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'Canaille, canaglia, Schweinhunderei': Language Personalities and Communication Failure in the Multilingual Fiction of Anthony Burgess

1. The multilingual Anthony Burgess

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) read and / or spoke Farsi, French, German, Italian, Malay or Jawi, Russian, Spanish and Welsh with varying degrees of fluency, in addition to his native English in which he published. He was also interested in Chinese and Japanese. He learnt Spanish during a three-year wartime posting to Gibraltar from 1943-46. He explained to the Spanish translator of *Earthly Powers* (1980) in 1982 that he "then spoke it well. I now speak it badly but I can still read it --- with some help from a dictionary".¹ He then learnt Jawi over his four years in Malaya and Brunei in the mid- to the late 1950s, during which he wrote *The Malay Trilogy*. In 1942 he married Llewela or Lynne Jones (1920-68), from an Anglo-Welsh but non-Welsh speaking background with whom Burgess translated a trio of French novels in the early 1960s. Burgess maintained an active interest in translation throughout his creative life.² His second wife Liana Macellari (1929-2007) was a translator from English to Italian. The couple lived first in Malta from 1968-70, then spent most of their time in Italy 1970-75 before moving to French-speaking Monaco near the Franco-Italian border up to Burgess's death in 1993. Among Burgess's papers held in Manchester is correspondence in French, Italian and Spanish. He often annotated books and manuscripts with phrases in Jawi script and his private library contained hundreds of titles in languages other than English, mainly Italian and French. In the novel *1985* (1978) he explained that on account of his bookshelves being disorganised and not being able to find the original English, he was obliged to re-read George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in Italian, which alerts him to an error in the translation of the very first sentence which he rushes to interpret: 'Era una bella e fredda mattina d'aprile e gli orologi batterono l'una'. "It ought to be 'battevano tredici colpi'. They

¹ To José Manuel Alvarez and Angela Pérez, 8 January 1982, International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Cambridge Street, Manchester. I am grateful for the Director of the Foundation Andrew Biswell and its archivist Anna Edwards for their advice and assistance compiling sources for this article.

² See Howard, Paul: Introduction. In: Anthony Burgess, *ABBA ABBA*, edited and with an introduction and notes by Paul Howard. The Irwell Edition of the Works of Anthony Burgess. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2019, 11.

were striking thirteen. Latin logic, you see. The translator couldn't believe that clocks could strike thirteen, even in 1984."³

Yet in contrast to many émigrés or migrant writers, his mother tongue remained his medium of literary expression. Burgess's work consequently does not properly belong in any of the categories elaborated in studies of 'born translated' or 'exophonic' writers.⁴ Nevertheless his rich language knowledge inflected both how he wrote his native English and what he wrote about. He moved away from England voluntarily and acquired new language knowledge out of human, cultural or intellectual interest rather than out of necessity. But he did not feel entirely 'at home' in land of his birth. In 1976 Burgess wrote of himself in an author's note that in his view "It is a British writer's duty to get out of Britain if he can and examine the English language against the foil of other tongues". He regarded himself as something of a misfit in the London-based English literary world, adding that "Like many Mancunians, especially when they have Irish blood and a Catholic background, he finds the Mediterranean more congenial than the Thames, and he left literary London and journalistic life behind eight years ago to get on with some real work".⁵ As a literary critic and biographer he wrote about James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway who also wrote in self-imposed exile in non-Anglophone environments. Burgess saw his own situation reflected in theirs. In 1985 he wrote of himself, thinking of Lawrence, that he was:

using foreign languages more than English in daily discourse, trying to hear the English and see the English the more clearly for not living with them. Voluntary expatriation never goes down well with my, and Lawrence's, fellow subjects of the British crown: the novelist who lives abroad is trying to evade taxation or bad weather or both (in fact, he evades neither). What he is really trying to do is to get out of the narrow cage which inhibits the British novel, to acquire a continental point of view, to avoid writing about failed love affairs in Hampstead.⁶

These voluntary exiles contributed more to the renewal of English Literature than their stay-at-home contemporaries, according to Burgess. He credits a quartet of multilingual authors, the Anglo-German Ford Madox Ford, who makes an appearance in *Earthly Powers*, along with Joyce, Hemingway and Lawrence with "the jettisoning of the artificial plot which had

³ Burgess, Anthony: 1985. London: Arrow 1980, 20.

