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Já a ti druzí: Výklad existenciálního stavu jednotlivce v technologické společnosti založený na novelách Anthony Burgesse *Mechanický pomeranč*, *M/F* a *Doktor je nemocný*

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*

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## Thesis Abstract

Jedním ze stěžejních témat novel Anthonyho Burgesse *Mechanický pomeranč*, *M/F* a *Doktor je nemocný* je konflikt jedince a jeho osobních záměrů a projevů svobody se společností a její snahou tyto výrazy osobní svobody omezit. Burgess v uvedených knihách rozvádí dialektiku mezi subjektem, jeho vnímáním reality a právem na svobodnou volbu a ostaními objekty, jejich objektivní realitou, právem a etikou ustanovenou kvůli zajištění koexistence lidí ve společnosti. I přes urputné vzdorování Burgessových jedinců tlakům společnosti a jejím snahám je konformizovat, jsou nakonec donuceni se většinou podvolit a musí přehodnotit své postoje ke světu a k ostatním.

Jelikož hlavní postavy Burgessových románů svádí bitvy jak s kulturními vzorci, které definují chování člověka ve společnosti, tak se samotnou biologickou podstatou člověka, jsou nakonec donuceni uznat oba vlivy, přirozených i vštípených dispozic jejich jednání. Radikální individualismus, který hlavní postavy Burgessových děl obhajují, se stává jejich zhoubou. Obzvláště v novelách *Mechanický pomeranč* a *Doktor je nemocný* jsou hrdinové redukováni na pouhou věc určenou k manipulaci ostatními.

V podmanění Burgessových hrdinů hraje zásadní roli technologie a technologické myšlení. Zvážením antropologických a filosofických pojednání Arthura Bradleyho a Louise Armanda o technologii vychází najevo pojetí technologického jako ztělesnění lidských vlastností v nelidském mechanismu. K tomuto pojetí přispívá také Marxovo přehodnocení člověka ve vztahu k výrobním silám a pracovním podmínkám v industriální společnosti a určení esence techniky Martinem Heideggerem jako vymáhajícího zjednávání, které klade na člověka nárok, aby odkrýval skutečné jako použitelný stav. V soužití s technologií a v konfrontaci se stroji, které napodobují fungování lidských bytostí, se posléze fundamentálně mění lidská identita a myšlení vůbec. V rozebíraných Burgessových prózách se stává technologie prostředkem pro adaptaci jedinců a zároveň nástrojem rozmělnění jejich subjektivity.

V *Mechanickém pomeranči* je hrdinovo chování modifikováno díky poznatkům moderní vědy a jejich aplikací na reflexivní mechanismus lidského těla. V novele *Doktor je nemocný* je hrdina vystaven neosobnímu přístupu moderní medicíny k člověku a podroben diagnostice technologickými mechanismy, načež se on sám stane nástrojem pro vykonávání různých úkonů. Zavedením automatizovaných reakcí a úkonů se jedinci vytrácí subjektivita, přichází o svobodnou vůli a stává se sám strojem.

V novele *M/F* se mimo technologii stávají rozhodujícím prostředkem ovládnutí jedince skryté struktury kultury a společnosti. Burgess v této knize rozvádí strukturalistické pojetí kultury a společnosti jako systém znaků a odkazů a umísťuje svého hrdinu do spletité sítě hádanek a poukazů, která nevědomě určuje směr jeho zdánlivě svobodného jednání. Ztráta subjektivity a svobodné vůle hrdiny je navíc vyjádřena v setkání s jeho dvojníkem, který představuje zcela opačné postoje hrdiny a v donucení převtělil se do dvojníkovi postavy.

Burgess ve svých novelách staví jedince do konfliktu se samotnými mechanismy, které zajišťují fungování společnosti. Nadvláda exaktních věd je zajištěna neustálou produkcí a potřebami konzumní společnosti. Kultura jako reflexe reality ustupuje a dává prostor vyhroceným vyjádřením individuality, demonstrovaným na násilnickém chování v *Mechanickém pomeranči*. V Burgessově prózách ztráta individuality ohlašuje hrozbu rozmanitosti a tendenci směřování k jednostrannému vnímání skutečnosti v západní společnosti.

## Table of Contents

1. Ch 1: An Individual in Burgess's Novels: Nature Vs. Culture.....	7
2. Ch 2: Unrestrained Freedom in <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> .....	14
3. Ch 3: Technology in <i>The Doctor is Sick</i> and in <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> .....	22
4. Ch 4: Culture as a System of Signs and Representations in <i>M/F</i> ...	31
5. Ch 5: Conclusion.....	38
6. Bibliography.....	41

## An Individual in Burgess's Novels: Nature Vs. Culture

The main protagonists of Anthony Burgess's novels *Clockwork Orange*, *M/F* and *The Doctor is Sick* all strive to preserve the uniqueness of their self when facing the vagueness of the other. In these Burgess's novels the relationship between an individual and the society becomes an epitome of this conflict, in which the individual is confronted with integrating forces of culture and eventually has to establish a certain equilibrium with the other. Therefore, to duely analyze this conflict both ontological and ontic standpoints have to be considered.

With emphasis laid on the main characters, their constant evaluations and re-evaluations of themselves, and Burgess's narrative techniques a proper ontological perspective of the main characters is established, which can subsequently be analyzed from philosophical and psychological viewpoints. On the other hand, the interaction between the self and the other represented by the state, its institutions, ethics and laws in effect, but also by the antagonists of the main characters, creates a wider context in which an ontic viewpoint presents itself, which can be subsequently analyzed by the works of anthropology and sociology.

R.K. Morris defines the conflict that Burgess's protagonists experience as the one between the "private" and "collective" which is finally resolved by coercing the originally inadaptable protagonists to step out of their self and adjust themselves to the outer conditions:

Burgess pictures the human condition as the mediate collision of private ideas and personal visions against a collective that is not always sympathetic, but potentially (when not actually) hostile. Under such circumstances, our survival depends upon playing roles we generally despise, are frequently incapable of sustaining, and are seldom empowered to master; to survive is about all we accomplish.<sup>1</sup>

The study of the relationships between the self and the other that can be observed within the texts enable the reader to trace mechanisms of state power which are employed to maintain morality among its citizens and therefore preserve peace and social order. Burgess's novels *A Clockwork Orange*, *M/F* and *The Doctor is Sick* all feature characters, who endeavor to contest the cultural order and inevitably end up grossly subjected by their society and forced

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<sup>1</sup> Robert K. Morris, *The Consolations of Ambiguity: An Essay on the Novels of Anthony Burgess* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971) 3.

to submit to culturally prescribed patterns of behavior. Technology usually plays a decisive role in their subjection and as such it deserves due attention. Moreover, in order to assess the validity of individualism as a recognized form of human freedom in the western society it is necessary to correlate it to the forces, either cultural or biological, which predetermine human behavior and therefore undermine the principles of individualism.

Moreover, Burgess, is often discussed by literary critics<sup>2</sup> as an author who shapes his fiction essentially through oppositions. Burgess's novels, indeed, feature constant fights between opposing forces and contrasting issues which are finally resolved only to outline a new conflict. Nature and culture, as the most fundamental oppositions in the constitution of man, are often contested in Burgess's novels and therefore their influence on man deserves to be properly analyzed.

Oswald Spengler's anthropological study of human nature and technology *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life* offers several interesting propositions concerning the natural aggression of man and the cultural transmission of this aggression. Spengler establishes his reasoning on the assertion that "man is a wild beast."<sup>3</sup> From this assumption stem the parallels that he draws between human and other predators. However, at the same time Spengler does not fail to notice how these dispositions were gradually developed by man's thinking and culture.

One of these anatomical similarities is vision, or more precisely parallelly aimed eyes, which enable the predator to target its prey and by doing so, to captivate a detail in the world and acquire perspective of distance and space. Another one, a hand, is simultaneously alike and totally unmatched in the realm of nature. It resembles limbs of predators, but unlike them it is harmless by itself. As Spengler proclaims: "Unarmed hand just as it is, is useless. In order to become a weapon, it [hand] needs a weapon."<sup>4</sup> The power of hand consists in its technical skillfulness.

