

## ANTHONY BURGESS INTERVIEWED IN ITALY IN 1974 ABOUT: *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* (and other subjects in general)

*Interviewer:* What literary significance does this book [*A Clockwork Orange*] have?

**A.B.:** In a sense this book does state what I'm always trying to state in my work; that man is free, that man was granted the gift of free will and that he can choose, and that if he decides to choose evil rather than to choose good, this is in his nature and it is not the task of the state to kill this capacity for choice.

In effect the book *A Clockwork Orange* says that it is better for a man to do evil of his own free will than for the state to turn him into a machine which can only do good. I mean in this sense, I've been using the theme of free will in novel after novel, but this book is different from the others in that it uses a specially contrived language and also in that it makes far more explicit use of violence than in any other of my work.

I don't like violence, I don't like presenting violence in my books, I don't like, even, presenting the act of sex in my books; I am naturally timid about these things.

But in writing *A Clockwork Orange*, I was so appalled at the prospect before us, in the late 1950's, the prospect of the state taking over more and more of the area of free choice, that I felt I had to write the book.

The book is didactic, the book teaches, preaches, a little too much and I don't think it's the job of the artist to do that, the job of the artist is to show.

But the book became popular precisely because it combined the didactic and what seems, to many people, to be the pornographic. Pornography and violence, and the teachy, preachy quality; and when you get these two together you normally produce a book that can become a bestseller.

The book didn't become a bestseller, not for many, many years, but inevitably it has become my most popular book and this I resent. Out of the thirty odd books I have written this is often the only book of mine which is known, this I resent very much.

*Interviewer:* It also talks about a private happening in your life, an element of biography involved?

**A.B.:** Yes, indeed. My first wife, who is now dead, was attacked during the war in London, in the blackout, by four American soldiers, who were in fact deserters. It wasn't a sexual attack, it was an attack for robbery, but the result of this attack was that she had a miscarriage, she lost the child she was carrying at the time and her health deteriorated, and I suppose her eventual death was initiated by this act of violence.

I think it's the job of the artist, especially the novelist, to take events like that from his own life, or from the lives of those near to him, and to purge them, to cathartise the pain, the anguish, in a work of art.

It's one of the jobs of art, I think it was D.H. Lawrence who said " We shed our sicknesses in works of art. "

In this sense, the part of the novel, the part of the film, in which the character is writing a book, and the book is called in my own book, *A Clockwork Orange*. It was an attempt to put myself in the novel, to put myself as a writer who is subject to the deprivations, to the violence of wild youth, and by that means to clear it out of my system so that I didn't have to think about it any more.

I think that the therapeutic virtue of this book is probably its greatest virtue as far as I'm concerned. Its artistic virtue is rather less.

*Interviewer:* And then the novel was made into a film, did it make a lot of money for you?

**A.B.:** No, I didn't make any money at all, I just sold the book rather early on in my career. Ever since the book had been written, from about 1962 on, there had been attempts to make a film out of it; but of course, in 1962, 1963, the climate wasn't yet ready for films of this kind. We weren't ready in 1962 to see on the films explicit violence, explicit rape, even explicit nudity.

So the original attempt to make a film of *A Clockwork Orange* was an attempt at a very low financial level. The idea was to make a kind of 'underground' film with the

*Rolling Stones*

, (a very popular singing group at that time, and I think still), in it, playing the four leading parts; the film would not make much money, the film would not be shown publicly probably, but only in film clubs.

So, in consequence I accepted \$500 for the rights of the book.

Naturally the book was now in the hands of operators who were able to sell it eventually for \$500,000. So the money gained from the book has been gained by those who didn't write it.

For my own part I don't worry, because it is the nature of serious artists not to make money. Artists don't make money, they get their pleasures in other ways.

*Interviewer:* Had you written the book within 1959 and '60 anyhow?

**A.B.:** The book was written in about..., it was finished in 1960, but there was great difficulty getting it published.

In those days people were very squeamish, in 1960, in England, only then for the first time was it possible to buy a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in its unabridged form, it's only just over ten years ago. The climate has changed so fundamentally in ten years, that it's very hard for us now to believe what life was really like in the 1960's.

*Interviewer:* But putting money aside what has signified for you with the appearance of the film?

**A.B.:** The film has just been a damned nuisance.

I am regarded by some people as a mere 'boy', a mere helper to Stanley Kubrick; the secondary creator who is feeding a primary creator who's a great film director.

