

Flowering Wounds and Ultra-Violence:  
Transgressions in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and J. G. Ballard's *Crash*

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<b>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</b>				
<p>The main aim of this thesis is to analyse the various ways in which transgression – or, the breaking of social and moral norms – manifests itself two very different novels: Anthony Burgess's <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (1962) and J. G. Ballard's <i>Crash</i> (1973). I do this by studying the novels' protagonists: Alex in <i>ACO</i>, and James and Vaughan in <i>Crash</i>. I compare and contrast the reasons behind their transgressions, and what they feel they gain from their actions. I also examine how boundaries are broken in relation to language and narrative form in the novels.</p> <p>In chapter one I introduce my topic and the approach I take to study my two chosen novels. I then give brief plot summaries, after which I move on to give background information about the authors, the novels and their historical and social contexts. In the second chapter I present the theories used in my thesis. Transgression as a term cannot be covered by one theory or viewpoint, which is why I have gathered theoretical background from various fields of study, e.g., literature, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. In my thesis I acknowledge the importance of deliberateness in transgression, and also that it is a fundamental part of human experience. In addition, it is crucial to note that the relationship between transgression and the limit is not a black-and-white matter; rather, they intertwine: the limit tempts into transgression.</p> <p>In the analysis section of the thesis I apply the theories introduced in the previous chapter. I begin the analysis of <i>ACO</i> by studying the reasons behind Alex's transgressive behaviour. After this I take a brief look at the language of the novel, Nadsat, and study its role as the language of violence, and also the linguistic violence present in the novel. I then examine the role of transgressive violence in the novel. I also explore the connection between violence and music. I then move on to study how the State transgresses the rights of the individual. I conclude the analysis of <i>ACO</i> by examining whether Alex succeeds in transgression. The analysis of <i>Crash</i> will also begin with the examination of reasons for transgression and a brief look at the transgressive language and form of the novel. Since eroticism is the main form of transgression in Ballard's novel, there are two subsections devoted to the subject: the first one deals with the eroticism of cars and car-crashes, the second one focuses on eroticism associated with injuries, wounds and death. The analysis of <i>Crash</i> will also examine whether Vaughan's death is a final, successful transgression. Finally, there is a brief conclusion about the main ideas discovered in my analysis section.</p> <p>In the fourth and concluding chapter of my thesis I take a closer look at the similarities and differences in how transgression manifests itself in the chosen novels. In both novels the respective protagonists do not want to be part of their societies which is why transgression offers a new and different life. Transgression, whether in the form of violence or eroticism, is seen as life-affirming in the novels. Through destruction comes ecstasy and loss of self: thus, transgression is seen as a beautiful, positive force. At the end of my final section I bring forth some examples of how reality seems to have mimicked some aspects of the novels. Finally, I mention a few possible subjects for future research.</p>				
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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Topic and Approach

Humans are limited beings. We live by and organise our lives and actions according to countless norms and rules. In addition to societal boundaries, humans are also bound by their physical limitations and limits. Although norms and rules have usually been put in place to create order and safety in society, they can also be stifling. What happens when someone decides to go against these limits? This is where *transgression* comes into the picture. Many literary works are valuable in the study of transgression: the examining of the social and moral norms and boundaries people have set for themselves and how they have also been crossed or broken – an angle from which I have chosen to study two very different novels, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and J. G. Ballard's *Crash*, which I will soon introduce in more detail. I intend to examine how transgression and transgressive acts manifest themselves in these two novels, and I will do this by studying the protagonists: comparing and contrasting the reasons behind their transgressions, and what they feel they gain from their actions.

Transgression in the simplest terms can be said to mean the crossing or breaking of boundaries of some sort. In the field of theology or religious practice, it is a concept that is usually associated with the notion of sin or acts that are somehow illicit and forbidden. However, transgression is not quite as simple as that – for example, sex and violence are not transgressive in themselves. When reading the literature on transgression it becomes clear that not only can it be a deliberate act of defiance but it is also a fundamental part of human experience. The limits and boundaries that are crossed or broken are usually social and moral norms. The relationship between transgression and the limit is not a black-and-white matter; rather, they intertwine: the limit tempts into transgression.

In literature, transgression or transgressiveness is not limited to one approach. Borders, boundaries and limits can be understood in various ways as they exist on all sectors of life. For example, if one were to take a look at *Dangerous Crossing*, a collection of papers on transgression, the diversity of viewpoints would come apparent: the papers study topics such as, travels through imagined and actual worlds, national borders, gender identity, linguistic and genre crossings, social and family norms. Loeb and Porter, the editors of the collection, add that the papers also “explore the breakdown of borders between male and female, private and public, [...] the dominant and the oppressed, the rational and the irrational” (9). Loeb and Porter also point out the important fact that “the readers of border texts, by switching from one referential code to another, are both ‘self’ and ‘other,’ and thus become border crossers themselves in the very progress” (10).

The two works I have chosen to analyse are *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), by Anthony Burgess (1917-1993), and *Crash* (1973), by J. G. Ballard (1930-2009). Both novels have stirred readers and academics with their examinations of the darker side of the human psyche. *A Clockwork Orange* (from now on abbreviated as *ACO*) is known for its protagonist’s passion for violence and the brainwashing he goes through (raising the question of whether it is better to be able to choose bad or being forced to be good). *Crash*, on the other hand, focuses on the eroticism of car-crashes and the sexualisation of cars and technology. As mentioned before, violence is not transgressive in itself but it would be foolish to ignore the importance it has in both novels. Violence is abundant in both *ACO* and *Crash*, though slightly masked by the Russian based slang (“Nadsat”) in the former, but fully exposed by the cold, clinical descriptions of car-crashes and injuries in the latter.

## 1.2. Plots

### 1.2.1. *A Clockwork Orange*

I will now give brief plot summaries of the two novels, and I will begin with *ACO*. The main character and narrator of *ACO* is a 15-year-old boy called Alex. He leads a life of crime and violence set in the Britain of the near future. This young man carries out his violent whims and fancies as the leader of a gang consisting of three “droogs,” or friends, called Pete, Georgie and Dim. Alex, however, is slightly naïve about his invincibility and one evening the disgruntled droogs trick him into getting caught by the police. The violent escapades that have previously brought Alex joy and the feeling of power are stopped when he is sent into prison. There he tries to put on a façade of good conduct, but after a while discovers a way that would get him out of prison in two weeks: Ludovico’s Technique.

Alex undergoes Ludovico’s Technique, a new “treatment” for turning criminals into good citizens. This treatment of conditioning prevents Alex from acting on his violent desires. If he tries to commit an act of violence, nausea and the feeling of dying are triggered by the treatment. The roles have changed and it is no longer Alex who practices violence, but the State, with Alex as the victim. The State has turned Alex into an individual with no real freedom of choice and incapable of defending himself. Violence was the one element besides classical music that brought meaning to Alex’s life, and it has been taken away by the State.

Feeling himself to be alone as a newly-freed man, Alex decides it would better to end his own life, and so he goes to the library to find books on the subject. However, from there on Alex is caught up by the victims of his violent past. He ends up at the house of a writer he assaulted at the beginning of the novel. At first the writer does not recognise Alex

and plans to use him as a weapon against the government. Later, the truth is discovered and in desperation Alex tries to kill himself by jumping out of a window. He survives the fall and is visited in hospital by the Minister of Interior, who appears to be very apologetic and assures him that the government never meant him any harm. The fall reverses the treatment and Alex briefly returns to his old behaviour. However, he soon grows tired of violence and realises that it was a necessary phase of making mistakes before becoming an adult and searching for a deeper meaning to life.

For Alex, most of his transgressive acts come in various forms of violence: for example, the violent robbery of a shop, assaults on a homeless man and a writer, fights against rival gangs, and sexual violence directed at two ten-year-old girls who are playing truant and the wife of the previously mentioned writer. It could also be said that the State transgresses the rights of the individual when Alex is put through brainwashing.

### **1.2.2. *Crash***

The protagonists of my other chosen novel are not too dissimilar from Alex; they may have different approaches, but transgression is something that gives them a life worth living (although in *Crash* the ultimate goal is an orgasmic death). *Crash* tells the story of a man called James Ballard and how his life is changed by two things: a car-crash and meeting Dr Robert Vaughan. James is a middle-aged man whose career and marriage have not offered him much satisfaction in recent times. It takes a car-crash to wake him up and bring him back to life: for him it is the first real experience he has had in years. The other two victims of the crash were a couple: a woman called Helen Remington, who survives, and her husband who dies. The crash awakens something hidden in James's mind; he has a growing interest in car-crashes and their victims. Having recovered enough from the accident, James starts to rent different cars and visits the crash site where he meets

Vaughan for the first time – although he soon discovers that Vaughan has been following him for a while.

James also decides to buy a new car that is exactly the same as the one involved in the accident. When James goes to the police pound to look at his crashed car he meets Helen Remington again. The two form an unusual relationship due to the shared experience of the car-crash; both have discovered that they can only get sexually aroused in cars – this is the reason for their later encounters. However, James's odd friendship with Vaughan is more significant as it takes over James's life and even marriage. Vaughan has once been a TV scientist but his life changed dramatically after a motorcycle accident. Vaughan is obsessed with anything to do with road accidents and car-crashes of various degrees: he has a vast collection of photographs and film footage of people injured in accidents; he likes to do much of the documenting himself. The ultimate dream for Vaughan is to die in a head-on collision with the actress Elizabeth Taylor.

The more time James spends with Vaughan, the more he becomes drawn to the nightmarish eroticism that the cars and injuries from accidents have to offer. There is also a slowly creeping affection James feels towards Vaughan which confuses him. Vaughan had told about his dream death scenario to his eclectic circle of friends but this would later be spoiled by a stunt driver called Seagrave. Seagrave first goes missing but it later emerges that he has recreated Vaughan's death scene rather poorly, under the influence of drugs and Seagrave himself dressed as Elizabeth Taylor. This tips Vaughan over the edge and he becomes suicidal, but he first makes a car journey with James and they both take LSD; the two men end up having sex and later Vaughan attempts to run over James. Vaughan steals James's car and ten days later the news of Vaughan's death in a car-crash reaches James. James, however, does not see it as a tragedy and he is already planning his own death.



In *Crash*, transgressive acts have perhaps more masochistic traits than in *ACO*: Vaughan, and through his influence, also James, find the idea of being in a car-crash – and also someday dying in one – sexually exciting. Transgression can also be seen in the desire to have the human form somehow broken (for example, cuts, wounds, broken bones) and merge with the technology of the car.

### **1.3. Authors and Contexts**

#### **1.3.1. Historical Context**

I will begin by introducing the historical contexts in which the two novels appeared. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison emphasise the importance of acknowledging the destructive effect that the experience of war must have had on the British population (2). The same can be said about authors who would struggle and question the relevance of their work during and after the war (Cockin and Morrison 2). Part of the problem – though not the main culprit – was the critical establishment, which in the post-war period showed very little interest in contemporary literature (Cockin and Morrison 3).

Even though many post-war writers would deal with the themes of “atonement, regeneration and redemption” (Cockin and Morrison 4), there were also feelings of fear and reserve regarding the new mass society, “a world of managerialism, planning, new technologies and social engineering” (Waugh 42). These fears would inevitably merge with new ones concerning the Cold War: “the intellectual recognition of Britain’s decline as a world power, fear of political and social surveillance, as well as threats to the perceived or imagined hegemony of particular social groups” (Waugh 42). These themes also emerge in Ballard’s *Crash* and Burgess’s *ACO*, particularly the fear of new technologies and the individual’s battle for survival in an increasingly frightening society.

A new and rebellious youth culture would grow out of the generation who reached young adulthood in the 1950s; a generation of teenagers who had been fortunate or unfortunate enough to miss the opportunity to fight in the Second World War due to their youth (Cockin and Morrison 5). Furthermore, changes and expansion in education, youth clubs and organizations and also the raising of the school-leaving age helped to formalise and institutionalise “‘youth’ as a discrete social group associated with specific need and problems” (Osgerby 128). The reign of the Teddy Boys would start to weaken in the late 1950s, when the “hip, west London cliques” known as *modernists* emerged, who would evolve into Mods in the early 1960s (Osgerby 131). As Osgerby points out, style was important to both Mods and Rockers: the former could be recognised from their penchant for chic, smoothly tailored Italian-inspired suits, while the latter were known as the Mods’ leather-wearing rivals, who rode motorcycles (131).

The reactions concerning the new youth cultures were not exclusively negative. However, the opposing views revealed the dual thinking in post-war debates about youth culture (Osgerby 131). Precisely because of their stylish and clean-cut appearance, “the mods were often fêted by the media as pacesetters of the 1960s social dynamism” (Osgerby 131). Nevertheless, the next moment the media could turn and vilify them as “*bêtes noires*” of society (Osgerby 131).

When the post-war society gradually became more affluent, disposable income was spent and invested on better housing but also on cars and holidays (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 239). The increasing popularity of cars in a consumer society brought forth the “complex relationship between material standards and the quality of life” (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 239). The car was a source of a host of new problems: pollution, traffic jams and deaths and injuries in car accidents; and yet, the car was also seen as a symbol of wealth and status, “whether in form of the company car [...] or [...] luxury cars”

(Zweiniger-Bargielowska 239-40). In addition to prosperity, the car has also traditionally been the symbol of freedom and mobility in the West. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska points out that the car often represented masculine identity, and also that the “phallic symbolism of the car and its relationship with sex has been celebrated in pop songs and represented in advertising” (239).

It is also worth taking a brief look at technology since it is featured in both *ACO* and *Crash*, though its role is perhaps more prominent in the latter novel. However, in both novels technology is closely linked with the human body. It plays an invasive role but also acts as an object of desire, something with which to be merged. Sherryl Vint sees that technology in and of itself is neutral: it does not emancipate or oppress, but it “can be used to signify new forms of exclusion as well as new spaces of freedom” (21), a theme which will be later explored in the analysis section of my thesis.

The genre of science fiction is especially befitting for examining the possibilities of future bodies and technologies because it is a discourse which enables both the author and the readers to imagine the outcomes (Vint 19). Vint also emphasises that “[t]he new selves SF [science fiction] might help us imagine are both the problematic selves and the unexpected others [...] they remind us of the fragility of our boundary-making work and that the Other always is an aspect of self made problematic” (21).

### **1.3.2. Anthony Burgess and Origins of *ACO***

To reach a more comprehensive understanding of the novels, I will first describe Anthony Burgess’s life briefly and then move on to J. G. Ballard. John Anthony Burgess Wilson was born in 1917 to a pianist father and a music-hall mother in Manchester (Dix 3). Burgess’s mother unfortunately died when he was still a baby, and according to Carol M. Dix, he then had a stepmother who is included as the grotesque figure in *Inside Mr*

*Enderby* (3). In addition to the stepmother, the Roman Catholic Church was a significant influence on Burgess, both at home and at school, as can be seen in many of his novels (Dix 3).

Curiously, the writer's profession found Burgess only when he had a serious health scare in his early forties, a suspected brain tumour (Morrison xiv). Up until that point, Burgess had worked for six years as an education officer in the Colonial Service in Brunei and Malaya (Morrison xiv). In Burgess's own words: "The surgeons in London said it was inoperable and gave me a year to live. Well, they told my first wife that, and she kept it to herself for a time. [...] this terminal year was one in which I had to work very hard to earn a little money for her" ("Thousand Words"). Burgess aimed for ten novels, but by the end of the supposed final year of his life, he had managed to write five and a half novels, one of which was an early version of *ACO* ("Thousand Words"; Morrison xv).