Spengler proclaims that, "a predator's hand is a practical ruler when related to an eye of a predator which mediates the world 'theoretically' "<sup>5</sup> Man, presented with these advantages can gradually take control of his surroundings, first by focusing on them, then by objectifying

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<sup>2</sup> R.K. Morris, Suzanne Keen, Thomas LeClair

<sup>3</sup> Oswald Spengler, *Člověk a technika: Příspěvek k jedné filosofii života* trans. Rudolf Jičín (Praha: Neklan, 1997) 14. (my translation)

<sup>4</sup> Spengler 22. (my translation)

<sup>5</sup> Spengler 21. (my translation)



them and ultimately by using them to his profit. Thus, the technicity of man, is the first step in accomplishing dominance over nature. Moreover, the technology of man, unlike the instinctively determined technology of animals, is progressive, as Spengler mentions. It is not limited by the life span of an individual. Through culture the manufacture process can be inherited by further generations and gradually perfected.

There is yet one more parallel between man and predator which Spengler further stresses and which should be mentioned, that being the territorial ownership within which the ultimate power is exerted. A predator cannot withstand in his proximity another one of his species which would threaten to usurp his position. It is a very well known fact that gangs and tribes are driven by extreme territorial identity. A state also has to maintain territorial identity among its citizens, but it usually cannot treat those who threaten the coexistence of people in the state with unrestrained violence. According to Spengler, "Property is an area, in which unlimited power is exerted."<sup>6</sup> A state being symbolically a property of its citizens<sup>7</sup> is generally an executor of unlimited legal power and exerts this power on all the subjects that find themselves in its territory.

It is not necessary to search long for examples of aggression aimed against those who invade the territory of others in the 3 studied Burgess's novels. Especially in *A Clockwork Orange* one can witness a proper spectacle of territorial conflicts on different levels.

When Alex's position in his own gang starts to diminish, he is obliged to show his "droogs"<sup>8</sup> that he disposes with unlimited power to earn their respect again. Furthermore, when Billyboy and his gang threaten the position of Alex's gang and take the liberty of raping a girl in Alex's territory it is clear that the conflict cannot be solved by any other means than violence. Finally, by killing an old woman Alex transgresses a fundamental law of the territory he inhabits and deserves to be punished accordingly.

In *M/F* this conflict is represented in a more subtle and symbolical manner. Miles has to cope with Llew, an outsider, who threatens his ontological status, his self. Even though, Llew is not killed in an act of deliberate violence, he becomes a victim of an accident whose main agent is Miles. Last of all, Edwin Spindrift is engaged in defending his intellectual, marital and ontological territory in *The Doctor is Sick*.

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<sup>6</sup> Spengler, 17. (my translation)

<sup>7</sup> Not in the sense of collective ownership practiced, e.g. by communist regimes.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (London: Penguin, 1996) 3.

Apart from territoriality, Pierre L. van den Berghe stresses in his essay “Bringing Beasts Back In: Toward a Biosocial Theory of Aggression” also another important aspect of human aggression, that of hierarchy. Firstly, van den Berghe proposes a distinct line between aggression and predation. By predation he means “killing other species for food”<sup>9</sup> whereas by aggression he means a physical attack or a threat aimed against those of the same species. Predation itself, is no condition of aggression and vice versa. Van den Berghe deems aggression to be motivated primarily by competition for resources and asserts two means which regulate the conflict, territoriality and hierarchy. According to van den Berghe it is not common for many species to be both highly territorial and highly hierarchical; however, it happens to be so in the case of man.

It can be, nevertheless, easily observed in the human society that territoriality and hierarchicality are tremendously expanded through Culture. The extent into which territoriality can be expanded by culture was already illustrated on Burgess’ novels. Moreover, van den Berghe stresses the extensive stratification of human population, which is no longer based only on biological factors such as age or sex, but on cultural factors, ranging from clothes to the profession of an individual. Importantly, though, he also mentions that these culturally elaborated models of aggression often prove successful in curbing violent behavior or aggression rather than kindling them.

In a more recent study of man’s technicality Arthur Bradley elaborates on Leroi-Gouhran’s explication of hand as a “natural or original prosthesis” or an “exteriorization that constitutes the interior of our body.”<sup>10</sup> Bradley defends this prosthetic reasoning by marking the “immediacy, continuity and indivisibility of the touch” as “the very condition of the (Christian) body”<sup>11</sup> and assessing the touch not merely as a sense but as the means of reaching the other and establishing a primeval relationship with the world. He argues that “tactility is not merely one sense amongst others but the fundamental condition of our relation both to our own bodies and to our life-world.”<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Bradley deems the hand to evolve reciprocally with the technical apparatus it creates. It is, therefore, this constant interaction of man and his creations that fundamentally

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<sup>9</sup> Philippe van den Berghe, “Bringing Beasts Back In: Toward a Biosocial Theory of Aggression” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (American Sociological Association, 1974) 779.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Bradley “The Deconstruction of Christianity: On Touching the Frontiers of Theory” *Language Systems*, Ed. Louis Armand, Pavel Černovský (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007) 18.

<sup>11</sup> Bradley 14.

<sup>12</sup> Bradley 14.

shapes the human as a human being. How is this interplay between human and inhuman executed? Bradley and Armand point to Aristotle as to the one who articulated the first ontology of the technical object. Unlike Plato who defines techné merely as the practical knowledge, from Aristotelian viewpoint “techné is an essentially inert, neutral tool whose status is entirely determined by the use to which it is put by human beings”<sup>13</sup> Unlike nature, which in itself sustains the powers to grow, any fabricated object, an artefact such as a chair needs an efficient cause, a participation of a human element in order to be constructed. Technicity, is than an exclusively human means of subjecting nature in order to attain prolongations of himself, which gradually replace nature with culture and fundamentally alter the natural human environment.

The paradox of culture as the artificially created environment and at the same time natural environment of man is quite often the subject of Burgess’s novels. The more culture and institutions interfere with the lives of Burgess’s protagonists the more they distance themselves from their nature and idiosyncrasies. In *A Clockwork Orange* Alex is conditioned to avoid violent behavior which theretofore represents the most authentic expression of his nature. In *The Doctor is Sick* Spindrift is coerced to stop being captivated by the words’ phonetic qualities and forced to focus on the meanings of words, which is rather a difficult task for a doctor of linguistics. Ultimately, Miles Faber is compelled to commit incest in *M/F*, in spite of his defiance to succumb to instinctual behavior.

Burgess occasionally attempts to confront the creative power of the nature with that of man and he does so quite ironically. For instance, after a victorious brawl with Billyboy’s gang and a hasty retreat from the police Alex and his “droogs” hide in the dark corner of a secluded street: “It was like resting between the feet of two terrific and enormous mountains, these being the flatblocks, and in the windows of all the flats you could viddy like blue dancing lights. This would be the telly.”<sup>14</sup>

By drawing a simile to a mountain, Burgess first strives to evoke majesty of such a construction and even the spectacle of flashing tv-sets seems to captivate senses. Here, moreover, the human prosthesis, technology, is exposed clearly, stretching into the sky and resembling the natural formations of mountains. Thereafter, Burgess suddenly smashes the illusion of grandiosity to pieces by exposing the stupefying tendency of the television as a

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<sup>13</sup> Arthur Bradley, Louis Armand “Thinking Technicity” *Technicity*, Ed. Bradley, Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 2.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 15.

human invention: “There would be some big famous stupid comic chelloveck or black singer, and it was all being bounced off the special telly satellites in outer space, my brothers.”<sup>15</sup> What this passage perfectly expounds is the alienation of a youth amidst the technological upsurge of the western society and simultaneously a mocked heroic pride of having surpassed the nature in all areas of human life.

The conscious rejection of the deteriorating mass culture and the unconscious self-congratulatory and self-confident recognition of the technological progress instilled in the mind by the culture mark a split in the mind of Alex almost from the beginning of the novel. Similarly, as technology marks the triumph over the savage nature surrounding him, Alex somehow ceases to be conscious of his own inner savage disposition. The concealed threat of violence arises gradually with the progress of the novel. Moreover, it is difficult not to take into consideration that *A Clockwork Orange* was written at the beginning of the Cold war, when the threat of universal war was imminent. The novel, therefore, presents the threat of unknown and disguised forms of violence and aggression next to the skirmishes and brawls between youth gangs. The reader is presented with both of these forms of violence, with the undisguised “ultraviolence”<sup>16</sup> of Alex, his droogs, policemen and others and the with the concealed, cultivated violence of the state and its institutions.