⁴ See, for instance, Yildiz, Yasemin: *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. New York: Fordham University Press 2012 and Walkowitz, Rebecca: *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press 2015.

⁵ Burgess, Anthony: *An Author's Note*, appended to *Moses: A Narrative*. New York: Stonehill 1976.

⁶ Burgess, Anthony: *Preface to Flame into Being. The Life and Work of D.H. Lawrence*. London: Heinemann 1985, x-xi.

sustained the English novel” and demonstrating that “human reality can be shown in a heightened form without manipulation, and if a novel cannot present life direct and dangerous it is probably not worth writing”.⁷

Beyond Jawi and the Romance trio of French, Italian and Spanish, Burgess’s knowledge of the languages in which he took an interest had its limits. He acquired enough Russian, becoming aware of its alphabet and the basic rules of grammar, to devise Nadsat, a kind of Russian-English creole, for *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). He was sufficiently aware of Welsh to write a five-page introduction to ‘The Tongue of the British’ in a volume which also has chapters on Japanese as well as German.⁸ According to his German translator Wolfgang Krege, “he didn’t understand much German”, yet reading Krege’s rendering of the poems in his version of Burgess’s *Napoleon Symphony* (1974), “he noticed at once when a line had an iambic foot too much or too little”.

2. Varieties of ‘Language Personalities’ in Burgess’s Fiction

Krege was less impressed by his knowledge of German literature and in particular his high opinion of Günter Grass whom Burgess considered “a great innovator”.⁹ Yet Burgess cites Grass’s novel *Der Butt / The Flounder* (1977) in *Earthly Powers*, which displays probably the most “continental point of view” of any of his novels.¹⁰ Burgess cites Grass moreover in the original after the novel’s bilingual Anglo-French narrator Kenneth Toomey recalls coming across a novelist called Jakob Strehler, the author of a “seven-volume novel sequence under the general title *Father’s Day (Vatertag)*”. This is the title of *The Flounder*’s controversial eighth chapter, which includes a double depiction of rape, the first committed by a trio of lesbians using a dildo, the second by Hell’s Angels who kill their victim in the most brutal manner. Strehler’s *Vatertag* is on the subject of “the Austro-Hungarian Emperor presiding over a Central Europe that is undemocratic and infested with police spies but is also charming, comic and creative”. The titles of the seven volumes are borrowed or adapted from chapter headings or poem titles in *Der Butt* but listed, with one exception, in the reverse order

⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁸ In Burgess, Anthony: *A Mouthful of Air. Language and Languages, especially English*. London: Vintage 1993, 140-44.

⁹ ‘Memories: Wolfgang Krege’, News and Blog Posts, International Anthony Burgess Foundation web-site, <https://www.anthonymburgess.org/burgess-memories/burgess-memories-wolfgang-krege>.

¹⁰ Burgess, Anthony: *Preface to Flame into Being. The Life and Work of D.H. Lawrence*. London: Heinemann 1985, x-xi .

There are copies of Grass’s novel as *The Flounder* and *Le Turbot* at the Archive in Manchester but not the German original.

to that in the novel: [where they differ originals are in square brackets] "Dreimal Schweinekohl; Nur Töchter; Wir sassen zu Dritt [Wir aßen zu dritt]; Hinter den Bergen; Wie Er Sich Sah [Wie ich mich sehe]; Arbeit geteilt; Woran Sie Sich Nicht Erinnern Will [Woran ich mich nicht erinnern will]"¹¹ An Italian friend of Toomey's, who turns out to have a German-speaking background, is surprised to see his reading matter and Toomey confesses his admiration:

'I didn't know,' Concetta said, picking up a copy of *Woran Sie Sich Nicht Erinnern Will* from the floor by her chair, 'that you read German'.

