VIOLENCE: THE DEVIL WITHIN US
EXAMINED IN FOUR CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NOVELS:

ANTHONY BURGESS, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
FLANN O'BRIEN, THE THIRD POLICEMAN
IRIS MURDOCH, THE TIME OF THE ANGELS
MURIEL SPARK, THE BALLAD OF PECKHAM RYE

by

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B.A.(Hons.), The University of British Columbia, 1979

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Deaartment of English)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
May 1981
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines violence as a thematic concern in four contemporary British novels: Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, Iris Murdoch's *The Time of the Angels* and Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. Violence pervades these novels, affecting every character and situation, and it is revealed in elements of fantasy, grotesqueness and surrealism in language, theme and character.

A vital link between the novels is that each possesses a demonic character (or characters) whose demonism is symbolic of the darker side of man's nature. These novelists portray life as being a continual struggle--this struggle is the choice between the opposing forces of good and evil; and from this struggle violence erupts. These demonic figures represent the dark and violent choice of evil.

An examination of the characters of the demonic figures in these novels reveals that each exists in a strange or curious sort of hell or inverted world. Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange*, creates a hell for others which, in turn, sends him to a hell created by society. Violence is the means used by both sides, thus neither Alex nor society appears totally innocent nor totally guilty. The nameless Narrator in *The Third Policeman* is literally dead and in hell--a hell he has created by his own earthly actions. However, he is not alone in his hell, for his accomplice in murder and the peculiar policemen are also oddly affected. In *The Time of the Angels*, the characters' hell is confined to a fog-bound rectory in which they are virtually trapped. Leo,
however, seems to possess a fey quality which enables him to somehow evade the others' predicament. In contrast, Carel, his aging counterpart, has despaired and is doomed. In *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, Dougal Douglas purposely creates a hellish situation for a chosen group of people; his reason is psychological manipulation—the result is violence.

The focal point of the novels seems to lie in the obsession shared by these demonic figures—obsession with self and self-gratification. Essentially, it is the obsession of these protagonists which warp and influence the nightmare worlds which all the characters inhabit, worlds in which violence and destruction seem inevitable. This violence is a reflection of the growing violence of our modern, technological society in which psychopathy (comparable to that practiced by these demonic figures) is on the increase and humanism is on the wane.
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Introduction

Violence is a timeless and universal phenomenon. The seeds of the violent act, whether physical or psychical, lie within all mankind. No-one is exempt, for violence...demonstrates the 'real' nature of man, his fundamental disorderliness and will to destruction, his hatred of constraints, his resentment of ideas and ideals and all the other artificial constructions. Hence the artist who deals honestly with violence becomes a kind of nose-rubber or mirror-holder, someone rubbing the spectator's nose in the disagreeable, and holding up a mirror in which he can contemplate the essential filthiness, nastiness, and beastliness of mankind. . .1

Fraser's rather pessimistic view of mankind seems to hold true in the light of contemporary British fiction. The novels of Burgess, Murdoch, Spark and O'Nolan (Flann O'Brien) emphasize that violence is an inescapable aspect of the human condition and that it seems to be an inevitable product of an ever-existing bi-polarism: the struggle for supremacy, or at least stability, between the opposing forces of good and evil and their subordinates: love and power, order and disorder, truth and fantasy. This struggle, which is focused on the conflict between selfhood and selflessness, generates violence because the desires or "instincts" that "people don't like to gratify except with the help of ingenious devices, disguises and a rather childish hypocrisy. . .are the most deeply rooted in the human psyche." These instincts are "'fear. . .the taste for blood and death.'"2

There are numerous ways of presenting violence in the novel, but to use violence as a thematic technique it must be made palatable or acceptable to the reader: mere excess of brute aggression--people tortured or killed--will either only repel the reader without engrossing him in the novel's purpose, or the violence will seem less real and thus the work will have less impact. To avoid this effect, the novelists
make use of such literary devices as the distancing and commingled elements of grotesqueness, fantasy and surrealism (the Surrealist movement, in fact, "drew on the powerful stimulus of violence")\(^3\). The use of distinctive language is also an important factor. These devices create unusual and distinctive settings or worlds in which the characters are permitted to carry out the most horrific acts—yet the reader remains unalienated and amused throughout.

Fraser also points out that "in a culture as starved of physicality as ours, the enduring appeal of a good many violent works is not just that they are violent but that they re-immers e us vicariously in physical action."\(^4\) He adds that "it also a fact that other people have been able to commit these violences and to ignore the traditional safeguards of innocence, and ignorance, and helplessness. One has the sensation of a chasm having opened in front of one's feet. And the immediate reaction is to demand, How could they?"\(^5\) One possible answer, of course, is perhaps we all could if our unconscious desires were so tapped—as Dougal Douglas taps the unconscious life of Peckham Rye bringing death and destruction to the surface. The Surrealists, in fact, note that "the unconscious does not usually bring us good news, and that what we repress is hatred more often than love. . . ."\(^6\) A good example of this phenomenon is Mr. Druce in The Ballad of Peckham Rye: his unconscious hatreds lead him to murder.

Violence is not confined to the contemporary British novel, of course, it spans all ages and all nationalities. The significance of violence in the contemporary British novel lies in its presentation, in the techniques used to convey its presence, and in its
thematic use: it is shown to be a way of repelling loneliness and of clinging to the existence of one's self in an absurd world. With a rise in the knowledge of man's psychological make-up, the progression of modern society towards a mechanistic existence, and the decline in values and traditional morality, the stage is set for a rather cold-blooded presentation of violence. The more boisterous and warm-blooded presentation of violence of preceding eras has been altered to accommodate these modernistic changes in human life.

The rise of the novel in the eighteenth century included violence at its inception. Novelists such as Sterne, Smollett, Matthew Lewis, Swift and others, all employed violence, in particular grotesque or fantasy violence. This characteristic was not lost in the nineteenth century either--Dickens also included a considerable amount of grotesque violence in his novels. The reliance of the contemporary novel on the mingling of dream/nightmare and reality is a surrealistic technique ("the real contains the surreal"7); but in the novel this technique had its origins in Lewis's The Monk. André Breton discusses The Monk enthusiastically in his Manifesto of Surrealism:

Long before the author [Lewis] has freed his main characters from all temporal restraints, one feels them ready to act with an unprecedented pride. This passion for eternity with which they are constantly stirred lends an unforgettable intensity to their torments, and to mine. I mean that this book, from beginning to end, and in the purest way imaginable, exercises an exalting effect only upon that part of the mind which aspires to leave the earth and that, stripped of an insignificant part of its plot, which belongs to the period in which it was written, it constitutes a paragon of precision and innocent grandeur. 8

Lewis's prideful characters are echoed in the contemporary novels discussed in this thesis. The "passion for eternity" Breton considers
to be dominating the lives of characters such as Ambrosio and Matilda in *The Monk*, is clearly repeated, for example, in *The Third Policeman*, in which the Narrator clings desperately to existence by denying reality and living in a world constructed by his imagination.

The absurdity of the world in which the Narrator finds himself resembles Breton's description of life: "Life is absurd not in the nauseating sense of the word but so far as 'absurd' designates the forces that outdistance the narrow limits of logic and gravitate towards the wondrous." The world of *The Third Policeman* is also "derived, in part from the ideas of the Celtic other-world [where] Time has no meaning" and a day can be synonymous with a hundred years. Furthermore, "de Selby is modelled on Des Esseintes, hero of Huysman's *À Rebours* (Against Nature) and possibly on Slawkenbergius, the savant whose works are the lifelong obsession of Walter Shandy in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*."11

One aspect that novels as diverse in period as *The Monk* and the contemporary novels discussed here have in common is their use of the grotesque. The grotesque is violent in its own right: it is the "violent clash of opposites, and hence [is] an appropriate expression of the problematical nature of existence."12 The grotesque is the device of bringing two incongruous elements together--laughter and horror--to elicit an emotional response. Furthermore:

The grotesque is the expression of the estranged or alienated world, i.e. the familiar world is seen from a perspective which suddenly renders it strange (and, presumably, this strangeness may be either comic or terrifying or both).

The grotesque is a game with the absurd in the sense that the grotesque artist plays, half-laughingly, half-horrified, with the deep absurdities of existence.

The grotesque is an attempt to control and exorcise . . . the demonic elements in the world. 13
This device is clearly in evidence in the novels of Burgess, Murdoch, Spark and O’Nolan; much of the disorientating quality of these novels arises from the authors’ inclusion of elements of the grotesque and in the importance of the “demonic” figures of Alex, Leo, Carel, Dougal and the Narrator of The Third Policeman.

Each of the four novels discussed contains this thematic element: the presence of a demonic figure whose actions—wittingly or unwittingly—elicit tensions and bring the deeply hidden desires of the other characters to the surface. The result is havoc and an explosion of violent action. In turn, violence acts as a catalyst in the novels—it cuts through the layers of false morality and hypocrisy to expose the true nature of man, his "disorderliness and will to destruction," and his puniness in the face of the absurdity of the universe.

The Demonic Figure

Perhaps the most significant cause of violence in these novels is the desire or quest for power. In Murdoch’s opinion, love and power are the opposite sides of the coin, the archetypal opposing forces within man. One of the overriding characteristics of the demonic figures in these novels is their pride and their desire for power. This desire has effectively crippled the minds or spirits of these men, and the theme of crippling—both of the mind and the body—is a central one, not only to these novels, but to the genre as a whole:

Modern novels frequently emphasize the complexity of man. They show that although man may well be a victim of society or some unreasonable wound, he is as much a victim of his own character and so is not entirely an innocent victim. . . It is perhaps arbitrary to deal separately with characters who function primarily as victimizers, but there are enough
of these individuals who cause pain—and enough of them are found in influential roles—to merit their classification into a subgroup of those maimed figures who inhabit, and create, waste lands.

That such creatures should be deformed—that they should, in particular, limp—is an ancient notion probably derived from two sources: deformity from the Platonic concept that a man's character is reflected in his appearance; limping, from the fact that the Arch Enemy of man, Satan (Hebrew for "the adversary"), has cloven hooves which he can disguise but not entirely conceal should he take human shape. 14

The demonic figures of these novels clearly fit into Hays' "classification" of limping "maimed" creatures who are representative of the powers of evil or the darkness which lies within mankind. In The Ballad of Peckham Rye, Dougal Douglas is certainly meant to represent, if not Satan himself, at least a demonic representation of evil powers. Likewise, O'Nolan indicates that the Narrator of The Third Policeman represents evil, for he has both a crippled body and a crippled mind—the latter deformed by his obsession with de Selby. Alex in A Clockwork Orange and Leo and Carel in The Time of the Angels are also crippled, but they exhibit social and spiritual deformation for their bodies are perfect and intact. Rather, Alex, Leo and Carel are Luciferian creatures—outwardly beautiful angels who have, inwardly, become dark, proud creatures obsessed with gratification of the self above all else. Carel seems almost a parallel to the Miltonic conception of Satan—his power and magnetism cause him to disbelieve, to want ultimate power for himself; as a result he is cast into hell, but a hell of total emptiness. Carel's "downfall can be attributed to his fascination with the dark side of German existentialism" especially "Nietzsche and Heidegger, about whom Murdoch has said 'Heidegger is Lucifer in person.'" 15
Like Murdoch, Hays emphasizes the power of love in vanquishing evil and the cloying absorption of selfhood. True love is selfless love, the abnegation of self with regard to the other; however, to "consider oneself first, to compound this disregard of others by denying their humanity and dignity, is to foster the world's sterility by one's own demonism."16 This brand of "demonism" is clearly evident in these four novels in which those who "seek life, love, or purpose have to contend with those who pervert, corrupt, defame, and destroy"; in other words, to contend with those who commit violence, with "enemies who bear the mark of the Enemy."17 These marks include the "diabolical attributes of lameness [and] red hair."18

The use of a demonic figure in each novel is for the purpose of personifying the evil hidden within men, and to allow the struggle between good and evil to be waged in visible form. Thus the quality of evil is given force by being characterized; and its force is emphasized by the dreamlike or fantastic settings created in which the characters struggle to exist.

On a physical level, Dougal Douglas in The Ballad of Peckham Rye and the nameless Narrator of The Third Policeman are the most obviously Satanic. Spark goes to great lengths to present Dougal as being, if not Satan himself, at least a powerful representative of chaos and the force of evil. His name is Gaelic for "dark stranger," and he exudes a "dark glow."19 Dougal fits neatly into Hays' schema of the Satanic entity: Dougal is deformed or misshapen. He is a "man of vision with a deformed shoulder"(p. 17). He continually asks people to feel the "bumps" that are hidden in his short curly hair—a Pan-like
touch. Dougal is also a shapeshifter: "Dougal changed his shape and became a professor" (p. 16)—a sure sign of the devil, for the devil can alter his shape at will. In this respect, Dougal can be compared to Policeman Fox who can also change his shape: Fox "began putting his immense body through the tiny opening."  

Dougal also dislikes crossing the river, a common trait for those in the service of evil and for whom the purity of running water is anathema as it is symbolic of the purity of the uncorrupted human spirit.