Likewise, the unknown, or the unfamiliar areas of one’s psyche are expounded as major propellers of action for other Burgessian characters. Miles Faber, in search for the mysterious works of the guru of freedom of expression Sib Legeru in *M/F* contests everything he is not, and finally is offered no other choice than to turn into a totally different person. Similarly, Dr. Spindrift in *The Doctor is Sick*, suspicious of his wife’s infidelity and eager to uncover these unknown circumstances between him and his wife, roams the streets of London, encountering bizarre characters, and finally ends up in a totally different world, where his knowledge of a phonetics has no more value than his bald head, only to find out this whole odyssey was scarcely a dream, that he experienced when falling into a coma during a surgery. At the same time, Spindrift is so removed from everyday life that his actions in the objective reality actually resemble dreaming.

What unites Alex, Miles and Edwin Spindrift is the search for a unique expression of their self and an effort to fill in the void in their life with something exceptional and unique. Each of them is, nevertheless, endowed with some contrasting qualities, which are either, in spite of

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<sup>15</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 15.

<sup>16</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 3.

their dissonant nature deemed by themselves to be harmonious in the setup of their personalities, or are not reflected at all. Alex revels in brutal violence and rape yet at the same time he esteems classical music. Miles is a literate intellectual and a skilled riddle solver; however, he is not aware of the true meaning of the words Sib Legeru and does not attempt to solve the riddle of the plotting against him, which is based on the notorious Oedipus myth. Edwin Spindrift, lastly, is captivated by the sounds of language, but not with their fundamental function as signs of communication. This split between the reality of words and the reality of objects renders his communication with his wife impossible even though he wishes to comprehend her and have a happy marriage. What, however, makes the characters unique is the fact that they are not willing to conform to the patterns of the majority in order to level out their discrepancies and rather attempt to find their own way of establishing inner balance.

## Unrestrained Freedom in *A Clockwork Orange*

In *A Clockwork Orange* Alex appears to be a character, who does not recognize any conflicts whatsoever in his personality. Having already explored the anthropological background to violent and aggressive behavior, it may be suitable to subject Alex's behavior to thorough analysis. An essential question to be answered foremost is whether we can induce from the reading of *A Clockwork Orange* that Alex's aggression is driven by biological or cultural forces. Only after clearing out this uncertainty, it becomes more obvious which aspect of Alex's personality the society attempts to re-shape.

There is, however, and probably never will be a straightforward answer to this question. Based on what was already stated, it seems that both nature and culture somehow contribute to the violent setup of an individual like Alex. In order to reach a satisfactory explanation, it is essential to consider particularly Alex's motives to commit violence, the main themes of the novel and the connotations of Burgess's language.

Right from the beginning of the novel, the reader is acquainted with the drug-empowered milk that Alex and his "droogs" regularly indulge in. Apart from evoking hallucinations, this substance is said to "sharpen [them] up and make [them] ready for a bit of dirty twenty-to-one."<sup>1</sup> The drug, therefore helps them to induce instinctual violent behavior. On the other hand, the substances mentioned, being synthetic drugs, are products of the culture and drug use or abuse adheres to certain cultural patterns. Burgess apparently strives to draw an attention to the paradox of the spectacle, milk symbolizing purity and innocence and the drugs representing twisted consciousness and licentiousness. Burgess ironically lightens the severe contrast between the young age and the drug abuse. The yearning to commit violence, however, is not originally induced by the drugs, it is only intensified by them.

The urge to commit violence, however, appears to be motivated by different circumstances. An important clue appears when Alex subjects his deeds to self-reflection: "All right, I do bad, what with crasting tolchocks and carves with the britva and the old in-out, in-out, and if I get loveted, well, too bad for me, O my little brothers, and you can't run a country with every chelloveck comporting himself in my manner of the night."<sup>2</sup> By admitting the wickedness of

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<sup>1</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 3.

<sup>2</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 31.

his behavior Alex shows that he is fully conscious of committing wrong and of the consequences that arise from his behavior. Nonetheless, he is persuaded that the decision to indulge in violence is the privilege of his personal freedom: "More, badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies, and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty." Moreover, as presented here, the concept of God is reshaped by Alex to bless his philosophy of extreme individualism. Burgess seems to present these opinions as a consequence of perverted ideology of escalated Protestantism or Neo-Pelagianism, driving at the cultural heritage of England.

To stir even more the moral ambivalence thus presented Burgess proceeds to confront the individual with the state: "But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines?"<sup>3</sup> Finally, Alex comes to propose that violence is a form of his protest against the society and thereby he valorizes his deeds. He concludes his contemplation by a motto affirming his extreme individualism: "But what I do I do because I like to do."<sup>4</sup> Has the individualism which Alex displays totally lost its limits and awareness of the cultural heritage of England which made this individualism possible ?

In an extreme form such as that which Alex seems to advocate it appears so. However, this vision is rather short-sighted and even Alex himself proclaims that no state could function if everyone behaved in the same way as he does. Moreover Alex, thinking himself to be almighty, is not yet consciouss of the powers that the state has at its disposal in coping with troublesome individuals like himself.

The issue of personal freedom and its restricting by the state power tends to resonate strongly with the political philosophy and particularly in Burgessian milieu with the conflict between the doctrines of Neo-Pelagianism and Augustinianism. Many critics have alleged<sup>5</sup>, that at the core of the major conflict of Anthony Burgess's fiction stands a religious controversy. This controversy is obviously mediated as an issue of morality. However, the perception of religion as a safeguard of morality is dissected in Burgess's novels and religion loses its normative power on people's lives in Burgess's novels.

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<sup>3</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 31.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 31.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Biswell, Suzanne Keen, Thomas LeClair, R.K.Morris

Andrew Biswell proposes in his biography of Burgess that “The Augustine/Pelagius distinction might be thought of as the engine which drives Burgess’s mature imagination; it gave him a set of home-made theological spectacles with which to view history and politics.”<sup>6</sup> Biswell alleges that the conflict between these doctrines assumes in politics the distinction between political conservatism, as a derivation of Augustinianism, and socialism or liberalism as the ideological forms of Pelagianism.

Augustinianism, preaches the heredity of the Original sin; in Andrew Biswell’s words “that man is born in a fallen state, naturally predisposed towards evil, and that it is impossible to proceed towards goodness and salvation without the intervention of the Christian God.”<sup>7</sup> Neo-Pelagianism, on the other hand, originated from the heretic Pelagius living in the fifth century AD, who stated that man is inclined towards goodness without the need to embrace religion.

*A Clockwork Orange* introduces both the dystopic visions of a modern democracy with unrestrained freedoms as well as that of an Augustinian state, which rules with unlimited power. Burgess’s sympathies are hardly traceable in this mayhem, because he endows both of these poles with inhuman and condemnable features and shatters any real propositions with consistent irony. It is a frequent object of criticism, for example, that the character with the most humane and acceptable views in *A Clockwork Orange*, the prison chaplain, is ridiculed by Burgess and viewed as an alcoholic and an informer. Endowed with these contrasting qualities, he may stand for the downfall of religion and for the detachment from its original spiritual mission.

The state is portrayed with undesirable features and inhumane tendencies when viewed from the perspective of an individual and the individual is endowed with unwanted qualities and peace-threatening inclinations when approached from the perspective of the state. The self and the other are, therefore in constant opposition and this conflict must be resolved one way or the other. In *A Clockwork Orange* the shift of reader’s allegiances from the state to the hero is carried out mainly by the metatextual remarks of the narrator. Whereas in the first part, while the power seems to be fully in Alex’s hands the prevailing mood is that of condemning him, in the second part, where the state represents the dominating power the general attitude of the reader is to sympathize with him.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Biswell *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* (London: Picador, 2005) 106.

<sup>7</sup> Biswell, 104.



Anyhow, as Alex attempts to adjust the undesirable conditions of the other to fit his own perception of reality, he embarks on a protest which consists primarily in committing violence. This protest, however, being aimed against the society and the cultural order which Alex, even though he fails to admit, is a product of, is in fact a way to self-destruction. This protest is exhibited openly by breaking the law, disdainning institutions and projecting one's violence on innocent people. Contempt for institutions and for people who live in accord with rules and regulations is virtually omnipresent in the first part of *A Clockwork Orange*. School, which Alex hardly ever seems to attend is a "seat of gloopy useless learning"<sup>8</sup> and a symbolical denial of education is executed by tearing of books and by roughing up of a "doddery stary schoolmaster type veck."<sup>9</sup> Disrespect for elderly is demonstrated after a couple of pages, when Alex and his "droogs" beat up an old drunk and finally when Alex accidentally kills the old woman after he breaks into her house. The protest, however, appears to be but an excuse to commit violence, a rather popular expression of "freedom" of the adolescents at the time. Compared to Miles Faber's protest against the society in *M/F* Alex's protest appears baseless.