'I'm learning. I have to learn. Strehler's quite incredible. I've done something I never dreamed I'd do --- well, not since my Henry James days --- sent him a gushing schoolgirl letter, in English of course. No reply as yet. Perhaps he gets lots of them. Do you know his work? If not you must. He's absolutely ---'

'*Doch als uns der Fliegenpilz seine Wirkung entzog, als kein Glück mehr nachdämmern wollte*', she read, with a light tripping accent that evoked nothing of the Teutonic North, 'als wir uns ...'¹²

'But', I said, amazed, 'really, I never cease to be ---'

'My Alto Adige inheritance', she said. 'This looks good.' (307-08)

Toomey succeeds in learning German by reading *Vatertag* with the help of the English translation. He is visiting the Jewish Strehler at his house near Vienna when war breaks out in September 1939. As Toomey is half-French and half-British he stands outside both cultures; his outsider status is underlined further by his homosexuality and residency in later life on Malta where the novel begins. His knowledge of other languages is a sign of his erudition and the text of the novel is sprinkled with foreign words and phrases to suggest his cosmopolitan intellectual reach and interests. *Earthly Powers* is also a novel which attempts to encompass the whole world just as Toomey himself circumnavigates it in the course of the narrative.

Burgess drew on his linguistic expertise to create invented languages, which he also deployed in film scripts such as *La Guerre du Feu* (1981), in critical works on linguistics, in literary criticism and biography, as well as in numerous novels. In *Time for a Tiger* (1956) attitudes to language and language learning are arguably the central theme. Foreign languages are present too in the *Enderby* series (1963-84), which features the unscrupulous Italian-English translator Rawcliffe and Enderby's attempts to communicate in Italian, Spanish and Arabic on his journeys to Rome and Morocco. *Honey for the Bears* (1963) is set in Russia and

¹¹ All quotations in this paragraph are from Burgess, Anthony: *Earthly Powers*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1981, 283-85.

¹² From Grass, Günter: *Der Butt*. Göttingen: Steidl 1997, 501. The quotation continues 'als wir aus jeweils verschiedener Zeitweil wieder der platten Gegenwart zufließen'.

inspired by Burgess's visit to Leningrad in preparation for *A Clockwork Orange*. Russian phrases abound and miss-communication between visiting English- and resident Russian speakers is once more deployed for comic effect. *Tremor of Intent* (1966) is Burgess's attempt at a Le Carré-esque spy thriller and set on the Continent. *Beard's Roman Women* (1976) is set in Rome, as is *ABBA ABBA* (1977), which is partly about translation and a fictional meeting between the dying John Keats and the Roman sonneteer Giuseppe Gioachino Belli.

Burgess's characters often display what one could term a 'language personality' to denote their attitude both to languages other than their own and to those who speak them. What is distinctive about Burgess's fiction in the context of twentieth-century English literature is that he is alert to situations in which languages other than English are being used and he obliges his characters to negotiate encounters with non-English speakers as their counterparts might do so in real life. An attitude to language *tout court* or other languages is thus a character trait in his fiction. The representation in English of other languages can also be amusing but at the same time a means of showing how both the projection and apprehension of personality can change when the language is switched. In the Enderby novels communication is a source of comedy, but Enderby also quotes Goethe and has attempted to translate Rilke's Duino Elegies.¹³ His comedy Italian is derived from Dante whose *Divine Comedy* he has read in parallel English translation, memorising individual lines. On his visit to Italy, Enderby otherwise relies on translating English expressions word for word, which works no better from English to Italian than it would for any other language pairing but produces amusing results. Enderby's linguistic haplessness mirrors his incompetence in his amorous affairs, but Burgess drew on his own literary erudition to portray it. When Enderby expostulates "Canaille, canaglia, with their bloody sex and blasted jealousy", when accosted by the husband of an upstairs neighbour for sleeping on the couch of his marital flat during his absence,¹⁴ he is quoting from Lawrence's reaction to negative criticisms of *Women in Love*. These included headlines which must have reminded Burgess of censure of *A Clockwork Orange*. Burgess reconstructs the episode in *Flame into Being*:

¹³ See Burgess, Anthony: *The Complete Enderby*. London: Vintage 1995, 81 and 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

“A Book the Police Should Ban” and “Loathsome Study of Sex Depravity Leading Youth to Unspeakable Disaster.” To which Lawrence replied: “Canaille, canaglia, Schweinhunderei, stinkpots. Pfui! --- pish, pshaw, prrr! They all stink in my nostrils.”¹⁵

Is Enderby a comic version of Lawrence? There could be other echoes. The novel's first word is “PFFFRRRUMMMP”.