Dougal's body, "already highly crooked by nature" (p. 15), is an outward manifestation of his twisted inner nature. However, in spite of his crookedness, Dougal is extremely attractive to other people, and he uses his powers to advantage. Indeed, if Satan is considered to be the personification of our dark, inner desires, this extreme attraction is not hard to believe. Our desires are extremely attractive—it is hard not to give in to the urgent requests of the self. Thus demonic characters, such as the five presented in these novels, would be extremely attractive and charming. Those that are repelled—like Dixie, for instance—tend to be so because these demonic characters are adept at understanding the hidden motives of others and then exposing these traits, much to the mortification of the possessors.

Dougal brings excitement to the otherwise drab lives of the inhabitants of Peckham Rye; he accomplishes this by divining peoples' inner thoughts and desires and then manipulating people into acting them out. The result tends to be violence in one form or another. Humphrey says "There's a dirty swine in every man" (p. 7). The "swine" is this dark, unprincipled side of human nature—the side that Dougal taps with skill.
Spark is explicit about Dougal's function in The Ballad of Peckham Rye. Dougal and Merle Coverdale walk into the graveyard and Dougal sits down on "an insignificant headstone [and] pose[es] like an angel-devil..." (p. 30). Dougal is Lucifer, the "angel-devil"; the "insignificant headstone" reveals man's unimportance, his absurdity, in the face of the forces of good and evil. Dougal is also likened to "a succubus whose mouth is its eyes" (p. 28); in this capacity he can be compared to Leo in The Time of the Angels: "Leo was leaning forward now and was studying Marcus with a fascinated almost delighted expectancy. With a sense of being experimented on, Marcus controlled his gaze. There was something familiar and somehow deadly about the situation. Leo knew him too well."

Like Dougal, Leo plays with people, controls them like puppets; he knows what their reaction will be and he loves to manoeuver them into fulfilling his behavioural preconceptions of their actions.

Manipulating people is the Devil's power: he offers a choice which is no choice, and Muriel finds this out with Leo. Like most of us, Muriel thinks to use the "devil" (or the unconscious) as a tool for her purposes; however, she discovers that the dark force is really using her. Muriel erroneously considers that what attracts her to Leo is his...

...rather immoral...friskiness, that cheerful willingness to behave badly which had had such an ugly issue in the unspeakable theft and in the scene with Eugene which she had overheard. She had thought of Leo as potent as a sort of pure elemental force. It had been indeed some sense of the 'purity' of that force which had led her so readily to conceive of him as an instrument. A creature so simpleheartedly egotistic could not be a menace. This was not the kind of thing which Muriel feared. It was the kind of thing which she flattered herself she could control. Yet now she felt both shocked and muddled, disgusted by Leo's behaviour and yet unable resolutely to judge him, as if she herself had already become in some way his accomplice (p. 123).
Muriel feels ambivalent towards Leo, both "disgusted by him, and yet strangely attracted to him. Marcus also feels this way about Leo. When Leo leaves him after trying to extort money from him, Marcus feels both excited and "disgusted." Leo's paradoxical ability to simultaneously attract and repel people is a reflection of our base nature and our overlying moral sense.

Leo's intense beauty also seems Luciferian in its perfection. He desires to be a "prince" (p. 98) and his physical description is princely indeed: he is described as "glossy," "luminous," "gold," "light," (p. 99) and so on. He "glides" (p. 9) rather than walks and his hair is a "reddish-gold" (p. 99). Leo is an ethereal, angelic creature, but he is a fallen angel--a continuous dark stream of lies pours from his mouth; he is concerned only with manipulating people--which he does to ward off his feeling of angst. He is capable of great charm and great cruelty--as is Carel. The two men represent the two faces of evil: the bright, beautiful face which ensnares people, and the reverse: the dark, anguished, hopelessly face of the damned soul which has descended into the nothingness of hell and realises the horror of an eternity separated from God. Power and violence become the only means of assuring a sense of existence in the midst of such chaos.

Alex is also a Luciferian figure. He is charming, intelligent, and handsome. His name means "helper of men" and he helps men straight into destruction. But Alex's major flaw is pride, and in this respect his name seems to be a reference to Alexander the Great--like the soldier, Alex is full of pride in his leadership capacity over his "droogs"; he feels that Dim must "learn his place," he feels justified in punching Dim in the face when Dim mocks the singer in the
Korova Milkbar, because, in Alex's opinion, "It was [him] really Dim had done wrong to"(p. 26).

Alex is our "humble narrator"(p. 65), and as such should gain our complete sympathy, especially in view of his insouciant charm and his continual inclusion of us into his tale ("O my brothers"[p. 5]). However, his overweening Satanic pride and his all-too-real delight in violence for violence's sake, tend to distance us from him toward the end of the novel; and it his pride which ultimately leads to his fall. Alex becomes a rather grotesque figure, for his apparently reasonable and amusing character is incongruous with both his obvious love of power and the subject matter of his speech: "lashings of ultra-violence which is a real kick"(p. 19).

Alex's pride becomes ironical when he desires to pull the feathers out of a peacock's tail because it is too "boastful"(p. 137), or when he castigates the government for being "very boastful"(p. 122). For Alex (as is proper in one only concerned with gratifying self) can neither comprehend that he parallels the peacock's qualities in his dress and manner, nor that he parallels the government in its symbolic attempt to divest him of his own tail feathers in an effort to render him truly "humble." However, it is a consistent pattern throughout the novel that the most inhuman creatures wear clothes that are the "heighth of fashion"(p. 97), a narcissistic preoccupation with the trivial and superficial which clearly reveals the hollowness of their beings.

Alex is called a "toad"(p. 51) and a "bedbug"(p. 51) by the woman he accidently murders. A toad is frequently cited as a witches' familiar—it is also (like Joe in The Third Policeman) a poisonous, slimy creature, as Alex essentially is. His victim tells him to "keep
[his] distance" or she will "be forced to strike"(p. 51) him. Alex incites normally passive people to violence just as Dougal does. His brand of evil ignites opposing forces and violence is the outcome.

In *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, Dougal specifically refers to himself as the devil, although with the exception of Mr. Weedin, no-one believes him. This scepticism reinforces the view that people only believe what they want to believe--we are blinded by our preconceptions and misconceptions of life, and the result of living in a shuttered world is tragedy and violence. For example, while being shown Dougal's "bumps," Humphrey asks Dougal if he is supposed to be the devil. Dougal replies, "No oh, no. I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls"(p. 77). Dougal is telling the truth; he is explaining what he is and what he does, but Humphrey does not believe him. Weedin asks Merle if she has ever "looked at [Dougal's] eyes"(p. 82): the eyes are the window of the soul, but Dougal, embodying the blackness of man, is soulless, thus only emptiness will be reflected in his eyes.

Like Dougal, the Narrator of *The Third Policeman* seems to represent the demonic aspect of man, an aspect created by an obsession with self. According to Hays, one of the most obvious signs of the satanic element in literature is the "limping hero," and the Narrator fits neatly into this definition on account of his wooden left leg: "part of me is wood and has no life in it at all"(p. 41). The "part of" him that is lifeless is his spirit, his emotions. He is as wooden as his leg.

The Narrator is not alone in his wooden left-leggedness, however, for Martin Finnucane also has a wooden left leg and he leads a
band of other such similarly afflicted men to rescue the Narrator from the scaffold. The Narrator's world, or hell, is peopled with both these violent, one-legged men and the malefic policemen, all of whom are as base as he. Martin Finnucane is also a murderer, and in view of this fact and his physical similarity to the Narrator, he appears to be an external manifestation of the Narrator's psyche. Certainly, he is violent enough; he tells the Narrator that if he is in trouble, Finnucane "will come with all the one-legged men and rip the bellies" (p. 42).

Perhaps the most horrifying facet of the demonic creatures surrounding the Narrator is that they are his own creations, for his hell is a hell of the self; he is trapped forever within a world bounded by his last moments in Mathers' house—a world created by his own imagination or psyche. He personifies the self or ego; he is self gone mad, bounding through a world of its own making. The Narrator's world orbits around the black cash box, thus it is a mechanistic, absurd, violent and totally horrifying world.

That Martin Finnucane is a clone of the Narrator, is further emphasized by Sergeant Pluck using the Narrator as a scapegoat for Finnucane's murder of the dream Mathers. The Narrator protests his innocence; but, of course, he is the murderer—of the real Mathers—so this world has a sort of perverted justice: the Narrator suffers in fear for his 'life' for a murder he thinks he did not do, conveniently forgetting that he has not paid, in earthly terms, for the murder he did do.

The fact that it is the Narrator's left leg that is wooden
is also significant, for his entire world is made up of left-hand turns. When Pluck shows the Narrator the "road to eternity"(p. 108) on MacCruiskeen's ceiling "map," the road to take is the first left-hand road. The Narrator argues that no road exists there, but Pluck disagrees: "it is a very old road. . .but there is no signpost"(p. 108). The left-hand path--the crooked path--is the way to hell, the oldest road of all for the self to travel upon; there is no "signpost" because everyone finds their own way there.

Pluck's criticism of Policeman Fox is that Fox "has an opinion that there is a turn to the right down the road and likely that is what he is after, he thinks the best way to find it is to die and get all the leftness out of his blood. I do not believe that there is a right-hand road. . .as you are aware the right is much more tricky than the left, you would be surprised at all the right pitfalls there are. We are only at the beginning of our knowledge of the right, there is nothing more deceptive to the unwary"(p. 132). To "die and get all the leftness" out of one's blood is to advocate the total extinction of self--only by so doing can one revoke the power of evil, an evil shown in the Narrator to be his obsession with self. However, such an act would require a mighty courage, a commodity that the Narrator--like most humans--sorely lacks. For the "right-hand" path--the pursuit of good and truth--is infinitely more "tricky" than the easy road of fantasy and comfortable illusion.

Another indication of the Narrator's demonic nature is his namelessness. He is without a name throughout the entire novel, and to be obsessed with self and yet not to possess the uniqueness of
individuality which is bestowed on one by one's name, is paradoxical in the extreme. Like the Narrator, Satan might be considered self out of control, and he is sometimes termed the nameless one; yet, again paralleling the Narrator, Satan simultaneously possesses many names. Throughout the novel the Narrator (and Joe) proffer a variety of names the Narrator might have had (if he could remember), thus emphasizing both his demonic and his universal nature.

The Narrator has peopled his surreal world with nothing but demons, and they seem to represent his unconscious desires for power and violent action (he literally scares John Divney to death, a violent and horrible, yet fitting end to an unscrupulous character). The inhabitants of his world are strange, dreamlike, inhuman figures. MacCruiskeen, for example, is described as being "on wires and worked with steam" (p. 66); Pluck taps his head and it makes a "booming hollow sound" (p. 133) as if it were empty. These policemen seem like mechanical clockwork creatures, but their demonism is shown by such details as Pluck's face which sports "a violent red moustache" (p. 48); for red hair symbolizes compatriots of the devil. Also, Policeman Fox blocks the left-hand side of the window in Mathers' house which shows that he is in league with the powers of darkness. These policemen are grotesque figures, in their hugeness and beefiness they seem both ridiculous and horrific and they exude a menacing and yet comic atmosphere or presence. Thus the policemen fit into Philip Thomson's view of the grotesque: the grotesque "will cover...among other things, the co-presence of the laughable and something which is incompatible with the laughable." But while the obsession with detail and the
size of the policemen seems comic—at first—their implacability shows through and they become grotesque figures representative of dark fears hidden within our unconscious thoughts.

Joe, too, is described as a demonic figure in the traditional fashion. The Narrator starts imagining that Joe is in the bed next to him; the thought repels him because Joe's "diminutive body would be horrible to the human touch—scaly or slimy like an eel" (p. 101). If Joe is his soul, then Joe would be "scaly" and "horrible" because the Narrator, by his actions, has forgone the right to have anything else. He has chosen to become an evil being—and as such is invaded by a "scaly" soul.

ii The Obsession with Self

Man holds the opposing cosmic forces within himself: within each man is the capacity for good or evil, love or power, truth or fantasy. These forces continually war for possession of the spirit, and each of these novelists explores the degree of choice man has available to him in this respect. This war between good and evil generates spiritual violence, and it manifests itself externally in the high incidence of physical violence in the novels.

These novelists concentrate on the battleground of the self, and the self's choice of evil rather than good: "In the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego." The result of this choice is regression into the world of fantasy and this coincides with Freud's view of mankind:

Freud takes a thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature. He sees the psyche as an egocentric system of quasimechanical energy, largely determined by its own individual history, whose natural attachments are sexual,
ambiguous, and hard to control. Introspection reveals only the deep tissue of ambivalent motive, and fantasy is a stronger force than reason. Objectivity and unselfishness are not natural to human beings. 25

"Objectivity and unselfishness" are certainly "not natural" to the protagonists of the four novels discussed herein. They are all completely dominated by their "fat relentless" egos, their obsession with self, and it is this relentless obsession with pursuit of selfish aims that generates violence.

Like Murdoch, Burgess views the universe as being dominated by two forces, but he is less certain of their actual nature or of their strength. Burgess "shares the Manichean belief that there is a perpetual conflict between two forces that dominates the affairs of the universe, and whether the forces can be accurately labelled 'good' and 'evil' is by no means certain. . .all that is certain is that the opposed forces exist, are in conflict, and that earthly tumults. . .are relatively trivial affairs that merely 'figure' the great cosmic clash." 26

All four novelists attempt to examine this "cosmic clash" by presenting it in more humanly accessible terms; this accounts for the devil figure who generates the conflict with inevitably violent results. That none of the demonic figures seems entirely evil also brings their existence to a more human level. Thus rather than appearing as some overpowering spiritual entity, they represent the evil within man--his darkness triumphant.