From what can be inferred from *M/F* and from Burgess's own evaluation of his novel in his essay "Oedipus Wrecks" Miles hates taxonomies, or the arranging and sorting of facts into categories. Any manifestation of a system, or any preconceived motion is painful to him because he desires total freedom. Since Miles disdainns structure, as a system that tries to limit his free will to a minimum he also disdainns the society which is a structure par excellence. He tries to avoid being incorporated by any of the mechanisms of the society from the fear of being absorbed and his self being subjected to universal patterns of behavior.

Miles refuses to be controlled by passion and sexual instincts just as he refuses to be controlled by the society. The public copulation, which he performs in the beginning of the novel is first of all a protest against the society, against what is acceptable. Miles struggles to disapprove biogenetic determinism as well as cultural determinism, therefore he is ultimately harshly subjected by both. Alex, on the other hand, is quite content with the biological foundation of his behavior, or rather he is not aware of it at all and takes his behavior to be a sheer expression of his freedom.

The territorial conflicts with other gangs and gang rapes that Alex and his gang indulge in, seem to support this assertion. As already mentioned, the fighting for one's territory is

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<sup>8</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 28.

<sup>9</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 8.

directed by securing unlimited power over an area. The rape or aggressive sexual behavior of males is closely connected with the territorial dominance, but also follows the hierarchical organization within a group. This is openly exhibited when Alex and his gang contest Billyboy's gang's dominance over the territory, where the members of the hostile gang are trying to "perform something on a weepy young dewotchka."<sup>10</sup> Billyboy and his fellows immediately release the girl and prepare for a fight in order to defend their territory. Similarly, when Alex and his droogs break into the house of F. Alexander they first establish dominance over the place by beating him and rendering him harmless and only then they proceed to rape his wife. Naturally, Alex, as a leader of the gang, is the first to perform the act. The animal instincts aroused in this affair are various and therefore the boys also satisfy their hunger with a "half a loaf of kleb with a big dollop of maslo on it" and a "rookerful of like plum cake"<sup>11</sup> which also signifies that they are in control of the territory and dispose of the local resources.

The instinctively motivated desire to commit sexual violence is once more exhibited when Alex comes across two young girls in a record shop, drags them home and renders them defenseless by alcohol in order to take possession of them. To sharpen his instincts he gives himself a "jab of growling-cat secretion in the rooker"<sup>12</sup> and to intensify his power he puts on the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth symphony. Burgess links Alex's sexual lust to the power of the orchestra and the vehemence and grandeur of the *Ode to Joy* to the coital procedure, "bass strings like gavoreeting from under his bed."<sup>13</sup> The idea of *Ode to Joy* arousing violent sexual behavior or emphasizing aggression is highly ironical and almost comical, however, taking into account Alex's thinking it is overtly logical. Because joy is power for him, the hymn for universal peace is perverted into a cultural product that validates his violent conduct. Eventually, after the affair is over the pitiful girls curse Alex and call him a "wild beast" and a "Beast and hateful animal"<sup>14</sup> The open animosity with which Alex is awarded resonates strongly with Spengler's assumption that man is a "wild beast."<sup>15</sup>

Judging from the motives for his behavior it is obvious that Alex is aspiring for power and commits violence in order to obtain it. He enjoys exerting unlimited power over people in his vicinity and he rarely restrains his instincts. He always struggles to be in control. Power is a drug for him and his addiction increases with every successful fight, rape or argument. In his

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<sup>10</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 13.

<sup>11</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 19.

<sup>12</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 35.

<sup>13</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess *A Clockwork Orange* 36.

<sup>15</sup> Spengler 14.

gang, he can accept only the role of a leader and once his top position in the hierarchy of the gang is threatened, he reacts violently.

An important aspect of Alex's psychology which contributes to this assumption is the issue of his twisted hermeneutics, that is, the issue of his interpretations or rather misinterpretations. What is revealed in the unrestricted freedom with which he views various works of art is insufficient enculturation or disdain for cultural order. His interpretation of Beethoven's music and other classical music is driven primarily by his insatiable desire for power: "Music always sort of sharpened me up, O my brothers and made me feel like old Bog himself, ready to make with the old donner and blitzen and have vecks and ptitsas creeding away in my ha ha power."<sup>16</sup> Because for Alex, pleasure is associated with power and domination, listening to good music awakens violent behavior in him.

Another pertinent example of Alex's extreme collision with ethics or cultural patterns is displayed in his understanding of the Bible. He sums up his Bible reading lessons that he takes in the prison to make an impression of a "good boy" in the following manner: "I would read of these starry yahoodies tolchocking each other and then peeting their Hebrew vino and getting on to the bed with their wives' like hand-maidens."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, even the Bible is adjusted to serve his purposes and dreams of violence. Furthermore, he exhibits indifference towards the New Testament and he refrains from being affected by any moral guidance whatsoever.

In other terms, Burgess affirms that religion on its own has lost the power to affect the moral status of teenagers. Without the support of other social structures, such as family or state institutions in the early process of socialization, it is practically powerless. Art, as displayed, with its unclear and modifiable propositions, is similarly hopeless. In order to instill discipline and obedience in Alex and suppress his strong biological disposition towards violence a concerted effort has to be taken. As it is with other examined Burgessian protagonists, Miles Faber and Edwin Spindrift, a mere change of a set of attitudes is insufficient, their whole personality has to undergo a series of dramatic changes to be able to function properly in the society.

In all of the examined novels the protagonists are ultimately forced to live in a reality which is drastically discrepant from their subjectively fashioned understanding of reality. Their re-

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<sup>16</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 32.

<sup>17</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 60.

assessment of the world is induced by the forced alteration of their system of references and signs. Moreover, they are obliged to reach an understanding of this system. Because, as Martin Heidegger proposes: “it is constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being.”<sup>18</sup> Da-sein or a being always strives to reach an understanding of its surroundings based on a relation with itself. Nevertheless, this original relation to oneself, is bridged and perverted in order to reach a more harmonious relationship with the other and its demands.

Alex’s relation to violence, which defines the utmost essence of his personality, is fundamentally re-programmed through the “Ludovico’s Technique.”<sup>19</sup> Interestingly enough, the process is based on imposing an association between pain with violence which totally reshapes Alex’s existing setup between pleasure and violence. This effort to induce intensive pain and nausea when exposed to violence or when attempting to behave violently, closely resembles Pavlov’s experiments with conditioning reflexes. First of all, Pavlov discerns between physiological stimuli<sup>20</sup>, which directly induce salivation, and psychological stimuli, which, directed by the association with original physiological stimuli can in some situations induce even more intensive reactions.<sup>21</sup>

A perfect analogy can be observed in *A Clockwork Orange*. The films featuring brutal violence that drugged Alex is forced to watch are accompanied by Beethoven’s music. As a result, an association between nausea and violence penetrates also his links between music and violence. That is also the reason why after the treatment Alex experiences the most intensive fits of pain and nausea when exposed to Beethoven’s music. Thus, one of the key aspects of Alex’s identity is used as a mediator that emphasizes and transmits the reaction.

Nevertheless, Pavlov mentions that the association between the physically induced condition and psychological signals will gradually wear off if the signals will be repeated for some time without the accompanying physical stimuli. Therefore, the reason why Alex unconditionally reacts to Beethoven’s music with nausea after the treatment is because he is constantly faced with violence, which therefore appears to be omnipresent in the human society. The effects of Alex’s treatment are reverted only after his unsuccessful attempt at suicide.

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York, 1996) 10.

<sup>19</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 62.

<sup>20</sup> Such as inserting stones or sand in the dog’s oral cavity.

<sup>21</sup> Ivan P. Pavlov *Conditioned Reflexes : An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex*. Trans. G. V. Anrep. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960 ).

Pavlov may also serve as a fitting example, because of his role as a propagator of experimentation as the most useful and appropriate means of assuring progress in modern science and medicine. Medicine plays no less important role in *The Doctor is Sick*. The main character of the novel, Edwin Spindrift, who is a doctor of phonetics is deprived of his rights by a doctor of medicine and becomes merely an object of a medical institution. As the title and the plot overview symbolically announce the triumph of exact sciences over humanities, so does Spindrift “spin” in the “drift” of the modern world, unable to define himself by the terms offered to him by the society and susceptible to manipulation and abuse.