Burgess's use of his linguistic knowledge did not follow a programme as such but enriched his depiction of communication in the differing contexts of his novels. His characters' 'language personalities' are different each time for this reason. If Enderby is incompetent in a comically intelligent way, Toomey in *Earthly Powers* is intellectually curious and open. In *Time for a Tiger*, which is set in a multilingual environment in which Malay, Chinese, and Arabic jostle with English, Urdu and Punjabi, interest in other languages for their own sake is a mark of ethical integrity. The language personality in this novel is thus a function or indicator of morality. In *A Clockwork Orange*, in contrast, the most accomplished linguist is the murderer and rapist Alex who uses his facility for language as a source of power, observing precisely how others speak and adjusting his own voice, diction and vocabulary according to his interlocutors. The language personalities of the two leading characters, Nabby Adams in *Time for a Tiger* and Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, could not be further apart from each other.

In the rest of this article I will consider the multilingual dimensions of three novels which are otherwise so different in style and setting. They are *Time for a Tiger*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *ABBA ABBA*. The first two are closely linked and temporally proximate, as I will attempt to show, but depict facility with language very differently. *ABBA ABBA* is more an intellectual *jeu d'esprit* and dwells on the pit- and pratfalls of translation and depicts an encounter between two poets who do not speak each other's languages which is facilitated by a bilingual intermediary and translator as a failure.

3. The Multilingual Ideal in *Time for a Tiger*

Like *A Clockwork Orange*, *Time for a Tiger* has an appended glossary compiled by Burgess himself, containing slightly more than 200 terms and phrases from Arabic, Chinese, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and German as well as Malay. The total is roughly the same as in the glossary of Nadsat, which was added by the American publishers for *A Clockwork*

¹⁵ Burgess: *Flame into Being*, 101.

Orange's second edition. Thus unlike *A Clockwork Orange*, a glossary appeared at the end of *Time for a Tiger* from the start, though it has recently been updated and expanded. The vocabulary and phrases contained in it are richer than Nadsat and drawn from a variety of colloquial domains, including sex, food and religion. It also contains potentially useful phrases, such as "I am sorry I have no money" (in Malay), "you've done a terribly wrong thing" (in Tamil), or "I love you" (in Chinese), as well as philosophical concepts and adjectives such as "beautiful". *Time for a Tiger* is a comic and fundamentally happy novel, which is reflected in much of the non-English terminology featured in the dialogues. There are minor overlaps with *A Clockwork Orange* when it comes to sexuality and profanities. The Malay term for what Alex knows as 'yarbles' (testicles) is listed, for example.

Burgess owned several Malay grammars and dictionaries, British Empire publications by imperial officers which convey the purpose of communication between English and Malay speakers in the first half of the twentieth century. The compiler or author of the third edition of *An Abridged Malay-English Dictionary* is listed as "the late R.J. Wilkinson, CMG, Governor of Sierra Leone, 1916-1922, previously of the Malayan Civil Service".¹⁶ Sir Richard Winstedt, KBE, CMG, author of a volume on *Colloquial Malay* was also a Reader in Malay at the University of London.¹⁷ The conversations offered in parallel include 'With a Ruler', 'With a Chief', 'With a Malay House-Boy', 'Surveying', 'Planting', and 'Hunting Big Game'. As a phrase book it gives an insight into the historical context of linguistic interaction against which the Malay Trilogy essentially rebels. 'With a Chief', for example, includes the following exchange:

To change the topic. How is it your people are so backward with their rents?
Last year the crop failed and there was a murrain among the cattle. Many of the young men are away looking for work.
What are the prospects for the present crop? Will it be good?
By virtue of your luck, sir.
Do Malays really trust in the luck of an official?
Of course. Your predecessor was said to have a cold constitution and so continuous rain spoil the harvest. (56)

Dictionaries and grammar books should be listed as sources and inspirations for Burgess's multilingual fiction.

¹⁶ *An Abridged Malay-English Dictionary*. London: Macmillan 1946.