Burgess also has his views on the function of God and the Devil in the universal order: "I believe, if you like, that God and the Devil are possibilities, but it is not foreseeable, it is not inevitable that God should win over the Devil." 27 Three of the novels I have
examined clearly show Burgess's trend of thought--God, or 'good'--does not triumph over evil; furthermore, the struggle leaves death and destruction in its wake which indicates the immense power of the force of evil. As Murdoch points out, truth, which is on the side of good, is unpalatable to human nature: "truth always hurts a bit and that is why we know so little of it" (p. 215). Man prefers to cower amidst a tissue of fantasies; this is an illusionary mode of living which has strong possibilities for evil. Thus evil has a strong chance of winning the "cosmic clash."

In contrast, O'Nolan does not seem to subscribe to the outlook of Murdoch and Burgess. His protagonist is evil, a murderer. He commits crimes for self-gratification and to further his fantasies, but as a result he has to exist permanently in a horrific world of fantasies--a ghastly world created entirely by his absorption with self. In The Third Policeman evil seems to have been vanquished--the Narrator is punished in eternity for his inhuman use of violence.

The "cosmic clash" is fought out in a dreamlike setting. The futuristic England of A Clockwork Orange, for example, is a surreal, nightmarish world in which people live out their unconscious, innermost ideas and fantasies, thus distorting reality and distorting the distinctions between good and evil. Alex is a paradigm of his world. He lives out his violent fantasies, and his fantasies tend to be tinged or inspired by eroticism. This eroticism adds a surreal note to Alex's cruel and sadistic dreams:

Like Sade, the Surrealists also understood eroticism to be the dynamic behind the most intransigent expressions of human subjectivity: revolt, hysteria, perversion and crime.
Unleashed eroticism, they conceded, might demand excess, blasphemy, subversion, the blood-letting of the sadistic cult. Feeding on itself might lead, ultimately...to dissociation of the personality and death. 28

Alex's key to his realm of fantasies is music. He enjoys the music of Beethoven, Bach, Mozart--music which is great art; in this he diverges sharply from the musical tastes of his generation. However, Alex's love for music, instead of providing innocent joy, enflames him with desire to commit the most atrocious acts. It is music which makes Alex "feel like Bog himself"(p. 35) and which transports him into a fantasy realm of even greater heights of violence than he commits with his "droogs":

Oh, bliss, bliss and heaven. I lay all nagoy to the ceiling, my gulliver on my rookers on the pillow, glazzies closed, rot open in bliss, slooshing the sluice of lovely sounds. Oh, it was gorgeousness and gorgeosity made flesh. The trombones crunched redgold under my bed, and behind my gulliver the trumpets three-wise silverflamed, and there by the door the timps rolling through my guts and out again crunched like candy thunder. Oh, it was wonder of wonders. And then, a bird of like rarest spun heavenmetal, or like silvery wine flowing in a spaceship, gravity all nonsense now, came the violin solo above all the other strings, and those strings were like a cage of silk round my bed. Then flute and oboe bored, like worms of platinum, into the thick thick toffee of gold and silver. I was in such bliss, my brothers. . As I slooshied, my glazzies tight shut. . I knew such lovely pictures. There were vecks and ptitsas, both young and starry, lying on the ground screaming for mercy, and I was smecking all over my rot and grinding my boot in their litsos. And there were devotchkas ripped and creeching against walls and I plunging like a shlaga into them. .(p. 29)

Alex's delight in the music is truly awe-inspiring--the beauty of the music lifts him to lyrical heights of expression. But from his "bliss and heaven" emerge his darkly violent urges for domination--both sexual and sadistic. Perversely, he pictures the glorious beauty of the music accompanying the horror of his fantasy actions. The music lifts and
carries him through beauty into the blackness of his innermost being
where he finds his own, surrealistic, personal and perverse "heaven,"
where he lords it as God--or rather Satan--in the frightful horror of
his nethermost being--a nonpareil of violence.

Alex's love for music does not only inspire the urge for
violence, it also makes him greedy, foolishly so. When he breaks into
The Manse, he sees, during his confrontation with the irate, cat-loving
owner, a bust of Beethoven which he immediately lusts after: "but
ittyng towards it with my glazzies like full on it and my greedy rookers
held out, I did not see the milk saucers on the floor"(p. 51); this is
Alex's undoing and his doom: his greed blinds him to the danger. He
trips over the cats' saucers and in the ensuing melee the woman attacks
him quite viciously. Infuriated, Alex "tolchoks" her harder than he
meant to and kills her--all to "reach lovely Ludwig van in frowning like
stone"(p. 52). Love of music leads to his doom.

Alex likes music for the unholy visions it affords him, and
his greed for music, or his obsession with self, inspire him to violence
and murder. However, Alex's music-inspired actions are contrary to the
Murdochian view of the effects of great art on mankind: "the appreciation
of beauty in art or nature is not only. . .the easiest available
spiritual exercise; it is also a completely adequate entry into. . .the
good life, since it is the checking of selfishness in the interest of
seeing the real."29 For Alex, however, the "spiritual exercise" of
listening to music is far removed from "checking" his "selfishness" in
the "interest of seeing the real." On the wings of his love of music
he soars up to the pinnacles of brutal and sadistic fantasies where he
conceives of himself as a deity. At this moment he is blind to otherness;
people exist only to serve his sadistic needs.

Through his fantasies, Alex reveals the power of the id which resides within each man and which has the desire to dominate the ego or man's rational being. What is needed is restraint, a quality which is sorely lacking in the demonic figures in these novels: they are entirely dedicated to self. To be so concerned with self is to be childlike, for like Alex, children have
dark, brutal and aggressive phantasies that [are] truly horrible, arising naturally out of the hunger to exist, and their need to survive. Human culture, and the natural moral sense, are ways in which we humanize our phantasies and 'reform' them. . .when people resort to 'fun killings' or sadistic murders, they may be acting out the primitive phantasies of early childhood. 30

It is this same obsession with self that inspires the Narrator in The Third Policeman to commit murder. As Alex lives in a devalued world in which the brief gratification of lust and power is paramount so does O'Nolan's Narrator live in a world in which his obsession with the mad genius of de Selby is supreme. The Narrator has not descended to the conventional hell of fire and brimstone, instead his hell is concocted from his own consciousness. Although his body is dead, his spirit has been trapped by the strength of his selfish desires, thus keeping him forever in their horrific toils: "Was. . .the world I knew merely the interior of the being whose inner voice I myself was"(p. 103).

Thus it is that the Narrator cannot get away from Mathers, Mathers' house, or his desire for the black cash box: they are the last things he was conscious of before he was blown up. They form the nucleus of his hell, along with de Selby (the cause of his unspeakable actions), Divney (his tempter in life), and the peculiar
policemen (who, as representatives of "law and order" have control over his existence).

The Narrator can be compared with Golding's Pincher Martin and his immense, posthumous spiritual struggle to hold on to "life" for as long as possible. Like Pincher Martin, the Narrator is terrified of letting reality in—the reality of death—for if he does so his existence will be terminated. Even a hell as awful as the one he has created for himself seems preferable to death. Consequently, he cannot dismiss his obsession with self. In fact:

structure and style... come to mirror a vision of infinite recession which appalls, fascinates and amuses, resting as it does on an ultimate assertion of unmitigated selfhood. The book's method is its theme: the dizzying indulgence in the abyss of selfhood (der selbe [of the self]), the regardless pursuit of omniscience (omnium). A narrator whose thoughts were 'never far from de Selby,' that is, one who likewise held that the 'usual processes of living were illusory' and for whom he committed his first serious sin and his greatest sin... ends counterfeiting infinity, forging the quintessence of 'business-end of everything'—'some people call it God'" 31

Joe remarks "apparently there is no limit... anything can be said in this place and it will be true and will have to be believed"(p. 74). This frightful idea is the result of the Narrator's "dizzying indulgence" of self—now he is being made to suffer the consequence, the perpetual nightmare of anything being possible; this is a totally disorienting factor and one that is truly insupportable.

This nightmare is reflected in the peculiar and "unnatural" (p. 46) dimensions of both the barracks and the policemen themselves. They display weird angles and nightmare proportions. As the Narrator approaches the barracks the road turns towards the left, and the "false and unconvincing"(p. 46) looking barracks appear on the left-hand side.
The dimensions waver and alter mysteriously as he approaches and the Narrator finds the spectacle "appalling" and his "gaze faltered about the thing uncomprehendingly as if at least one of the customary dimensions was missing, leaving no meaning in the remainder" (p. 46). What is missing from the barracks is reality; this structure is a dream-construct and as such is altered and presented as we think we perceive, not as we actually, physically, perceive. Thus the Narrator is trapped within his own personal, idiosyncratic perception of the world; there is no external reality to balance and moderate his view. Also, his own human "dimension" is missing--only an inhuman spirit remains clinging to existence. There is no sense to what is left; he is in hell or chaos where God-given laws of order and stability cannot and do not rule. Naturally, this assault on the senses is "appalling." De Selby promotes chaos by his experiments; the Narrator succumbs to de Selby's influence and follows his chosen mentor into a hellish eternity.

The physical anomalies of the Narrator's nightmare world are also evident in his view of Sergeant Pluck: "ordinary enough as each part of him looked by itself, they all seemed to create together, by some undetectable discrepancy in association or proportion, a very disquieting impression of unnaturalness, amounting almost to what was horrible and monstrous" (p. 47). This is an acute description of a denizen of a dream or nightmare world, a world in which ordinary things are queerly distorted, and in which their meaning must be deciphered. Such a world does violence to the senses; harmony between the senses and the mind is lost, and disharmony reigns. Naturally the Narrator feels "afraid" (p. 46) of the "momentous and frightening"(p. 47) barracks, becoming
"dry-throated and timorous from wonder and anxiety"(p. 47). The real cause of the Narrator's fear, however, is the resemblance (although he does not realize it) of the barracks to Mathers' house. Like Mathers' house it has "a small window"(p. 171) which he can see as he approaches the barracks. Even more disquieting is his feeling that "the whole morning and the whole world seemed to have no purpose at all save to frame the house"(p. 172). The house is the external manifestation of his consciousness: "the whole morning and the whole world" cannot exist without the house because the house has become the limit of his existence. After all, according to de Selby, "a house [is] 'a large coffin'" or "'box'"(p. 19). The Narrator is trapped forever within the tangible results of his crime, and his fruitless search for the black cash box becomes his sole meaning for existence.

O'Nolan carefully constructs a framework of brutality and murder to justify the hell he creates for his "hero"(p. 173), who is, according to the author, "a heel and a killer"(p. 173):

Not everybody knows how I killed old Phillip Mathers, smashing his jaw in with my spade; but first it is better to speak of my friendship with John Divney because it was he who first knocked old Mathers down by giving him a great blow in the neck with a special bicycle pump which he manufactured himself out of a hollow iron bar. Divney was a strong civil man but he was lazy and idle-minded. He was personally responsible for the whole idea in the first place (p. 7).

The Narrator, with almost unbelievable callousness, opens his story with a description of his murder of Mathers. The contrast between the humorous idea of anyone bothering to manufacture a "special bicycle pump" expressly for murder, and the gruesome, crushed head of Mathers is grotesque, it highlights the unconcern with which the Narrator views anyone but himself, and it justifies his continual existence in
hell. In addition, the Narrator dismisses Mathers with a brief phrase, he does not even allow Mathers the decency of an entire sentence to describe his demise. The Narrator continues to reveal the extent of his cold-blooded selfish nature by his immediate denial of any responsibility towards Mathers' murder; he places all the blame on Divney. He always speaks of the murder as though it were committed by someone else. Naturally enough the Narrator is betrayed, just as Alex is betrayed by his "droogs." For resorting to violence for gain, the Narrator is made to suffer in eternity.

The Narrator carefully charts his moral decline:

I do not know exactly how or when it became clear to me that Divney, far from seeking charity, intended to rob Mathers; and I cannot recollect how long it took me to realize that he meant to kill him as well in order to avoid the possibility of being identified as the robber afterwards. I only know that within six months I had come to accept this grim plan as a common place of our conversation. Three further months passed before I could bring myself to agree to the proposal and three months more before I openly admitted to Divney that my misgivings were at an end. I cannot recount the tricks and wiles he used to win me to his side. It is sufficient to say that he read portions of my 'de Selby Index' (or pretended to) and discussed with me afterwards the serious responsibility of any person who declined by mere reason of personal whim to give the "Index to the world' (p. 14).

The Narrator neatly portrays, on a descending scale, his fall from a semblance of morality into immorality; from a supposedly ethical human being to an inhuman, unscrupulous murderer. He painstakingly describes the year-long process of "persuasion." However, what really stands out here is Divney's fine judgement of the Narrator's character: Divney divines the essentially self-seeking and violent nature of his compatriot. Divney offers the Narrator a bait he cannot resist—he tempts him with de Selby. Divney, the Devil's Advocate, plays on the
Narrator's need to assert self. He persuades the Narrator that he is selfish to keep his collation from the world. He persuades the Narrator that a manuscript is more valuable than a man's life; this, of course, is precisely what the Narrator himself really thinks in his ultimate selfishness. Thus, after a show of pretended reluctance, he becomes an accomplice to murder.