## Technology in *The Doctor is Sick* and in *A Clockwork Orange*

The recurring Burgessian issue of subjection and exploitation of an individual by means of modern science and technology places again the question of technology, power and human nature in the centre of the investigation. What Burgess essentially warns against in his novels is what Herbert Marcuse terms “technological rationality”<sup>1</sup> or technology as a medium and a sphere of thought.

In *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse attempts to define the condition of man in the post-industrial societies by demonstrating the political paradigms of capitalism and communism. Marcuse argues that “Today, political power asserts itself through its power over the machine process and over the technical organization of the apparatus.”<sup>2</sup> In saying so, he discloses the close ties between political power, technology and economics. Moreover Marcuse emphasizes that “productivity mobilizes society as a whole, above and beyond any particular individual or group interests.”<sup>3</sup> In this process of mobilization, a primary subjection of an individual to the governing apparatus can easily be observed. In other words, a state, in its effort to procure a constant progress establishes dominance over its citizens by calling them up for a challenge. Throughout the Cold War the challenge was obviously defined for both rivaling ideologies as that of surpassing the other in all areas of human activity.

It is, however Marx, who originally defines the identity of man with relation to the machine and production. Marx’s concept of identity stems from the process of re-production and expansion of objective conditions of the living labor capacity or workers; which is carried out by the ongoing production process. Marx observes that “What is reproduced and produced anew is not only the presence of these objective conditions of living labour, but also their presence as independent values, i.e. values belonging to an alien subject, confronting this living labour capacity.”<sup>4</sup>

The worker, therefore becomes subjected by the superstructure of his original living conditions which he himself reproduces and is consequently alienated from the original conditions. The relation to both the other and to the alienated living conditions are sustained

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Sphere Books, 1968) 64.

<sup>2</sup> Marcuse 20.

<sup>3</sup> Marcuse 20.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* trans. Martin Nicolaus 2002. 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010  
<<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch09.htm>>.

by the system of production in which the worker re-produces himself anew and anew infinitely and the capitalist is re-produced as capital, or the provider of resources:

The objective conditions of labour attain a subjective existence vis-à-vis living labour capacity -- capital turns into capitalist; on the other side, the merely subjective presence of the labour capacity confronted by its own conditions gives it a merely indifferent, objective form as against them -- it is merely a value of a particular use value alongside the conditions of its own realization [Verwertung] as values of another use value.<sup>5</sup>

The machine, then, fulfills the role of a mediator in this process. Moreover, with more and more people being incorporated in the production process, the worker loses his exclusive role in the production and becomes a mere contributor in the creation of the product. By being alienated from his craft, he alienates himself from the product he manufactures and becomes attached to the thing, with which he spends most of the time and which symbolizes the accumulation of his skills and thus his surrogate, the machine.

Marcuse also elaborates on Marx's definition of automation and thereby presents a new element in the reality of industrial society, which has a severe impact on the understanding and fashioning of subjectivity: "the social process of automation expresses the transformation, or rather transubstantiation of labour power, in which the latter, separated from the individual, becomes an independent producing object and thus a subject itself."<sup>6</sup>

The change of focus from the unique skills of the individual to the force of the collective machinery resonates with certain turns in Burgess's novels. First of all, the perception of an individual merely as an object in an intimately devised scheme or process occurs in all the analyzed novels. Alex is abused as an instrument of political propaganda by the governing party in their ostentatious project to wipe out violence from the society, only to be used later by the opposing dissent as an example of the dehumanizing efforts of the government. Miles Faber also becomes a tool in a mysterious plot to exorcize the tradition of incest from his family. In order to forestall him from committing incest instinctively, he is coerced to marry his sister and copulate with her.

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<sup>5</sup> Marx <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch09.htm>>.

<sup>6</sup> Marcuse 44.

Nevertheless, the most systematically and consistently abused character appears to be Edwin Spindrift in *The Doctor is Sick*. In the hospital environment, he is under constant surveillance of the medical staff and medical devices. Furthermore, he is imparted only information, that would make him concede unconditionally his will to the medical staff. However, Edwin is even more easily manipulated outside the hospital environment and becomes an instrument of several profiteers who feed in him the hope of meeting his wife and re-uniting with her.

Burgess expounds the reality of the hospital, where the patients are constantly confined to their beds and scolded when trying to exhibit the slightest manifestations of personal freedom, with consistent irony. This utter subjection of the self is repeatedly demonstrated by inducing the status of a thing or an instrument:

It was, in a way, refreshing to be prescribed complete passivity, to be ordered to become mere thing. It was satisfying too, to know that one was contributing to the uniformity of the ward. There was now not one who was not rooted, like a flower, in bed.<sup>7</sup>

Being treated as a thing implies the loss of consciousness and subjectivity and therefore a transition into a mere object. In a same way as a flower, which can be hardly conscious of its being, Edwin finds himself in a vegetative state and incapable of movement. Moreover, by “contributing to the uniformity of the ward.” his disciplined status and the forced unity are affirmed.

Nevertheless, the perception of being a mere thing is induced also outside the hospital environment in a tv commercial introducing a washing machine, which happens to have the same name as Edwin:

‘Spindrift, Spindrift  
Is so cheap yet so posh.  
For a snowier wash  
Get Spindrift, get Spindrift today.’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Anthony Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* (New York: Norton, 1997) 39.

<sup>8</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 151.



Similarly, Edwin is exposed to situations in which possibilities to treat him as an instrument arise. Edwin's doctor, Railton, also happens to be a skilled trumpet player and his hand's movements during examinations often resemble the depressing of the trumpet's valves. Therefore, before undertaking an examination, which consists in pumping air in Edwin's head, a punctuated wordplay "strumpet, trumpet, pump it full of air."<sup>9</sup> is inserted at the end of the chapter, which connects the playing of Edwin's brain as a trumpet with an indecent subjection of a prostitute's body. Edwin's depersonalized condition is expressed comically after examination when "He and the air trolleyed back to the ward..."<sup>10</sup>

The subjection of Edwin's mind is originally announced in his dream of a 'battleship sailing straight into [his] frontal lobes'<sup>11</sup> where a battleship, a metaphor for technology "assails" his brain, amending his thinking. The cold steel, aggressivity and brisk action, which this image produces is also peculiar to the medical staff and the techniques they utilize. Also their assumption that there has to be some material object, e.g. a tumor, in Edwin's brain that is making him behave strangely is peculiar to the technical thinking of dealing with an object. No doubt this object inside Edwin's brain becomes the true focus of the doctors, but inadvertently they subject Edwin to the same treatment. However, from the perspective of the normative other, Edwin does resemble a broken-down object, which is unable to function properly in the society and as such requires mending. His sexual life is dysfunctional and his marriage is collapsing.

On the whole, what is the object of interest for the medical staff is not Edwin as a human being, but his brain, heart, kidneys; in short, his body, which can be most precisely analyzed when approached as a thing:

The tests that followed required more than a single whitecoated operator, so that greater opportunities presented themselves for treating Edwin as a thing. Impotent on a cellar table, he could be discussed or, when a social mood prevailed, ignored. The tests were intimate and searching, so that he was fingered more, heaved about more, recalcitrant parts of his body were scolded more. But when he was particularly docile and plastic he was elevated to a pet's level and patted.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 56.

<sup>10</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 58.

<sup>11</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 36.

<sup>12</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 47.

A proper spectacle of the human narrowed to a body can be observed in this passage. The impotence signifying the impossibility of action, complemented by a frequent use of passive voice imparts the de-subjectivized status of Edwin in the procedure. Moreover, the “cellar table” proposes connotations of a dead body being examined and “whitecoated operator” induces handling, or controlling an unconscious, “plastic” and thus shapeable object, rounding off the inhumanity of the medical examinations. The desubjectivized condition is also peculiarly expressed in Alex’s prison code “6655321”<sup>13</sup> which consists of a sequence of descending numbers with number 4 omitted. The omission of number four, which symbolizes wholeness and unity, may very well indicate the lack of personal integrity and a forced digression from Alex’s identity and personality in the prison environment.

Nevertheless, the culmination of the depersonalization process occurs in the cutting of Edwin’s hair before the brain surgery. By being rid of his hair, which is accepted by many cultures as an intimate expression of one’s individuality and sexuality, Edwin is stripped of one of his last possibilities to express his humanity and completes his journey “to the ultimate bourn of thingness.”<sup>14</sup>

Playing the role of a mere thing becomes peculiar to Edwin also in his later encounters with people on the street. He is imprisoned by a criminal who revels in self-flagellation and coerced to whip him, he participates in a frivolous opera featuring mobsters as Indians, and finally he is forced to take part in a competition for the most photogenic bald head. He is to play various roles, none of which, however, seems to be in accord with his true self. As Edwin’s wife Sheila proposes, his personality is “suspended,”<sup>15</sup> because he does not take into account the words’ meanings and rather pronounces them “just because he like[s] the sound of [them]”<sup>16</sup> His self, therefore appears to be trapped in some distant reality which none of the other characters seem to acknowledge and his body becomes but a tool in the objective reality of the other.