¹⁷ *Colloquial Malay. A Grammar with Conversations and An Appendix of the Malayan-Arabic Spelling*. London: Kegan Paul 1945. CMG stands for Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George; KBE for Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Glossaries are not as rare as one may think at the end of novels with far-away settings where the locals speak other languages. They equip readers with the smattering of key terms they may need before they begin to find their way in a new linguistic universe.¹⁸ Such new terms can also be explained through context as you read along, as Burgess believed he had done in *A Clockwork Orange*, or in a prefatory note. Their italicised inclusion can be ornamental, tokenistic, atmospheric, or perhaps metonymic, a sign to readers that they are reading an imagined translation. Not all foreign words have to be glossed as they can serve as residues of incomprehensibility to all but that small minority which has knowledge of the relevant language. If they are entirely absent, however, and the novel is rendered in English as if it were taking place between monolingual English speakers, then a key element of the foreign setting is surely lost. The monolingual approach can be a sign that the writer him- or herself is ignorant of the languages in question or that s/he assumes the readers to be ignorant of the languages in question.¹⁹ Partial knowledge can result in strange errors of syntax or spelling, which in turn point back towards an insufficient understanding of the cultural context which is being depicted.²⁰ Such absences and insufficiencies are not necessarily signs of bad novels, though readers with the requisite linguistic knowledge will have their trust in the writer's judgement shaken. If the language is wrong, then what else is wrong too?

Readers who come to gang-leader Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* after following the Malayan travails of Nabby Adams and Victor Crabbe in *The Malayan Trilogy* may be struck at second glance by the novels' shared concerns with social prestige, cultural capital, rebellion against compromised authority and allegiance to groups defined by age, ethnic affiliation, or language, all of which Burgess explores in two different contexts. The ex-pat who wrote *The Malayan Trilogy* is an ethnographer who gazed on the colony in open revolt with the eye of a participant observer (references in *Time for a Tiger* to James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* signal this anthropological strand to the novel).²¹ He casts a similar look on his changed home

¹⁸ Trojanow, Ilija: *Der Weltensammler* (Vienna / Munich: Hanser 2006), for example, which is inspired by episodes in the life of the colonialist traveller and translator Richard Burton (1821-90), has one.

¹⁹ Brian Lennon argues that Anglophone authors write for the export market and that the presence of multiple languages could represent a problem for translators. Lennon, Brian: In *Babel's Shadow: Multilingual Literatures, Monolingual States*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 2010.

²⁰ Walsh, Jill Paton: *A Desert in Bohemia* (London: Corgi, 2001), set in Czechoslovakia during the Cold War, is an entirely Anglophone projection; Edugyan, Esi: *Half-Blood Blues* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2011), on the other hand, reproduces key concepts in German with multiple inaccuracies.

²¹ On Modern Linguists as ethnographers, see Wells, Naomi et al: *Ethnography and Modern Languages*. In: *Modern Languages Open*, 1 (2019). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.242>

country on his return, seeing a constellation of competing and antagonistic social groups whose workings and interactions with one another are at once both familiar and strange.

Language use is connected with power relations in both *A Clockwork Orange* and *Time for a Tiger*. In *Time for a Tiger* the more unsympathetic the characters are, the less respect they show to their multilingual environment. The Punjabi Alladad Khan, for instance, is learning English and western ways for instrumental reasons because he is ambitious. For the sake of his career he is even prepared to make the sacrifice of drinking alcohol, for which he develops a taste. He also believes that he has a chance of seducing Fenella Crabbe. "All the English he knew was: names of cars and car-parts; army terms, including words of command; brands of beer and cigarettes; swear-words".²² The authoritarian headmaster Boothby, who lashes out at his pupils and teachers because he is losing his grip (and *vice versa*), is in the habit of anglicising local names, making "Pushpenny" out of "Pushpanathan", and calling non-Europeans "Wogs" (50-51). His independent-minded History master Victor Crabbe, in contrast, whom he wrongly suspects of being the brains behind a pupils' protest, is laboriously learning Malay, which he is said to speak 'slowly'. Crabbe is firm in his conviction that he and his wife are living there for "the incredible mixture of religions and cultures and languages" and "to absorb the country" (57). At the beginning Fenella wants to join a film club showing such imported classics of the western cinematic canon as "*The Battleship Potemkin; The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari; Sang d'un poète; Metropolis; Les Visiteurs du soir*" (54). She shows her mettle, however, by adapting and being ready to spend time with the local inhabitants: by the end of the novel she is no longer interested in high cinematic art brought in from the other side of the globe, having found local culture is "Like something out of *The Golden Bough*" (84). The best linguist in the novel by some margin is the alcoholic non-commissioned officer and old India hand Nabby Adams who speaks both Punjabi and "clean grammatical Urdu" (68), but is losing his command of his native English. Burgess renders Nabby's Urdu through correct but over-elaborate, slightly stilted English with archaic insertions. Take for example this exchange with Alladad Khan who has incurred his displeasure by making too much noise outside a bar. Khan explains the reason for his behaviour before Adams initiates him in a money-making scam to fund his need for drink:

²² Burgess, Anthony: *The Malayan Trilogy: Time for a Tiger, The Enemy in the Blanket, Beds in the East*. London: Vintage 2000, 39.