The Narrator has entirely abnegated himself from any sense of responsibility. Because of their greed, he and Divney commit murder, and, as a result, the rest of the Narrator's time left on earth is a living hell. He cannot leave Divney for a second because Divney knows where the black cash box is hidden and the Narrator cannot trust his accomplice to share their ill-gotten gains. Meanwhile, the Narrator grows to loathe the sight of his erstwhile friend. This hell on earth is merely transposed into eternity when he dies: at first he is alone with only the weird denizens of hell as companions, but then the Narrator frightens Divney to death, and they are closeted together forever.

Old Mathers tells the Narrator that his "principal weakness [is] Number One" (p. 25), that is, his devotion to self. This weakness is, of course, also the primary flaw of the majority of the characters in these novels, hence the ease with which Dougal in The Ballad of Peckham Rye and Leo in The Time of the Angels, for example, can manipulate those around them. This devotion to self is also the contributor to the violence that flares in these novels--for nothing is allowed to stand in the way of the self. The compulsive desire to always look out for "Number One" is also reflected in A Clockwork Orange in Alex's prison identification number: "little 6655321" (p. 61). Broken down, this number reads: 6655321=28=10=1: Alex is also "Number One" the primal figure. In
Alex's opinion, he is the only figure in his world, he has no use for others; to Alex other people merely exist to satiate his desires for sex, bloodletting and violence. For Alex, violence is his only expression in life, the only way he feels he exists; only when he is committing some horrible act of gratuitous violence does he feel really alive.

For O'Neill's Narrator, the black cash box has become his reason to "live"—he desires existence at any cost, his principal fear is of irrevocable extinction, and the black cash box gives him a meaning in life. At the thought of his impending death on the scaffold, the Narrator immerses himself in thoughts of life:

I began to feel intensely every fragment of my equal humanity. The life that was bubbling at the end of my fingers was real and nearly painful in intensity and so was the beauty of my warm face and the loose humanity of my limbs and the racy health of my red rich blood. To leave it all without good reason and to smash the little empire into small fragments was a thing too pitiful even to refuse to think about (p. 89).

The Narrator's love of life is immense, and he is intensely aware of its joys now that he is on the verge of being hanged.

The Narrator's horror of death is portrayed even more clearly after he encounters Policeman Fox. Fox asks the Narrator if he is sure he escaped from the scaffold:

Was I sure? Suddenly I felt horribly ill as if the spinning of the firmament had come against my stomach for the first time. ...I felt my brain struggling on bravely, tottering so to speak, to its knees but unwilling to fall completely. I knew I would be dead if I lost consciousness for one second. I knew that I could never awaken again or hope to understand afresh the terrible way in which I was if I lost the chain of the bitter day I had had. I knew that he was not Fox but Mathers. I knew Mathers was dead. I knew that I would have to talk to him and pretend that everything was natural. ... (pp. 158-159).
To the Narrator the thought that he may indeed be dead is so horrifying, that he prefers to cling to his existence in hell; he prefers to exist in his nightmare world than give up his consciousness. He is unable to face reality and risk losing his self forever. He knows that Fox is Mathers and that therefore he is talking to a dead man and thus it must logically follow that he is dead also, but he clings to his fantasy, and willingly allows the gruesome and grotesque cycle of events to begin again. Obviously, the Narrator will never be able to exhibit enough courage to extricate himself from his nightmare. His nightmare is an existential one, similar to the plight of the characters in Jean Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos*[^1] in which the exquisite torment of hell is provided by the other characters, just as the Narrator's hell lies principally in the presence of the ghastly and menacing policemen and their execution of a system of unholy justice.

The Narrator is the epitome of selfishness: he cannot bear the thought of having his "little empire" smashed to pieces, yet he coldly and callously performed this very act upon the corpse of Mathers. The Narrator keeps referring to humanity, but in view of his crime, he has forfeited the right to be human. In fact, he has not been truly human since he murdered Mathers with the spade. He has committed an unnatural deed (although he never feels he deserves to be punished), thus he must suffer for eternity in an unnatural hell in which he continually tries to pretend that "everything [is] natural."

Like the Narrator in *The Third Policeman*, Alex does not have a sense of responsibility towards others; he does not feel responsible for his violent acts. He gleefully refers to an article in the newspaper

[^1]: Sartre, Jean Paul. *Huis Clos.*
referring to "Modern youth" in which a priest declares that "IT WAS THE DEVIL THAT WAS ABROAD" (p. 35). This message delights Alex because it places all the responsibility for the evil in the world onto the devil: "so we young innocent malchicks could take no blame" (p. 35). The "devil" is "abroad" in Alex's world, but it is a devil which lurks within man, it is man's innate capacity for evil, an evil generated by the desires of the self. Evil is not confined to Alex and his "droogs," however, and this is shown by the contents of the newspaper articles: "the gazetta was the usual about ultra-violence and bank robberies" (p. 34). That the paper is chiefly concerned with news of this variety clearly indicates the fascination people have with violence and cruelty: it titillates human fancy, yet we are hypocritical and profess to dislike and abhor such violent actions. Each one of us has the capacity to be completely controlled by the id, thus fulfilling our desires at any cost. To prevent such an occurrence, the majority of us learn self-control, reason and a sense of otherness. Alex, of course, is totally lacking in self-control, and extreme acts of violence are the result.

Dr. Brodsky provides further evidence of Alex's preoccupation with self. At the demonstration of Alex's "cure" in front of the Minister of the Interior and various prison officials, Dr. Brodsky discusses Alex's reaction as though he were not even there. Alex cries out: "'Me, me, me. How about me? Where do I come into all this? Am I like just some animal or dog... am I just to be a clockwork orange'" (p. 100). In this dehumanizing society, individuals are relegated to the level of animals; but the addiction to unthinking violence degrades men to a position even less than animal-like. Violence is the condition of man's regression into inhumanity. Alex realises that by divesting
him of the ability to commit violent acts they have taken his humanity, his self, away from him. To exist in the absurdity and nightmarishness of his world, however, he needs the ability to be violent. He is a product of his society, a society which reduces people to "clockwork." If he is not violent, he will be unable to survive in this world: "Advanced knowledge has merely confirmed the belief that man is depraved ... the only form of individualism left resides in someone like Alex and finds expression in sick brutality." However, Alex's "teen-age friends and enemies have been from the first soulless brutes, as apt hoodlums as policemen. The experts in behavioural transformation are more sophisticated in their enjoyment of vicarious violence." Hypocritically, these "experts" use Alex as their puppet, and with him to provide the excuse, they plunge into the depths of degradation and violence without implicating themselves.

Selfishness is not a prerogative of Alex and the government, however; F. Alexander possesses his share too. F. Alexander tells Alex that he is going to use Alex as a weapon to bring down the government. Alex then asks if he will be able to live normally again:

He looked at me, brothers, as if he hadn't thought of that before and, anyway, it didn't matter compared with Liberty and all that cal, and he had a look of surprise at me saying what I had said, as though I was being like selfish in wanting something for myself (p. 126).

It is ironic that neither can see the selfishness of himself, only that of the other. Alex demands his rights as an individual and a human being, yet he has never allowed other individuals their rights. Both he and F. Alexander use people entirely for their own ends. This world operates on the Judaic law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,
but Alex does not care for being on the receiving end of this law. This law also operates in the world of the nameless Narrator, and he does not care to be on the receiving end of it either. When Pluck decides to use the Narrator as a scapegoat in order to avoid the wrath of the inspector, the Narrator is extremely upset. But the "terrifying thing about the Sergeant's responses is that, compared to the sense of life held by the narrator, they are totally unemotional, and he expects standards of moral behaviour from the narrator while having none himself." In this respect, Pluck can, however, be compared to the Narrator himself, and his "responses" seem totally justified in a hell constructed to cause the sinner grief and suffering.

Because Alex's self is a construct of violence, his inability to perform violent deeds results in his decision to commit suicide. He goes into the library to find out how, and he notices that it smells "like the von of very starry old men with their plotts stinking of like old age and poverty"(p. 112). Alex's keenest sensory apparatus is his sense of smell and he tends to describe things in terms of smell rather than sight. His disinterest in visual perception reflects his lack of spiritual insight and it is significant that when he is betrayed by his "droogs" he is chained across the eyes: "one of my cursed grahzny bratties chained me on the glazzies"(p. 53). He is "chained" by his view of life; he is chained, not only literally within the state prison, but within his self and his compulsion for violence. As he is taken to the police station, his eyes open a little and he sees a blurry "steam" (p. 54) city going by--a nightmarish image which reflects the world he lives in.
Murdoch also emphasizes the destructive powers resultant from an over-interest in the self. Pattie stumbles over Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and she "kicks" (p. 8) it "petulantly" (p. 8), an action which symbolizes her later feelings about Carel and his dark philosophy. Murdoch is opposed to Heidegger's negative expression of the idea of being, his ideas like nothingness and death. These negative ideas help to determine the concept which is at the centre of Heidegger's phenomenology, the *Dasein*, the being-there quality of every existent being. The human *Dasein*, confronted with its own eventual nonbeing in death, must respond to its own inner voice which constantly underlines its finitude. There can be no appeal outward to a transcendental being; the *Dasein* must turn back to itself and the inner voice which proclaimed its limited existence. This is another version of the self-involvement which Iris Murdoch abhors, and in Carel's case it leads to self-deification. 

In contrast to many of her other works, however, there is really no strong opposing force to combat the *Dasein* of Carel in *The Time of the Angels*. "The two ethical alternatives offered...are satanism and weak atheistic humanism." The "satanic alternative" is represented by Carel; "humanism" by Marcus and Norah Shadox-Brown.

Rubin Rabinovitz interprets the significance of *Sein und Zeit* to the novel. He notes that the long quotation at the opening of Chapter Fifteen of *The Time of the Angels* is from Heidegger's work, and "on the most elementary level, Iris Murdoch is opposed to Heidegger because his continuation in the tradition of Neitzschean nihilism poses a great threat to any ethical system based on an idea of goodness; Heidegger's idea of nothingness introduces a moral vacuum from which Carel never emerges." When Pattie reads Carel's philosophic writings (which are lying on his desk) the words sound "senseless and awful" to her "like
the distant boom of a catastrophe" (p. 144). The ponderous, heavy, gloomy words echo the state of Carel's inner being: his simultaneous horror of and his belief in the essential nothingness of man.

The isolation of the self in a "vacuum" is symbolized by the dreamlike setting of the novel: a fog-bound rectory located in a "wasteland" (p. 21), isolated from the real world:

Ever since their arrival the fog had enclosed them, and [Pattie] still had very little conception of the exterior of the Rectory. It seemed rather to have no exterior, and, like the unimaginable circular universes which she read about in the Sunday newspapers, to have absorbed all other space into its substance (p. 21).

The rectory is a self-contained universe, cut off, both physically and spiritually, from the rest of the world. It is shrouded in a pall of evil which is generated by Carel and which corrupts and perverts its occupants. The outside world and its laws have ceased to exist; only Carel's demonic rules operate here. Naturally, in such a restricted and claustrophobic world, especially with Leo and his penchant for manipulating people, violence is never far from the surface. With so many selfish people striving for gratification, violence of one variety or another can only be the result.

Pattie hates opening the door of the rectory because when she does fog, and possibly enemies (Pattie sees Mrs. Barlow as an "enemy" [p. 9]), will rush in. Nor do the characters wish to leave; they prefer to linger entrapped in a solipsistic world. Carel remarks to Pattie that it is "terribly dark...inside. The fog seems to have got into the house" (p. 8). Carel is a Kurtz-like figure whose belief in his essential hollowness has let evil rush in—just as the fog pours into the house at every opportunity. The gloom of the house is symbolic of
the dark nature of Carel and Leo (and, it seems, of Elizabeth).

The claustrophobic quality of the rectory affects Muriel deeply; she longs for any action to destroy it:

Should they not, before it was too late, break out? Muriel was surprised to find how strongly she took to this metaphor. What exactly was there to break out of? What was she afraid of here which made her dream vaguely of an escape, a rescue, a shock which might dissolve barriers and bring to something which seemed dark and cramped the sudden light of change (p. 96).

Muriel, in spite of her intentions, is never strong enough to "break out" of this prison of fantasy and selfish desires; it takes an act of violence to liberate her and Elizabeth from the rectory, but their freedom from the stranglehold of the fantasizing self is left uncertain. Neither the selfish love Muriel feels for Eugene nor the ethics of Norah Shadox-Brown are enough to break the prison. Paradoxically, Muriel and Elizabeth are set free by cruelty and despair, by Leo's callousness in stealing the icon and the violent nature of Carel's death--his retreat into suicide.