A complete refashioning of subjectivity induced by the interaction of man and technology is proposed by Arthur Bradley: “what begins as a mere prosthesis or supplement to the thinking or acting subject is now revealed to be an irreducible condition of thought, consciousness and

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<sup>13</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 57.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 71.

<sup>15</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 45.

<sup>16</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 152.

subjectivity”<sup>17</sup> Thus, today, man exists in a mutual relation with technology and evolves not only with the new inventions of technology, but evolves in the overall relation to the technical, and thus continuously re-shapes his thinking in the interaction with technology.

Martin Heidegger pursues in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology* apart from the essence of technology also the relation between man and technology. Heidegger defines technology as a calling forth or “challenging,” “which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”<sup>18</sup> The revealing encompasses all the processes that have to be undertaken to transform nature into a utilizable state, which Heidegger calls a “standing reserve.”<sup>19</sup>

It is not, however, solely nature which is approached by this challenging claim. Man is challenged by technology as well, and this challenging bestows upon man the task of “ordering the real as a standing-reserve.”<sup>20</sup> The question arises, whether man can himself become the utilizable state and as such be subsumed in the standing-reserve. Heidegger demonstrates on terms “human resources” and “supply of patients” when the treatment of man closely resembles that of being handled as a standing-reserve.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, in all the analyzed novels, and particularly in *A Clockwork Orange* and in *The Doctor is Sick*, where the main protagonists are subjected to a certain demand of society, the treatment of individuals as controllable and transformable self-less entities prevails. Heidegger, nevertheless, states that man can never be converted into mere “standing-reserve,” because he is “challenged more originally than are the energies of nature”<sup>22</sup> and because only man is capable of perfecting technology and as such “takes part in ordering as a way of revealing.”<sup>23</sup>

This is, however, not entirely true in the case of Alex and Edwin, who are both stripped of their creative powers in the process of their subjection. Both of them exist in a way outside the realm of technology, and partially due to this gap in adaptation to the modern world they become extremely vulnerable to the powers of technology. The loss of subjectivity, as

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<sup>17</sup> Arthur Bradley, “Originary Technicity ? Technology & Anthropology” *Technicity*, ed. Bradley, Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 86.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* “The Question Concerning Technology” trans. William Lovitt (London: Harper & Row, 1977) 14.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” 17.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” 19.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” 18.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger *ibid.*

previously demonstrated by alienating Edwin himself from his self in the course of the medical examinations, implies also the dissolution of objectivity, which becomes another aspect of the “standing-reserve” and Heidegger’s reasoning:

Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve.<sup>24</sup>

The “objectlessness of standing-reserve,” signifies the subsuming of objects into a whole that does not recognize anymore the identity of its objects and as such it functions as a metaphor of society. The ordering into standing-reserve omits the identity of objects it subsumes because they are only transitory in the generating of the utilizable whole, or “standing-reserve.” This blending of the subject into an objectless swarm is particularly well exemplified in *M/F*:

As the maw of television must soon, if its twenty-four-channel appetite were to be satisfied, swallow every face in the United States, so the electronic village would become a reality, there would be no strangers, performer would greet presumed viewer in acknowledgement of electronic contact, and there would be no one-sidedness, since viewer and performer were readily interchangeable.<sup>25</sup>

In this explication of television as a malignant device of modern technology, Burgess announces the loss of subjectivity and the merging of the self with the other with an almost apocalyptic vigour. The chosen diction, with expressions such as “maw,” “appetite” and “swallow” alludes to the culture of consumerism and to the threat of uniformity that consumerist culture induces.

Nevertheless, the inability to identify an object from the mass of objects also opens a new perspective on the examined novels. It is of particular interest that in none of the novels is the main character confronted with a central antagonist that would have a corporeal form. It is true that in *M/F* Miles encounters his double Llew, who differs from him in many respects. Yet, Llew repeatedly tries to befriend Miles and functions rather as an amicable force to alter his attitudes to more socially acceptable ones. All other antagonists function

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” 19.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Burgess, *M/F* (London: Penguin, 2004) 22.

rather as markers of otherness and thus represent the collective pressure to conform imposed on the individual by the other.

The application of standing-reserve on man, originally stems from the modern science paradigm of nature. This paradigm views nature as a system that can be unraveled only through systematic and coordinated efforts to abstract facts from nature and apply them. Borrowing Heidegger's words, this paradigm of nature articulates "that nature reports itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation and that it remains orderable as a system of information."<sup>26</sup>

The focus of modern science on man also becomes one of the chief interests of Michel Foucault's study of punitive mechanisms in his *Discipline and Punish*. In this book, Foucault observes a fundamental change in the techniques of punishment, which took place around the middle of the eighteenth century, when torture and bodily punishments were renounced and gave way to the strict management of the convict's time, constant surveillance and other techniques that would contribute to the reformation of the convict and procure his retrieval to the society.

Hand in hand with this change goes the change of focus from the body to the mind of the convict. The crime is said to be driven by the criminal's intentions and the body which becomes but a tool for the realization of the crime is a mere manifestation of the criminal's problematic mind. Therefore, as Foucault proposes "the expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations."<sup>27</sup>

In *A Clockwork Orange* this technique is extolled by the minister in his opulent speech to the prisoners, in which he condemns "outmoded penological theories"<sup>28</sup> and proposes the new way of dealing with criminality, which should be driven by the effort to "Kill the criminal reflex"<sup>29</sup> However, the body is by no means excluded by the punitive process, it only ceases to be the visible manifestation of the punishment. As Foucault adds:

there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them:

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<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" 23.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1995) 16.

<sup>28</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 69.

<sup>29</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 69.

this knowledge and this mastery constitutes what might be called the political technology of the body.<sup>30</sup>

This approach to the body is pertinently employed in the Ludovico's technique, where the knowledge of an inherent mechanism of the body, which consists in linking a random condition to a certain reaction, is misused and applied on Alex. Therefore, Foucault's answer to the question, how to exploit or utilize bodies to some other purpose runs: "subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge."<sup>31</sup> The knowledge, however, can be utilized in many different ways. The knowledge of the behavior of defiant objects, for example adolescents such as Miles Faber, endows his antagonists with an ability to easily control his acts and direct them in a way to fulfill their goals rather than his.

Simply by inclining Miles towards an opposite option to the one they wish him to embrace, his antagonists seriously influence his decision making, which he himself occasionally questions: "You can say that I was so determined to go that I was able to put off going. Or that the urge to leave was so strong that it seemed imposed from outside and hence had to be resisted."<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, Foucault alleges that the new method of controlling man relies on the establishment of representations and signs which will serve as a "a sort of general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the 'mind' as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas."<sup>33</sup> This proposition defines the crucial foundation of social and political control. By simulating the territory of the mind outside the mind of the subject, an ultimate device for the control of an individual is established. Here, we touch upon technology again as an exteriorization of human mind, or prosthesis of man, with which man is obliged to exist in a dialectic relation. Nevertheless, the system of signs and representations does not necessarily need to be implanted in some technological apparatus, it is more subtly present in every culture, which in its functioning resembles an apparatus of some sort.

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<sup>30</sup> Foucault 26.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault 28.

<sup>32</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 95.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault 102.

## Culture as a System of Signs and Representations in *M/F*

Michel Foucault's assumption of social control pervading structures and objects of everyday use will now be considered in relation to Burgess's novels. The perception of the culture as a system of signs is elaborated most precisely in *M/F*. In his essay "Oedipus Wrecks" Burgess admits that he found inspiration for *M/F* in a famous lecture of Claude Levi-Strauss 'The Scope of Anthropology' which deals with structural similarities between two myths concerning incest, the Oedipus myth and the Algonquin myth. Levi-Strauss found a connection between incest and riddle solving, which both of the myths feature and thereby advocated the determinateness of certain cultural patterns across different cultures. The pre-determined nature of these patterns and their symbolical extension, according to Levi-Strauss establishes culture as a system of signs: "even the simplest techniques of any primitive society have hidden in them the character of a system, analyzable in terms of a more general system."<sup>1</sup> In this particular case, the riddle solving according to Levi-Strauss symbolizes incest by uniting two originally separated parts, the question and the answer. Levi-Strauss establishes this symbolical link on the basis of the ascertainment that an incestuous act is carried out as a consequence of a correctly answered question in both of the Algonquin and Oedipus myths and therefore on the assumption, that there is a logical relation between the riddle and incest.