'I was tortured with thirst, sahib.'

'Well, next time you're thirsty you can pay for your bloody own,' said Nabby Adams in violent English. 'Do you think I am bloody made of beer?'

'Sahib?'

'Listen.' Nabby Adams returned to Urdu. 'We are going to injure a car. We then shall buy it. Then we shall sell it. We shall buy it cheap and sell it dear, as is the way of merchants.' (68)

If the novel has a linguistic ideal, however, it is collective and embodied by the principal characters sitting together of an evening over a drink: "Three languages rapped, fumbled or rumbly oozed all the while. At these sessions Nabby Adams spoke only Urdu and English, Alladad Khan only Urdu and Malay, the Crabbes only English and a little Malay. And so it was always, 'What did you say then?', 'What did he say?' 'What did all that mean?'" (115)

4. Malign Use of Language Expertise in *A Clockwork Orange*

A Clockwork Orange is a cruel text. Nadsat is only one element in Alex's fascination with the ways different people or groups of people use language, which he calls their 'goloss' or voice (which in Russian also means 'vote'). He is a schoolboy and Nadsat means 'teen' and denotes the argot invented by him and his gang.²³ He and his 'droogs' separate themselves off from adults by communicating in language which their parents and other figures of authority cannot understand. His speech acts often confront and mock a world controlled by adults, who inhabit the realms of authority, religion, and science. Alex also alters his 'goloss' according to the effect he wishes to have on his interlocutor. He judges everyone he meets by the way they speak, presenting a variation of his language personality in each encounter. He likes to have language supremacy, especially over his 'droogs', that is he needs to set the tone in each language act by establishing the parameters of diction and lexis. His acts of trickery often depend on his ability to imitate how others speak.

What becomes clearer in the second half of the novel is that figures of authority make little attempt to understand Alex, which is why he communicates with them in a parody of their own speech. First the Discharge Officer fails to understand his reference to "pee and em" (120), which Alex has to translate as 'parents'. Dr Brodsky and Dr Branom who carry out the Ludovico Technique on him to cure him of his violent urges are made to sound like two colonial ethnographers when they take a momentary interest in Alex's speech. In response to

²³ See Vincent, Benet/Clarke, Jim: The Language of *A Clockwork Orange*: A Corpus Stylistic Approach. In: Language and Literature, 26:3 (2017), 247-64 for an overview of research on Nadsat.

a one-sentence answer Alex has given containing no fewer than four items of Nadsat, Brodsky says "Quaint [...] the dialect of the tribe. Do you know something of its provenance Branom?" This prompts Branom's famous characterisation: "Odd bits of old rhyming slang [...] A bit of gipsy talk, too. But most of the roots are Slav. Propaganda. Subliminal penetration."²⁴ In *Time for a Tiger*, ethnographic curiosity was presented as a positive. In *A Clockwork Orange*, knowledge is power.

Alex is a different sort of linguist than the colonial characters in *Time for a Tiger* but a linguist nonetheless. He respects everyone he meets to the extent that he listens carefully to them, behaving in ways which in *Time for a Tiger* are indicators of ethical integrity. Life in jail introduces him to a new range of usage, not all of which he can understand. An old lag speaks in "this very old-time real criminal's slang" (93) which includes words like 'sproog' and 'poggy', which do not feature in any of the glossaries because they do not belong to Nadsat. Alex expresses admiration for another cell-mate because: "Although he specialised in Sexual Assault he had a nice way of govereeting, quiet and like precise" (97). Criminal subcultures complement or mirror those defined by youth. Like Alex and the droogs the jailbirds confront authority and participate in a sub-culture. In jail Alex is re-introduced by the 'prison charlie' to the ultimate linguistic arbiter, the originator of the Divine Word, recalling the chaplain preaching "the Word of the Lord" (88) and reading "out from the book about chellovecks who slooshied the slovo" (89). Alex reads the bible from cover to cover, preferring the Old to the New Testament, which he explains in a parodic precis, presenting the good book in his own terms:

I would read of those starry yahoodies tolchocking each other and then peeting their Hebrew vino and getting on to the bed with their wives' like handmaidens, real horrorshow. That kept me going, brothers. I didn't so much kopat the later part of the book, which is more like all preachy govereeting than fighting and the old in-out. (88-89)

The point here is not whether Alex gets religion but that he understands religion as being about language, listening, and, above all, linguistic supremacy.