This, I naturally resent, I resent also the fact I am frequently blamed for the various crimes which are supposed to be instigated by the film.

It is said that young boys see this film, and I believe in England now young girls also, and then they go round imitating what they have seen in the film. They go round beating up old men and there have been one or two murders, and the murders have been blamed on this film.

Well, when the press gets on to these sad events they don't go to the director and ask him what he thinks about it, they go to the author.

They go to me and say " Do you feel responsible for all this? " and I have to say, " Well, whether I'm responsible or not, this question should have been asked twelve years ago when the book was first published, not now when the book has become better known after its transference to another medium. "

But the fundamental answer is, no, one is not responsible. If I am responsible for young boys beating up old men or killing old women after having seen the film then Shakespeare is responsible every time some young man decides to kill his uncle and blames it on Hamlet.

Shakespeare is responsible for producing a film like *King Lear*, in which unutterable violence is presented, and even that earlier play of Shakespeare's, *Titus Andronicus*, in which not only do we have multiple rape but also mutilation and finally cannibalism.

Shakespeare, as far as I know, has never been blamed for any of the violence in the world; and for that matter, if we're going to start blaming books, let's start blaming the *Bible*, the most blood-thirsty ever written, was the

*Bible*

.

And there was a man in New York State who killed something like sixteen children, slaughtered them in cold blood, and he said he was fascinated by the stories of blood sacrifice in the *Old Testament*

and he merely wanted to present a sweet offering to the Lord.

Again, we had a man in England, a man called Haig who murdered various women and drank their blood, and he blamed all this on the sacrament of the Eucharist, he said he was so fascinated by the notion of drinking the body and blood of Christ during mass that he merely wanted to transfer this to his own life, and drink the blood, at least, of live women.

Now, if, when, we get to that stage, all art is culpable; and I prefer to say that elements in man which produce violence, which produce murder and rape, are already there and are not likely to be instigated, or even prevented, by a work of art. The work of art merely takes life as it is and shows life as it is and that's the end of its duty.

*Interviewer:* Mr. Burgess what is your opinion of our present civilization and our society, our present society?

**A.B.:** It is no different from any other society, in the sense that our society is violent, our society is irresponsible. I don't think we're any worse than, say, the society in which Shakespeare lived.

The stories we read about Elizabethan England indicate that it was far more dangerous to walk the streets of London say, in 1590 odd, than it is to walk the streets of New York or Rome today.

The fact is that human nature doesn't change, we're violent, we're naturally violent, we're naturally aggressive and we just see more of it nowadays because we see more newspapers and more films.

And let me get this straight, while I'm at it; there's nothing wrong with violence, violence in itself is not a bad thing, it is not automatically to be condemned, because only through violence can beneficent changes be made.

It was only through violence that the Americans were able to create a revolution, it's only through violence, in our own age, that we were able to defeat the Nazis.

*Interviewer:* Well then, where and how is society to be criticised since human nature, according to you, is the same, doesn't change?

**A.B.:** Well, in certain superficial senses we can criticise human society, we can say that the profit motive is too important, or the state is too powerful and things of that kind, but when we criticise human society all we're doing is criticising humanity.

We're just merely saying that man is like this, man is acquisitive and this is probably wrong, man is aggressive and this is probably wrong and so forth.

But where we must be careful, I think, is in this area where the word progress appears. I'm not quite sure what the term progress means, I think progress is possible in the material sense, I think it's a good thing for people to have more material comforts, nobody would deny that; I don't ask for many for myself but I don't begrudge Liz Taylor and Richard Burton having yachts and Cadillacs and so forth.

This is a good thing, this is part of human nature, the pampering of the flesh, the giving to the senses of what will awaken the senses and gratify the senses.

But in the wider, moral sense, progress is not possible, we cannot become better people unless we become different human beings, different animals.

I do accept the fundamental Christian tenet that man is born in original sin: we are more likely than not to choose the bad rather than the good, and this, which is called the Augustinian point of view, I too believe, after Saint Augustine who first propounded it, seems to be in thorough accordance with the facts of history.

Now, there is a contrary belief which strangely enough, or not so strangely, came from England, or came from Britain; there was a monk called Pelagius who said that man is good, that man is capable of becoming better, that man can build the just society and create his own heaven upon earth.

This seems to me to be false, it is not borne out by the facts of history, but this false theory, this heresy, underlies Socialism, underlies Communism, underlies all political theories which believe that man can fulfil himself through the state.