The decision to make the self and its desires paramount in life is also examined in The Ballad of Peckham Rye. As in the other novels, violence is shown to stem from this choice. Perhaps the most obvious example (after Dougal with his selfish and satanic desires for psychological manipulation) is Dixie. Like the Narrator of The Third Policeman, she is driven by greed; like the Narrator, the purpose of her greed is to improve her social position. Here the resemblance ends, however, for while the Narrator desires public recognition for a volume of de Selby's Index edited by himself, Dixie wants public recognition for her advancing social status, a status
symbolized by such items as a spin-dryer and a fancy new bungalow. To achieve her aim, Dixie makes Humphrey's life a misery. She rarely consents to go out for the evening because she would rather save the money. When Humphrey takes her up on to the Rye and tries to make love to her, she is simply not interested; instead she is obsessed by her monetary situation and cannot stop complaining about it. After a while, Humphrey can stand it no more, and he turns on her saying: "I know what's the matter with you... you're losing all your sex. It's all this saving up to get married and looking to the lolly all the time, it takes sex out of a girl. It stands to reason, it's only psychological" (p. 57). Dixie is a soulless creature whose desires for love and sex are calculatingly subordinated to her longing for a house and a "spin dryer" (p. 56). She is reduced to an automaton. When Dougal learns of Dixie's meanness, he muses: "Avarice... must be her fatal flaw. We all have a fatal flaw. If she took sick, how would you feel, would she repel you?" (p. 29). Dixie's sickness is "avarice," and she does repel Humphrey. Arthur Crewe tells Humphrey: "the more [Dixie's] got the meaner she gets" (p. 123). Dougal uses this "fatal flaw" in his experimentation with human nature, he works on it and plays with it until violence erupts: Dixie lets fly with her handbag at Beauty and an ongoing fight begins between the young people and continues sporadically until Dougal leaves Peckham Rye and Dixie gets jilted by Humphrey at the altar.

Merle Coverdale is also trapped by her greed for physical possessions, an entrapment which ultimately leads to her being viciously murdered. She has been having an affair with her employer, Mr. Druce, for a number of years, but she hates her continued involvement with him and she complains to Dougal that she is trapped by
the relationship. She envies Dougal because he is "free" (p. 98). He replies "Aren't you free?...stop seeing Druce" (p. 98). However, Merle cannot for two reasons: she fears if she leaves Meadows, Meade and Grindley she will not get as good a position elsewhere; and Druce contributes money towards the upkeep of her flat and she does not wish to give it up. Thus the deadly sins of pride and greed have enmeshed Merle in their coils and she is unable to break free. Dougal finally liberates Merle of course, but not in the way she wished. He engineers her "freedom" by carefully and cold-bloodedly goading Druce into feeling suspicious of Merle. Dougal almost imperceptibly feeds Druce's growing paranoia until the man murders Merle by plunging a corkscrew into her neck.

The murder of Merle is also an extension of her sexual relationship with Druce which is one of an escalating sado-masochism. Druce likes to pinch her neck—hard—and Merle squeals, but does not protest. Malcolm Bradbury notes that Muriel Spark has a "capacity...to turn our familiar world into an exceptional, even a surreal milieu..." She creates a "universe of strangeness" wherein ordinary everyday activities and actions become "a strange and terrifying human performance." Druce's behaviour as a sadist is thus meaningful in light of the Surrealists' preoccupation with the Marquis de Sade and his practices. Sade and the Romantic Movement have been considered the progenitors of Surrealism: thus David Gascoyne writes of the Surrealists' interest in Sade and their "desire for violence, both intellectual and physical." It is Dougal's manipulation of people and their inner desires and fantasies which creates the surreal ambiance of Peckham Rye.
The atmosphere throughout the novel is one of uneasiness and expectancy, with the possibility of violence as a result. This odd feeling is also to be found in Surrealist literature and art, for

Surrealism always tended toward an iconography of disquiet. An art which is expressly anticonformist makes its point by sabotaging the existing order of things; and a free and open sexuality was intended to be the model, in this instance, for a free and open society. But the view of sexuality which actually came out of the work was, as often as not, pessimistic and incomplete, crippled and fearful.

The sexuality of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (and, indeed, of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Time of the Angels*) is "incomplete, crippled and fearful." Druce and Merle are sadistic and masochistic respectively and their relationship lacks the wholeness of love; Humphrey's and Dixie's sex life has dwindled to nothing since she has become obsessed with saving up for marriage.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex is a sadist who cannot experience love and gentleness and human companionship; for Alex to enjoy sex it must be accompanied by violence. In *The Time of the Angels*, Leo's sudden passion for Muriel is certainly not tender: "'I love you Muriel. And you're going to undergo my love. And you're going to love me'. . . . he gripped Muriel's arm, digging his fingers in fiercely." (p. 179). Leo makes his declaration of love sound like a jail sentence—he tries to force his love violently onto Muriel. This passion is not love, it is selfish desire, "incomplete" caring. As a demonic figure, Leo, like Alex, cannot love.

### The "Inverted" World

Each of the four novelists has so far been shown to have created a world dominated by the darker side of the self, a nightmare construct peopled with demonic creatures trapped in a miasma of fantasy
and desire. Each world is a dreamlike, inverse of the external world, a place of reversals and opposites. In worlds such as these, the majority of individuals, enslaved by their desires, lose most of their humanity and become mechanical creatures, clicking inhumanly along in pursuit of self-gratification. The clashing of opposites in these inverse worlds (good versus evil, love versus power, truth versus fantasy, order versus disorder) continually results in violence of one form or another. In *A Clockwork Orange*, for example, violence and the lust for power are born out of love, Alex's genuine love for music; yet conversely, the opposite is also found: "Burgess seems to be saying that, in a brutal, resigned, mechanical world--a world turned clockwork--love must come from hate, good from evil, peace from violence, redemption from sin." In these worlds, then, the attributes of virtue arise from sin, and vice versa. In Alex's world good only exacerbates evil; out of chaos and disorder in *The Third Policeman* emerges a perverse kind of order; in *The Time of the Angels*, Carel and Leo, under the guise of love, lust for power--the result is destruction. Dougal Douglas in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, works on the rigid, over-controlled order of Peckham, and again violence is the result.

The protagonists of these novels, to a greater or lesser degree, exude an unexpected air of innocence, the incongruity of which in regard to their actions, seems grotesque. Again, this is a facet of the weird, inverted worlds created by these authors: only in such a milieu could hate, violence and destruction arise from apparent innocence. One of Spark's themes in her novels is an "obsession with the breaking or collapse of innocence, and a related interest in figures of camp or high style"; and in *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex "simply
experiences life directly, sensuously, and, while he is free, joyously. Indeed, his guiltless joy in violence of every kind, from the simple destruction or theft of objects to practically every form of sexual and nonsexual assault, is such that the incongruous term *innocent* is liable to come to a reader's mind." But Alex's air of innocence is illusory, created purposely (primarily through the medium of first person narrative) by Burgess to enable us to follow Alex down the gory path of his multiple crimes. For Alex craves the sensation of hate that he experiences through violence, sex, and perversely, through music. When he listens to Bach he thinks, "slooshing away in the brown gorgeousness of the starry German master... I would like to have tolchocked [the F. Alexanders] harder and ripped them to ribbons on their own floor" (p. 30).

Alex is a man of contrasts. He cannot stand ugly sights or smells, yet he practically worships blood. He does not like Dim because Dim has "too much von of sweat on him, which was one thing [he] had against old Dim"(p. 24). Alex also dislikes Dim because Dim tends to get himself into a mess when they are out "tolchocking." When Alex sees a drunk in the street he is impelled to attack him for "one veshch I could never stand was that. I could never stand to see a moodge all filthy and rolling and burping and drunk, whatever his age may be, but more especially when he was real starry like this one was"(p. 14). Alex is physically nauseated by old age, dirt and decay, in particular their odour. Thus the hell of prison-life is as carefully crafted to torture his senses as is the nightmare world of the Narrator in *The Third Policeman*. Prison is a nightmare for Alex because of the cramped conditions shared with men who exude an unpleasant smell, a
smell which exemplifies the hopelessness of their existence—their imprisonment in the far stricter prison of social existence—and ultimately in the self. This prison-smell horrifies Alex because it denotes the failed, trapped, lifeless human being without power, and this is precisely the kind of existence he most fears for himself:

I could viddy all the plennies sitting down slooshying the Slovo of the Lord in their horrible cal-coloured prison plotties, and a sort of filthy von rose from them, not like a real unwashed, not grazzy, but like a special real stinking von which you only got with the criminal types, my brothers, a like dusty, greasy hopeless sort of von (p. 63).

The prison chaplain provides a sermon on hell which corresponds to Alex's feeling of being in the underworld: the sinners' "mouths crammed with burning ordure, their skin peeling and rotting. . ."(p. 63).

While uncleanness plunges Alex into a form of selfish hell, blood raises him into an equally selfish heaven (which is made complete by music). Blood is Alex's "old friend"(p. 12), which pours in "red curtains"(p. 17) throughout the novel. Alex notes that all blood or "red red krovvy"(p. 89) is "put out by the same big firm"(p. 21). To let the blood of humanity is to go against "the good" or the "big firm"; thus in bloodletting he achieves the ultimate in power, and in so doing proves his existence. Out of contact with something as fundamental to humanity as blood comes the spark which leads Alex to the desire for violence, and thence to evil.

Alex does not care to dissociate himself from his will in any way, even through the medium of drugs. He thinks it is a "cowardly sort of vesch"(p. 7) to want to lose touch with reality, or at least the reality one controls to some degree: "you lost your name and your body and your self and you just didn't care"(p. 7). Alex does not want to
lose his self, he would rather assert self—through violence—only thus does he touch existence and feel he is alive. Ultimately, Alex and his "droogs" are vivified by violence, by the blood it produces. For as blood is the life-giving force of their victims, and as their victims are weakened by its spillage, so concomitantly are Alex and his "droogs" strengthened and revitalized by it. Alex seems almost parasitical in his lust for and enjoyment of blood.

Paradoxically, after the enjoyment of letting blood, the feeling of hate sets in. After raping Mrs. Alexander and leaving her bruised and bloody on the floor, Alex and his "droogs" smash up the room: "then there was like quiet and we were like full of hate, so smashed what was left to be smashed"(p. 22). Out of their love for violence and out of sexual desire comes hate; in fact, sex seems to be sublimated to a need for power over the victims. However, the element of desire in the sex act conversely makes them victims too, victims of a force they cannot avoid. Thus out of sex comes an intense hatred. Alex and his "droogs" do not seem human in this scene, rather they have metamorphosed into mechanical creatures driven solely by hatred. Alex uncharacteristically lets his mask of urbanity slip briefly at this point, and he loses, momentarily, his aura of innocence, appearing indeed as though he were made of clockwork.

Upon reaching the police station and being booked for his assault on the cat-lady, Alex gives the police a full list of his crimes: "I gave them the ultra-violence, the crasting, the dratsing, the old in-out-in-out, the lot, right up to this night's veshch with the bugatty starry ptitsa with mewing kots and koshkas. . .when I'd got through the lot the shorthand millicent looked a bit faint, poor old veck"(p. 50).
His mechanical recitation of his crimes of "ultra-violence" sounds almost like a shopping list; this technique, combined with the language employed, serves to divorce the reader from the actual horrific nature of Alex's crimes and to conjure up sympathy for him—an unnatural sympathy for a vicious hoodlum, a sympathy which is enhanced by the use of Alex's point of view.

Alex's attitude and his crimes are incongruous; this occasions a feeling of surreality in the novel, a sensation of reality being filtered through dream-inspired impressions, sensations and associations. In this way we may participate vicariously in this maelstrom of violence without feeling guilty.

In an inverse world in which evil may come out of good, Alex has become a mechanical creature who can only escape his fate through music. However, music, which in Murdochian terms pertains to the good and thus should pave the way to the real, leads Alex into the bad. Brodsky endorses this view: "the sweetest and most heavenly of the activities partake in some measure of violence--the act of love, for instance; music for instance. You must take your chance, boy, the choice has been all yours"—(pp. 91-92). The sight of beauty, for example, makes Alex want to act "real savage"(p. 124), a reversal of the normal response to beauty. In a perverse way, Alex becomes slightly more human when he listens to music, but he becomes the personification of all man's darkest, most demonic thoughts. Alex plays out man's capacity for evil by embodying our most violent fantasies.

While Alex feels his mode of existence as freedom, it actually restricts true freedom of the self:
. . .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. 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 this not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines? I am serious with you brothers, over this. But what I do I do because I like to do (p. 34).

Alex envisions himself fighting for individualism and freedom against the "big machines" or the "government." What he does not realise is that he is just as mechanical himself; he likes to "do" violence because his Nadsat culture--the culture of self-gratification--has conditioned him to feel this way; he is imprisoned within his desire for the reality of violence. He cannot recognize love: he even views God's creation of man as an act of "great pride" rather than selfless love. The concept of selflessness, in fact, would be incomprehensible to Alex.

While Alex is redeemed somewhat by his love for music, Brodsky is mechanical and violent in a horrific, calculating, cold and spiritless fashion. Even Alex is preferable to Brodsky, for while Alex desecrates the human body, Brodsky desecrates the human soul. Alex is forced to keep his eyes open to watch films on physical and sexual violence; he is conditioned to feel deathly ill at the thought of this violence, yet those viewing the films with him are shown to be equally violent and perverse psychologically. Dr. Brodsky is totally inhuman and robot-like, as his "thick otchkies"(p. 81) indicate. Essentially, he is less human than Alex because he cannot even appreciate music: "music. . .so you're keen on music. I know nothing about it myself. It's a useful emotional heightener, that's all I know"(p. 90). Brodsky cannot appreciate music because he lacks even the perverse and
destructive emotions of Alex and the Nadsat world; this makes him a chilling representative of the "bourgeois" (p. 36) world of the "not-self."