There are at least three significant events or factors that have contributed to the emergence of *ACO*. The first of these was a very violent attack in 1944 on Burgess's first wife by a gang of four American GI deserters (Ingersoll 62; Morrison xiv). Burgess's wife was pregnant at the time and the violent assault led to a miscarriage and eventually to alcoholism and her early death (Ingersoll 62). Turning this frankly horrific incident into a work of fiction was cathartic for Burgess, and, as quoted by Morrison, Burgess said it was "an act of charity" to the perpetrators of his wife's assault (xiv). By this Burgess refers to the fact that he wrote the story from the perspective of the assailants and not the victim (Morrison xiv).

The second decision Burgess made concerned the novel's characters. The inspiration for its protagonist stemmed from the new youth culture of the 1950s, which was often seen as threatening. Since Burgess had been away from Britain for a few years, it was probably

easier for him to notice the changes in society and to react to them in his writing. Here is what Burgess had to say on that very matter in an interview conducted in 1991:

I was worried about something I'd only just noticed, having come back to England. There was a genuine growth in juvenile violence. It was also structured violence. There were proposals to extirpate the violent element in youth by using Pavlovian techniques, the notion being that you could wash the brain and produce good citizens. Well, as a north-western Catholic this struck me as horrible because you were denying free will, you see. ("Thousand Words")

The perpetrators of juvenile violence Burgess is alluding to were most likely the Teddy Boys of the late 1950s and the first Mods and Rockers of the early 1960s (Osgerby 130; Morrison xv). In addition to gang violence, Burgess took note of the development of pop music and coffee bars which would later turn up in *ACO* (though coffee bars would be changed to milk bars) (Morrison xv).

Burgess's third major decision concerned the *language* of *ACO*. Burgess had always been fascinated by slang and dialects in their various forms, and he had considered using the contemporary slang of the early 1960s in the novel, but he decided against it because, in his opinion, "it was ephemeral like all slang and might have a lavender smell by the time the manuscript got to the printers" (Morrison xvi; *You've Had Your Time* 27). Burgess was a very adept linguist and it was his interest in the Russian language and the opportunity of a working holiday in Leningrad (now St Petersburg) in 1961 that gave him the idea of inventing a Russian-based slang for *ACO* (Biswell xii-xiii). According to Andrew Biswell, Burgess and his wife saw gangs of youths who were violent and well-dressed, not unlike the Teddy Boys back in England (xiii). Biswell then continues to point out that these gangs

made Burgess realise that “dandified, lawless youth is an international phenomenon, equally visible on both sides of the Iron Curtain” (xiii).

As mentioned before, Burgess had been concerned about the possible use of Pavlovian techniques and brainwashing of various forms on young people to control their behaviour (“Thousand Words”). The American psychologist B. F. Skinner was one of the advocates of behaviour modification and it is his ideas that Burgess wanted to target in *ACO* (Morrison xxii). Biswell emphasises that there is no evidence that Burgess had read Skinner’s *Science and Human Behaviour* (1953): it is likely, however, that he found a summary of Skinner’s theories in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World Revisited* (1959), which he read while preparing to write *ACO* (xi). Free will was of utmost importance to Burgess, which is why with *ACO* he set out to “offer a counter-argument to the mechanistic determinism of Skinner and his followers” (Biswell xii). Despite, or perhaps precisely *because* of this, Burgess saw the potential of his novel’s language to conduct his own brainwashing experiment:

[T]he strange new lingo would act as a kind of mist half-hiding the mayhem and protecting the reader from his own baser instincts. And there was a fine irony in the notion of a teenage race untouched by politics, using totalitarian brutality as an end in itself, equipped with a dialect which drew on the two chief political languages of the age. [...] As the book was about brainwashing, it was appropriate that the text itself should be a brainwashing device. The reader would be brainwashed into learning minimal Russian. The novel was to be an exercise in linguistic programming [...] (*You’ve Had Your Time* 38)

It seems slightly ironical that Burgess would choose to conduct his own brainwashing of sorts when he is so vehemently against Skinner’s ideas. It can nonetheless be seen as a

means of exposing the flaws of Skinner's theories if they were to be carried out in the most extreme way possible.

In the words of Richard Mathews, *ACO* was a "radical experiment" which would mark a departure from the style Burgess had used in his previous traditionally constructed novels (36). Burgess hoped that a change of genre would create variety and at the same time reach a greater readership (Mathews 36). Peter Hughes Jachimiak points out that even though *ACO* is often seen "as part of the modernist dystopian continuum, it is agreed that during the late 1950s and early 1960s the British novel went through a series of notable changes" (148). One of the most noteworthy of these changes was the crossover between so-called "high" and "low" narrative forms – science fiction in particular was a genre with which many previously "mainstream novelists" dallied, in the hope of finding new ideas (Jachimiak 148).

*ACO* was published in Britain in 1962 and by that time Burgess's reputation was growing steadily; he had hopes that *ACO* would further boost his career and income (Morrison xvi). These hopes were not unreasonable considering that in the days of only two television channels, the interview with Burgess and the dramatization of the first chapter of his new novel on BBC would have reached an audience of up to nine million (Morrison xvi-xvii). Despite the media coverage, *ACO* did not sell well, "a mere three thousand copies by the time his [Burgess's] next royalty statement came through" (Morrison xvii). Burgess then consequently blamed over-exposure; the novel had been so thoroughly discussed in the media that potential readers did not think it was necessary to go out and purchase the book (Morrison xvii). As Morrison points out, the reviewers – who were anonymous in those days – were not kind with their words, either: "The consensus was typified by the *New Statesman*'s verdict that the novel was 'a great strain to read.' The *Times Literary Supplement* was harsher still: 'a nasty little shocker'" (xvii).

*ACO* was released in the US later in 1962 and was better received than in Britain (Morrison xvii). However, due to the demands of the American publisher, the reviewers were reading a version of the novel which differed from the original British edition: the final chapter, where the main character Alex reaches maturity and renounces violence, had been left out (Morrison xvii). It was not an easy decision for Burgess but he knew “his financial security rested on getting his name known on the other side of the Atlantic” (Morrison xvii). Burgess would later comment on the matter in the preface included in the restored American edition in 1986: “My book was Kennedyan and accepted the notion of moral progress. What was really wanted was a Nixonian book with no shred of optimism in it” (“A Clockwork Orange Resucked”).

Although Stanley Kubrick’s film version of *ACO* would bring the story of Alex to a much wider audience, it would also become a source of upset to Burgess himself: “A great disservice. And it still goes on... Words can hit hard but not so hard as shapes in Technicolour [sic]” (“Thousand Words”). The film version was based on the American edition of the novel and thus also lacked the final chapter of the story. The violence – no longer veiled by the novel’s language – became much more apparent in Kubrick’s film version. Jachimiak does indeed point out that “it was Kubrick’s less cerebral, highly stylised version – and crucially, not Burgess’s original text – which was initially subjected to widespread condemnation” (149).

Kubrick shunned publicity and so Burgess was left to defend and debate both the novel and the film adaptation (Jachimiak 149). Copycat crime, death threats and the press reaction in Britain led Kubrick to place a self-imposed ban on the film, which would later perpetuate the mythology surrounding the film and the novel: a mythologising of the film because of its unattainability; a mythologising of the novel “as it remained the only available format in which *A Clockwork Orange* could be consumed” (Jachimiak 148).



Burgess continued to work until his death from lung cancer in 1993 (“Burgess a Brief Life”).

### **1.3.3. J. G. Ballard and Origins of *Crash***

Although both started their writing careers around the same time, Ballard was over a decade younger than Burgess, with a very different background and formative years. James Graham Ballard, who is better known as J. G. Ballard, was born in Shanghai in 1930 and lived the first fifteen years of his life in China (Elborough 2; Pringle 4). During the Second World War, Ballard and his family went through the frightening experience of being interned in a Japanese detention camp in China for three years (Elborough 2). David Pringle makes a rather obvious and simplistic point when he suggests that it is the early part of Ballard’s life and experiences which make him and his writing “incurably ‘foreign’” (4). However, Pringle also points out that this characteristic is one of Ballard’s strengths when it comes to his texts (4). Even though Ballard was born to British parents, it could be argued that his origins were, in a way, more colonial than British because of where he spent his childhood.

Before finally deciding to become a writer, Ballard was heading for the medical profession but dropped out of Cambridge after two years (Elborough 3; Pringle 5). Ballard’s decision to pursue the career of an author was hurried along when one of his stories was a joint winner of the university’s fiction prize in 1951 (Elborough 3). Ballard saw the prize as an encouragement to abandon his medical career for a literary one but he did however appreciate what he had learned during his studies of the human anatomy (which can be seen, for example, in *Crash*) (Elborough 3).

Ballard’s career can be said to have begun around 1956 when he started selling stories to British science fiction magazines (Pringle 4). Ten years later Ballard had

managed to get over fifty short stories and four novels published (Delville 1). According to Michel Delville, Ballard's efforts helped to raise the profile and literary standard of science fiction as a genre of writing "at a time when it was dismissed as adolescent, escapist and, ultimately, second-rate art" (1). Travis Elborough points out that even though Ballard's early work can be described as fairly conventional science fiction – with its space travel and interplanetary adventures – it is ultimately the *inner* space, the unconscious, which intrigued Ballard (4). The deviance of Ballard's writing from the science fiction conventions, combined with his moving across "high" and "low" literary paradigms, unfortunately resulted in his work being relegated "to the margins of both the SF canon and the literary establishment" (Delville 2). The long overdue recognition and reappraisal of Ballard's works did not happen until the publication of his partly autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun* in 1984 (Delville 2).

The publication of *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969, hereafter referred to as *TAE*) and *Crash* (1973) helped to put in motion the "second phase" of Ballard's career in the early 1970s when he became a cult figure appreciated by the underground scene (Delville 1). *Crash* had its origins in a short story included in *TAE*. A darker tone and themes of sex, violence and celebrity culture started to creep into these short stories when Ballard began writing them in the 1960s (Elborough 6). In addition, both personal and international tragedies had their effect on Ballard: the death of his wife in 1964, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the Vietnam War (Elborough 6). For Scott McCracken it is indeed Ballard's *Crash* which sets the darker tone for 1970s society, when "the post-war enthusiasm for an economy fuelled by mass consumption began to fade in the wake of the oil crisis" (623).

The seeds of inspiration for *Crash* did not only come from *TAE*; Ballard took the plunge into the art world when he put on an exhibition at the New Arts Laboratory in

London in 1970 (“Krafft-Ebing Visits”). The exhibition consisted of three crashed cars and the reaction to them came as a surprise to Ballard even though he had set it up as “an experiment to test one or two of the hypotheses in the book [*TAE*]” (“Krafft-Ebing Visits”). The response to these inanimate objects of art was shocking but undoubtedly helped Ballard to further develop his ideas for *Crash*. Here is what Ballard told in an interview in 1973 about his experiences:

I’ve never seen people get drunk so fast. I was certainly within half an hour the only sober person at that gathering. People were breaking bottles of red wine over the cars, smashing the glasses, grabbing the topless girl and dragging her into the back of one of the cars. Brawls broke out. There was something about those crashed cars that tripped all kinds of latent hostility. Plus people’s crazy sexuality was beginning to come out. In a way, it was exactly what I had anticipated in the book without realizing it. (“Krafft-Ebing Visits”)

These kinds of deeds were not committed only in the excitement of the opening night; after a month the “cars were well and truly wrecked” due to regular attacks by the visitors to the gallery (“Krafft-Ebing Visits”). With his exhibition, Ballard had inadvertently created a small cult and for a brief period of time it was acceptable and fashionable to take part in the destruction of the vehicles.

As Andrzej Gasiorek so aptly points out, science fiction enabled Ballard to take a closer look at the rapid progress in technology and social changes in the twentieth century in an effort to try and understand the developments in human life (9). For Ballard, the most prominent and wide-reaching of these changes is the car: “We spend a large part of our lives in the car [...] I think the twentieth century reaches its purest expression on the highway. Here we see all too clearly the speed and violence of our age, its strange love affair with the machine and, conceivably, with its own death and destruction” (“Autopia”).

It seems that the reception of *Crash* has been very mixed: the press reaction was mostly negative when the novel was published and the positive re-evaluation of Ballard's work and its intricacies only came later. A *New York Times* reviewer dubs it "hands down, the most repulsive book I've yet to come across [...] Believe me, no one needs this sort of protracted and gratuitous anguish: except perhaps those who think quadruple amputees are chic" (Elborough 12). The *Times* reviewer thinks along the same lines but hands out some grudging compliments to Ballard: "Ballard has a brilliant reputation but this novel's obsession with sado-masochism via deliberate car-crashing is repellent. *The fact that he writes well makes it creepier*" (Elborough 12-13; added emphasis).

Owing to very unfortunate circumstances, Ballard himself was involved in a car-crash two weeks after completing *Crash*: "my car rolled over on a dual carriageway and crossed into the oncoming lane. This was an extreme case of nature imitating art. The experience was frightening and disturbing, in exactly the way I had described in *Crash*" ("Ballard on Crash"). Furthermore, this is not Ballard's only personal link with the novel: the main character is the namesake of the author (James Ballard) and the novel is set near his own place of residence. Ballard justifies these decisions thus:

In making myself the narrator I was trying to achieve complete honesty – and at the same time, in a paradoxical way, emphasising that the book is a piece of fiction. [...] I did this [setting the novel in his home territory] in order to achieve complete realism. I wanted the book to have complete authenticity. Also, the landscape around London Airport has very much the affectless character that I see as the hallmark of future. ("Ballard on Crash")

It would seem that, because of the shocking themes dealt in the novel, Ballard's inclusion of realistic details is a way to give the reader something to grasp on.

Although the focus is on cars in *Crash*, in an interview with *Cypher* Ballard emphasises that the novel is more about technology as a whole and its “sinister marriage” with sex (“Ballard on Crash”). Ballard acknowledges that this is an uncomfortable thought but one which we must face (“Ballard on Crash”). Ballard does not see that technology in itself is necessarily “forbidding or inhuman” (“Ballard on Crash”) and, in fact, he is sure that harnessing it to the sexual impulse will “transform sex in the way that, say, the jet engine has transformed travel” (“Krafft-Ebing Visits”).

#### **1.4. Aims and Methods**

I have chosen the two novels because, although already extensively studied on their own, I am sure new interpretations can be found when the two are compared. Although both of them were products of the Cold War, the novels appeared over a decade apart: *ACO* in the early 1960s and *Crash* in the early 1970s. Both novels are dark in tone and one could easily think that the outlook in them is rather bleak and negative, although humour does provide some relief. Transgression, too, is often by default associated with the negative due to its close relationship with violence and boundary-breaking nature.

I am going to study how transgression manifests itself in Burgess’s and Ballard’s works, and will do so by examining the protagonists of both novels. Even though James is the narrator, I have chosen to include Vaughan as the other protagonist of *Crash* because James focuses a great deal on Vaughan’s story as well. I am interested in examining the complexities of transgression and how it manifests itself in these two novels by Ballard and Burgess; I wish to study whether its nature is purely destructive or if transgressive acts can be seen in a positive light. I aim to find out what kind of boundaries the characters break. I will compare and contrast the importance and significance of transgression to the main characters of the novels, Alex (coming of age story) and James Ballard and Robert

Vaughan (middle-aged men, the possibility of a new life through transgression). In addition to the characters and their transgressive actions, I will also examine how boundaries are broken in relation to language and narrative form in the novels.

Furthermore, it is important to study why the characters feel the need to transgress boundaries: what do they get out of going against the rules and norms of society? Do the transgressive acts have an effect on the characters' identities or was that side of them always present? In addition, I will examine if transgression brings them closer to their true self and whether transgression can be seen as a positive force.

