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The Clockwork Testament, or Enderby's End or Death in New York
by Anthony Burgess.

The manuscript, (of which page 52 is missing and some pages are almost unreadable), can be read on various levels, which are, curiously enough, rather unrelated between each other. I shall shortly describe three of them: A: What might be called the "narrative" level: A British poet is invited to New York to give lectures on English literature. He is a Catholic, his poetry is of the "philosophical" kind and he is deeply committed to a disciplined elaboration of beautiful language. In New York he is engulfed by brutal vulgarity, shallow political commitment, commercial Kitsch a pleasureless sexuality and, what is worse to him, desecralisation of poetry, in three different surroundings: his class, (where he gives a lecture on Renaissance English poets invented by him to a group of alienated pseudo-intellectual youths, where he criticizes and gives grades to silly, pornographic and cheaply political poems made by his students, and where a girl wants to prostitute herself to him to obtain grade A), the subway, (where a group of hoodlums are about to violate and elderly woman, whilst some passangers watch as if it were a TV show, and a nun prays, and he himself draws a sword hidden in his walking stick to fight the hoodlums), and in a TV program, (to which he is invited because a film vaguely based on a poem of his is said to have provoked violence, and where he meets a hypocritical Catholic teacher, a silly and vulgarly efficient animator, and a hard, pityless and glamorous movie star). He has three heart attack and dies of the last after having made love to a woman who came to his apartment to kill him in revenge to the effect his poetry had on her.

B: What might be called the "linguistic" level: There is the obvious shock between the American and British use of the English language. There is the shock between the philosophical, (and theological), and the brutally vulgar language. There is the shock between the language of poetry and the commercial and cheap political jargon. And there is the shock between the traditional discursive speech and the language of film scripts and TV programs. (There is a very funny transcription of a TV interview, where, for instance, "ethical" becomes "ethnical", and "predestination" becomes "priority nation".)

C: What might be called the "message" level: The dialectics between determination and freedom, ("original sin" and "choice between good and evil") is the constant theme that runs through the manuscript. The dialectics

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is never resolved, but is shown in various contexts. It is personified in St. Augustin and Pelagius, and the author seems to side with Pelagius, (curiously one reason seems to be that Pelagius is British). The author seems to suggest that the deep-lying reason for the barbarous state of political and aesthetic affairs which he diagnosticizes is the fact that people are no longer aware of this dialectics. His manuscript aims at provoking such an awareness, because to him the impossibility to solve the contradiction between determination and freedom is the human condition, if we take this contradiction in its religious connotations. (I.e.: catholic connotations.)

Appreciation: The manuscript reads very well, because it has suspense, it has drama, it poses important questions, and is at times very funny. It is written with skill and it addresses itself to a great range of readers, (from the "high-brow" to the "middle-bro@"). It should sell well, because it is written by a well-known name, and it has sex, violence, and religion in it. In my opinion it does not raise the truly important questions about the problems it deals with, (neither in the realm of politics, nor the arts, nor philosophy, nor religion). It leaves me unsatisfied, (which might be due to the fact that human condition is unsatisfactory), but it also leaves me rather unconcerned, (which might be due to the commercial skill it betrays, which means that the manuscript is part of the universe the author apparently criticizes with such violence). In other words: I do not think the manuscript is a true "meta-discourse" of the theme it handles. But my opinion does not invalidate the interest of the manuscript: an intelligent, even fascinating, description of one aspect of the world we have to live in. No doubt: the manuscript should be published in my opinion.