Alex, then, appears to be no more violent than the world he lives in, a world which laughs at his humiliating torture and which (as Alex points out) conceived the behaviour modification films which are far more violent than anything Alex ever undertook.

Carel (in *The Time of the Angels*) does not understand the concept of selfless love either. His dark passion for Pattie and his incestuous relationship with Elizabeth are his way of manifesting his power; indeed his aura of power, his presence, is extremely magnetic. Pattie, even in the height of her regard for Eugene, is irresistibly drawn to Carel. She is denigrated by him, however, and rendered less than human by their dark passion. She is a mouse ("Pattie-Beast" [p. 145]) to his hawk: "his presence subjugated her whole being with a dark swoop, with a pounce of automatic unconscious power" (p. 147). Pattie, in fact, is fascinated, not by the man himself, but his palpable, almost tangible power; his power has a dark "presence" of its own. Power is also what attracts Muriel to her father, and yet it simultaneously repels her.

Mankind is fascinated by power--power of all kinds; and power is perhaps one of the most potent forces as it stems from deep unconscious urges within us. The Surrealists acknowledged the desire for power in love by their homage of de Sade. In fact, the surrealistic idea of love ranges from the "ideals of courtly love to the noxious basements and torture-chambers of the Marquis de Sade."
recognize the "legitimate pull of both magnetic poles--the zenith of Eros and the nadir of Thanatos. Sade was admitted to the pantheon of ancestors listed in the first Manifesto because he was 'Surrealist in Sadism.' Carel clearly seems to be a surreal figure in his role of father and lover. All the women in the novel (with the exception, perhaps, of Norah Shadox-Brown) seem to be at once sexually attracted to him and frightened or intimidated by him (Marcus exhibits the same response). This attraction may stem from the unconscious feeling that, in the view of the Surrealists, "fathers in general stood for authority, for repression, for conjugal rights exercised with a brutish regularity," and Surrealism "was founded on a patient reply of childhood experience. Above all, Surrealism was about the overthrow of authority as represented by the father." Both Pattie and Muriel try desperately to "overthrow" Carel's authority; but Pattie has to flee from the situation, and Muriel is only freed by his suicide.

Leo also desires to "overthrow" authority: "I told you I needed a great big liberating act. That was it. Down with fathers!" (p. 104). Leo has stolen the icon--Eugene's prize possession. His act is symbolic: in the Freudian sense, he is acting against his father in a push for authority; in a Christian sense, in his role as Lucifer, he is revolting against God. The web of lies and deceits surrounding the icon is emblematic of the lies and untruths utilized by Satan to desecrate God's most loved accomplishment--the creation of man. Leo is even described as a hissing Miltonic fallen angel when he and Muriel cling together in the cupboard. They emerge from the cupboard like "falling angels"(p. 155) and Leo utters "a continuous very soft hissing buzzing sound"(p. 156).
Pattie's slavish love for Carel leads to their undoing for her devotion adds fuel to the flames of his madness for power. Carel claims to be her god; she is his "dark angel" (p. 149). Murdoch said of *The Time of the Angels* that "there was a kind of religious or metaphysical conception at the very root of the idea" and this concept is embodied in the title: "the word 'angels' in the title is a reference to Carel's idea that, with the death of God, the dark angels have been liberated." The "dark angels" are the dark unconscious desires of man. Carel tells Marcus "one can only love an angel. And that dreadful thing is not love. Those with whom the angels communicate are lost" (p. 166). Carel is certainly "lost." His passion for Pattie and her acquiescent soul lead him on a quest for power which ultimately destroys him. He calls Pattie his "black goddess," his "counter-virgin," his "anti-Maria" (p. 166). For Carel has become a sort of anti-Christ, worshipping and embodying all that is opposite or contrary to Christ's teachings. While Christ taught the inestimable value of selfless love and the importance of the spirit, Carel preaches violent, selfish passion, and the inexpressibly awful nothingness of Heidegger's philosophy—the condition of the non-spirit.

Carel celebrates a peculiar sort of black mass with Pattie: he recites a prayer (of sorts) while making love to her on the floor in the darkness. The sunlight is blacked out at his request; this symbolizes his voluntary act of violence to his soul when he blocks out the spiritual light of love and God's teachings. Like Christ, Carel is betrayed and Pattie is his Judas. He asks her to "bear pain" (p. 149) for him, but she is unable to. Her failure symbolizes the essential
uselessness of Carel's power; and his "dark angel" leads him to his death. For "the man who would be king, who would rise above the common lot or urge others to do the same, violates the inertia of nature and invites catastrophe. Man's natural role is limited."53 All the protagonists in these novels attempt to rise above man's "natural role," thus it is inevitable that each book contains a catastrophe as a result of pride and a desire for power.

In The Third Policeman the Narrator's degeneration into a mechanical being is chillingly described. Paradoxically, his intensely human desires--greed and a desire for fame and position--transform him into an emotionless robot-like being. This degeneration begins with his slaughter of Mathers:

I went forward mechanically, swung the spade over my shoulder and smashed the blade of it with all my strength against the protruding chin. I felt and almost heard the fabric of his skull crumple up crisply like an empty eggshell. I do not know how often I struck him after that but I did not stop until I was tired (p. 15).

This gruesome description of the callous beating to death of an elderly man belies entirely the Narrator's earlier protestations of innocence and Divney's responsibility in tempting him into murder. He shows himself as ultimately the more evil character. He is only partly redeemed later on by his affection for the female bicycle; but of course, she too is primarily a mechanical being: "his ride on the stolen bicycle...is...presented in terms of an adulterous liaison...But the liaison has a very real warmth and considerable humanity."54 The Narrator has forced his humanity to be an exiguous part of himself. Justly, his insensate beating of Mathers leads to his doom, for because
of his preoccupation with shattering Mathers' skull, Divney has
time to slip away and hide the black cash box. Divney's action
begins the Narrator's hell on earth, and his eventual descent into
the hell of eternity where he is ever "occupied with the mechanical
task of finding the black box" (p. 20).

After the Narrator is blown up, his eyes "remained open for
a long time without a wink, glazed and almost sightless" (p. 21) and
he notices things about him "in a cold mechanical way" (p. 22). This
description reinforces the image the reader has of the Narrator as an
empty, doomed creature with the blank stare of a corpse. The Narrator's
eternal tormentor, Mathers, is also described as being "mechanical."
Mathers' face is "terrifying... but the eyes were horrible. Looking
at them I got the feeling that they were not genuine eyes at all but
mechanical dummies animated by electricity or the like, with a tiny
pinhole in the centre of the 'pupil' through which the real eye gazed
out secretively and with great coldness." (p. 27) This description of
Mathers seems reminiscent of descriptions of the Devil; and the emphasis
on "coldness" and the mechanical quality of the man indicates a
horrifying implacable force of evil lurking in mankind, a force which
produces coldness, chaos and violence in its wake. Even the world
of the Narrator seems "like a great workshop" where "sublime feats of
mechanics and chemistry were evident on every side" (p. 108); feats of
humanism are nowhere in evidence.

The Narrator's world shows further evidence of the reversal
of normal rules. Sergeant Pluck decides that as the Narrator has no
name he cannot exist, even though the Narrator can clearly be seen to
be standing before him and his existence can be proven tactilly.
"This is the reversal of the empirical method." Furthermore, he can be wounded by MacCruiskeen's spear even though it is invisible. "The point of the spear is like many forces in physics. It must be there because it has effect, so even if it can never be seen or measured, its presence must be inferred in order to explain these effects. O'Brien is once again mocking the inability of the human mind, tied to the need to visualize, to embody or fully understand its own rationalization."

Mild as the Narrator appears throughout the majority of the novel (an aspect of his character which is controlled, as in Alex's case, by first person narrative point of view), we discover that he is actually like the characters in the other novels, filled with dreams of attaining power. He feels he can gain power with the "omnium" Fox tells him is contained in the black cash box:

I could destroy, alter and improve the universe at will. I could get rid of John Divney. . . by giving him ten million pounds to go away. I could write the most unbelievable commentaries on de Selby ever written and publish them in bindings unheard of for their luxury and durability. . . A leg of flesh and bone yet stronger than iron would appear magically upon my left thigh (p. 163).

On the way home he indulges in further pleasurable omnium-inspired fantasies: "extravagence of eating, drinking, inventing, destroying, changing, improving, awarding, punishing and even loving."(p. 168). All these ruminations seem a far cry from the rather humble-sounding, almost childlike, Narrator of earlier in the novel. Through his fantasies the truth emerges, the real nature of the Narrator becomes clearly visible. Of all the sensations he desires to experience, power is the
most sought after. However, like Carel, Dougal and Alex, he desires
godlike power, the power to alter even a universe at will. He
embodies all man's obsessions with self--man's capability for greed,
cruelty, vanity. He epitomizes the negative aspects of man's nature:
he is weak, vain, egotistical, ruthless, selfish and power-hungry.
His comment "and even loving" clearly places love and affection
as a mere afterthought in his mind; and obviously by love he means
the satiation of lust or passion rather than the love of the spirit.
He also conjures up a long list of tortures (which sound like a
description of a painting by Hieronymus Bosch) to be administered
in revenge on Pluck and MacCruiskeen:

It would probably be possible for me to save time
and trouble by adapting the underground machinery
to give both of them enough trouble, danger,
trepidation, work and inconvenience to make them
rue the day they first threatened me. Each of the
cabinets could be altered to contain, not bicycles
and whiskey and matches, but putrescent offals,
insupportable smells, un beholdable corruptions
containing tangles of gleaming slimy vipers each
of them deadly and foul of breath, millions of
diseases and decayed monsters clawing the inside
latches of the oven to open them and escape, rats
with horns walking upside down along the ceiling
pipes trailing their leprous tails on the
policemen's heads, readings of incalculable
perilousness mounting hourly upon the--(pp. 164-165)

This ghastly and gruesomely fertile list of tortures reveals the
innate cruelty of the Narrator's nature. His innocent, rather
childlike, veneer cracks and peels away under the heady influence of
omnium-begotten omnipotence. We see that the violence with which he
kills Mathers is not uncharacteristic of his nature as he infers, but
rather is an integral part of his being.
Dougal Douglas also epitomizes the desire for power within man, and to this end Peckham becomes a microcosm of the world. Dougal tells Mr. Druce: "the world of Industry...throbs with human life. It will be my job to take the pulse of the people and plumb the industrial depths of Peckham" (p. 17). He adds"I shall have to do research...into their inner lives. Research into the real Peckham. It will be necessary to discover the spiritual well-spring..."(p. 17). Dougal's desire for power leads him to "plumb" the depths of the residents of Peckham by unleashing their innermost unprinciplled desires. Catastrophe results. He comments that the residents of Peckham are "bored"(p. 13) and this boredom is a result of the depressing, industrial milieu in which they reside. In this respect, their world is similar to Alex's England in which boredom is also rife. Boredom and violence are the opposite ends of a continuum, both stemming from the shallowness of the individual and an inability to find spiritual meaning in life. Thus boredom is the mainstay of the hooligan, and to be bored is the "most touted excuse of all."57

The boredom of the inhabitants of Peckham Rye allows them to be easily corrupted: they are titillated and excited by the sense of strangeness or uniqueness Dougal emanates. He plays on this facet of his personality in the same way he plays with Trevor Lomas's dislike of him, and violence is the inevitable result. Perhaps the cause of Dougal's need for power is his inability to love--his "fatal flaw"(p. 24). He cannot stand to see his girlfriend, Jinny, when she is sick: "It's my one secret weakness...I can't help it...sickness
kills me. . .try to understand my fatal flaw. Everyone has one"
(p. 24). Dougal's inability to be with Jinny when she really
needs him demonstrates his inability to genuinely love her; it seems
to be through his "flaw"--his failure to love--that his lust for power
arises and possesses him leading him from evil to evil.

As in the world of the Narrator in The Third Policeman, the
world of Peckham Rye is also a mechanistic one, both externally in its
domination by factories, and internally in its sterile "spiritual
well-springs." The inhabitants of Peckham Rye are locked in a dance,
and the idea of dance is a central metaphor in this novel:

Most of the men looked as if they had not properly
woken from sleep, but glided as if drugged, and with
half-closed lids, towards their chosen partners.
This approach found favour with the girls. The
actual invitation to dance was mostly delivered by
gesture; a scarcely noticeable flick of the man's
head towards the dance floor. Whereupon the girl,
with an outstretched movement of surrender, would
swim into the hands of the summoning partner (p. 58).

Not only these dancers, but all the characters in The Ballad of Peckham
Rye are locked into this formulistic dance pattern. This pattern is
altered, however, when Dougal arrives and choreographs his own version
which incorporates and expresses their inner desires. Before the
advent of Dougal, they are somnambulistic, trapped in a pattern of
ritualized daily movements. They move like clockwork to the
mechanical ballad of Peckham Rye. But after Dougal's arrival, the
inhabitants become the unwitting participants in a "motion study"
(p. 50) of which Dougal is the "choreographer"(p. 50). Not only the
factory girls, but all Peckham dances to his tune, his "ballad."
Dougal creates a nightmare world by unleashing Peckham's unconscious
forces, and the inhabitants dance to his disharmonious tune.
A clear example of this clockwork routine is the sexual behaviour of Merle and Mr. Druce. They follow a rigid routine. He visits her once a week--on Saturdays--and they perform routine actions. Nothing varies from week to week; nothing deviates from the pattern. They even remove their clothes "in a steady rhythm" (p. 53). Even their sado-masochistic tendencies follow a pattern--he routinely hurts her by pinching her--and she routinely screams. Their sex life is boring and mechanical (as Humphrey's and Dixie's is growing to be), which is not surprising as their relationship seems to be devoid of love. However, Dougal upsets this balance by adding the new dimension of jealousy and suspicion; Druce gives full rein to his sadism, and Merle dies for it.