But when we see the state becoming powerful, trying to fulfil man, we see that the state becomes a great instrument of tyranny, as in Russia, as in Nazi Germany.

What we have to do is live our lives, sort out our own morality for ourselves, accept that we're imperfect and just do the best we can.



This has always been the position of the just man throughout history and it must be the position in the future: we will not get any better but we must try.

*Interviewer:* You do believe in God then , Mr. Burgess?

**A.B.:** I don't know whether I believe in God or not. It seems to me that God is a very useful fiction, when Voltaire said " If God does not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. " I think he was propounding a very profound truth.

We cannot get through the day without using, at least as a hypothesis, the notion of God, the notion of Creator, the notion of Sustainer.

But I find it more and more difficult to accept the God of the churches, whether it happens to be the Catholic church or Islam, which is of course at the moment, a very, very, potent religious body because it's tied up with oil.

I think that the hypothesis of God is a good one, but in the sense that God has any relationship to me, the concept has no real meaning.

I just merely accept God as a kind of intellectual hypothesis which I find useful, no more. I'm not a practising Christian, I don't go to church, I don't believe there's a heaven; I believe that after this life we're finished with, but during this life the hypothesis of God is a very useful one.

*Interviewer:* So you are inclined to think that this world is convincing evidence that it exists somewhere a co-even and total logic?

**A.B.:** No. I think that it is possible for man, as it were, to create an alternative universe, I think it's the job of the artist, the job of the scientist, the job of the thinker to build up, as it were, an image of some possible ultimate reality. I think that the best thing men can do is create a structure like, say, Beethoven's ninth symphony, or a structure like the philosophy of Descartes or Spinoza, whether these systems, the musical system of the ninth symphony, the philosophical system of Spinoza or Descartes is an image of some ultimate reality, we don't know.

I would rather hope that it would be so, but it doesn't matter if not.

This is our sole job, it's to impose on the chaos of life some structure, some order, and the order is best found, I think, in art and philosophy.

*Interviewer:* Would you agree with that sentence pronounced by Jacques Monod, " Life is a fact of chance and necessity and man is alone in an indifferent universe. "

**A.B.:** Well, this is absurd, this point of view, ... yes, I accept that. I accept that the universe is a great mass of whirling matter which is totally indifferent to man and that hence man is somewhat absurd in his confrontation with this huge nescient chaos.

But man's glory is that he can create order, man's glory is that he can create structures which have a more formal significance, more pattern, than the swirling mass of life he sees around him and man must get on with his job.

Political man is totally unimportant, sexual man, consuming man, these are not important, but creative man is the only thing which is important, that is why we're here, in a sense, to create.

*Interviewer:* You live in Rome now, in exile, as it were. Have you accustomed yourself to exile?

Do you consider yourself an exiled writer?

**A.B.:** I think I am an expatriate writer rather than an exiled writer. When a writer has to leave his country and go to some other country, then he is a genuine exile. I decided to expatriate myself from England, I think chiefly because I felt that no writer could do his best work in England anymore, I think the days in which a writer could create great art no longer exist in England.

It is partly because of the lack of conflict, partly because of the domination of the welfare state and partly because English society itself is no longer dynamic. I find that American society, for instance, is far more dynamic, there are things happening there, there are changes being made; violence is involved, naturally, but things are moving and it's only out of these elements of violence and sex that novels and poems can be made.

You can't make a poem, you can't make a novel, out of the kind of life that's lived in middle class London anymore.

One has to get out, but I do find that living in Italy I am up against a very severe problem, and it is the problem of not being surrounded by my own language.

I resist Italian, I resist all foreign languages as I get older because I want to know more and more about my own; my job is to exploit the resources of English and I resist Italian. I feel that I am surrounded by foreigners, although of course, I am the foreigner, and this does bring about a very depressing sense of isolation at times.

Not so bad for the musician. One of the reasons I am writing music at the moment is because I recognise it as a kind of international language: the way into foreignness, it's a kind of alternative Italian, if you like.

*Interviewer:* Have you been away long?

**A.B.:** From England? I left England in 1968, so I suppose it is long enough. I have no desire to go back, when I do go back I find a country rather hard to understand; I don't understand the names that are used in conversation, I don't understand the main issues that are discussed.

The England that means anything to me at all is the England of the past. I feel that the England of Shakespeare, the England of Chaucer, have a reality for me which the England of Harold Wilson or Edward Heath, or both together, doesn't possess.

*Interviewer:* You have written so many novels, several critical books, essays, historical books, this is quite a lot. Do you work hard or do you work in a great hurry?