The framework of *M/F* is closely modeled on the Algonquin myth, which Levi-Strauss presents in his lecture. Consequently, the plot and most of Miles's actions are pre-determined by Burgess's choice of this general template. Everything that Miles Faber believes to be a manifestation of his freedom and the outcome of his free decision-making turns out to be directed by some unknown exterior purpose. Moreover, by refusing to recognize any influence of culture or nature on his actions, Miles becomes a victim of these unrecognized powers. The myth, in which Miles is imprisoned, however, becomes only the most obvious manifestation of the existence of some concealed structure.

It is also the perception of culture and society as a system of signs, that Burgess seems to take over from Levi-Strauss and from structural anthropology generally in *M/F*. Burgess defines the core of Miles's conflict as follows: "The taxonomy, or arranging of the world into

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Scope of Anthropology" *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press., 1966) 115.

categories, is painful to him because he desires total freedom, the collapse of structures. But he cannot escape from structures as easily as he thinks.”<sup>2</sup>

Since Miles disdains structure, as a system that tries to limit his free will to minimum he also disdains the society which is a structure par excellence. He tries to avoid being incorporated by any of the mechanisms of the society from the fear of being absorbed and his self being dissolved in the subjectless mass. However, this endeavor to avoid identifying his self with nothing but the vision of absolute freedom heralded by the works of “Sib Legeru” becomes an irreversible re-lapse to bondage, because he always finds himself in an unknown territory, and therefore prone to manipulation. Consequently, what appears to Miles as a manifestation of inconsistent chaos is exactly the opposite, a very delicately devised structure.

The incestuous plot is disguised in the obscure name of an artist, whose works promise the total freedom of expression, since “Sib Legeru” is an old English saying which means “lying with one’s sibling”<sup>3</sup> Most of the characters, who confront Miles with riddles either have a lion-like appearance such as Dr.Gonzi, who is endowed with a “lionface”<sup>4</sup> and “clawfingers,”<sup>5</sup> or have names which display some similarities to the sign lion, such as “Loewe” or “Pardaleos.” These characters also function as markers of incest, because they allude to the sphinx, which faces Oedipus with riddles. The sphinx as a creature which is half-man and half-animal, furthermore also offers the discerning tendencies of nature and culture in the treatment of incest. “Algonquin” hotel, where Miles lodges in New York is an another allusion to the Algonquin myth and names “Keteki,” “Indovinella,” and “Zagadka,” are all terms for riddle in various foreign languages. These names also contribute to the link between riddle solving and incest. Unaware of the references, or rather unconscious of the sphere in which these terms imply certain meanings and co-articulate a certain outcome, Miles is unable to look through the conspiracy against himself and becomes a victim of the implied meanings of words.

The framework of the incestuous plot is naturally not the only evidence of an underlying system, which imposes control over an individual. In the second chapter Burgess presents a humorous analysis of American table manners and also conveys the distance that Miles keeps from his native culture. Miles confesses eating his sandwich in the “European manner, with

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<sup>2</sup> Anthony Burgess, “Oedipus Wrecks”14th May 2009

<<http://bu.univ-angers.fr/EXTRANET/AnthonyBURGESS/NL3oedip.htm>>.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess, *Oedipus Wrecks* <<http://bu.univ-angers.fr/EXTRANET/AnthonyBURGESS/NL3oedip.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 78.

<sup>5</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 76.



knife as well as fork”<sup>6</sup> and questions the strangely uneconomical nature of an American practice of postponing forking until the portion of food is cut: “Why, for instance, cut everything first, in the manner of the nursery, in order to fork in everything after?”<sup>7</sup> Miles is unable to identify the reason for this handling with silverware and amounts it to both infantilism and to the necessity of having always a free hand prepared to draw a gun.

This exposition of the most delicate details of day-to-day habits resonates with one of Foucault’s points on discipline: “For the disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail is unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it”<sup>8</sup> The most infinitesimal automatized tasks that one performs in everyday life, are subtly endowed with messages, which unconsciously communicate some special content to the performer. These messages, as Foucault proposes, are often political in their nature and impose allegiance to some order, as exposed on an object of an instant soup, which carries the message:“- Synchronic metaphor of the diachronic. An instant soup, as here, symbolizing the New World’s rejection of history, but in France there are still kitchens where soup has simmered for all of four centuries.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to emphasize the structuralist method of his approach to cultural patterns Burgess uses terms that are used largely in linguistics, which is the original field of structuralism. The arbitrary nature of the relation between the signifier and the signified, however, enables the transposition of random meanings, be it in language or culture. An “instant soup,” as a sign, apart from conveying “the New World’s rejection of history” also deals with the economics of time and thus functions as a cultural pattern, which conveys a certain understanding of time and thereby directly influences behavior by making individuals subjected to an economic management of time. The beef sandwich is a similar manifestation of “The spirit of American Short Order Cookery”<sup>10</sup> which arranges allegiance to fixed cultural patterns.

In New York, which functions as an epitome of western culture in *M/F*, Miles is confronted with a subliminal form of coercion, which is executed by advertising and through objects as already mentioned. Miles is “bombarded by pleas to eat, drive, play or wash hair with

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<sup>6</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 20.

<sup>7</sup> Burgess *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Foucault 140.

<sup>9</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 21.

<sup>10</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 20.

Goldblow”<sup>11</sup> and finds only manifestation of freedom “in the act of robbery”<sup>12</sup> and therefore in the withdrawal from the society and its rules.

This subtle form of surveillance and form of coercion is exchanged on the mysterious Caribbean island “Castita”<sup>13</sup> for open forms of social pressure, insistent police questioning and almost constant supervision by police. The interrogatory techniques of the police are rather obscure and range from inducing fear to inventing an offence that Miles supposedly committed. Finally, he is accused of preposterous crimes such as “antipedobaptism” and “illegal importation of zumbooruks” and ceremoniously imprisoned.<sup>14</sup>

The direct exposure to forms of social control is also marked by the encounter with Llew, Miles’s lewd lookalike, for whom the police actually mistakes Miles. As a character with identical appearance but drastically opposing attitudes and behavior, Llew contests the innermost aspects of Miles’s self. When confronted with him, Miles attributes the similarity of their appearance to “A certain tiredness or inattention on the part of nature”<sup>15</sup> and commences to brace his self and defend the singularity of his self, because the existence of Llew presents a most acute threat to Miles’s ontological security, as “His very existence in the world was an affront to my innermost most tightly bound fibres of self.”<sup>16</sup>

Immediately after their encounter Miles starts to look for some signs that would differentiate them. In the initial moment of astonishment, Llew’s jaw is said to have “dropped farther” and later his “set of the mouth or flare of the nostrils in surprise” is labeled as “stupidlooking”<sup>17</sup> Miles is looking for deficiencies as if though he was an original prototype and Llew but a spoilt copy of himself. He is finally relieved of his fears when the different accent of Llew ‘s voice turns out to be ‘the hateful blessed key to a return to the total variousness of life against which [they] were blaspheming.’<sup>18</sup>

Miles attempts to perceive these features of Llew as markers of the other and thus deems them to be incompatible with his self. This endeavor of Miles corresponds with R.D.Laing’s view that “ontologically insecure person is preoccupied with preserving rather than gratifying

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<sup>11</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 23.

<sup>12</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 23.

<sup>13</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 62.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 87.

<sup>15</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 90.

<sup>16</sup> Burgess, *MF* 92.

<sup>17</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 90.

<sup>18</sup> Burgess, *MF* 91.

himself”<sup>19</sup> and in this effort to protect his self a person commences a detachment from himself, or in Laing’s words “engulfs oneself” which he describes as “a defence against the risk involved in being sucked into the whirlpool of another person’s way of comprehending oneself.”<sup>20</sup>

Miles initially engulfs himself by introducing himself as Selim for he “would not dirty [his] true name by sticking it in his mouth”<sup>21</sup> and experiences connectedness with the other when his handkerchief with which he attempts to wipe his head turns out to be Llew’s “gissum-stiff”<sup>22</sup> one. Moreover a desubjectivized impression seizes Miles when Llew takes Miles’s hand from his pocket and waves at him. By introducing his name as Selim, which is Miles read backwards, Miles offers a perverted identity of himself to Llew, in order to disguise his real self. Yet, in doing so, he has to carry on acting the role of someone, who is not in accord with his self.