Earlier in the novel when Dougal probes Druce's deepest secrets, the man breaks down and weeps, dumbfounded at the knowledge Dougal possesses. Merle enters upon this scene and stares aghast, exclaiming: "this place is becoming chaos" (p. 57)--which it is. In his satanic role, Dougal has transformed quiet, staid Peckham into a chaotic hell on earth where passions run wild, ruled over by the Lord of Misrule, and where violence, terrorism and murder stalk the streets.

Leo (in Murdoch's novel) is also an advocate of chaos. He postulates to Muriel that their world might not be as ordered, individual and free as she might think: "Just you cast your eye on the universe and then talk to me about morality. Suppose we're all being directed from somewhere else by remote control? Suppose we're just frogspawn in somebody's pond" (p. 104). When Muriel tries to take him to task for stealing the icon, he merely asks her if she knows about
"quasars" (p. 104). Infuriated, Muriel asks: "How could you have deliberately hurt your father so much?" But Leo again replies: "Quasars, Muriel, quasars, quasars, quasars, quasars" (p. 104). Leo is promulgating the view that we live in a chaotically haphazard world, a world like a "quasar." A quasar is thought to be a type of star, or star-like object, which is a source of radio energy. As these distant objects pulsate with meaningless radio waves, so perhaps we are just as meaningless and do not exist in the way we think we do. Possibly earth and its inhabitants are just such a purposeless collection of electrical impulses, performing actions indiscriminately and at random, with no higher order prevailing or controlling. In such a disordered, random world, morality becomes meaningless for there can be no standards of good and evil; our actions are as meaningless, and consequently as amoral, as the pulsating quasars.

This view is echoed, albeit in somewhat different terms, by Carel. He talks to Marcus of the "death of God" (p. 164) and the freeing of the "angels" (p. 164). The "angels" are harbingers of chaos, symbolizing the need to please self, to bolster oneself against the absurdity of the human condition. For if one is to be "good" in the sort of world envisioned by Leo and Carel, then "one must be good for nothing, without sense or reward" (p. 165). Thus any act of goodness or any act of violence becomes merely an act to bolster the ego, to assure oneself of one's existence.

If we live in a randomly ordered universe, then "we are the creatures of accident, operated by forces we do not understand" (p. 165); we are mechanical creatures with no real purpose for
existence. Norah encapsulates Carel's philosophy of absurdity and nothingness:

he stated not only that there was no God and human life was senseless, but also that the precarious reign of morality, itself of course an illusion, is now at an end and that henceforth humankind is to be the victim of irresponsible psychological forces which your brother picturesquely designates as angels (p. 185).

These "angels" are the unprincipled desires of the unconscious which deform and distort the world around them, creating a comforting fantasy structure. But "to be a benighted creature, sunk in a reality which one is overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy, is to be in a condition very like that of original sin." Carel, of course, is just such a "benighted creature," and Leo, by committing his "liberating act"(p. 104) of stealing the icon, is following in Carel's footsteps. Carel's philosophy, then, is representative of Murdoch's interpretation of Freud's dark view of the human psyche. This view stands in stark contrast with the optimism which enthrones reason as the core of morality. . .it depicts human beings as fantasy-ridden creatures, who prefer to live in the tissue of illusions rather than try to look at the world as it is, and themselves as they are. Realism and truth are what we must avoid because they are the enemies of fantasy and illusion. The hazy cosmos of the ego is magnetic and fascinating, and within its pliable domain the human consciousness drifts unimpeded around the great grand central me. 59

This description also applies rather aptly to the condition of the Narrator in *The Third Policeman* as he "drifts" around in a nightmare world created by the "great grand central me." Because the self has been allowed to run wild and madly create an impossible inverted world, "reason is overthrown and a coherent unreason takes its place. The Narrator has to accept with his senses what his reason
tells him is impossible." Thus his senses are preternaturally alive and active while his mind refuses to evaluate any logic; he merely accepts what he is told in this world where anything seems possible:

The scene was real and incontrovertible, and at variance with the talk of the sergeant, but I knew the sergeant was talking the truth and if it was a question of taking my choice, it was possible that I would have to forego the reality of all the simple things my eyes were looking at (p. 75).

The Narrator always chooses the easy route—the fantastic—over the real. He is told to use his imagination, and in a surreal sense, according to Breton, "the imaginary is what tends to become the real." He follows this maxim and blinds his eyes to illogic and illusion and decides they are real; concurrently he pretends reality is false. By his actions, he can truly be likened to one of Murdoch's "benighted" creatures.

Paradoxically, by entering the dominion of the self, the Narrator has become less than human—he lives sensuously but not intellectually. As Burgess shows in A Clockwork Orange, a world dedicated to the senses is one of violence and disorder. Ironically, however, the chief agents of disorder in the Narrator's world are the peculiar policemen; it is paradoxical that policemen, those respectable upholders of law and order, should keep order in hell wherein there can be no order. However these policemen actually commit the crimes and solve them themselves, thus they are, in actuality, rather the upholders of an odd kind of disorder! In fact, to try and keep a sense of order in his world the Narrator vainly endeavours to look "ordinary" in the naive hope that this will stave off the horror of his world:
"I knew I would go mad unless I got up from the floor and moved and talked and behaved in as ordinary a way as possible" (p. 23). However, when he begins to talk the "words spilled out of [him] as if they were produced by machinery" (p. 23), thus reinforcing the idea of the mechanical man who has lost his humanity.

Thus the "importance of The Third Policeman lies in its presentation of a vision of hell which implies man's reliance on order, pattern, harmony." In this respect it seems surreal, for the surrealists examined "madness, dream, the absurd, the incoherent, the hyperbolic and everything that is opposed to the summary appearance of the real." Alex's world is also one of disorder ruled by the so-called upholders of law and order. The government performs the ultimate irony when it hires its most vicious young criminals (such as Dim and Billyboy) to keep order, thus promoting (but legally this time) a reign of terror which is far more effective and far-reaching by virtue of its increased power and legitimacy, than the reign of the Nadsat thugs:

Alex's particular routine sado-masochism--nightly orgies of "tolchoking" and the old "in-out in-out," alternating between sabbaticals at the all-too-Freudian Korova milkbar and withdrawals (onanistic and otherwise) into his multi-speakered stereo-womb--may be the healthy neurosis standing between Alex and the paranoia of the populace. . .yet more insidious is the growing feeling one gets from reading A Clockwork Orange of governments encouraging violence in order to whip up and feed the paranoia that will ultimately engender allegiance through fear. 64

Fear, in fact, is the optimally effective tool, for ultimately, it is fear itself we are afraid of. We are terrified by the strength of this emotion which transforms us into mindless animals. To stave off fear
of the human condition—in particular the knowledge of the absurdity of man and the possibility of the void—violence is employed to assert existence and to provide some sort of meaning in life, perverse or no. In such surroundings, Alex has very little choice but to become a vicious thug.

Fear becomes an almost physical presence in *The Time of the Angels*:

It was in this closeness that Pattie apprehended at last something like a great fear in Carel, a fear which afflicted her with terror and a kind of nausea. It seemed to her now that, for all his curious solitary gaiety, she had always seen him as a soul in hell. Carel was becoming very frightened and he carried fear about with him as a physical environment (p. 32).

By rejecting God, by desiring to be a deity, Carel has allowed the blackness of evil to pour into his being. The result is this tremendous fear both of what it is he has become and of the absurdity of existence; like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, he has seen the "horror." Unlike Kurtz, however, he is unrepentant and unable to change. To survive he chooses power: only by the subjugation of his household does he feel that he exists.

The unease that O'Nolan's Narrator experiences in his dream world is exemplified by his obsession with the mythical gold watch. He continually despairs: "If I had not lost my American gold watch it would be possible for me to tell the time" (p. 46). To which Joe replies, "You have no American gold watch" (p. 46). Joe tells the Narrator the truth—but he refuses to listen. For time no longer exists for the Narrator, but, as indicated by his obsession with the watch, he desperately desires its presence to reconstitute order and normality in his world. Time is distorted in this world: in some areas an actual cessation of time has
occurred. Parts of the countryside are always bathed in the glow of a late afternoon sun for example; in other parts it is always morning. He is in de Selby's world in which de Selby "denies that time can pass as such in the acceptable sense and attributes to hallucinations the commonly experienced sensation of progression as, for instance, in journeying from one place to another or even 'living'"(p. 44).

When the Narrator returns to his house he receives the ghastly shock that the three days he thought he had been absent were, in actuality, sixteen years. This horrible knowledge, along with Divney's terrified explanations, provides incontrovertible evidence that he is dead, and this knowledge nearly annihilates the Narrator:

My mind became quite empty, light, and felt as if it were very white in colour. I stood where I was for a long time without moving or thinking. I thought after a time that the house was strange and I became uncertain about the two figures on the floor (p. 170).

In this instant, the Narrator has virtually become non-existent; he is of no substance. However, he is unable to let go of self and thus be delivered from hell. Consequently, upon leaving the house he turns "leftwards"(p. 170) and tramps the road back towards the barracks: "My mind was completely void"(p. 171). He is in a sort of limbo at this point, the only time in the book (or in his existence) that he has not been "concerned about" himself. However, this condition does not last and he reenters the mechanical pattern of his dreamworld, only it is subtly altered by the advent of Divney, whose "jaws clicked . . .like a machine"(p. 169); a change calculated to render hell even more unpalatable to the Narrator than it was previously--for he would have paid Divney "ten million pounds" to be rid for him forever.
Language

The language of these novels, especially in the case of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Third Policeman*, is as much a central force as the characters themselves. In this respect, the novelists reflect the Surrealist view, for the Surrealists like the Romantics before them...credited language with the power to change life, believing the quality of what we recognize as reality to be a function of our expressive, linguistic structures. They posited an intimate relation between the corruption of the European order and obsolescence of its forms of expression. 65

The Surrealist view is clearly applicable to the Nadsat culture of *A Clockwork Orange* in which the language shapes and molds life. The convention of Nadsat prevents ethical complexity, and the replacement of a conventional vocabulary with a carefully edited, limited vocabulary in which words frequently mean the opposite of what one expects, makes it difficult to differentiate between good and evil (for example, "horrorshow" conjures up the impression of something horrible, yet to the Nadsats it actually denotes something pleasurable): the Nadsats mentally chain themselves through their language and their unprincipled desires. The majority of Nadsat is derived from Russian. For example, "Bog" derives from transliterating the word God from the Russian (or Cyrillic script) into the Roman alphabet. 66 Possibly Burgess chose the Slavonic language because of the graphic quality of the words. God is clearly degraded by the Nadsats in view of the connations of "Bog." However, Burgess remarks that no "language is either beautiful or ugly," 67 it is what we make of it and how it reflects our purpose in society. The Nadsats have used their argot to imprison themselves within their culture.
Burgess "has carefully chosen words that are immensely more evocative to the English or American ear than their English equivalents, and he has modified some of them very plausibly." For example, "there is something much more murderous about a 'cutthroat britva' than a cutthroat razor." Nadsat is brutal, harsh and distorted, yet is an "'objective correlative' with a vengeance" and it "reflects certain rhythms and textures and syncopations" that are found in music.

It is hardly coincidental that Alex's favourite piece of music is Beethoven's Ninth, rich in dissonances that only a professional ear can detect, but filled also with as many untapped, infinite (so it seems) harmonies. .. Alex's language is, in its way, ugly ... but place it alongside the bland and vapid professional or everyday language of the doctors and warders and chaplains and hear how hollow their language rings. .. Contrarily, Alex emerges as something of a poet, singing dithyrambs to violence ... Language distorts Alex's world temporally. The language alters almost year to year; even Alex has a little difficulty understanding the speech of two ten year old girls he meets in the record store. One says to him: "Who you getten, bratty? What biggy, what only?" (p. 37) and Alex notes: "These young devotchkas had their own way of govoreeting" (p. 37). When he gets them home he remarks on the "weird slovos that were the heighth of fashion in that youth group" (p. 38). Thus language effectively distances everyone, disintegrating communication and transforming different age groups into virtually different nationalities. Thus

The ferocious and coarse, partly archaic, partly mod, neologic "nadsat" of A Clockwork Orange captures perfectly the violence and pain of incidents, breaking
down into standard English only when the hero is being brainwashed and stripped of individuality. Clearly, it is always an amazing feat to have the language of a novel not simply match the action, but be the action. 72

Alex's name is also interesting. One interpretation of its significance lies in the "fusion of the negative prefix a with the word lex [which] suggests simultaneously an absence of law and a lack of words . . . [Alex] is articulate but 'wordless' in that he apprehends life directly, without the mediation of words" even though he "seems to have a great many words at his command." 73

The language of The Third Policeman is also as much a part of the action as the characters themselves. The truth of the Narrator's world is revealed in the odd language employed, especially in the preponderance of negatives. In this sense, the novel falls into a surrealist category. Anna Balakian postulates that "language . . . is a vehicle by means of which intrinsic truths surge from psychic depths of conscience, precluding the possibility of the existence of abstract thought separate from its symbolization. . . . words are the symbolization of thought, its coefficient; they shape thought so totally that we cannot say which came first." 74

Certainly the language in The Third Policeman is very peculiar with its prevalence of polly syllabic words; if such a word can be employed in the place of a short one, it almost invariably is. The policemen are huge, beefy, in fact, grossly oversized, and their language reflects their appearance. Pluck never uses a simple word like puzzle or problem, he always turns to such favourites as "conundrum"(p. 62) or "puzzledom"(p. 49). Throughout the novel the
language of the policemen is convoluted, vague and abstract to the extreme. J. C. C. Mays notes that the dialogue does not grow out of what builds up to it but ostentatiously turns its back on the setting, using it only to silhouette the opposition between sound and sense or as an echo-box for the blank cartridge to resound more hollowly. The same dissociation is reflected in the terseness with which the words are put together. Brian O'Nolan is not happy in long sentences, which progress cautiously with the forms of subordination and connection clearly expressed, characteristically substituting clipped emphatic pronouns like he and it for who and which. The sentences are usually short and their elegance concise and antithetical.