**A.B.:** I don't work hard, I work as anybody else works, I do my job. I get up in the morning, have my breakfast and do my job but, and I say this to all writers, every writer must try and write at least one thousand words every day; no more, no less.

*Interviewer:* How did you start writing?

**A.B.:** How did I start writing? I started writing because I began my career as a musician.

I tried to be a composer for many, many years, and I found the writing of music very difficult because the mere physical labour of setting down on paper, notes for the instruments of the orchestra is wearing in itself. And in England, at the end of the war, it was not easy to get music performed, certainly there was no money in it and I used to envy these people who sat down at a typewriter and merely produced a simple line.

So I tried to do the same thing myself, I wrote a novel, the novel was accepted, and I saw myself as a novelist doing this kind of work solely as a hobby; but when I was invalided out of the colonial, the British colonial, service, with no job, I found that the only job that I could do was that of being a novelist.

And I think that many novelists, certainly in England, become novelists because they can't find any other work. That's how I became a novelist, I just found myself with nothing else to do except write novels and I've carried on with that to the present day.

*Interviewer:* Mr. Burgess, excuse me if I ask you, do you have a certain vanity?

**A.B.:** Do I have a certain vanity? What, a physical vanity? I have no physical vanity. Intellectual vanity? No, I don't think I am a vain person. Why, do I seem to be a vain person?

*Interviewer:* Er, we were wondering about your hair pulled down on your forehead.

**A.B.:** Yes, oh that's because I'm going bald, if I comb my hair high then you'll see a large bald patch. For some reason I resent baldness, I resent it strongly because I associate it with impotence, although I'm probably wrong. Yes, there is a kind of vanity, it's probably a sexual vanity after all. We all have it.

*Interviewer:* Now, the last book which has appeared in France, *La Folle Semence*, it has been quite successful and it has been called a fable on the theme of population explosion. Is this a problem which preoccupies you in particular?

**A.B.:** Well, it's a problem which did preoccupy me when I first conceived the book because I was living in the far east at the time, I'd seen India, I'd seen Bombay, I'd seen Calcutta.

I'd seen the ghastly results of over-population, and of course, I was living very close to Singapore, which is a little island crammed with humanity of all kinds, and naturally I saw this problem as one that was facing the east, but not yet facing the west.

In my little novel I present this theme of over-population as affecting my own country, England. I imagine a future in which the population is so great that people haven't enough to eat and the state steps in and forces people to have fewer and fewer children.

But I do, rather boldly I think, suggest a solution: the solution doesn't lie in contraception, in the states' imposing a limitation on the family, the solution is a Malthusian one.

Now, Malthus was an English clergyman who lived in the eighteenth century and first propounded the idea that soon there would not be enough food in the world for people, and therefore we had to do something about it.

He said the only thing we could do about it is to delay marriage, is to practise chastity, nowadays, of course, we don't believe in that, we believe that everybody has a right to copulate if they wish to; and they must guard against the inevitable biological results of copulation.

My view is as presented in this novel, so it's not perhaps essentially a serious view, I wouldn't go to the gallows on this view, is that we have to continue to accept certain natural checks.

Malthus said we have checks such as earthquakes, volcanoes, famines, these keep the population down.

But man has a cultural check and this cultural check is war. So, in my book I present wars which are waged, not for any ideological reason, not for territorial reasons, but because it's a means of keeping the population down.

*Interviewer:* Then another cultural check would be cannibalism?

**A.B.:** Well, this seems natural enough to me. It is probably always wrong, evil indeed, to kill one's neighbour for whatever cause.

But as far as I know there's never been any prohibition as far as eating the body of your neighbour is concerned, I can't see any ground at all for imagining that cannibalism is evil. What harm is one doing? One is merely breaking certain taboos and these taboos are naturally highly irrational. But it may very well be that one of our solutions to the coming problem of famine is cannibalism, we may be going to our supermarkets and buying cans of meat which are called *Mensch*

, or something like that, and these will be acceptable because we do, in fact, accept all kinds of nameless meats, seasoned with sodium nitrate, that we find on the shelves of supermarkets.

This may well happen and we may well so change our cultural thinking, our moral thinking, that we will accept it



It seems to me a far more reasonable solution than abortion which is genuine murder, and I do base my hatred of abortion on a very simple theory and that is, that everybody has a right to be born, but nobody has a right to live.

This is the fundamental theme of the novel we're talking about.