## **2. Transgression**

In this section my attention will be focused on how transgression and transgressive acts can be defined. I will begin by examining transgression in relation to society and norms, after which I move on to the subject of how bodies are regulated in society. I will then study the complicated matter of limits and how they are essential for enabling transgression. It is after this that I move on to study transgression on an individual level as a subjective inner experience and acknowledge the importance of transgression to the human experience: self and identity.

I will then look further into the relationship between eroticism and transgression by utilising the studies of the French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille. I will also include his theories on the subjectivity of transgression and the discontinuous nature of human existence. I will later also bring forth the undeniably important and close relationship between transgression and violence and death; not forgetting the despoiling essence of eroticism.

### **2.1. Transgressing Society**

Julian Wolfreys points out that we often think we know what transgression means, but it is a more complex issue than merely some illicit actions: “[D]isrupting order and rebelling against societal norms, if and when we think we transgress, we do no more than conform to expectations of acceptable ‘deviance’” (1). Wolfreys continues with conventions of transgression and says that usually the location from which one departs for transgression is “always on the side of the law, convention, what is taken socially and culturally, as well as institutionally, to be standard, acceptable, decent, proper, correct, approved or authorized” (3). Where one ends up after crossing the boundary is a place of the illicit, the outlaw; one

has crossed a threshold and moved “beyond the commonly determined bounds (of law, decency, or whatever)” (Wolfreys 3). Wolfreys adds: “Transgression, conventionally understood, can also be taken on as a *deliberate* act of defiance, non-acceptance of laws or rebellion” (4; added emphasis).

In much the same way, Chris Jenks sees that transgressing means going beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, violation or infringement (2). Hence, it is the presence of a law of some sort that enables transgression: institutions (e.g. society, a university, a religious community) assert, define and qualify its identity and limits based on certain axioms (logical statements assumed to be true) (Wolfreys 4). Wolfreys points out that the reason why such rules are produced, amended and supplemented is so that members or potential members of various institutions “can measure the extent to which they belong, how they might belong, to what extent they are excluded or can never belong” (4).

The rules of society and various institutions that Wolfreys and Jenks are discussing can also be referred to as *norms*. Norms are an integral part of any society’s definitions of acceptable, unacceptable and advisable behaviour – be they social, moral, religious, formal or informal norms. According to Christina Bicchieri, norms can be followed on a personal level or they can be collectively held norms (1). The term “norm” can be used to broadly refer to “a variety of behaviours and accompanying expectations” (Bicchieri 2). There is often confusion about the strictness of norms; Bicchieri explains that a norm can be “descriptive of what most people do, or prescriptive of behaviour” (1), *social norms* are informal and should not be confused with *codified rules* which are normative expectations (8).

Bicchieri emphasises that although fear and desire to please are strong motives to conform to norms, self-interest is a more likely reason for most people: the desire to fit in



and have an easier life (23-4, 29). A world where fear and the desire to please are the dominant motives to conform, would imply that conformity to norms would only be a result of monitored behaviour and the possibility of sanctions (Bicchieri 23-4). However, the norm is more powerful than one sometimes realises, and Michel Foucault certainly sees that “since the eighteenth century, it has joined other powers – the Law, the Word (*Parole*) and the Text, Tradition – imposing new delimitations upon them” (*Discipline and Punish* 184). What Foucault calls “The Normal,” is achieved through standardisation, e.g., in education and industrial processes: “Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age” (*Discipline and Punish* 184). Society’s control over its people would be maintained by various “degrees of normality” which at the same time show that a person is a member of a homogenous social body, but also categorised and hierarchised (*Discipline and Punish* 184).

Jenks attaches a series of continua in relation to the concept of transgression, for instance, sacred-profane, good-evil, sane-mad (2). Like Wolfreys, Jenks points out that even though these continua are often understood as absolute and seen as dichotomies, transgressions are in fact situation-specific and vary across social space and through time (2-3). Furthermore, transgression is closely related to the concept of *excess*, which is especially visible in contemporary society in the forms of over-production, over-consumption and excessive behaviour (Jenks 3).

After the realisation that society does not rest on an even base, new questions are constantly “raised about the relationship between the core of social life and the periphery, the centre and the margins, identity and difference, the normal and the deviant, and the possible rules that could conceivably bind us into a collectivity” (Jenks 4-5). Jenks raises the issue of insecurity about how we deal with relationships with others and the ownership of our own desires (5). Moreover, uncertainty and flux within our cultures brings forth

questions in relation to the categories of the normal and the pathological “when applied to action or social institutions” (Jenks 5). This instability leads to the testing and forcing of authority and tradition (Jenks 5). The lack of collectivity in society complicates the transgressive action because it is only through the sense of togetherness that helps us understand “that which is outside, at the margins, or, indeed, that which defies consensus” (Jenks 6). Similarly, Bicchieri points out that we often become consciously aware of norms, expectations and preferences only when they are violated (39).

Wolfreys reminds us that every transgression is different (8-9). In addition, according to Wolfreys, “being human thus means not only to be transgressed but also to be transgressive. Subjectivity is always grounded historically, culturally, ideologically, epistemologically, in space and time” (9). It is equally important to acknowledge that subjectivity is not stable, it is never fixed: “it is semi-porous, mutable, ineluctably protean, fluctuating, and discontinuously differentiated within itself and its others. Before sin, disobedience, misbehaviour or wrongdoing, transgression is always the limitless capacity of the subject to break its own limits and still remain itself” (Wolfreys 9).

As noted earlier, Wolfreys emphasises that what is considered transgressive is dependent on the person and also the time period in which the transgressive act is performed (9). He goes as far as to say that there is no transgression, “if by this term one means a stable or constant, universal concept, which is transferable from situation to situation, even to occasion, from era to era, constituency to constituency” (Wolfreys 9). Thus, it could be said that “what is the disruption of form or institution for some is the assertion of identity for others,” in other words, the idea of the transgressive does not possess a stable identity, form or meaning (Wolfreys 9-10). What is normal and acceptable can only be defined in relation to what is *not* considered to be normal in a particular society, in a particular time.

## 2.2. Bodies in Society

Norms do not merely refer to behavioural rules, they also concern the role of bodies and the expectations set on them by society. Bryan S. Turner describes the rather blunt premise of the sociology of the human body in the following way:

[T]he human body represents a regulatory problem in the development of human civilizations. [...] human bodies have to be trained, manipulated, cajoled, coaxed, organized and in general disciplined. The training or cultivation of bodies by disciplines is a principle feature of culture as learned behaviour. (15)

Turner's words may seem harsh but if one considers them again, it is not difficult to see that these actions are executed by various people and institutions in society: e.g., parents, teachers, schools, doctors, religious institutions, the police, prisons and the army. Thus, by following rules and behaving according to expectations, one goes through socialisation, i.e., one becomes part of society. In addition, Michel Foucault also reminds us that the body cannot be seen to be separate from the political field: "power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (*Discipline and Punish* 25). Going *against* these norms and governing bodies of society are a significant part of transgression.

One could argue that secularisation has led to religious decline and thus also the weakening of "regulative moral functions of religion" (Turner 18). Turner, however, wants to avoid this simplification and claims that many of these religious functions can now actually be found in medicine, "which polices social deviance through the creation of a sick role in the doctor-patient relationship" (18). Another significant change in the way human bodies are perceived has been the medicalization of the productive body or, as

Turner explains, “the rational application of medical knowledge and practice to the production of healthy, reliable, effective and efficient bodies” (21).

Related to the medicalization and controlling methods of human bodies in general, is the rise of consumer culture in the postmodern society (Kubisz 7). Marzena Kubisz sees that the overthrowing of production by consumption has also changed the definition of the body, not to mention the values associated with it (8). By this Kubisz means the increasing importance placed on body maintenance and appearance which are measured against idealised, unachievable bodies (20). This culture-generated fear is then utilised to sell the idea of self-control back to the consumers: the promotion of “the belief that through permanent vigilance and surveillance one can come close to the ideal” (Kubisz 20).

### **2.3. Tempting Limits and Transgression as the Human Experience**

Michel Foucault sees that transgression, or “profanation,” is enabled “in a world which no longer recognizes any positive meaning in the sacred” (“Preface” 30). Foucault also points out the close relationship between transgression and the limit, for they depend on each other: “a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows” (“Preface” 34). Foucault, however, emphasises that the relationship between transgression and the limit is not dualistic but rather “takes the form of a spiral” which cannot easily be broken (“Preface” 35). The act of transgression cannot be said to contain anything negative; it is an affirmation of limited (or, discontinuous) being (“Preface” 35). Foucault continues by suggesting that this affirmation does not contain anything positive either, for “no content can bind it, since, by definition, no limit can possibly restrict it” (“Preface” 35-6).

According to Ashley Tauchert, the purpose of transgression is to find the hidden conventions of regularity that construct “human life and consciousness *by breaching their terms*” (9; original emphasis). Critical transgression is characterised “by an underlying philosophy of excess and anguish, overspilling of boundaries, breaking of taboos, denaturalizing of cultural codes” (Tauchert 16). Like Bataille and Foucault, Tauchert remarks on the tempting nature of transgression; constraint then is seen as necessary because it invites transgression (48). Accordingly, death then is seen as “the ultimate constraint to the will to power” (Tauchert 48).

Tauchert argues that transgression has an enemy in the form of compassion because it recognises “the irreducible truth of the other in any encounter, critical or otherwise, while transgression centres on the inner experience of a sovereign will-to-power; masterhood” (115). Furthermore, it would appear that transgression “is fixated on the publicly abjected extremities of human potential: madness, orgies, murder, rape, incest, ecstasy, s-m, death” (Tauchert 116).

Georges Bataille paints a vivid picture of the relationship between transgression and prohibition by comparing it to the actions of a beating heart: “The frequency – and the regularity – of transgressions do not affect the intangible stability of the prohibition since they are its expected complement – just as the diastolic movement completes a systolic one, or just as explosion follows upon compression. The compression is not subservient to the explosion, far from it; it gives it increased force” (65). The “explosion” referred to, or, the transgression, is the result of temptation, a desire to fall, “to fail, to faint, to squander all one’s reserves until there is no firm ground beneath one’s feet” (Bataille 240). Bataille’s notion on the desire to fall is very much related to eroticism and the deliberate loss of self, to which I will return later.

Transgression is then seen as a part or centre of self and the *inner world*, but deviant, abnormal and marginal in the *outside world*. According to Wolfreys, transgression “indicates a moment of becoming, an event erupting from out of a multiplicity of possibilities in the textual and cultural formation of knowledge where transition is irreversible” (15). Wolfreys regards transgression as “the very pulse that constitutes our identities, and we would have no sense of our own subjectivity were it not for the constant, if discontinuous negotiation with the transgressive otherness by which we are formed and informed” (1). To Wolfreys, transgression is not “other,” it is not even marginal:

[T]ransgression is the centre of the self, the subject’s dark heart, an alterity [otherness] without which identity would have no place, and could not take place. [...] Transgression is the law of the law. No identity, no subjectivity, no ontology would be possible without some measure of transitive, translative transgressivity which the subject suffers in order to exist. (180)

Likewise, Jenks sees transgression as “a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation” (2).

Jenks acknowledges that “[t]he possibility of breaking free from moral constraint in contemporary culture has become an intensely privatised project” (6-7). The inability to recognise a bond leads to difficulty in acknowledging fracture and “how then do we become free-of or different-to?” (Jenks 7). Jenks emphasises that the limits and taboos are “never simply imposed from the outside; rather, limits to behaviour are always personal responses to moral imperatives that stem from the inside” (7). This is where, again, the intertwining of the limit and the desire to transgress can be seen.

John Jervis emphasises that transgression “is not simply a reversal, a mechanical inversion of an existing order it opposes. Transgression, unlike opposition or reversal, involves hybridization, the mixing of categories and the questioning of the boundaries that separate the categories” (4). According to Jenks, in order for transgression to happen there

has to be “an assumption and a recognition of ‘that’ which can be transgressed” (15). Unless there are relatively clear “fences” or norms in place, trespassing into another place is not possible (Jenks 15). However, it must be remembered that the boundaries are not fixed and absolute, nor are they timeless.

Jenks emphasises that an act of crime does not equal transgression even though within society it may be labelled as such and processed in the form of criminality (175). Transgression does not happen through ignorance or by accident, as Jenks points out: “the relationship between the perpetrator and the act must be *wilful and intended*, not accidental or unconscious” (177; added emphasis). Similarly, Bataille sees that eroticism and cruelty are both premeditated; they are “conscious intentions in a mind which has resolved to trespass into a forbidden field of behaviour” (79-80). Jenks sees that for Bataille,

being is the experience of limits and the foundational experience and prime metaphor for the belief is the knowledge of death. Death is the great finitude, the full stop [...] The urge to drive through the limit derives from the life force or, to put it another way, *the desire to “complete” life* [...] The constant inability to “complete” life, however, and the recognition of that inability generates a perpetual state of urgency and anxiety – this is part of the human condition. (93; added emphasis)

How being becomes recognised, is by being affirmed in and through others – through the erotic, the desire for another; “otherness always being the predicate of sexual activity” (Jenks 94). Jenks continues to comment on Bataille’s notion on eroticism: “Eroticism becomes, then, not a leisure pursuit of the few, not a wickedness to be confined to evil places and bad people, not an uncomfortable aspect of the self which should rightly be repressed or dispensed with, it becomes *the very energy of life itself*” (94; added emphasis).

#### 2.4. Sexuality/Eroticism, Death and Violence as Transgression

According to Jeffrey Weeks, one of the reasons why sexuality – especially the forms deemed “deviant” – attract strong reactions is because people have a lot invested in their “own concept of what is the ‘true sex’” (2). This form of self-centredness then leads to difficulties in understanding the odder erotic desires and sexual behaviour of others, and consequently, resulting in condemnation (Weeks 4). Weeks also points out that because of the assumption that “sexuality is the most spontaneously natural thing about us” – which is particularly strongly present in the Western culture – it can be said to form the basis of our identities and sense of self (4). However, Christianity has played an important role as a controller and judicator of sexuality in the West:

The Christian West, notoriously, has seen in sex a terrain of moral anguish and conflict, setting up an enduring dualism between the spirit and the flesh, the mind and the body. It has had the inevitable result of creating a cultural configuration which *simultaneously disavows the body while being obsessively preoccupied with it*. (Weeks 21; added emphasis)

It is perhaps ironic that *the Other* is born out of the struggle to produce and regulate the norm; the Other which is “the feared and execrated or merely despised, who simultaneously denies and confirms the norm” (Weeks 81). In the context of the Christian religion, transgression is equated with the notion of sin; transgressing is thus seen as acting against God’s will and the rules of a specific religion. Although religion is largely absent in my chosen novels, and it will not be my focus in later analysis, Christianity has hugely influenced parts of Western social and moral codes, particularly attitudes towards bodies and human sexuality.

The French philosopher and writer Georges Bataille sees that eroticism is closely linked with transgression. For Bataille, eroticism is very much a part of the inner life of



human beings because it calls their being into question (29). This is where human sexual activity differs from that of the other animals. However, not all human sexual activity can be classed as erotic. Eroticism arises whenever the sexual activity is not “rudimentary and purely animal” (Bataille 29). Bataille emphasises the subjectivity of eroticism since the being consciously calls his existence into question and often pursues a *deliberate loss of self* (31). Bataille also likens this inner experience to religious experience but being “outside the pale of specific religions” (34).

