*, to point out those areas where his

inconsistency is glaring, I have set myself a complex task. I have classified the novels discussed into four distinct areas of concern: the problem of physical suffering (Chapter One), the struggle for individual autonomy against coercive monolithic power (Chapter Two), the ethical role of the writer in society (Chapter Three), and the problem of belief in changing Roman Catholicism (Chapter Four). The superhuman breadth of Burgess's learning and interests, allowing him to write convincingly about so many environments, eras and situations, has necessitated this type of approach.

One result of this breadth and diversity is the requirement of a large and varied group of critical voices to be placed in dialogue with his thought. Julia Kristeva's blending of psychoanalytic theory and literary criticism has brought much light to bear on Burgess's handling of the abjection of physical suffering. Michel Foucault's description of the clinical gaze resonates well with Burgess's understanding of the potential for depersonalization of the patient in modern medical technology. Daniel Berrigan brings a contrasting type of Christian-based anarchism to set beside Burgess's own. Karen Lebacqz shares and systematizes Burgess's emphasis on responsibility and covenant, as opposed to individualist rights. Our panel of church historians, Pelikan, Brown, Frend and Pagels, has been useful in clarifying and fleshing

ethical lessons and the patness and closure of his anecdotes often militate against his dogmatic description of the ambiguities and messiness of real life. His fiction, in other words, is often more realistic than his autobiographies.

And yet, Burgess talks, over and over again, about the sacred task of the writer, the projection of a vision of unity and coherence to assist the reader in understanding the nature and options of moral choice in a universe that feels dualistic and embattled. The real measure of his craft and depth is the fact that he often succeeds in having his cake and eating it too. While fashioning cynical, pessimistic and surreal novels that focus harrowingly on the ethical duoverse he believes we inhabit, he is able to present convincing and inspiring tales of triumphs and tragedies of characters searching for that sense of unity and coherence.

His solution, though he would not have phrased it in this way, often seems to bear some resemblance to the Buddha's Middle Path. The phrase "the consolations of ambiguity," applied to Burgess's work by Robert K. Morris [See Chapter Three], characterizes this understanding well. All life is ambiguity. We are creatures of light and darkness, nobility and baseness, purity and corruption, altruism and selfishness. The first step in an individual's ethical maturation is the acceptance of this reality.

Burgess suggests that, having accepted this image of the self as a battleground of ethical opposites, one must take on responsibility, ownership, autonomy over one's ethical destiny. One's potential for moral choice must not be surrendered to the state, the church, or any other heteronomous body. Such an abdication of responsibility is tantamount to ceasing to be human, to becoming a mechanism -- a clockwork orange. Similarly, one cannot attempt to escape from this life-situation of dualism and ambiguity. All promises of escape are illusory, leading one only to new dualisms, new ambiguities, new crises.

All good-faith moral decisions have basically the same effect as trying to escape -- they present new situations in which moral choices have to be made, and the questions seem to get progressively more difficult and complex as we mature. But Burgess argues convincingly that we become better persons (or, in negative terms, less likely to contribute to the sum total of evil in the world) by accepting the responsibility for the moral choices we make.

What are the guidelines and considerations in making these moral choices? Self-interest plays a part -- we must survive in order to continue shouldering our responsibility. But Burgess clearly does not equate autonomy and anarchism with selfish individualism. The virtues he privileges all favor the building up of community, friendship and family. Responsibility, duty and fidelity are all powerful words to

him, words he, and his protagonists, often use with a regret so strong that it borders on emotional lability. His autobiography is filled with lamentation at his failures in realizing these goals in his life, goals which Enderby, Toomey and other protagonists also struggled haltingly to achieve.

We aspire to reach each other, but our arms fall short. We live in discontinuity, incompleteness, inner aloneness. The recognition of this state can lead to a suicidal sense of alienation or it can lead to a healing sense of the comic. There is an aspect of playfulness, of the ludic nature of life, to which Burgess often referred. We are in a sort of game, in which we are presented with situations requiring decisions. Each decision leads to another turn. We play the game with other people as partners or opponents, cooperators or competitors -- our relationship with these others is based on the choices we make. The consequences of decisions made by the players can include laughter as well as tears, often both at the same time, depending on one's breadth of view. When our decisions lead to happiness, Burgess recognizes, gratitude for blessings received -- health, family, friendship, the beauties of nature and the consolations of art and learning -- plays a great part in our ability to find the ludic aspects of our life. The humor we acknowledge in our life predicaments gives us many benefits, including healing and a sense of proportion.

Humor and playfulness are not trivial epiphenomena unrelated to our salvation, redemption or survival. They are virtues in themselves, essential survival skills. Burgess often stated that he found comedy in life situations despite his best efforts to be morally earnest and pessimistic.

The transcendent moments in life, his novels suggest, occur when we are able to make real contact with something larger than ourselves. This sense of unity is usually achieved through compassion, which for Burgess seems to be the primary virtue, as well as the most difficult to practice. Its complexity is a result of the ambiguity in which we live, our lack of full knowledge of the drives and desires of others and of the likely consequences of our actions. Compassion is a powerful force, capable of mobilizing individuals and whole communities to prodigies of heroism, sacrifice and effort.

He warns us in many of his novels that compassion is often misguided, wrong-headed and perversely dangerous. Hindsight can show us many occasions when cruelty would have been the greater kindness. But one of the rules of the game we play is that, unlike Merlin, we cannot live backwards, using hindsight as an ethical guide. We can learn from our mistakes, surely, but the rules and situations in which our moral choices are made keep shifting and changing, often making our acquired knowledge undependable and misleading. The consolation residing within this ambiguity, I believe

Burgess is saying, is that compassion is always the right choice -- a moral absolute -- not because of its consequences, but because of its unitive power, its "withness" (*compassio*, a suffering or experiencing with).

Compassion allows us to achieve temporary unity with other suffering, autonomous, striving, sinful individuals. And the moral choice to act compassionately, to surrender our precious autonomy and survival instinct to something greater than ourselves, is our autonomy's highest victory -- the victory of love.

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