We all have a right to be born but as far as living, well, who can legislate? Have I a right to live to the age of seventy? If I have that right, who says so? Beethoven was dead at my age, fifty seven, Napoleon was dead at fifty two, so was Shakespeare, Chatterton was dead at seventeen, Keats was dead at twenty five. What right do I have to live longer than these people?

But I think I have a right to be born and I have a right to know what life is like and after that it is a matter of chance, a matter of war, a matter of murder, a matter of what you will; but we all must have this taste of life and for that reason everybody must be born who wants to be born.

*Interviewer:* According to a psychoanalytical point of view, cannibalism can be interpreted as an act of love.

**A.B.:** Well, there's a curious ambiguity which exists in, I think, all languages. If I say I like men, I like women, I can also say, I like pork, I like beef, *j'aime le porc, j'aime l'humanité* etc.

There's obviously a fundamental sense that the act of liking, that the act of loving, can be interpreted as a desire to possess ultimately, the desire to take the body of the loved thing or

the loved person within one's own system, to absorb it.

This of course is there in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Catholic church, although our present churchmen are trying to kill that old, perfectly natural, cannibalistic symbolism; Christ said " Eat me, drink me. " In other words, " Love me. "

And this is based on a fundamental need , I think, on the part of men, to absorb beings greater than himself, either spiritually and, Christ says, physically; this seems to be the finest theological justification for cannibalism one can ever find.

*Interviewer:* You are also interested in futurology apart from the population explosion, do you think that our technical progress will make life longer and that old people will take over?

**A.B.:** There seems to be no evidence, as far as I know, that people are living longer than they were, say, in the time of Shakespeare. Whenever one looks, say, at an anthology of Elizabethan poetry one finds that people die young and people die old, pretty much as today. People die at eighty, people die at eighty five, at ninety, people also die at twenty, people die at sixteen.

My own pragmatic experience teaches me that life isn't becoming necessarily any longer, people are dying just the same.

But there is an undoubted fear on the part of the young that the world is in the hands of the old; I don't think there is anything necessarily wrong in that, there is no great vice in being aged any more than there is any great virtue in being young.

I think a lot depends on how wise the old are, and we have to do something about our educational system whereby we regard it as a continuous process, not merely something that happens in childhood or adolescence, but something that goes on all our lives so that our old are wise as well as old.

There's no danger in what I believe is called a gerontocracy, there's no danger in the old ruling, we're going to get a lot of this in time to come, so long as the old are wise.

There's no virtue in youth either because youth usually is not wise.

*Interviewer:* It has been said that man is going through an identity crisis, doesn't know the reasons which make him live or think. What do you think of it?

**A.B.:** I don't worry too much about identity, it's far more important to live than to have an identity.

Let me try to explain what I mean: I've just written a novel, or rather, I have a short novel coming out this year, in which my hero, who is a professor in an American university, has a sudden heart attack and finds that part of his brain is blocked out, blacked out, and he has to give a lecture on an Elizabethan dramatist and the only thing he can do is to invent one on the spur of the moment.

He can't remember any real ones, and by the time he has invented this one; he has invented his work, his character, his life, he finds he's just as real as any of the students sitting in that room.

He has identity, he has thorough identity, but what he doesn't have is life.

It is far more important to live piecemeal, live through the senses, live through the brain, than to worry about what one is, to worry about one's name or one's character or one's make-up, these things are not important and I think this phrase 'identity crisis' is one of the stupidest I've ever encountered.

We are, we fill up space, we fill up time, we're hunks of meat perambulating the world, we think, we have sensations, and that's all we should worry about.

I, myself, have been through so many identity crisis, in this sense I don't even know what my name is; the name under which I'm appearing at the moment is not my real name. I've used various other names, I don't really care what name I'm called, what name goes down on the registries.

I am a being, occupying this chair at this moment, and I have certain thoughts and certain sensations and that's all that matters.

Identity is not in the least important.

*Interviewer:* Do you believe then, in the old reasons by Catechism, are still valid, based on, to serve God and to love God?

**A.B.:** In the sense that God means the ultimate vision, the vision of beauty, the vision of truth,

which is the job of the philosopher or the artist to purvey, I think that may be said to be correct.

I don't think we're here solely to eat and drink and copulate, I think we're here to create, and as we're supposed to be made in God's image, in that sense, the sense of creation, we're most fulfilling our nature, the nature of a being somewhat like God.

More and more, as I get older, I find that these fundamental theological concepts have a certain truth in them, although it's not necessarily the truth that the Pope or the Archbishop or the bishop or the Priest sees.