Eroticism can be said to assent to life even up to the point of death (Bataille 11). Humans seem to be the only animal that has turned its sexual activity into erotic activity (Bataille 11). Furthermore, eroticism is independent of the “natural” goal of reproduction and more a psychological quest (Bataille 11). Nonetheless, Bataille sees the meaning of reproduction as a key to eroticism: “Reproduction implies the existence of *discontinuous* beings. Beings which reproduce themselves are distinct from each other, just as they are distinct from their parents. Each being is distinct from all others. [...] He is born alone. He dies alone. Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity” (12, original emphasis).

Thus, in one sense, the gulf can be seen as death which becomes vertigo-inducing and hypnotising (Bataille 13). Oddly, death can also mean continuity of being, for instance, the merging of an egg and a sperm cell results in the birth of something new yet at the same time the death of the reproductive cells (Bataille 14). Bataille continues: “The new entity is itself discontinuous, but it bears within itself the transition to continuity, the fusion, fatal to both, of two separate beings” (14).

As is apparent in Bataille’s theories, death and sex are closer to each other than people might be comfortable to admit. While Bataille might see the possibility of continuity in death, Foucault sees it as the final transgression; the limit between death and

life is absolute: “Death is not an experience. It is an absence, a void” (Lemert & Gillan 84). Foucault sees death as power’s limit: “death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most ‘private’” (*The History of Sexuality* 138). A conscious crossing of the limit culminates in suicide. Suicide demonstrates the “individual and private right to die”; the practice of the “right of death” – e.g. the death penalty – is then taken away from those in power or God (*The History of Sexuality* 139).

For Bataille the domain of eroticism is also the domain of violence, and what physical eroticism really boils down to is the violation of the very being of its practitioners (16-7). The inner desires and stirrings within humans often cause fear and worry because the excesses of those stirrings would show us where they could lead (Bataille 19). Bataille writes on eroticism and sacredness in the following way:

Erotic activity, by dissolving the separate beings that participate in it, reveals their fundamental continuity, like the waves of a stormy sea. In sacrifice, the victim is divested [...] of life [...] The victim dies and the spectators share in what his death reveals. [...] This sacredness is the revelation of continuity through the death of a discontinuous being to those who watch it as a solemn rite. (22)

The body’s internal violence is revealed in the external violence of the sacrifice, for example, in blood loss and ejaculations (Bataille 91). The body reminds the onlookers of their mortality because it is the image of their own inevitable destiny (Bataille 44). Death is a violence that destroys all humans indiscriminately. Despite, or precisely because of, this, violence and death simultaneously fascinate and disturb us (Bataille 45).

The violation of taboos is also closely linked with transgression. When what is sacred and forbidden to approach is violated, “we feel the anguish of the mind without which the taboo could not exist: that is the experience of sin” (Bataille 38). This act of

violation and experience leads to the successful and completed transgression (Bataille 38). Bataille comments on the relationship between death and eroticism thus: “Mortal anguish does not necessarily make for sensual pleasure, but that pleasure is more deeply felt during mortal anguish” (105).

Humans can never be completely free of their inner undercurrent of violence despite their efforts of building up a rational world (Bataille 40). Bataille continues by suggesting that: “Nature herself is violent, and however reasonable we may grow we may be mastered anew by a violence no longer that of nature but that of a rational being who tries to obey but who succumbs to stirrings within himself which he cannot bring to heel” (40). Violence in itself, however, is not transgressive. For example, *animal* violence does not break taboos or cross boundaries. Violence becomes taboo-transgressing when it is used “by a creature capable of reason (putting his knowledge to the service of violence for the time being” (e.g., war) (Bataille 64).

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman sees that death is never simply just death, an act of dying; there is always a cause which is sought out in the post-mortem (316). Bauman continues with this thought and emphasises that “[w]e do not hear of people dying of mortality. They only die of individual causes; *because* there was an individual cause. [...] One does not die; one dies of a *disease* or of *murder*” (316-7; original emphases). However, it is not clear if Bauman includes old age and worn-out body parts and organs in the category of “disease”, or suicide in the “murder” category. Bauman does not hesitate to remind us of the significance death has in life:

Death does not come at the end of life: it is there from the start, in a position of constant surveillance, never relaxing its vigil. Death is watching when we work, when we eat, when we love, when we rest. Through its many deputies,

death presides over life. Fighting death is meaningless. But fighting the *causes* of dying turns into the meaning of life. (317; original emphasis)

It is of course a frightening thought that one does not know how close death can be at any time. However, in relation to transgression, death is more likely to provide positive excitement rather than fear.

## **2.5. Obscenity and Despoiling**

Bataille briefly touches upon the realm of disgust and nausea in relation to what is perceived to be normal in each society: “The feeling of nausea varies with the individual and its material source”; these aversions are then passed on to children generation after generation (e.g., which foods to eat, what is seen as filth) (58). In addition, what is considered obscene is also dependent on culture and the person who finds particular objects or acts obscene (Bataille 215). Obscenity is not fixed or universal. Obscenity can be described to mean something repugnant, social degradation and loss of control (Bataille 246).

The connection between obscenity and loss of control that Bataille writes about is not completely dissimilar to Mary Douglas’s theory of equating dirt with disorder (2). Douglas also states that there is “no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder” (2), which echoes Bataille’s ideas on acceptable and unacceptable acts or objects which are culturally and individually dependent. Dirt then is seen as something that goes against order; it is disorder which spoils pattern (Douglas 2, 94). Douglas does not see that the elimination of dirt/disorder is necessarily negative; to her it is more like “a positive effort to organise the environment” (2). However, dirt is not dirt in itself: it only becomes something unclean when it is “matter out of place” (Douglas 40). Douglas explains the relationship of order and disorder in the following passage thus:

Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and all from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. *We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.* (94; added emphasis)

Though repellent and unacceptable in theory, dirt, disorder, norms and limits tempt into transgression precisely because of the danger and potentiality within them.

Bataille reminds us that “it is natural that timid minds should see nothing more to it than this unpleasantness, but it is easy to see that its ignoble sides are connected with the social level of the people who create it, people whom society vomits forth in the same way that they in turn vomit up society” (246). Oddly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, beauty has crucial importance, too, “for ugliness cannot be spoiled, and to despoil is the essence of eroticism. Humanity implies the taboos, and in eroticism it and they are transgressed. Humanity is transgressed, profaned and besmirched. *The greater the beauty, the more it is befouled*” (Bataille 145; added emphasis). The stricter the limit, the greater the temptation is to transgress it.

It should be noted, however, that obscenity is not limited to actions. Obscene language in the form of swearwords, sexual descriptions and sometimes words that are deemed in some way blasphemous, are also likely to cause offence, depending on who hears them. The offensiveness is also dependent on in which contexts “obscene” language is used. Some people might even find the incorrect use of language offensive or infuriating. Although the degree of obscenity may vary in the novels, language plays a significant role in both *ACO* and *Crash*, works which are stylistically very different from each other.

### **3. Analysis**

In this section I apply the theories presented in the previous chapter to *ACO* and *Crash*. My analysis of *ACO* begins by examining why Alex chooses transgressive acts. After this I take a brief look at the language of the novel, Nadsat, and study its role as the language of violence, and also the linguistic violence present in the novel. I then move on to discuss the importance of violence in relation to transgression. I then proceed explore the connection between aesthetic experiences and violence, and how they affect Alex. It is after this that I examine how the State transgresses the rights of Alex (the individual) and the role of technology in that process. I conclude the analysis of *ACO* by examining whether Alex succeeds in transgression.

The analysis of *Crash* will also begin with the examination of reasons for transgression. I then briefly take a look at the transgressive language and form of *Crash*. Eroticism is the main form of transgression in Ballard's novel which is why there will be two subsections devoted to the subject: the first one focusing on eroticism that is associated with cars and car-crashes, and the second one focusing on eroticism associated with injuries, wounds and death. The analysis of *Crash* will also examine whether a final transgression was achieved or not. Finally, there will be a brief conclusion about the main ideas discovered in my analysis chapter.

#### **3.1. *A Clockwork Orange***

##### **3.1.1. Why Choose Transgression?**

The reason why characters in fiction choose to commit transgressive acts is very often connected to the notion of freedom: the freedom to do what one wants or striving to

become free of something. This can also be seen in the actions of the 15-year-old Alex: for him, transgression equals happiness, freedom and control over one's life – most often through violence. It is with his actions that Alex strives to achieve power and control, to which, as a teenager, he would not otherwise have access. In addition, it is his way of fighting against the State, the institutions, or to use the words of Alex, the “big machines” (ACO 34).

Alex comes from a working class home, and in the society of the novel, the future does not present him with many options for social improvement. Crime and violence thus offer him a better life. It can also be said that Alex's actions are a way of separating himself from his parents' generation; he has no desire to become a part of the drudgery of everyday life. For Alex, television in particular represents conformity, entertainment for the masses: “Tonight was what they called a worldcast, meaning that the same programme was being viddied by everybody in the world that wanted to, that being mostly the middle-aged middle-class lewdies” (ACO 17-8; see Appendix for Nadsat Glossary).

There are very few clues about Alex's childhood and what might have led him to the path of transgression. However, there are mentions of Alex having been in so-called corrective schools: “[B]anners and flags on the wall, these being like remembrances of my corrective school life since I was eleven, O my brothers” (ACO 28). This would suggest that from a very early age, Alex has preferred the other side of the law. For this reason, Alex and others like him are a source of great frustration to the Post-Corrective Advisor, Mr P. R. Deltoid: “You've got a good home here, good loving parents, you've got not too bad of a brain. *Is it some devil that crawls inside you?*” (ACO 33; added emphasis). In the eyes of an outsider, Alex's actions might indeed look inexplicable – but it is precisely the safety and the restraints of everyday life that Alex seeks to destabilise, from which to break away.

Alex may be young but he is perfectly aware of the illegality and immorality of his actions, but he chooses to undertake them regardless. He has nothing against the law-abiding citizens but he finds the other side more appealing. In the following passage Alex contemplates the reasons and justifications for his behaviour after a home visit from his Post-Corrective Adviser:

[B]rothers, this biting of their toe-nails over what is the *cause* of badness is what turns me into a fine laughing malchick. They don't go into the cause of *goodness*, so why the other shop? If lewdies are good that's because they like it, and I wouldn't ever interfere with their pleasures, and so of the other shop. And I was patronizing the other shop. More, the 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 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.

(ACO 34; original emphases)

This lengthy excerpt is one of the most intriguing and significant passages in the novel because in it Alex shows full understanding of his choices. It also brings forth the important aspect of *deliberateness* in transgression. Alex points out that “the badness is of the self,” and while the majority of people resist acting on these urges, Alex embraces that side of himself. He also remarks on the oppressing nature of institutions and the State; there is no room for individuality or independent thought in the society of the novel, which acts as a catalyst for Alex's rebellion and search for his own identity. Beryl Schlossman



also draws attention to the machinery in the novel's society which is responsible for erasing any traces of individual identity or moral choice (273).

The notion of freedom in relation to transgression has already been mentioned, but another aspect is also worth bringing up, which is the aim of bettering one's life. This might mean the improvement of one's life in social or financial terms, or on a deeper level, of one's inner life. In Alex's case, the feeling of freedom, pleasure and control is achieved through the use of violence. When Alex violates the being of others he is then able to have control over them and derive pleasure from it. With the help of his gang of droogs, Alex disrupts the order of society and does not submit to its laws. At the same time he is trying to find his place in society, or rather trying not to conform to it.

### **3.1.2. The Language of Violence and Violence of the Language**

It is important to acknowledge that the first-time reader may not completely grasp the abundance of violence in the novel because it is partly veiled by Nadsat, the slang used by Alex. Nadsat has its origins in Russian, Cockney rhyming slang and archaic English. Nadsat gives the scenes of violence a deceptive humorous gloss. It could be said that Burgess himself practices linguistic transgression with the slang: two very different languages, English and Russian, are made to form a rather violent but functioning union. However, Burgess does not simply pick random Russian words for Alex to use; he plays with the sounds of words, their connotations and associative meanings with English, thus "creating a web of [...] 'resemblances': *Bog* for 'God', *sinny* for 'cinema', *rot* for 'mouth'" (Sassi 261). In addition, Carla Sassi points out that Nadsat is "a language that strives all the time to be 'something else' – sound, music, tangible object, visual image or performance" (255).

The slang causes confusion in the novel as well as for the reader. In one scene, the doctor who oversees the brainwashing enquires the origins of Alex's way of speaking: "Quaint," said Dr Brodsky, like smiling, 'the dialect of the tribe. Do you know anything of its provenance, Branom?' 'Odd bits of old rhyming slang, [...] A bit of gipsy talk, too. But most roots are Slav. Propaganda. Subliminal penetration.'" (ACO 91). Here we have the only direct reference – "Slav. Propaganda" – to what might be going on in the novel's society. When the story was written it is more likely that the British youth would have taken influences from American culture rather than Slavic, or Russian, to be precise. However, Carol M. Dix seems to be convinced that there has been an "intervention if not invasion" by both the American and the Russian side (14). Dr Branom's answer would indeed suggest that the East currently poses a threat or that it has been one at some point in the recent past.

The condescending attitude of Dr Brodsky is captured when he reduces Nadsat to a "quaint" tribe dialect. However, even Alex recognises the differences between generational ways and fashions of communication: e.g., Alex remarks that the two little girls he rapes "had their own like way of govoreeting" (ACO 37). Sassi comments that because all the characters have their own way of speaking, they often have difficulties in understanding each other, which in turn creates "anxiety, fear, distrust and isolation" (258-9). Nadsat then can be seen as Alex's way of asserting his identity with language because by moulding it, he is able to "tell his own unique subjectivity" (Sassi 254). The aforementioned lexical and linguistic violence is an assault on both the novel's characters and the reader.

Like Alex going through brainwashing, the reader is also subjected to a linguistic brainwashing of sorts by Burgess: at first there might be some confusion and resistance, but the reader soon picks up the meanings of the Nadsat words. The learning is largely achieved through first-person narrative: Alex draws in and charms his audience by

addressing them as his “brothers” and referring to himself as “Your Humble Narrator” (Mathews 38). Thus the readers become interested in and feel sympathy towards Alex when he shares his story and teaches them his slang (Mathews 38). The readers are forced to go through this so-called linguistic brainwashing; otherwise they would not be able or allowed to be privy to Alex’s story.

In the final chapter Alex has to face the fact that growing older is inevitable and that he would have to move on with the times, too. This becomes more apparent to Alex when he meets an old droog, Pete, who now has a wife: “‘He talks funny, doesn’t he?’ said this devotchka [the wife], like giggling. [...] ‘Did you used to talk like that too?’” (*ACO* 146). Though still only 18 years old, the use of the past tense must hit Alex with the realisation that his linguistic “weapon” has lost most of its effectiveness and is now a source of amusement.

### **3.1.3. Violence as Transgression**

As has been mentioned before, violence in itself cannot be equated with transgression, but in the case of *ACO*, its importance cannot be ignored either. It is used instrumentally to acquire material things, but it is also a source of intense elation mixed with a sense of control for Alex. In the absence of a clear role and opportunities in society, Alex makes his own destiny by resorting to violent acts. Leading a “normal” life is not an attractive option to Alex: he sees that going against the norms and rules offers a more interesting life with the possibility of choosing one’s actions. I will now examine some of the scenes from the novel that deal with Alex’s relationship with violence and its uses.