The language used by the Narrator is also strange and convoluted, but his speciality is a use of negatives with the prefix "un", and a habit of describing the scenery as if it were sentient: "The right-hand road was a greener country with the small turbulent river accompanying the road at a respectful distance" (p. 46). When Joe tells him he will leave him if he is hanged, the Narrator pours out a torrent of words prefixed with "un". He speaks of his "unintegrity" (p. 103), his "unisolation" (p. 103), the "low unsilence of the daytime" (p. 104) and being "unalive" (p. 131). Rather than use a positive word such as noisy, he continually employs words like "unsilence" which are couched in a negative fashion; he also likes double negatives, for example, "not at all unflattering" (p. 145). This backwards or reverse method of speaking is perhaps symbolic of a nightmare existence in hell where chaos, illogic and negation of values reign. The Narrator prefers to avoid reality by using "unalive" rather than dead--dead is final, emphatically positive, and the Narrator wishes to avoid this thought to any extent. Anne Clissman comments:
Throughout the book O'Brien has shown an awareness of the problem of translating the untranslatable into semasiological terms. Language is bound to express a particular set of physical laws and the problem of the scientist is to find new terms, and sometimes even new grammatical forms in which to express new concepts. Here the objects the narrator sees partake of no qualities inherent in the world and so can only be described in terms of what they are not. 76

Murdoch and Spark do not employ language in quite the way that Burgess and O'Nolan do. Through first person narrative point of view and wild experimentation with language, Burgess and O'Nolan are able to present us with unfamiliar and dreamlike worlds in which the strangest events may occur; but because we have to make the effort to learn, or at least feel familiar with, the language, we tend to become a part of the world and feel an involvement in it (even though the language paradoxically also distances us from the actual protagonists). The same involvement is not felt in either The Time of the Angels or The Ballad of Peckham Rye. Murdoch and Spark use the more conventional tool of repeated key words and images to symbolically create a thematic pattern. One interesting factor in The Time of the Angels, however, is that the first chapter is in the present tense, in contrast to the more conventional past tense of other chapters. The use of the present tense creates a dramatic initial reaction to the novel, a sense of immediacy. We are precipitated into the relationship between Carel and Pattie; yet Carel is not named, he is merely a "black cassock"(p. 8), a subtle presence of evil which has yet to be defined. However, he is symbolic of evil's ever-present quality, a timelessness suggested by the use of the present tense.

The evil is further indicated by the all-pervasive fog. The
fog, which is present throughout most of the novel, is a physical emanation of evil in the house: "curling, creeping, moving and yet still, always receding and yet always present, everywhere and yet nowhere, imposing silence, imposing breathless anxious attention, it seemed to symbolize everything which at this time [Muriel] feared"; yet it also "excited"(p. 58) her. Evil is just such a formless, intangible force—one which both frightens yet excites people, and Murdoch's use of this image pattern combined with an imagery of darkness, deftly presents us with a vivid picture of a hellish, nightmare world where evil holds sway and violence simmers just below the surface, ever ready to erupt. That the evil is timeless is further intimated by Murdoch's extensive use of present participles which suggest a continuous flowing movement.

Spark is more light-hearted in her use of language: she uses language to indicate social structure, education and age grouping, and the friction which is present between them. One key word which originates with Dougal and which is soon being used by nearly everyone except Dixie (who dislikes it) is "psychological"(p. 119). Dougal is tampering with everyone's psychology; he functions as a catalyst and as such precipitates the dark forces contained within the characters so that they bubble to the surface. Sometimes Dougal echoes Alex such as when he pretends Trevor Lomas attacked him "with a razor—rip, rip, rip"(p. 130). At other times the language is close to that of The Third Policeman--this is evidenced by the cold, matter-of-fact way Druce's murder of Merle Coverdale is described: "he came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times and killed
her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife" (p. 136). The rather mechanical way the murder is described is indicative of Spark's method of presenting violence in the novel. There are numerous fights and victimizations, but all are described in precise, utilitarian terms which again serve to distance the reader. The language tends to be simple and clipped, the sentences short and terse; the language does not flow smoothly and neither do the lives of the characters in the novel.

Conclusion

It seems significant that the writers of contemporary British fiction discussed here all employ the device of a demonic figure (or figures) as central in their works, and that these figures tend to be evil and mechanical in their perpetration of acts of violence. The cold, clinical, routine way violence is depicted in these novels differs from the way in which violence was depicted in previous literary eras. The change from the seemingly more spontaneous violence in earlier works (which was carried out by red-blooded characters with identifiable human emotions) to the colder variety depicted in contemporary works, seems indicative of our modern climate in general. We live in a world in which psychopathy seems to be on the increase and humanism on the wane. Burgess does not, however, limit state violence to the "modern age." He points out, through the films shown in Alex's conditioning process, that there has always been plenty of violence from biblical days to the Second World War. However, these historical contexts show man's addiction to an ever-increasing, more horrific use of violence, and it is the effectiveness and soullessness of modern violence which seems to disturb him most.
As man makes way for machines, he in turn becomes more machine-like, and violence seems to be one of the most potent ways of reacting and trying to prove one's human existence. F. Alexander, in his *A Clockwork Orange*, notes that "all lewdies...were being turned into machines and that they were really--you and me and him--more like a natural growth like a fruit" (p. 124). It is our naturalness which is fast disappearing in contemporary life; as a consequence we are perhaps losing our humanity. In fact, the ills of society seem to derive from indulgence rather than deprivation:

Alex's utopia is more than a result of suprapermissiveness and self-gratification; it is the consequence of "original sin" inborn with every offspring of modern organizational leviathans. Having discovered that existence has always meant freedom, but never having been taught "goodness," Alex responds predictably and inevitably to the killing burden of choice.

Socially, he and his "droogs" parody the formless, shadowy, omnipotent political entity that sports with them as they with "lewdies." This Kafkaesque infinite regression is frightening. . .we are all, in some way or another, products of conditioning: tools to be manipulated and clockwork oranges whether we will or no. 77

All the protagonists in these novels have had to bear "the killing burden of choice"; it is as a result of their choices that violence occurs. Carel chooses the *Dasein* of Heidegger's philosophy (in which the self is made aware of the essential nothingness and aloneness of its brief existence) and relapses into despair at life's absurdity; his "evil spreads until his entire household is corrupted." 78 Leo chooses to "act" but his act is the cruel and heartless theft of the icon. His action results in a violent squabble between Muriel and Pattie and it indirectly culminates in Carel's suicide. Dougal has the choice of overcoming his "fatal flaw" and pursuing love or giving in to the dark, demonic side of his nature. He chooses the latter and brings
violence and chaos to Peckham Rye. The Narrator of The Third Policeman has a clear-cut choice: to rob or not to rob Mathers. However, his obsession with de Selby (his self) drives him not only to robbery but also to murder, and from thence to the horrible consequences of eternal damnation.

Alex has the least freedom of choice because he belongs to a society which practices the same vices as he, but which hypocritically punishes him for being violent. He could, perhaps, have chosen not to follow the path of violence initially, but his Nadsat culture more-or-less preprograms him into a violent pattern.

The degree of choice presented in the novels indicates the views of each author on the human condition. Burgess has a darkly pessimistic view of man's nature which is revealed in the inhumanity of all the characters in A Clockwork Orange: from the weakly vicious, revengeful old age pensioners in the library, to the mad piety of F. Alexander, and ultimately to Alex himself. In A Clockwork Orange no-one ever feels any guilt or remorse over any hurtful action they may have committed.

Burgess's views seem to be echoed by O'Nolan for his Narrator in The Third Policeman is an unrepentant and heinous killer who, it appears, will be able to relive his murder of Mathers for eternity, yet it seems unlikely he will ever suffer remorse or guilt for his crime. In fact, his crime seems to have made little impression on him.

Neither does Dougal Douglas feel any guilt or remorse for the havoc he creates in Peckham Rye. Spark sketches a brief life-history of his doings after he leaves Peckham and he leaves behind him
a trail of nervous breakdowns, horror and chaos wherever he goes. Spark evidently believes in the force of evil, its strength and proliferation, and the ease with which human nature succumbs to its charms; Dougal embodies her belief.

Murdoch has a differing viewpoint on the concept of good and evil. She portrays the contrast between the evil inherent in a beautiful youth and his aging counterpart. But while Leo shows no sense of guilt over his theft or his lies, Carel seems bowed down by the horror and despair engendered by what he has become. Evil is debilitating and destructive to those who practice it as well as to those who suffer its indignities. Murdoch shows the inevitable hopelessness of evil, its ultimately depressing and enervating nature; but she stresses the fact that not all of us are evil—we need a crutch, such as the beauty of nature or art, to aid us to feel love and to give us the spiritual strength to see reality. Herein lies her major divergence from Burgess's Manichean viewpoint.

These four novels provide us with comparable yet contrasting visions of violence in contemporary British literature. They provide a background of similar structural elements against which to view the struggle between good and evil and its by-product, violence. This background incorporates the use of demonic figures, a portrayal of the deadly effects of self-absorption, and a setting composed of mechanical and inverted worlds. To some extent the four novelists all employ elements of the surreal and the grotesque to create the most fertile environment for the imaginative expression of violence. Thus language also becomes a major thematic tool.
According to Fraser, "violence is usually the cutting edge of ideas and ideologies," and this view, when transposed to literature, seems to hold true for these four novelists. Each time violence occurs in the novels a clear thematic statement about the dark nature of mankind is being expressed. Violence, both sexual and sadistic, is an attention-getting device and perhaps nothing else is so effective in ensuring the reader's thoughtful interest. The novelists point out that in our modern world in which it is only too easy to succumb to technologically-induced desires and fantasies, violence of the variety practiced by the outwardly charming, but essentially evil characters in these novels is increasing, because, in ever-growing numbers, we too are embarking upon a vicious cult of self.
Notes


2 Fraser, p. 10.


4 Fraser, p. 63.

5 Fraser, p. 83.


9 Balakian, p. 248.


11 Clissman, p. 352.


13 Thomson, p. 18.
16 Hays, p. 116.
17 Hays, p. 109.
18 Hays, p. 110.
21 Iris Murdoch, The Time of the Angels (St. Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1978), p. 117. All further references to the text are taken from this edition.
23 Thomson, p. 3.
25 Murdoch, p. 51.
27 Aggler, p. 28.
28 Short, pp. 160-161.
29 Murdoch, pp. 64-65.
32 Anne Clissman comes to the same conclusion: "The circular nature of the hell in which the hero endures is similar to that envisioned by Sartre in his play Huis Clos... 'many of the plays in the Theatre of the Absurd have a circular structure, ending exactly as they began'" (p. 354).
34 Chew, p. 59.
35 Clissman, p. 170.
36 Rabinovitz, p. 315.
37 Rabinovitz, p. 313.
38 Rabinovitz, p. 313.
39 Rabinovitz, p. 315.
42 Russell, p. 29.
44 Bradbury, p. 243.
45 Aggler, p. 173.
46 Gascoyne, p. 61. Breton defines the term 'Surrealism' as "pure psychic automatism," based on the "superior" reality of association, the power of the dream and disinterested thought. In this way, surrealism frees the imagination and allows us to perceive a clearer or truer reality.
47 Short, p. 160.
48 Short, p. 160.
49 Russell, p. 21.
50 Russell, p. 21.
52 Rabinovitz, p. 314
53 Hays, p. 140.
54 Hays, p. 93.
55 Clissman, p. 163.
56 Clissman, p. 165.
57 Fraser, p. 168.
60 Clissman, p. 157.
61 Short, p. 73.
63 Gascoyne, p. 60.
64 Morris, p. 71.
65 Short, p. 70.
67 Burgess, p. 8.
68 Aggler, p. 170.
69 Aggler, p. 170.
70 Morris, p. 69.
71 Morris, pp. 69-70.
72 Morris, p. 57.
73 Aggler, p. 173.
74 Balakian, p. 92.
75 Mays, p. 109.
76 Clissman, pp. 174-175.
77 Morris, p. 70.
78 Rabinovitz, p. 315.
79 Fraser, p. 162.
Bibliography