Trust the artist more than the churchmen, the artist will interpret theology far better than they.

*Interviewer:* This will be the future of morality,... which is not wholly sexual morality of course,... creativity?

**A.B.:** Well, yes, this is a problem. We've already talked a little about the future as far as the population explosion is concerned. As far as our diminishing food supplies are concerned we may have to create a new morality, a morality in which it is not only tolerable but even virtuous to eat one's fellow men.

We're always creating new moralities all the time.

But there are certain fundamental moral tenets that we can never disown and this of course, I think, is, to use the Schweitzerian phrase: respect for humanity, love for humanity, the sense

that we are all one member of each other, and that possibly respect is a little more important than love.

There's too little respect about at the present time, too little respect for people as unique beings, capable of creation, capable of the ideal vision; to kill a man, to kill a woman or to kill a child is to kill the vision that that child or woman or man possesses of the ultimate reality. This is a terrible thing to do. Lack of respect.

*Interviewer:* What are you working at?

**A.B.:** What am I working at here? I'm writing a symphony at the moment here, but a symphony to me is rather like a woman knitting, it keeps one part of my brain occupied while another part can concentrate on new literary ventures.

Well, at the moment I've completed a long, an epic poem I suppose you can call it, about Moses, *The Lawgiver*, and I'm writing a novel. I've started a novel about a kind of Pope John in which I present the situation that at the moment is being presented to us, whereby Pope John is a candidate for canonisation; he's going to be made a saint.

In my novel it, in effect, states that the canonisation is thoroughly misplaced, that Pope John was possibly a bad man, even though he didn't intend to be a bad man, because we owe to him the present disruption of one of the greatest intellectual and moral institutions that ever existed, the Catholic church.

I am working on a series for television about the life of Shakespeare, I'm working on a film about Beethoven's relationship with his nephew. I am working on various things, there's always plenty

to do, there's no writer's block as far as I'm concerned, and there aren't really enough hours in the day for the things that I have to do.

*Interviewer:* Which are the linguistic areas that you consider more fertile today?

**A.B.:** It's very hard to say, I don't know them all. I should imagine that possibly... very interesting things are going on in the Finnish language that are not translated into English.

But as far as we can tell, the English language is producing some very interesting things, I don't say England, I don't say America, I just say those areas in which the English language is used.

I might say West Africa I might say the West Indies, I might say South Africa, Australia and so on.

The English language has certain virtues which are not possessed, for instance, by the Italian language, which is the language that surrounds me at the moment, it is a highly flexible language, a language willing to change, a language willing to discard all its grammar and, this is very important, to amass as big a vocabulary as it possibly can.

I feel that the Russian language, for instance, has probably been ruined by the Soviet system, the delimitation of meaning, the unwillingness of the state to allow subtleties, ambiguities, which are resident in all languages, for a purely artistic end.

I don't know what Solzhenitsyn is like as a writer, I've only read him in English and I gather the

translations are pretty bad, but Solzhenitsyn has his limitations imposed by the fact that he's a Russian; he loves Russia and not humanity, in that, he is a product of the Soviet system.

But in America where there is comparative freedom to write what one wishes, in England too, the possibilities are very large.

I don't think they have yet been fulfilled, we haven't at the moment got a great writer in English, we may have in the future, the lines of communication are open.

The English language is developing in a very interesting way and I feel sure that the possibilities in the field of literature for English are immense, if not infinite.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any message that you would like to deliver to mankind, to people?

**A.B.:** Well, as the Americans say, 'If you want a message you must go to Western Union.' It is not the job of the artist to propound messages, it is the job of the preacher, it is the job of the politician; it is merely the task of the literary creator, like the musical creator, to produce shapes, structures, which will be satisfying in themselves and which need not necessarily have any direct relationship to life as we live it at the moment.

I don't think that man can do anything more at the moment than to look at himself and say 'I haven't changed much, I am what I was when I was kicked out of the Garden of Eden,' to use that convenient myth, 'I must cultivate those qualities in myself. I must not take politicians seriously, all politicians are probably the most evil men alive; they pervert language, they pervert thought, they pervert morality. Take no notice of the political unit, but rather in the smallest possible community, the community of one's family, the community of one's friends,



and try and develop those latencies which lie within us as creative beings.'

I can say no more than that, it's not really a message.

*Interviewer: Un bellissimo messaggio.*

© Estate of Anthony Burgess 2002