It is clear to the reader that Alex derives pleasure from stealing and vandalism; however, to him the human connection – preferably his fist or boot meeting someone else’s face – is far more satisfying. The cracking of bones, the dull thumping of kicks and

especially the sight of blood please Alex enormously. The playful side of Alex comes out when his gang meet Billyboy's rival gang and a fight breaks out:

[T]here I was dancing about with my britva like I might be a barber on board a ship on a very rough sea, trying to get in at him with a few fair slashes on his unclean oily litso. [...] my brothers, it was a real satisfaction to me to waltz – left two three, right two three – and carve left cheeky and right cheeky, so that like two curtains of blood seemed to pour out at the same time [...] (ACO 17)

Violence is a passion that brings Alex joy, though admittedly, only when he is the one in the dominating position. These moments turn the fights into well-choreographed dances where Alex and his droogs are the skilled performers. The scene is one of the earliest examples in the novel where violence is likened to something artistic, for in the eyes of Alex, violent acts are aestheticized.

As odd as it may seem, for Alex violence is a life-affirming activity, and seeing the deep red blood flow from a victim of his latest violent escapades, Alex feels very much connected to life in such moments. The most easily noticeable mark of violence is blood, and this is what most often catches Alex's attention. Blood represents death and violence but at the same time it is also the fluid that keeps us alive. Alex does indeed often wonder and describe the beauty of the "dear old droog the red – red vino on tap and the same in all places, like it's put out by the same big firm" (ACO 21). Alex is in awe of this deep red liquid that symbolises the life force and inner violence of every human being.

The pain and agony of others is a reminder of mortality to Alex, but it also emphasises the fact that he himself is alive: the more brutal the violence, the more heightened is the feeling of being alive. Indeed, one of the reasons why violence holds such interest for Alex, is the *destructive* nature of it. Undoubtedly, the destruction is more discernible if the victim is young and beautiful, but this does not stop Alex when he and his

gang come across a homeless person: “I could never stand to see a moodge all filthy and rolling and burping and drunk, whatever his age might be, but more especially when he was real starry like this one was. [...] *So we cracked into him lovely, grinning all over our litsos*” (ACO 14-5; added emphasis). It is with these actions that Alex asserts his power and ability to violate and destroy. The power to hurt and incapacitate someone brings Alex unsurpassable joy, though his love of classical music does come close.

In the novel Alex does not have an intimate relationship with anyone: there is no one for him to trust. However, as a teenaged boy, Alex has sexual desires that he feels need to be fulfilled one way or another. The most tempting way for Alex to achieve this is through sexual violence, which enables him to reassert his power and stay in control. There are two instances when Alex has his moment of being a perpetrator in despoiling and befouling. The first of these sadistic sexual encounters happen when after a night of “ultra-violence,” Alex and his gang end up at a house of a writer, appropriately called “HOME.” The gang force their way into the house and assault the writer and his wife. The events culminate in the gang rape of the wife, while the writer is made to watch: “Then there was like quiet and we were full of like hate, so smashed what was left to be smashed [...] The writer veck and his zheena were not really there, bloody and torn and making noises. *But they’d live*” (ACO 22; added emphasis). One could say that in a perverse way Alex thinks he is being a fair leader since he is allowing every gang member have their share of the woman.

The second of these sexual violations happens during a day when Alex skips school and goes to a record shop, where he notices two 10-year-old girls:

Then an idea hit me and made me near fall over with the *anguish* and *ecstasy* of it, O my brothers, so I could not breathe for near ten seconds [...] [T]hey viddied themselves as real sophistoes, which was like pathetic, and started talking in big-lady golosses [...] *Well, they would grow up real today.* Today I

would make a day of it. No school this afterlunch, but education certain, *Alex as teacher*. (ACO 37; added emphases)

Alex lures them back to his home and decides to give them a lesson they would never forget, i.e., rape them. Alex is now able to act as an authority – though not an adult himself yet but a 15-year-old boy – and assert his power over the young girls. The sense of control is more than pleasing to Alex and he makes the most of it. He first injects himself presumably with heroin – “the old jab of growling jungle-cat secretion in the rooker” (ACO 38) – and then provides the girls with plenty of alcohol. Mirthful at first, the atmosphere quickly changes to something far more sinister when Alex starts to feel the drug kicking in and he puts on the record of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (“Ode to Joy”): the two girls then have to “submit to the strange and weird desires of Alexander the Large” (ACO 39). Here we see one of those moments when music and violence form an explosive union for Alex, a subject which I will later study further.

Oddly, afterwards Alex seems to display a slight pang of guilt when he defends and downplays his actions by saying that the girls could hardly feel anything because they were very drunk. Although this could also be seen as boasting, judging by the expression of pleasure he has derived from his deeds: “When the last movement [of Beethoven’s symphony] had gone round for the second time with all the banging and creeching about Joy Joy Joy Joy, then these two ptitsas were not acting the big lady sophisto no more” (ACO 39). It is as though Alex feels that with his actions he has in a way “fixed” the girls, thus assigning qualities to violence that are at the same time destructive and mending.

### **3.1.4. Beauty, Music and Violence**

Besides violence in various forms, classical music is the only thing that brings Alex joy in his life. One would perhaps not think that someone like Alex would have an affinity with

classical music, but it is something that excites him: it rouses both sexual and aggressive feelings (for example, preparing for a fight). The power to hurt and incapacitate someone brings Alex unsurpassable joy, and this, combined with the music that he adores, means that the results are often destructive. It can also be said that Alex's taste in music represents his avoidance of conformity since most of his teenage peers listen to manufactured pop music.

Alex clearly appreciates the music in its own right, but for him the aesthetic beauty is further intensified when it is combined with violence. Although the music itself is not despoiled in any way, it could be argued that violent acts and fantasies have an effect by association. Alex's passions and interests are oriented towards subjects that provoke strong emotions in him, like the aforementioned classical music. These emotions are then connected with Alex's desire for violence and the pleasure that derives from it. The powerful associations are brought on and powered by Alex's need for strong stimulants, which are the music he loves and also the drugs used in the milky drinks enjoyed by Alex and his gang: "Music always sort of sharpened me up, O my brothers, and made me feel like old Bog himself, ready to make with the old donner and blitzen and have vecks and ptitsas creeching away in my ha ha power" (*ACO* 35-6). Thus, Alex seems to associate and understand music in close relation to violence. He even describes a symphony by Otto Skadelig – a composer made up by Burgess – as "a very gromky and *violent* piece" (*ACO* 130; added emphasis).

In Alex's mind the beauty of violence, and vice versa, is so strong that listening to music induces a state of ecstasy in him. These ecstatic moments are often accompanied by violent imagery in Alex's fantasies. When Alex returns home after one of his night-time escapades, he prepares an aural feast for himself:

Oh, bliss, bliss and heaven. I lay all nagoy to the ceiling [...] glazzies closed, rot open in bliss, slooshying the sluice of lovely sounds. Oh, it was gorgeousness and gorgeosity made flesh. [...] 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. (*ACO* 29)

In the passage there is a stark juxtaposition of the ecstasy caused by the beauty of music and how the ecstasy is further translated into images of terror and violence. Despite first impressions, there is however only one instance in the novel where Alex verbalises a desire to kill, and it is brought about by music: “I thought, slooshying away to the brown gorgeousness of the starry German master [J. S. Bach], that *I would like to have tolchocked them both* [the writer and his wife] *harder and ripped them to ribbons on their own floor*” (*ACO* 30; added emphasis).

### 3.1.5. The State and Technology

The role of technology is very different in both novels. In *ACO* it is mainly used as a device for brainwashing and torture, while in *Crash*, technology is seen as a source of sexual pleasure, and is thus placed at the centre of attention. Both uses of technology involve a loss of self for the characters, though it is more deliberate in *Crash* than in *ACO*. The only positive associations Alex has with technology are his record player and the thrill he gets when driving stolen cars: “I turned on the ignition and started her up and she grumbled away real horrorshow, a nice warm vibraty feeling grumbling all through your guttiwuts” (*ACO* 18).

The most prominent use of technology in *ACO* is the treatment, Ludovico’s Technique, which Alex goes through in order to get released sooner from prison. It is true



that Alex himself has made the decision to undergo the treatment but there the freedom of choice ends. The procedure is forced upon Alex both mentally and physically: the conditioning against violence is accomplished by strapping Alex to a chair and showing him films containing scenes of extreme violence:

[T]hey put like clips on the skin of my forehead, so that my top glazz-lids were pulled up and up and up and I could not shut my glazzies no matter how I tried. I tried to smeck and said: “This must be a real horrorshow film if you’re so keen on my viddying it.” And one of the white-coat vecks said, smecking: “Horrorshow is right, friend. A real show of horrors.” (ACO 80-1)

This procedure combined with the chemical Alex is injected with before the film viewings, in him develops an aversion and a strong feeling of revulsion to violence in any form. What previously were *abstract* rules are now very real and *concrete* in Alex’s reactions to violence: nausea and the feeling of dying. The brainwashing in a way installs an “internal” Bentham’s Panopticon in Alex, an equation from which even the guarded/unguarded watchtower is removed, leaving him in a paranoid state of self-supervision.

The rules and norms are thus re-drawn for Alex: old ones are re-enforced and a new one is added – music is accidentally included when Beethoven is used as background music in one of the films. Previously a source of joy, the music that meant so much to Alex, has now become associated with pain:

“I don’t mind about the ultra-violence [...] I put up with that. But it’s not fair on the music. [...]” Then Dr Brodsky said: “Delimitation is always difficult. The world is one, life is one. *The sweetest and most heavenly of 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.*” (ACO 91-2; added emphases)

The State has thus transgressed the rights of the individual with the excuse of crime reducing efforts. The State passes on the responsibility to Alex, and as Mathews points out, they do this by chemical conditioning without actually “seeking to eliminate the causes of the violence or to strengthen moral understanding” (41). It is quite shocking how matter-of-factly Dr Brodsky tells Alex how violence is actually part of life and then that some of these significant human aspects would be removed from him: most crucially, love.

In *ACO* technology is used to benefit the State and government. By turning criminals into law-abiding citizens with Ludovico’s Technique, the State is seemingly doing something good. However, Alex’s personal space, body and brain are invaded and transgressed by the State, or the “big machines,” that is supposed to protect its citizens. The individual’s rights are violated for the good of the majority: Alex loses his freedom of choice. This becomes evident when Dr Branom talks with Alex after his first Ludovico session:

“Violence is a very horrible thing. That’s what you’re learning now. *Your body is learning it.*” [...] “Life is a very wonderful thing,” said Dr Branom in a like very holy gloss. “The processes of life, the make-up of the human organism, who can fully understand these miracles? [...] What is happening to you now is what should happen to any *normal healthy* human organism contemplating the actions of the forces of evil [...] *You are being made sane, you are being made healthy.*” (*ACO* 85-6; added emphases)

Good behaviour and the norms of society are thus imposed on Alex, but who decides what is to be considered “sane,” “healthy” or “normal”? It seems that it is most beneficial for the State to ingratiate itself to the people who are not too independent in their thoughts and who are not likely to rebel, thus condemning people such as Alex to undergo Ludovico’s Technique.

The supposed goodness and crime reducing ways of the State raise more suspicion when Alex questions the authenticity of one of the violent films he is made to watch, this time portraying a gang rape situation:

This was real, very real, though if you thought about it properly you couldn't imagine lewdies actually agreeing to having all this done to them in a film, and if these films were made by the Good or the State you couldn't imagine them being allowed to take these films without like interfering with what was going on. So it must have been very clever what they call cutting or editing or some such veshch. *For it was very real.* [...] I began to feel sick. (ACO 82; added emphasis)

The penultimate sentence in the passage is crucial: Alex himself has been a participant in similar situations which is why he would recognise whether it was real or not. Nevertheless, Alex hesitates to trust his instincts because the thought of a State that is prepared to go to such lengths is too frightening even for Alex. It is rather ironic, then, that during Ludovico's Technique Alex is shown films of "the 1939-45 War" (ACO 83), films which basically show how the State is capable of doing horrific things to its citizens: i.e., Nazi Germany. Schlossman sees that in ACO there is a connection made between Alex and his droogs' actions, "the post-war period and the crimes of several regimes in the twentieth century" and "the ambivalent relationship of all cultures towards acts of annihilation" (278).

### **3.1.6. The End is Nigh?**

In ACO, Alex does succeed at first in his transgressive acts: he is aware of that what he does is wrong but he does it regardless. Later, however, a major disruption to Alex's violent behaviour comes in the form of Ludovico's Technique. Freedom of choice is taken

away from Alex: he is rendered helpless because he cannot even defend himself from other people's violence. The treatment also conditions him to have strong aversion to sexual feelings, thus making him unable to make love – that is, if Alex ever were to form such a relationship of equality with another person. Alex thus becomes a model citizen out of necessity: he ceases to have the ability to choose his own actions and becomes a lesser human than the “normal” people in the novel's society.

Not long after his release from the treatment, Alex is beaten up by Dim and Billyboy – a former droog and a former enemy, respectively – who have now become policemen. They take Alex to the countryside so they can commit the assault with no distractions, and afterwards he ends up at the house of a writer whom Alex's gang had attacked in the beginning of the novel. The writer is determined to use Alex's story against the government, and although he seems helpful at first, he is only interested in furthering his own political cause and taking advantage of Alex. For various reasons, Alex sees suicide as the only solution to his restricted life – crossing the final limit of death tempts him: “I jumped, O my brothers, and I fell on the sidewalk hard, but I did not snuff it, oh no. If I had snuffed it I would not be here to write what I written have” (*ACO* 132).

The fall seems to reverse the brainwashing and the penultimate chapter ends with the infamous “I was cured all right” declaration, which would suggest that Alex returns to his old ways (*ACO* 139). The final chapter, however, gives the reader another end result. It begins with nearly the same description as the novel's opening chapter, but Alex has a new gang. After briefly returning to his previous violent behaviour, Alex notices he is increasingly bored with the gang activities. It would seem that Alex is finally growing up: he has a job and has started to entertain a thought of having a family. At first this might seem like Alex has admitted defeat. However, his violent behaviour had lasted so long that

it reached a saturation point when his transgressive acts became a norm. Thus, stopping and changing his actions, Alex could in fact be seen to transgress the violent norm itself.

Alex explains his violent past as youthful stupidity saying that youth is being like one of those wind-up toys that walk in straight lines but cannot help banging into things. He would try to warn his own future son better but he would end up making the same mistakes: “And nor would he be able to stop his own son, brothers. And so it would itty on to like the end of the world, round and round and round, like some bolshy gigantic like chelloveck, like Bog himself [...] turning and turning and turning a vonny grazhny orange in his gigantic rookers” (*ACO* 148). Even though Alex may express a desire to stop his previous way of life, having a son would enable continuity through Alex’s own discontinuous being.

### **3.2. *Crash***

#### **3.2.1. Why Transgress?**

The starting points for James and Vaughan’s transgression are fairly different from Alex’s. They are both middle-aged men, James works as a director for television adverts and Vaughan used to be a famous TV scientist before a motorcycle accident. The novel starts with a prolepsis of Vaughan’s death, but James’s car-crash is the story’s true beginning, which later leads him to meet Vaughan. For both of these men, the accidents spark new feelings and desires, and as James remarks to himself in hospital: “This obsession with the sexual possibilities of everything around me had been jerked loose from my mind by the crash” (*Crash* 19). There is no going back to the way things were before: transgression offers the possibility of a new life. The excitement of car-crashes and the injuries caused by them become an escape from normal everyday life and work.

