

Louis Armand, PhD
SUPERVISOR'S REPORT:

re "THE SELF VERSUS THE OTHER: AN EXPOSITION OF AN
INDIVIDUAL'S CONDITION IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY BASED
ON ANTHONY BURGESS'S NOVELS *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, *M/F* AND
THE DOCTOR IS SICK" by Martin Lauer
(MA dissertation, 2010)

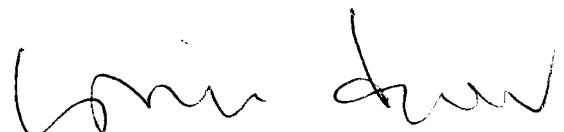
Mr Lauer's BA thesis examines selected writings by Anthony Burgess within the framework of a "psychopathology" of technological society, as it was theorised, fictionalised, and clinically tested in the 1960s and 70s. He draws upon the work of R.D. Laing and I.P. Pavlov, as well as Marx's *Grundrisse* and key texts by Heidegger, Spengler and Foucault, among others. In so doing, Mr Lauer provides a credible apparatus for examining the idea of a technologically deconstructed "self." What is at stake in this thesis is not the validity of primarily behaviourist approaches to human psychology, or of a "behaviourist" literary criticism; since these are themselves specific to the fictional worlds invoked in Burgess's novels. The question seems to be more of an ethical one, of what follows once we hypothesise a world governed by "behaviourist" precepts: the constitution of self as an expression of intentions and the capacity to think and act ethically, outside any system of external (societal or state) coercion. The possibility therefore of "free will" is examined as constituting a particular kind of paradox between the so-called "individual" (born, in Marx's view, through a collective subjection to mass mechanisation) and the "state" (metaphorised as a type of collective ego).

The research for this thesis has been relatively extensive, including a period spent in Britain and contact with Prof Alan Roughley, director of the Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester. While it would have benefited from more rigorous copyediting, its linguistic deficiencies do not significantly impact upon the arguments presented.

Questions:

To what extent is Mr Lauer's approach able to go beyond the use of clinical or theoretical texts to merely illustrate an argument contained in a work of fiction, or to hypothesise an analysis of a fictional character's traits? Equally, to what extent does the fictional work merely "make use of" the psychological or anthropological theories it refers to, implicitly or explicitly? Are we able to step beyond the "use" of fiction as an "allegory," therefore, of worlds invoked in behavioural science? Is behaviour itself a metaphor? Is it discursive? Does fiction—in this case the work of Burgess—expose deficiencies in such world views, and is it capable, even, of performing a critique of them? Can we say that fiction exposes the limitations of such views by opening alternative possibilities, and alternative human *realities*? Is this one of the paradoxes that stands at the heart of the ideologisation of science and technology as *social* principles, and their expression vis-à-vis the "individual" by way of the operations of power?

My provisional recommendation for this thesis, dependent upon the candidate's performance in his defence, is a grade between very good and excellent.



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