Alex also varies how he speaks according to how confident he is and how much control he believes that he has over a situation. He is never entirely serious, always parodying the diction which he is borrowing but never completely inhabiting. Take two examples from the

²⁴ Burgess, Anthony: *A Clockwork Orange*. The Restored Edition, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Andrew Biswell. Foreword by Martin Amis. London: Penguin 2012, 125.

first chapter. In the first there is a contrast between the passage in his first-person narrative voice, containing four items of Nadsat, and his direct utterance to the elderly man returning from the library, in which Alex impersonates a middle-aged conservative:

He looked a malenky bit poogly when he viddied the four of us like that, coming so quiet and polite and smiling, but he said, 'Yes? What is it?' In a very loud teacher-type goloss, as if he was trying to show us he wasn't poogly. I said:
'I see you have them books under your arm, brother. It is indeed a rare pleasure these days to come across somebody that still reads, brother.' (11)

As a connoisseur of speech, Alex notices that the 'dodderly starry schoolmaster type veck' he has selected to beat up attempts to gain control over the encounter by adopting a linguistic pose and speaking like a teacher. The grammatically incorrect 'them' in Alex's answer is deliberate, while addressing the much older man as 'brother' is menacingly but also playfully inappropriate, even if it is an echo of the communist 'comrade'. Alex is appropriating himself a 'teacher-type goloss' when he expresses his joy at finding someone who 'still reads', aware, as are his readers, that this sort of comment is usually directed at the young by the old. Together we enjoy the reversal. By the end of the chapter in a confrontation with police officers in the Korova Milk Bar, Alex has reached the height of cockiness, so confident is he in his abilities to elude the law.

'Stealing and roughing. Two hospitalisations. Where've you lot been this evening?'
'I don't go for that nasty tone', I said. 'I don't care much for these nasty insinuations. A very suspicious nature all this betokeneth, my little brothers.' (18)

Linguistically, the police are no match for Alex who reverses the expected roles in the dialogue, once again adopting that of the older person, this time claiming cultural superiority with the mock archaism 'betokeneth'. He adopts a similar tone when questioned later by his father on the subject of his nocturnal exploits: "'Never worry about thine only son and heir, O my father,' I said. Fear not. He canst take care of himself, verily.'" (54)

A Clockwork Orange mixes high and low registers just like the classic picaresque tales from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Alex is as linguistically astute as any first-person narrator in the international history of the picaresque genre. Alex's at best ambivalent attitude to owning to his wicked actions as he narrates his past life echoes the slippery stances taken by the first-person narrators of the classic picaresque novels, from *Lazarillo di Tormes* to *Moll Flanders*. He also challenges a range of readers' preconceptions, above all those of *bien-pensant* liberals, one of the targets of Burgess's satire, and does so what's more in true

picaresque style because *A Clockwork Orange* is a pseudo-confession. Alex's greatest speech act of all is the novel *A Clockwork Orange*, which is a title he borrows from the writer whose wife dies from the injuries Alex inflicted on her. When he meets him for the second time Alex discovers the writer shares his name as he is called F. Alexander and that he has written up the story of Alex's life but only to further his own liberal agenda in his battle with what he believes to be an authoritarian government. Alex has to reclaim ownership of his own story when confronted with this text:

Well, brothers, what he had written was a very long a very weepy piece of writing, and as I read it I felt very sorry for the poor malchick who was goveereeting about his sufferings and how the Government had sapped his will and how it was up to all lewdies to not let such a rotten and evil Government rule them again, and then of course I realised that the poor suffering malchick was none other than Y.H.N. 'Very good,' I said. 'Real horrorshow. Written well thou hast, O sir.' And then he looked at me very narrow and said:

'What?'

'Oh, that,' I said, 'is what we call nadsat talk. All the teens use that, sir.' (174-75)

Alex shows literary self-awareness in his repeated references to himself as 'Your Humble Narrator' or 'Y.H.N.' and his Baudelairean invocation of his readers as 'O my brothers'. If his encounter with his former droog Pete and Pete's wife in the last chapter is anything to go by, Alex has long since relinquished this teen slang. Classic picaresque novels distinguished the narrative present more clearly from the narrated past, but by the end of the novel Burgess follows that generic convention in *A Clockwork Orange* too.