Even though James had already carried out transgressive acts with his wife Catherine (for example, masturbating while watching graphic news reports about wars and other atrocities), it is only when he forms a twisted sort of friendship with Vaughan that he wholly embraces the darker side of himself. Vaughan enables and directs James to a new kind of sexuality and eroticism that is to be found in cars, car-crashes and physical injuries. Vaughan is a guide and teacher to James which makes it possible for him to pass on his obsessions to James. There are also feelings of attraction that tie James into Vaughan, making him almost as obsessed about Vaughan as about the new technological eroticism. Although James wants to have sex with Vaughan, the relationship is more about James wanting to *be* like Vaughan, become him. In a way, Vaughan is a physical manifestation of James's transgressive thoughts ("Increasingly I was convinced that Vaughan was a projection of my own fantasies and obsessions" (*Crash* 181)) and also, a car personified.

In *Crash*, James's road to transgression begins with a car accident which he describes as the only real experience he had gone through in years. It is an experience for which he is strangely thankful and pleased about: "For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body [...] After being bombarded endlessly by road-safety propaganda it was almost a relief to find myself in an actual accident" (*Crash* 28). The fact that James refers to road-safety advice as "propaganda" reveals that perhaps he had already unconsciously considered the car and the car-crash as something not to be afraid of, but to actively seek its intimacy. As Gasiorek points out, "the trauma of the accidents leads not to repression but to a heightened awareness of their possible meanings" (89). Thus, the physical violation to James's body leads him to contemplate and re-evaluate the desires within him. After the long recovery period and despite the feeling of disconnectedness with his old life, James finds unexpected freedom and pleasure from cars and the slowly creeping eroticism that becomes connected to them.

The possibilities of transgression and the newly discovered sensations related to cars are a revelation even to James himself: “The aggressive stylization of this mass-produced cockpit, the exaggerated mouldings of the instrument binnacles emphasized my growing sense of a new junction between my own body and the automobile” (*Crash* 41). Detachment from normal everyday life highlights James’s yearning for some sort of connection – even if it means connection with technology. Through physical intervention, the crash has inadvertently awakened something within James that drives his subsequent desires and actions. James seeks to recreate the moment when he merges with the technology of the car, in which the loss of self aspect of transgression plays a great part.

Echoing the thoughts of Bataille on the loss of self, David Pringle recognises its significant role in Ballard’s text while also making a reference to Freud’s theories on the subject (58). Pringle emphasises that loss of self “does not necessarily mean oblivion,” and while people might revere individuality and see dispersion of self as something dangerous, it can also be considered ecstasy (58). The methods James and Vaughan use in order to achieve loss of self – and thus, ecstasy – can certainly be said to be life-threatening. Pringle would go as far as to say that Ballard’s characters are often motivated by a kind of “death-wish” (51).

### **3.2.2. The Language and Form of *Crash***

The novel’s blunt language might not appeal to everyone but it is crucial in understanding the world of *Crash*. On the surface the work may resemble an erotic or pornographic novel, but on closer inspection it becomes clear that the text is not meant to excite sexually. Julian Murphet describes it as “the language of auto manuals [that] morphs into crude porn,” which may sound rather harsh but it is not far off from the truth (787). Ballard himself has told in an interview that “[t]he clinical detachment is the essence of the whole

thing” (“Ballard on Crash”). It would seem that Ballard has thus succeeded in taking part in and at the same time crossing the genre of erotic writing with his work: *Crash* is a text which has extreme sexual content but in form it lacks the aspects of pornographic titillation.

In some of his novels, Ballard produces original patterns of syntax not only in terms of language, but also in the story: Gasiorek regards this as “an effort to lay bare the grammars of a technological and media-dominated world” (16). This is especially prominent in *Crash* which employs a detached style in its descriptions of sexual desires and activities of the characters. Even though the said acts are often very graphic, they are described clinically and with the precision of a textbook or manual. For example, there are several sex scenes in cars where the changing positions of limbs and the order in which they occur are thoroughly (almost tediously) itemised.

Contrary to the Nadsat-veiled violence in Burgess’s *ACO*, Ballard is happy to show the reader the unrestrained desires and actions of the characters without too much embellishment. However, branding *Crash* as stylistically poor would be unjust. Ballard manages to create morbidly beautiful images of car-crashes and injuries of the victims – something which Murphet feels adds a certain “impish exuberance” to the text (787). For example, there are two rather glittering images: shavings of fibreglass are referred to as “death confetti” (*Crash* 101), and in one scene, fragments of a tinted windshield are embedded in someone’s forehead like “jewels” (*Crash* 4). To create these extraordinary images, Ballard blends seemingly incompatible elements of hard technology and the soft, yielding human flesh.



### 3.2.3. The Eroticism of the Car and the Car-Crash

Sebastian Groes considers Ballard's choice of the car over human-centred production of places significant because it is "the ultimate expression of late capitalist science and technology" (87). In addition, Gasiorek brings up another key aspect to the exploration of *Crash*, "namely that the car crash is a symbol of sexual fulfilment" (83). It is in this piece of technology where the violence, eroticism and death are combined. People are usually disturbed by car-crashes but it is not uncommon that they are also morbidly fascinated by them: Ballard indeed points out that "The car crash is the most dramatic experience in most people's lives [...] there's something about the automobile crash that taps all kinds of barely recognized impulses in people's minds and imaginations" ("Krafft-Ebing Visits"). It is these very desires and impulses that are taken into new heights in *Crash*.

In the novel, James and Vaughan yearn for a closer connection with technology, cars specifically. The vehicles are eroticised: parts of the car are associated with body parts, e.g., gear stick, switches, buttons, leather seats – penis, nipples and skin. In other words, technology, or something non-human, gets sexualised. Bodily fluids are also frequently mentioned and associated with the engine coolant of the car. Through this eroticisation the car eventually also becomes anthropomorphised, while the human body is likened to a machine: a collision from which emerges "a fused machine-body [...] a new hybridised organism" (Gasiorek 92). The car is no longer treated as a mere symbol, as something that is part of the "realm of the imaginary"; the vehicle as the desirable image has been externalised and literalised, changing the car to an actual embodiment of the aforementioned image (Gasiorek 83).

When James recalls his first minor collision, it becomes clear that before Vaughan, there already was the seed of dark eroticism within him:

[After] a hurried sex-act. Reversing out of the park, I struck an unmarked tree. Catherine vomited over my seat. This pool of vomit with its clots of blood like liquid rubies [...] still *contains for me the essence of the erotic delirium of the car-crash* [...] In this magic pool, lifting from her throat like a rare discharge of fluid from the mouth of a remote and mysterious shrine, I saw my own reflection, a mirror of blood, semen and vomit [...] (*Crash* 8-9; added emphasis)

The early excitement of a crash for James is evident in the passage: it is a premonition of things to come. It is befitting that a pool of vomit represents the essence of the erotic for James because it is a physical representation of the inner violence brought about by a collision. It is also “matter out of place” (Douglas 40) that has crossed the corporeal boundary, from inside of the body to the outside world. James’s reflection in the “magic pool” is reduced to blood, semen and vomit: an almost primordial soup where life and death are represented by both blood and semen, coexisting alongside the waste product, vomit.

On some level, there are also spiritual and religious aspects in James and Vaughan’s desire to assimilate with the car: they want to become part of something greater than themselves. Delville also brings forth the spiritual side of the car-crash, and he sees that the surrender of the characters to the crash “becomes an initiation into a radically new environment” (39). Delville continues to comment that the way the process is described by Ballard is a combination of “the raw intensities of sexual energy and religious revelation” (39). Blood is seen to have almost holy qualities in the novel: for example, when Vaughan manages to bring a piece of leather from a front seat of a crashed car, it excites him in a different way:

Lying in the centre [of a silk scarf] was a triangle of bloodstained grey leather [...] It lay between us like a saintly relic, the fragment of a hand or shinbone. For Vaughan this piece of leather, as delicious and as poignant as the stains on the gusset of a shroud, contained all the special magic and healing powers of a modern martyr of the super-highways. (*Crash* 154-5)

The blood of the woman who was injured in the collision is a kind of sacrifice, both life and death are present in the piece from the leather seat – a liquid that recently had sustained life was now rapidly pouring away. Religious qualities can also be seen in the treatment of sexual fluids in *Crash*: after a sexual act they are often smeared on various parts of the car, e.g., there are frequent mentions of semen being spread across the instrument panels or seats of the vehicle. These acts are carried out in an almost ritual-like manner: it is a consummation of the nightmare marriage of flesh and technology.

In addition to eroticism and beauty, the car is also assigned qualities of safety when it is described as “a chromium bower” and “benign technology” (*Crash* 133). James and Vaughan find the perfection of technology attractive and for them the ultimate union of man and the machine is found in a car-crash. This shows us the desire of the two protagonists to merge and assimilate with the car: the copulation between the imperfect human body and the machine of perfection. There is a desire to cross the final limit of death and become immortalised in a car-crash, become inseparable from the perfect technology.

As the story progresses, James and Vaughan increasingly aim to become one with the car and break through the boundaries of the human body. Furthermore, Vaughan slowly becomes an integral part of James and his wife’s, Catherine’s, sexual fantasies – some of which eventually become reality. For James these fantasies and acts are also very much associated with the eroticisation of cars. The following excerpt describes the feelings

of James when he is in the front seat while Catherine and Vaughan have sex at the back of the car during a carwash:

The distant headlamps, refracted through the soap solution jetting across the windows, covered their bodies with luminescent glow, like two *semi-metallic human beings of the distant future* making love in a chromium bower. [...] I wanted to reach out and care for them, helping them into their next sexual act [...] along the *guidelines provided by the diagonal seat vents* [...] *celebrating in this sexual act the marriage of their bodies with this benign technology.* (*Crash* 133; added emphases)

James is less worried about his wife having sex with his friend, and would rather like to be able to “help” them achieve a perfect sexual experience in harmony with the car. The car is seen almost as if it were a sentient participant in the act: it provides “guidelines” for a complete and immaculate union between the human body and the vehicle. The car is no longer a mere symbol of mobility: it has become a place in its own right, a stage where sexual acts and encounters are performed.

It is this technological space that becomes significant in the brief relationship between James and the woman with whom he collided, Helen Remington. James acknowledges a unique connection after the crash: “Already I was aware that the interlocked radiator grilles of our cars formed the model of an inescapable and perverse union between us” (*Crash* 15). Keeping in mind that in the novel the car-crash is seen as sexual fulfilment, James and Helen’s relationship thus begins with an orgasm. With such a traumatic beginning, it is then not surprising that both of them are consequently able to become aroused only in cars: they have formed a bond due to their shared experience of the crash.

The more James becomes drawn to Vaughan's way of perceiving car-crashes, the more he becomes attuned to the supposed hidden or unconscious desires of the public. This becomes apparent when James, Catherine and Vaughan come across an accident scene that has caused a traffic jam:

A considerable number of children were present, many lifted on their parents' shoulders to give them a better view. [...] the spectators [...] looked down at the scene with the calm and studied interest of intelligent buyers at a leading bloodstock sale. [...] Clearly the most vivid erotic fantasies [about the victim] would be moving through our minds, [...] seeding the infinite futures that would flower from the marriage of violence and desire. (*Crash* 127-8)

After the spectacle is over and the ambulances have left, James senses an all-encompassing sexuality among the leaving crowd: they were as if "members of a congregation leaving after a sermon" (*Crash* 129). What people experienced, were unspoken feelings of attraction and arousal towards a car-crash, which includes the tragedy of the individuals injured in the accident. The crash seems to tap into something deep within people: James likens it to a "bloody eucharist" in which the crowd had participated by observing it (*Crash* 129). This ritual-like experience makes James realise that he is not alone with his desires: he is merely one step further than the rest by actually acting upon his passions.

However, for Vaughan, witnessing a car-crash is not enough; he is obsessed with documenting everything he sees at an accident scene with his cameras: the car, the victims and the grimacing faces of the rescue team. The obsession becomes clear to James when Vaughan shows him his "project": a room full of thousands of car-crash photos, films and surgical textbooks. There are even photo albums documenting the recovery process of some of the crash victims. It would seem that the events lack meaning for Vaughan if they have not been recorded in some way: they are not real until they have been captured and

“filtered through image-making systems and techniques” (Gasiorek 84). This documentation of images works in two ways: on the one hand, the camera brings the object incredibly close to the viewer, but on the other hand, it also manages to distance them from the events and the victims. One could say that this technology observed through technology in a way loops and “doubles” reality. Gasiorek points out that the wound fetish combined with the obsessive documentation projects “the interaction of body with machine as a self-sustaining circuit” (90).

### **3.2.4. The Eroticism of Injuries, Wounds and Death**

It can be said that in the crashes the form or the outlines of a human body are *broken* and the body is destroyed. The so-called boundaries of the body are violated and the wounds and scars can be seen to “break” the human form. One of the clearest and most significant indications of James beginning to see the world anew in terms of the beautiful broken body is the opening sentence of chapter 16: “The world was beginning to flower into wounds” (*Crash* 119). This rather grotesque image of fleshy blossoming conveys the freedom that James has found through his newly acquired technological eroticism. James and Vaughan seek the pain in other people’s crash injuries but ultimately they want to experience it again themselves. James has had a taste for it in his car-crash while Vaughan has already gone through several collisions. Vaughan is also interested in staging the aftermath of a collision: he makes prostitutes pose in various “crash” scenes, and he then takes photos of them with their limbs in unnatural positions.

In addition, it is also possible to say that the injuries can be the origin of something very questionable: new orifices for sexual pleasure. On one instance, James fantasises about his wife getting badly injured in a car-crash which would also be the “birth” of a new orifice: “I visualized my wife injured in a high-impact collision, her mouth and face

destroyed, and a new and exciting orifice opened in her perineum by the splintering steering column, neither vagina nor rectum, an orifice we could dress with all our deepest affections” (*Crash* 148). Contradictorily, the human body is thus seen to become more perfect with this new addition of sorts when in fact it is being more mutilated. The new orifice would only be associated with erotic pleasure; it would not have the life-giving imagery of the female genitalia (i.e., giving birth) or the rectum’s connotation with waste.

One would perhaps associate feelings of horror and pity with a person who has had the misfortune of being injured in an accident of some sort: horror at the sight of serious injuries and wounds, pity at the loss of the ability to walk or severe facial wounds and scars, for example. However, the two protagonists of the novel, Vaughan especially, regard them almost as badges of honour. They show that the person has acquired them in a car-crash and that they have had the opportunity to get into close contact with the vehicle. James also sees the injuries of others and his own as something that have come into existence purely for sexual use – they have been given a new, erotic purpose.

James often mentions his erotic interest in scars, particularly Vaughan’s, but also on the bodies of other people. In an oddly egotistical manner, James feels that the scars have come into existence for his use and pleasure only. Although she is a minor character, Gabrielle, one of Vaughan’s eccentric friends, plays a memorable role in James’s exploration of erotic scars and injuries. Having suffered severe injuries in a car-crash, Gabrielle is forced to wear leg braces and a back-brace which pose a world of exciting possibilities for James:

Her body [...] was a ripening anthology of perverse possibilities. [...] As I [...] ran my fingers along the deep buckle groove, the corrugated skin felt hot and tender, more exciting than the membrane of a vagina. This depraved orifice, the invagination of a sexual organ still in the embryonic stages of its evolution

[...] I explored the scars on her [...] as she in turn explored mine, deciphering together these codes of a sexuality made possible by our two car-crashes.  
(*Crash* 145-6, 148)

Similarly to James's fantasies about Catherine's new orifice, Gabrielle's injuries are seen to add beauty and attractiveness in her. It is as if Gabrielle's injuries have brought her closer to becoming at one with the car: collision with the vehicle has caused physical changes which James regards with admiration. Gabrielle's body is in transition of becoming a hybrid between technology and a human being. The metal braces and their straps have been slowly digging into her skin and flesh, almost re-moulding her appearance so she is better equipped to receive the strange new sexuality.