Moreover, by treating Llew as nothing more than an obnoxious, annoying thing, Miles concurrently re-shapes his own self in relation to Llew as an object, and therefore starts to perceive himself too as an object, viewed from the perspective of the other. Laing describes this condition as an expression of one’s ontological insecurity and as an early symptom of schizophrenia:

The more one attempts to preserve one’s autonomy and identity by nullifying the specific human individuality of the other, the more it is felt to be necessary to continue to do so, because with each denial of the other person’s ontological status, one’s own ontological security is decreased, the threat to the self from the other is potentiated and hence has to be even more desperately negated.<sup>23</sup>

The evidence of such a mutual relation being established, which however does not appeal to Miles very much, is displayed in Miles’s affront of Llew:

-You’re a bit of a rat, aren’t you ?

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald D.Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1960) 42.

<sup>20</sup> Laing 51.

<sup>21</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 93.

<sup>22</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 93.

<sup>23</sup> Laing 52.

-Who ? Me ? A rat ? If I'm a rat you're a fucking rat too. That stands to reason if we're like the same.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, Miles also calls Llew “a nothing that happens to have [his] face”<sup>25</sup> implying his refusal to recognize Llew’s self and inducing the treatment of Llew as if he was a thing, or but a manifestation of the other. He also calls Llew a “mindless animal”<sup>26</sup> because his deeds are controlled primarily by instincts whose influence on behavior Miles attempts to deny. After accidentally killing Llew, who attempts to rape Miles’s sister, Catherine, Miles is finally driven to accept the role of an object which he originally attributed to Llew. Having the same appearance, he is obliged to play the role of Llew to disguise evidence of his death from his mother and from the police.

The climax of Miles’s desubjectivation is proposed in his marriage to his sister and their subsequent copulation. Forced into the skin of Llew, Miles has no option but to yield to his bawdy nature and perform the incestuous act. Moreover, he also starts playing culturally established roles; he has an argument with Catherine, which he calls a “fair simulacrum of the start of a married quarrel” and they both perform “cliché responses”<sup>27</sup>

The incest is heralded by unifying opposites, such as in a riddle, which links a question with an answer. Similarly, the circus clowns happen to be clergymen as well, combining the worldly and the spiritual, and thus connecting two perspectives on human life that should remain separate. The contrary to incest is conveyed in images of dividing force or double edged symbols. Miss Emmett, who resembles an ant, is always pictured with scissors dangling by her waist to protect Catherine from inapt suitors. When Catherine is being assaulted by her father or Llew, who is finally recognized to be Miles’ twin, Miss Emmett uses the scissors as a weapon, like an ant uses pincers, and thus forestalls the incestuous connection. The plural form of “scissors” is, however, challenged by Miss Emmett who reprimands Miles for using them in plural: “A scissors is *this*, not *them*, you ignorant boy”<sup>28</sup>

Miles reacts the use of scissors in a singular by announcing the “death of plurality”<sup>29</sup> By this demise of plurality the central metaphor of incest becomes obvious. Burgess uses the endogamic relationship as a metaphor of narrowing down possibilities, a fusion of opposites,

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<sup>24</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 102.

<sup>25</sup> Burgess, *M/F* *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Burgess, *M/F* *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Burgess, *MF* 167.

<sup>28</sup> Burgess, *M/F* 114.

<sup>29</sup> Burgess, *M/F* *ibid.*

which consequently leads to the wiping out of singularity from the world. In the last chapter, Burgess reveals that Miles is black, and is convinced that most of the readers would have imagined his hero to be a white man, challenging the automatic, reductionist responses of people.<sup>30</sup> Miles's marriage to his sister is finally revoked and Miles later marries Miss Ang, a Chinese, thus advocating for miscegenation and for the richness of life emanating from it, which, however is only partial, because they do not have any children of their own. Importantly, though, these children are removed from the threat of incest and their potential connection will only help to preserve plurality. In the end, Miles is pictured by Burgess as a man who has sobered from his idealized visions and adapted his self to co-exist in a more harmonious relation with the other.

The confirmation of the other and reassessment of one's self marks also the last chapter of *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex seems to have lost his lust to commit violence, and contemplates settling down with a woman. Refusing to get drunk with his new "droogs" and wandering off to have "a nice hot chai with plenty of moloko"<sup>31</sup> signalizes his transition to peaceful behavior and a tendency to conform to common cultural patterns. Moreover, he condemns his violent behavior and compares it to that of a mindless mechanical toy, attributing it to the imprudence of youth.

The ending of *The Doctor is Sick*, on the other hand, does not seem to propose any dramatic change in Edwin's relation to the other. Even though the brain operation which he actually underwent during his journey to the unconscious was successful his split with the reality is not averted. His status of a thing, nevertheless, is crowned by being but a "bilabial fricative"<sup>32</sup> to his wife and by being compared to an "X-ray machine"<sup>33</sup> or to "electrocephalo gadgets"<sup>34</sup> he himself complained about. His life is said to be "governed by Verner's law and Grimm's law."<sup>35</sup> As such he rather resembles the agency of the other, his mind being supplied with input information, which is processed only to produce resultant data. His inability to conform to the social patterns is caused by being stripped of some fundamental aspects of human agency, particularly of emotions.

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<sup>30</sup> Burgess, *Oedipus Wrecks* <<http://bu.univ-angers.fr/EXTRANET/AnthonyBURGESS/NL3oedip.htm>>.

<sup>31</sup> Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* 138.

<sup>32</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 253.

<sup>33</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 255.

<sup>34</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* 254.

## Conclusion

Based on the overall observations of human nature as presented in Burgess's novels the most accurate assumption seems to be that man is both biologically and culturally determined to live in a community. Seclusion is punished with coerced docility to the conventions of the society, as exhibited in *A Clockwork Orange* and in *M/F*, or with total rejection by the society in *The Doctor is Sick*. Freedom appears to be but an apparent, illusory creation of ideology to give the subject a sense of unlimited possibilities. Everything in the Burgessian world of fiction, even the most apparent manifestations of chaos are governed by some underlying structure, which, however cannot be decoded by the main characters.

Burgess presents in his novels the condition of the individual, who is being unceasingly exposed to the pressure of the other and inevitably consents to conform to the social order and reinstates his body as a new entity with new relation to the world and social structures. The system, which originally appears as the hateful agency of the other, is finally constituted in the self. Technology, as an exteriorization of human mind, becomes a medium of this transition and as such offers a threat to the individuality of every human being. The loss of individuality, nevertheless, also marks the loss of plurality, which initiates a convergence of opposites, whose interplay is indispensable in Anthony Burgess's fiction.

The conclusions reached, proposing the changes in subjectivity in contemporary western society and the gradual dissolution of the self in the other induced by technology and by technological approaches to an individual utilized by culture are already accepted as vital themes for further discussion in the postmodern discourse. The studies on cyberspace, digital media, artificial intelligence and other phenomena of the late twentieth century deal with the evolution of mind caused by the "technosymbiosis"<sup>1</sup> of man.

The theoretical works, which served as an illuminating and explanatory groundwork for the ideas and images evoked by the primary texts, allowed to cast the chosen Burgess's novels in new light and to present his literary representations as either conflicting or corresponding with the perceptions of particular authors, who view man from the scientific perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Armand, "Grammatica Speculativa" *Language Systems*, Ed. Louis Armand, Pavel Černovský (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007) 63.

Reciprocally, this approach also provided the secondary works with illustrations for the subject matter discussed by them.

The chosen course of the investigation required the choice of some passages that do not particularly abound with figurative language. This was due to the fact, that the technique of the analysis was to correlate particular textual details and technical background of the novels to the chosen works of philosophy, anthropology, psychology and sociology. By choosing this technique, focus was partly redirected from the realm of the metaphoric to the realm of the factual, but the formal language properties were still taken into account and elaborated on in the conduction of the analysis.

The further research in this area may be directed to music in Anthony Burgess's novels and to the understanding of music as a structure, which, similarly to language functions an effective method of composition, yet at the same time enslaves the composer in a certain pattern. Apart from the relation between language and music, such analysis could focus on the technicality of Burgess's style and on the interplay of the musical and the verbal of his fiction. The scope of this research would, however, require the consideration of a large body of Burgess's work and considerable academic background in musicology.





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