5. Translation as Restitution and Repair in *ABBA ABBA*

The deployment of other languages and depictions of inter-linguistic communication in *Time for a Tiger* and *A Clockwork Orange* were both directly or indirectly products of Burgess's Malayan period in the 1950s when he was exposed to new languages and obliged to use them. *ABBA ABBA*, similarly, could not have been written without moving to Italy in 1970. It is a short novel or novelette in two parts, the first a prose account of the English poet John Keats' last days living in a flat at the bottom of the Spanish Steps in Rome, the second part consisting of translations of a selection of sonnets by the Roman dialect poet Giuseppe Gioachino Belli which are ostensibly the work of a Manchester-born descendant of Belli's Anglo-Italian associate, Giovanni Gulielmi (an Italianisation of Burgess's own given name, John Wilson). The translator is in fact Burgess himself and the fictional story in part one an elaborate introduction to them. When the 25-year old Keats arrives in Rome, lacking funds and in poor health, his modest knowledge of Italian derives, like Enderby's, from Dante,

whose *Divina Comedia* he also reads with the help of a translation. Keats is said, however, to have better French. He meets both the poet Belli and the translator Gulielmi, whose Scottish maternal grandfather, "a staunch Stuart man", left Britain after the Rebellion of 1745.²⁵ Belli and Keats could try to communicate with one another through the form of the Petrarchan sonnet, the strict rhyme scheme of the octet of which gives Burgess his title, but English is a language lacking in rhymes and the only sonnet by Keats which Belli gets to see is his squib about a cat, which does not impress him. Keats then passes him his own rendering of an obscene sonnet shown him by Gulielmi, which unbeknown to Keats is in fact by Belli himself who is angered that his friend has shared it with the Englishman. The two poets' fictional encounter is thus characterised by mutual incomprehension and misunderstanding. Keats does not find out that he has translated Belli and does not realise that as a foreigner the vulgar Italian terminology he utters offends his listeners. Gulielmi, a fictional alter ego, is the mediator between the two linguistic and literary worlds represented in *ABBA ABBA* and the real hero of the novel. He is also the only invented character. He moves to Manchester in 1832 with his ailing mother who wants to die in her father's homeland, marries a local woman a few years later with whom he has a child, who becomes the great-grandfather of the twentieth-century translator of the selection of Belli's 2279 sonnets which are reproduced in the second part of the text. Burgess describes Gulielmi's relationship to the English language in terms similar to those he has used for himself:

A Catholic provincial, aware of his foreign blood, he never felt wholly at home in the patrician language of the British Establishment and would, especially in exalted company, deliberately use mystifying dialect words or adopt an exaggerated and near unintelligible Lancashire accent. (137)

To write about translation is to write about loss since it includes the proposition contained in the myth of Babel that there was once a time when language did not present a barrier to communication. In *ABBA ABBA* this is limited to the notion that since the Renaissance and the Age of Shakespeare the British or at least the English have fallen back in their linguistic proficiency and cultural proximity to Continental Europe. Shakespeare's pronunciation of English vowels was also nearer to Italian than is contemporary usage: "Those worlds had been very close: the Italian realms and Elizabeth's own, or James's. No, with James, they had begun to drift apart. Elizabeth or Elisabetta. She speaketh the Tuscan to perfection, my lord. Rightly, she is named La Fiorentina" (78). Elizabeth I was no Italian speaker, that much is a fiction, but Shakespeare chose Italian settings for his plays and wrote dialogues in French as

²⁵ Burgess: *ABBA ABBA*, 49.

well as Welsh. Burgess's *ABBA ABBA* consequently has to be a work of restitution. It recovers knowledge which has ostensibly been lost and restores the facility of communication between the two languages of English and Italian. By translating Belli's sonnets from Roman dialect into English the modern-day Gulielmi achieves what his ancestor failed to bring about when he introduced Keats to the Italian poet. Fictionalised translation is thus an act of interlingual repair which Burgess, here expressing his own rich language personality, carries out on behalf of literature and Anglo-Italian literary relations. It can only be a partial achievement because translation can only ever be an approximate art.

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