In addition to the marks caused by the braces and straps, the scars speak their own language: it is as though they are messages from the car which James and Gabrielle are trying to decode. However, this is not the first time James feels that the scars "speak" to him: having seen the marks on Vaughan's body he thought that "they described an exact language of pain and sensation, eroticism and desire" (*Crash* 71). It is also intriguing to notice that James regards the grooves and scars from the braces, straps and buckles on Gabrielle's skin as new genitalia. These miniature vaginas in their "embryonic stages" represent the transformation the human body is going through in order to adapt to a new future of sexuality. James feels that he is also contributing to this process: "My first orgasm, within the deep wound on her thigh, jolted my semen along this channel, *irrigating its corrugated ditch*" (*Crash* 148; added emphasis). The "ditch" is seen as fertile ground in which James is willing to spread his seed. Although this "invagination" is physically unable to give birth, it does take part in the copulation between two people who have begun their journey towards technological eroticism.



The eroticism of death is more prominent in James's relationship with Helen Remington because it was part of the climax already in the beginning when Helen's husband died in the crash, but also during subsequent encounters: "In each sexual act together we recapitulated her husband's death, re-seeding the image of his body in her vagina" (*Crash* 64). The conception of death is a contradictory image but it encapsulates the spiral nature of transgression, along with the discontinuity of human beings. Birth and death are present in the referred image: there is sexual desire that is powered by images of death, and there is the possibility of pregnancy but potential new life is overshadowed by death. Usually the conception emerges from the death of two reproductive cells, which themselves are discontinuous but contain the potential for continuity; in contrast, in the case of James and Helen, the re-seeding of a dead husband would always lead to more death and lack the continuity aspect.

### **3.2.5. Final Transgression?**

Although Vaughan's death does not come as a surprise to James, it affects him in a peculiar way. Keeping in mind how diligently James tries to emulate Vaughan, it is then quite ironic that Vaughan's body is so disfigured in the crash that he is at first identified as James (though it has to be remembered that he crashed in James's car). The intertwining of James and Vaughan's personalities and desires is so strong that James feels he is actually visiting his own place of death when he arrives at Vaughan's accident scene. Vaughan's final car-crash may not be said to be a complete success because he fails in his plans to take the actress Elizabeth Taylor with him to death. These plans had already been partly ruined by the stunt driver Seagrave's crash: "Later, I realized what had most upset Vaughan. [...] Seagrave had pre-empted that real death which Vaughan had reserved for

himself. In his mind [...] the film actress had already died. All that remained now for Vaughan was to constitute the formalities of time and place” (*Crash* 154).

Later, when James and Catherine go to the police pound to look at the car in which Vaughan died, they make “brief, ritual love,” after which James gathers the semen in his hand and smears it over various vehicles (*Crash* 183). Finally, he also marks “the crushed controls and instrument dials, defining for the last time the contours of Vaughan’s presence on the seats” (*Crash* 184). It is as if through this action James is anointing and blessing Vaughan, or as Vaughan would probably refer to himself, the latest “modern martyr of the super-highways” (*Crash* 155).

Despite having had the “creative” aspect of his fantasy car-crash ruined, Vaughan does at least succeed in crossing the final limit between life and death. James also considers Vaughan’s crash as completed transgression, as the final sentences of the novel illustrate:

Already I knew that I was designing the elements of my own car-crash. Meanwhile, the traffic moves in an unceasing flow along the flyover. The aircraft rise from the runways of the airport, carrying the remnants of Vaughan’s semen to the instrument panels and radiator grilles of a thousand crashing cars, the leg stances of a million passengers. (*Crash* 185)

Vaughan’s death has not put James off his own plans since he clearly still regards dying in a car accident as desirable. In addition, it can be said that Vaughan finally did achieve a kind of immortality when his body merged with the metallic body of the car. James has already managed to cross several boundaries and now that Vaughan is gone, he is ready to start planning his own ultimate transgression. The discontinuity of Vaughan is irrefutable; however, it *is* possible to see his continuity in James and others who have followed

Vaughan's teachings. James does indeed spot two of Vaughan's disciples at the police pound: Helen Remington and Gabrielle, who have come to pay their last respects.

### **3.3. The Two Novels Examined**

According to Philip Tew, in contrast to the inner subjective struggles in modernist fiction, "much of postwar writing is concerned with discordant, intensely alienated intersubjective social interactions; with commodification of moral values; and public moral and ideological conflicts" (762). It is within the aforementioned themes that transgression can also be found. The two novels I have studied evidently offer wide-ranging treatments of "transgression," but with quite obviously different emphases. In *ACO* we have seen the individual's struggle against the norms and constraints of the State, whereas in *Crash*, the readers are presented with the extraordinary ways in which two men find new meaning in life through sexual transgression. The core stories are perhaps not ground-breaking, but by placing them in different contexts the authors manage to reveal new perspectives about the human condition.

Violence is very prominent in both novels but it manifests itself in different ways in relation to transgression. In *ACO*, it is more "outwardly" orientated: Alex is the active perpetrator by producing the violence and targeting it at others. In *Crash*, violence is more connected with masochism: James and Vaughan are aroused by car-crashes and aim to die in one. Although already extreme in their content, transgressiveness extends to the narrative forms of the novels. The potency is multiplied in the use of Nadsat because it enables linguistic transgression in *ACO*. Whereas in *Crash*, the use of pornographic and car manual inspired imagery conveys and embodies the protagonists' technological eroticism. In addition, it must be noted that both novels connect transgression with various degrees of joy and aesthetic pleasure: destruction is seen as beautiful and life-affirming.

#### 4. Conclusion

The aim of my thesis has been to examine transgression in its various forms and how it manifests itself in *A Clockwork Orange*, by Anthony Burgess, and *Crash*, by J. G. Ballard. Transgression can be used to refer to all sorts of boundary crossings, but in my thesis I focus on the more violent and sexual aspects of human life because my chosen novels portray the extremities of the aforementioned things. I studied the transgressive behaviour of the protagonists of both novels to see why they choose it and what they get out of it. In addition, I briefly examined how the novels themselves are transgressive in terms of form and language.

In chapter one I introduced my topic and the approach I would take to study my two chosen novels. I then gave brief plot summaries, after which I moved on to give background information about the authors, the novels and their historical and social contexts. In chapter two I presented the theories used in my thesis. Transgression as a term cannot be covered by one theory or viewpoint, which is why I have gathered theoretical background from various fields of study, e.g., literature, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. The texts of Chris Jenks, Julian Wolfreys, Michel Foucault and Georges Bataille, amongst others, proved to be very useful when I set out to map the various aspects of transgression.

The features that define transgression, and are most relevant to my thesis, are that it is a deliberate act (of defiance), and that there is a law or a norm present which enables transgression, in other words, the limit tempts into transgression – making the relationship between them not a dualistic one, but rather a spiral. In addition, transgression as a human experience must also be acknowledged, for being human, means to be transgressed and to be transgressive. Bataille in particular has written on that very subject, and sees that

eroticism is a significant aspect of transgression and inner life because it calls their being into question. The desire to fall, or a deliberate loss of control/loss of self, is related to eroticism, though not exclusively. In addition, and more importantly, transgression is part or centre of self: being is the experience of limits. In relation to my topic, I have also briefly described the role of bodies in society and the norms and expectations set on them. Finally, in the last subsection of chapter two I have taken a brief look at the connection between obscenity, despoiling and transgression. I also refer to Mary Douglas's concept of dirt as disorder.

In both novels the societies depicted do not meet the expectations of their respective protagonists and what they crave in life. In *ACO*, the State is rather unforgiving: a "normal" life equals an oppressed life, the citizens are expected to live in submission. Whereas in *Crash*, the ever-modernising society fails to connect with people, it does not provide a sense of belonging. Given that the societies in which the main characters live, it is then not surprising that the need for transgression stems from a desire to be free and the ability to choose one's own actions. However, that is only the starting point: the main goals are joy, ecstasy, and through them, loss of self.

The protagonists in both *ACO* and *Crash* are trying to figure out their identities and discover that living in accordance with the rules of society is not an attractive option. Transgression, however, does offer Alex and James and Vaughan the opportunity to determine their actions and not conform to the expectations of society. It is perhaps not immediately apparent but transgression has a life-affirming role in both novels: for the teenaged Alex it is a way to explore and assert his identity. He mainly does this through violence, which is frequently depicted in a celebratory manner because for Alex, violence is a source of joy. Whereas for James, a new technological sexuality awakened by a car-crash is an escape from his middle-aged and middle-class life.

However one looks at it, the significance of transgressive violence cannot be ignored, whether the novels' characters are practising it or are at the receiving end of it. Limits and boundaries are not gently stepped over; they are often broken with fists, kicks and a crashing car. There is a significant difference in the way the main characters practise their transgressiveness: Alex is noticeably an *active* perpetrator and transgressor, and one could say he “produces” violence. In contrast, although they also actively seek transgression, James and Vaughan are drawn to the violence of car-crashes and technology, they are ultimately “consuming” violence. Furthermore, in *ACO* there is a more tangible establishment in place against which Alex is fighting. Besides the State control, Alex strives to break away from the constraints of a “normal” life, e.g., going to school, getting a job, getting married etc. What James and Vaughan are up against in *Crash* is less to do with law enforcement or other institutions, and more about inner transgression: crossing one's own boundaries, e.g., sexual limits.

How the late 20<sup>th</sup> century society affected the reality of the novels is much to do with the increasing industrialisation and the rapid technological progress. This advancement would lead to the mechanization of many work processes, leaving the manual workers redundant. This loss of purpose would later be followed by the curiosity of how machines could be harnessed to work for humans. After two world wars, the Cold War brought more uncertainty, fear, loss of humanity and compassion. Despite its usefulness, there was distrust towards technology and fear that it could replace or destroy man – as the automation of work and atom bombs had already shown. Consumerism and the desire for stability and a “normal” life started to emerge in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, not everyone wanted to settle for and conform to this existence. Those who did not want to become imprisoned by the norms, and thus stifled and numbed as an individual, would find a way out in transgression.

In both novels the protagonists have in a way “woken up” and become aware of the restrictions in their lives set by society. Alex has started his disobedience from a very early age, whereas James has to go through a car-crash in order to wake up. In *ACO*, transgression is a way to avoid and escape the so called normal life before Alex is forced into it. In *Crash*, James is already part of the normal life, i.e., marriage, a steady job, which is why transgression for him is mainly about escaping and finding a new purpose.

Although transgression is very much an inner experience, it is often connected with a physical act or a physical response in both novels. In *ACO*, the physicality appears as violence (fights, assaults, rape). Thus, the marks can be seen on another person (their injuries), while the perpetrator gets physical and psychological pleasure. In *Crash*, James and Vaughan are also the victims of violence, unless they collide with an innocent person. The physical violence is directed at the protagonists themselves, resulting in masochistic pleasure. Physical marks, such as scars and wounds are celebrated because they are seen to “add” something to their carrier.

The technological societies of the novels convey very different reactions and outcomes. For instance, although in *ACO* technology can be a source of joy in the hands of the individual (record player and stolen cars), but in the hands of the State its use is not portrayed in a positive light: it becomes a torture and controlling device, a weapon of normalisation. In *Crash*, technology has invaded human-centred production of spaces, and as Groes puts it: the car is “the ultimate expression of late capitalist science and technology” (87). The problem is not that technology causes suspicion and confusion anymore: it is that the characters have adjusted *too well* to the technological change. The desire to merge with the car is almost thought of as humanity’s next evolutionary step: the hybridisation of metal and flesh. James and Vaughan feel that through a technological death, i.e., a car-crash, they become *more* than a human when merging with the machine of

perfection. Thus, the protagonists of *Crash* can be seen to give up their individuality for something greater. Whereas in *ACO*, Alex becomes *less* than human through technology when Ludovico's Technique removes his freedom of choice and individuality is taken away.

Desire and its gratification are also significant aspects in the discussion of the chosen novels. When once people would have at least attempted to resist temptations and suppress urges, the novels' respective main characters want and are able to cross the limit whenever they wish. The desires have to be gratified preferably almost immediately after they occur. The characters then could be seen as extreme specimens or perhaps even forerunners of the modern citizen: the emphasis being on the individual and instant gratification.

The novels also exhibit how intricate a role transgression has in life and in death. Alex's violent actions are more geared towards life because they make him feel more alive. Of course one must not forget Alex's suicide attempt for it is a final attempt to regain control and the right to die after being deprived of his transgressive self. The eroticism of *Crash* is ultimately heading for death in a collision. However, there are also many occasions of creating life, or at least attempts to do so in Ballard's novel: transgression leads James and Vaughan to new lives, James and Helen re-seeding the image of Helen's dead husband, Gabrielle's hybrid body and its "ditches" that James irrigates with his semen, a sexual fluid which is also often spread over cars. These are all attempts to create or revive life in a barren technological society, a brave new world set to fail.

On the basis of my analysis of the novels and their protagonists, Bataille's explanation of the experience of limits as the complex human condition seems to hold true. Knowledge and the recognition of death as the great finitude create a desire to "complete" life, and the inability to do so in turn "generates a perpetual state of urgency and anxiety" (93). This precise mind-set is present in the actions of the novels' main characters: there is



an excited, rushed pace in both novels whenever limits or acts of transgression are described. In such moments the use of language becomes more colourful, joyous and often ecstatic. For example, as mentioned in the analysis, when Alex encounters the two little girls he remarks on the rush of feelings thus: “Then an idea hit me and made me near fall over with the *anguish* and *ecstasy* of it” (*ACO* 37; added emphases).

Language and form are indeed significant components in what makes the novels themselves transgressive. In *ACO*, Burgess has altered the English language quite radically: he has not only done violence to the language but also to the reader by forcing them to accept this new creation in order to keep up with the story. *Crash* also presents the reader with an unsettling narrative but it is achieved through different methods. Ballard combines the hypersexual imagery of pornography with the clinical and straightforward approach of medical textbooks and car manuals.

Violence and its destructive power emerge as very significant themes in both novels. As we have seen in the analysis, scenes such as the rape of the two girls in *ACO* and James’s admiration towards Gabrielle’s injured body in *Crash*, show that violence and destruction are seen as beautiful: they are assigned aesthetic and mending qualities. In *Crash*, human’s only chance to become whole is to destroy oneself; human is only able to be whole when broken. Admittedly, in *ACO* destruction is directed at others. However, both novels show that through destruction comes creation: transgression, when executed by the protagonists, is a life-affirming experience which offers them a chance to renew themselves and their lives. The knowledge that they are ultimately discontinuous beings drives the protagonists towards transgression: they are compelled to pursue continuity even though the attempts often end up failing.

Although both novels portray extreme human behaviour, their essence has leaked out to the readers’ reality. One can see reality mimicking fiction – on purpose or inadvertently.

For example, Burgess had based Alex on youth gangs he saw in Russia and also Teddy Boys in the UK. Copycat crime and gangs appeared, but this was mainly due to Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation which reached a larger audience. After Teddy Boys came the headline-grabbing gang violence of Mods, Rockers, Punks, Skinheads and Neo-Nazis in later decades. The various punishment, torture and rehabilitation techniques that prisoners are subjected to have also come into public knowledge: e.g., Guantamo Bay, "Mega-jails" in the US, and the chemical castration of paedophiles and sex offenders.

In the case of *Crash*, humans' interest in the relationship between sex and technology does not seem to be dwindling: e.g., there have been documentaries about men who literally have sex with their cars. The technological revolution in terms of sex may not be moving as fast as Ballard predicted, but the ingenuity can certainly be seen in the sex toy industry. The fantasy of a fully functional pleasure robot has existed for a long time in science fiction and popular culture. Incredibly detailed life-size "RealDolls" with silicone flesh and PVC-skeletons are already available, while actual love robots are still in development. An extreme female version of technological eroticism can be seen in the use of so-called "fucking machines," which resemble phallic piston engines or drills. *Crash* also has an amazing parallel with the tragic death of Princess Diana in a car-crash after being chased by the paparazzi – which is not far off from Vaughan's fantasies about dying in a head-on collision with Elizabeth Taylor.

Owing to the limitations of this thesis, I could only analyse a certain number of scenes and I had to leave out some intriguing themes. In *ACO* one could further explore the State transgressing the boundaries of individuality. It would also be fruitful to study further the linguistic transgression in *ACO*. With *Crash*, further areas of study could include a more thorough examination of the relationship between James and Vaughan and their technological and homosexual eroticism. There are quite a few female characters in *Crash*

but their roles are usually minor. It would be interesting to study their roles in relation to transgression.

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## APPENDIX

## Nadsat Glossary

<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Origins</b>
Bog	God	Russian: Bog/God
Bolshy	Big	Russian: bolshoy/big
Britva	Razor	Russian: britva/razor
Chelloveck	Fellow	Russian: chelovyek/ person, man
Creech	Scream	Russian: kreechat/scream
Devotchka	Girl	Russian: devochka/girl
Droog	Friend	Russian: droog/friend
Glazz	Eye	Russian: glaz/eye
Goloss	Voice	Russian: golos/voice
Govoreet	To talk/speak	Russian: govorit/to speak, talk
Grazhny	Dirty	Russian: gryuzniyi/dirty
Gromky	Loud	Russian: gromkii/loud
Guttiwuts	Guts	School boy speak
Horrorshow	Good/well	Russian: khorosho/good
Itty	To go	Russian: idti/to go
Lewdies	People	Russian: lyudi/people
Litso	Face	Russian: litso/face
Malchick	Boy	Russian: malchik/boy
Malenky	Little	Russian: malyenkiyi/small
Moodge	Man	Russian: muzhchina/male human being
Nadsat	Teenage	Russian: ending for numbers 11-19
Nagoy	Naked	Russian: nagoi/naked
Oddy knocky	Lonesome/alone	Russian: odinok/lonesome
Ptitsa	Girl	Russian: ptitsa/bird
Radosty	Joy	Russian: radost/joy
Rooker	Hand	Russian: ruka/hand
Rot	Mouth	Russian: rot/mouth
Sinny	Movies, film	Invented slang: from cinema
Slooshy	To listen/hear	Russian: slushat/to hear
Smeck	Laugh (n.)/to laugh	Russian: smekh/a laugh
Snuff it	To die	English slang: to snuff is to kill, to die
Starry	Old/ancient	Russian: stariyi/old
Tolchock	To hit	Russian: tolchok/a push, shove
Veck	Guy	Russian: chelovyek/person, man



Veshch	Thing	Russian: vesh/thing
Viddy	To see	Russian: vidyet/to see
Von	Smell (n.)	Russian: von/stench
Zheena	Wife	Russian: zhena/wife

## Finnish Summary

Ihmiset ovat rajoittuneita olentoja: järjestämme elämämme lukemattomien sääntöjen ja normien mukaan. Yhteiskunnallisten rajojen ja normien lisäksi ihmiset ovat fyysisten rajoitustensa sitomia. Sääntöjen ajatellaan useimmiten luovan turvaa ja järjestystä yhteiskunnassa, mutta ne voivat myös olla tukahduttavia. Tällöin muutosta kaipaava ihminen päättää toimia normeja vastaan. Tutkielmani käsittelee erilaisia rajanylityksiä eli *transgressioita* kahdessa romaanissa: Anthony Burgessin *A Clockwork Orangessa* (1962) ja J. G. Ballardin *Crashissa* (1973). *A Clockwork Orange* tunnetaan väkivaltaa rakastavasta päähenkilöstään, 15-vuotiaasta Alexista, joka päätyy ”korjaavaan” aivopesuun (nostaen kysymyksen siitä onko valittu pahuus parempi kuin pakotettu hyvyys). *Crash* keskittyy kolareiden erotisointiin sekä autojen ja teknologian seksualisointiin, päähenkilöinä keski-ikäiset James ja Vaughan.

Tutkielmani tavoitteena on tutkia transgression monia ilmenemismuotoja valitsemisani teoksissa. Lähestyn transgressiota analysoimalla teosten päähenkilöitä ja heidän tekojaan: tarkastelen heidän syytään rajoja ylittävään käytökseen ja mitä he tuntevat saavuttavansa teoillaan. Tutkin myös sitä onko transgressio pelkästään tuhoavaa vai voidaanko se nähdä positiivisena voimana. Lisäksi käsitelen lyhyesti kuinka romaanit ovat itsessään transgressiivisiä narratiivisen muodon ja kielen näkökulmasta.

Transgressio on monitahoinen käsite, mutta yksinkertaisimmillaan se viittaa rajojen rikkomiseen tai ylittämiseen, useimmiten sosiaalisten tai moraalisten. Uskonnollisessa viitekehyksessä transgressio yhdistetään syntiin tai tekoihin, jotka ovat jollain tapaa kiellettyjä. Transgressio on kuitenkin käsitteenä monimutkaisempi tapaus, sillä esimerkiksi seksi tai väkivalta eivät itsessään ole transgressiivisiä. Transgressiota koskevaa kirjallisuutta lukiessa tulee selväksi, että se ei pelkästään ole tahallinen normeja uhmaava

teko vaan osa ihmisen olemusta. On myös huomioitava, että rajan ja ylityksen eli transgression suhde ei ole mustavalkoinen: ne pikemminkin kietoutuvat toisiinsa, raja houkuttaa transgressioon.

Tutkielmani ensimmäisessä luvussa esittelen aiheeni ja aineistoni. Annan teoksista juonitiivistelmät, jonka jälkeen kerron taustatietoa kirjailijoista, teoksista ja niiden historiallisista ja sosiaalisista konteksteista. Toisessa luvussa tuon esille tutkielmani teoriapohjan. Transgressio on laaja käsite, jota yksittäinen teoria tai näkökulma ei pysty kattamaan, jonka vuoksi olen kerännyt teoreettista tietoa eri tutkimusaloilta, mm. kirjallisuudesta, sosiologiasta, antropologiasta ja filosofiasta. Chris Jenksin, Julian Wolfreysin, Michel Foucault'n ja Georges Bataillen tekstit osoittautuivat erityisen hyödyllisiksi transgression käsitteen kartoittamisessa.

Tutkimukselleni olennaisimmat transgression piirteet ovat seuraavat: se on tarkoituksellinen tai tahallinen normeja uhmaava teko, joka edellyttää jonkinlaisen lain tai normin olemassaoloa, sillä se mahdollistaa transgression. Toisin sanoen, raja houkuttaa transgressioon, tehden niiden välisen suhteen pikemminkin spiraalimuotoiseksi kuin dualistiseksi. Lisäksi täytyy myös huomioda se, että transgressio on osa ihmiskokemusta ja –olemusta: ihmisyys tarkoittaa sitä, että ylittää rajoja ja että itse joutuu ylitetyksi. Erityisesti Bataille on kirjoittanut kyseisestä aiheesta ja hän näkee, että eroottisuus on olennainen osa transgressiota ja ihmisen sisäistä elämää koska se kyseenalaistaa ihmisen olemuksen. Eroottisuuteen liittyy myös itsensä ja kontrollin menettämisen halu. Lisäksi on tärkeä muistaa, että transgressio on itsen osa tai keskus: oleminen on rajojen kokemista. Tutkielmani aiheeseen liittyen olen lyhyesti kuvannut kehojen roolia yhteiskunnassa sekä niille asetettuja normeja ja odotuksia. Teoriaosuuden lopussa käsittelem myös pikaisesti transgression yhteyttä riistoon ja säädyttömyyteen. Viittaan myös Mary Douglasin konseptiin liasta epäjärjestyksenä.

Tutkielmani kolmannessa luvussa sovellan teoriaosuutta teosten analysointiin. Ensin käsittelen Burgessin *A Clockwork Orange*-teoksen. Aloitan romaanin analyysin tarkastelemalla päähenkilö Alexin syitä transgressioon, joihin kuuluu mm. halu vapaasti valita tekonsa, väkivallasta saatu ilo ja arkielämästä irrottautuminen. Käy ilmi, että Alex on hyvin tietoinen niin sanotusta pahasta käytöksestään ja valinnoistaan, joka on olennainen osa transgressiota.

Tämän jälkeen siirryn tarkastelemaan teoksessa esiintyvää Nadsat-slangia. Burgessin kehittämä, venäjänkieleen pohjautuva puhetapa on olennainen osa teosta, sillä Alexin ollessa minäkertoja, lukija ei voi välttyä altistumasta sille. Tutkinkin Nadsatia nimenomaan sen kahden roolin kautta: väkivallan kielenä ja kielen väkivaltana. Burgess itse on jollain tasolla harjoittanut väkivaltaa pakottaessaan englannin ja venäjänkielen yhteen. Alexin tapaan myös lukija joutuu aivopesun uhriksi, sillä tarinan seuraaminen edellyttää Nadsatin oppimista. Seuraavaksi käsittelen teoksessa olevaa väkivaltaa transgression muotona ottamalla esiin muutamia kohtauksia. Tutkin Alexin väkivallasta saamaa mielihyvää jengitappelun, pahoinpitelyn ja seksuaalisen väkivallan näkökulmista.

Analysoin myös väkivallan ja esteettisten kokemusten – erityisesti musiikin – yhteyttä ja kuinka ne vaikuttavat Alexiin. Seuraavaksi tarkastelen kuinka Valtio teknologian avulla rikkoo yksilön eli Alexin oikeuksia. Ludovico's Technique-nimisellä aivopesutekniikalla alistetaan Alexin ruumis ja aivot toimimaan Valtion haluamalla tavalla, näin tuhoten hänen tahdonvapautensa. Päätän analyysini tutkimalla onnistuuko Alex loppujen lopulta transgressio-yrityksissään vai ei.

Aloitan myös *Crash*-teoksen analysoinnin tutkimalla päähenkilöiden, Jamesin ja Vaughanin, erinäisiä syitä transgressioon. Molemmille miehille transgressio merkitsee uuden elämän ja seksuaalisuuden mahdollisuutta. Seuraavaksi tarkastelen lyhyesti teoksen muotoa ja kieltä. Ballard luo teoksen levottoman tunnelman yhdistelemällä pornografian

suoruutta, lääketieteellistä kliinisyyttä sekä auto-opaskirjojen teknillisyyttä. Teoksen hätkähdyttävimmät kohtaukset syntyvät juuri siitä kun Ballard tuo yhteen kovan teknologian ja pehmeän ihmislihan.

Eroottisuus on transgression päämuoto Ballardin teoksessa, minkä vuoksi tutkin sitä kahdessa alaluvussa. Ensimmäinen keskittyy autoihin ja kolareihin suuntautuvaan eroottisuuteen: tarkastelen päähenkilöiden halua sulautua autoon sekä kuinka auton eri osat vertautuvat ruumiinosiin, ihmisruumiin vertautuessa koneeseen. Kolarissa kuoleminen edustaa päähenkilöille epätäydellisen ihmisruumiin ja täydellisen koneen avioliittoa, lihan ja teknologian yhtymistä. Kauneuden ja turvallisuuden lisäksi auto nähdään ajoittain tuntevana olentona, joka osallistuu seksuaaliseen kanssakäymiseen.

Toinen eroottisen transgression käsittelyosio keskittyy fyysisiin vammoihin, haavoihin ja kuolemaan. Kolareiden lisäksi *Crashin* henkilöt kiihottuvat niistä johtuvista ruumiillisista vammoista: ne nähdään kauniina ja ruumista täydellistävänä. Kolareissa ihmisen muoto rikkoutuu, jonka seurauksena syntyy uusi eroottisuuden ”kartta” haavoista ja arvista. Teoksessa ihmisruumiin ajatellaan näin valmistautuvan vastaanottamaan uuden teknologisen eroottisuuden. Tarkastelen lyhyesti myös Jamesin suhdetta Helen Remingtoniin: naiseen, jonka kanssa kolarointi alun perin sai Jamesin heräämään uudenlaiseen elämään.

Päätän *Crashin* analyysin pohtimalla onnistuuko Vaughan ylittämään rajan viimeisessä kolarissaan. Kuolema ei mene täysin Vaughanin suunnitelmien mukaan, mutta hänen voidaan sanoa saavuttaneen eräänlaisen kuolemattomuuden sulautumalla autoon ja ylittämällä elämän ja kuoleman välisen rajan. Vaughanin jatkuvuus näkyy Jamesissa ja muissa, jotka ovat seuranneet Vaughanin opetuksia. Teoksen lopussa James suunnitteleeekin jo omaa viimeistä kolariaan. Analyysiluvun lopussa on lyhyt yhteenveto päälöydöistä.

Tutkielmani viimeisessä luvussa käsittelen tarkemmin teosten välisiä yhtenäisyyksiä ja eroavaisuuksia. Teoksista käy ilmi, että päähenkilöiden transgressiivisiin tekoihin on syynä vapauden ja uudenlaisen elämän kaipuu. Sekä Alex että James ja Vaughan etsivät paikkaansa maailmassa, mutta ymmärtävät, etteivät löydä sitä vallitsevasta yhteiskunnasta. Transgression kautta hahmot pyrkivät saavuttamaan tietynlaisen ekstaasin, joka johtaa jatkuvuuteen ja itsensä kadottamiseen. Transgressiivinen väkivalta on erittäin näkyvää molemmissa teoksissa: Alex on enemmän aktiivinen väkivallan tuottaja, kun taas James ja Vaughan ovat väkivallan kuluttajia kolarieroottisuutensa vuoksi.

Vaikka transgressio on ensisijaisesti sisäinen kokemus, se yhdistyy usein fyysiseen tekoon tai reaktioon kummassakin romaanissa: tätä ilmentävät esim. fyysiset vammat pahoinpitelyn jäljiltä *A Clockwork Orangessa* tai kolarin seurauksena *Crashissa*. Teknologia näyttäytyy hyvin eri tavoin teoksissa. Yksilön käsissä se tuottaa nautintoa, kuten Jamesin ja Vaughanin teknologiaeroottisuus todistaa. Teknologian päätyessä Valtion käsiin, sen rooli muuttuu kidutus- ja kontrollivälineeksi: normalisaation aseeksi, jonka uhriksi Alex joutuu. Teosten transgressio liittyy usein myös haluun ja sen tyydyttämiseen.

Teoksista näkyy myös transgression monitahoinen rooli elämässä ja kuolemassa. Alexin väkivaltaiset teot ovat pääosin elämään suuntautuvia kun taas Jamesin ja Vaughanin eroottisuus johtaa kuolemaan. Molemmat teokset kuitenkin ilmentävät transgression positiivista voimaa ja kauneutta, joka syntyy sen tuhoisuuden kautta. Tämän prosessin ansiosta hahmot pystyvät uudistamaan itsensä ja elämänsä. Pohdintojeni lopussa käsittelen vielä lyhyesti kuinka teosten transgressiivisuus näyttää vuotaneen omaan todellisuuteemme: esimerkiksi, Burgessin kuvaama nuorisoväkivalta näkyy uusien sukupolvien jengitoiminnassa kun taas Ballardin teoksen teknologinen eroottisuus ja seksuaalisuus näkyvät kekseliäisyytenä ja ääripäinä aikuisviihdeollisuudessa. Tutkielman lopuksi tuon esille uusia mahdollisia tutkimusaiheita.