

A Clockwork Orange as a Re-writing of the *Divine Comedy*: The Case of the Missing Chapter

Manuel Botero Camacho¹
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Artículo de reflexión derivado de investigación

Recibido: 23-03-2018

Aprobado 25-05-2018

ABSTRACT

This essay attempts to establish a connection between Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the journeys of their respective protagonists, Alex and Dante. The analysis begins by studying the structural resemblances that can be viewed in the designs of both works, enabling us to understand Alex' narration as a reflection of Dante's journey through hell, purgatory and paradise. To this purpose, the design of Burgess' text is going to be addressed, paying attention to how the missing final chapter in the American edition, and therefore in Kubrick's adaptation, harms the overall implications of the text. In addition, the thematic similarities between both works are going to be likewise analyzed, focusing on the subject of free will, present in both texts as the cornerstone of human reform and redemption.

Keywords: *A Clockwork Orange*, *Divine Comedy*, Reinterpretation, Free will.

La naranja mecánica como reescritura de la *Divina Comedia*: el caso del capítulo ausente

RESUMEN

Este ensayo pretende establecer una conexión entre *La naranja mecánica* de Anthony Burgess y la *Divina Comedia* de Dante Alighieri y los viajes de sus respectivos protagonistas, Alex y Dante. El análisis parte de las semejanzas estructurales que pueden vislumbrarse entre los diseños de ambas obras, permitiendo entender la narración de Alex como un reflejo del viaje de Dante a través del infierno, el purgatorio y el paraíso. Para este propósito, se tratará el diseño de la novela de Burgess y como este se ve afectado por la falta del último capítulo en la edición americana del texto y,

¹ Profesor en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, en el Departamento de Filología inglesa. Es profesor asociado del Departamento de Estudios Ingleses (UCM). Doctor en Literatura Comparada y Teoría del Discurso Literario. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6200-0629> E- mail: mbotero@ucm.es

por tanto, en la adaptación cinematográfica de Kubrick. Por otra parte, las similitudes temáticas se centran principalmente en el debate sobre el libre albedrío presente en ambos textos, presentado como pieza clave en la reforma y redención humana.

Palabras clave: *La naranja mecánica*, *Divina Comedia*, Reinterpretación, Libre albedrío.

A Laranja Mecânica do Relógio como uma Reescrita da Divina Comédia: O Caso do Capítulo Perdido

RESUMO

Este ensaio tenta estabelecer uma ligação entre a Laranja Mecânica de Anthony Burgess e a Divina Comédia de Dante e as viagens dos seus respectivos protagonistas, Alex e Dante. A análise começa pelo estudo das semelhanças estruturais que podem ser vistas nos desenhos de ambas as obras, permitindo-nos compreender a narração de Alex como um reflexo da viagem de Dante pelo inferno, pelo purgatório e pelo paraíso. Para isso, será abordado o desenho do texto de Burgess, prestando atenção à forma como o capítulo final em falta na edição americana, e portanto na adaptação Kubrick's, prejudica as implicações globais do texto. Além disso, as semelhanças temáticas entre as duas obras serão igualmente analisadas, focando o tema do livre arbítrio, presente em ambos os textos como a pedra angular da reforma e redenção humanas.

Palavras-chave: A Laranja Mecânica do Relógio, Comédia Divina, Reinterpretação, Livre arbítrio.

As one of the central texts of the Western literary canon, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* could be deemed as a perennial source of ideas for authors. Dante's work has become part of the collective consciousness as the vision of hell and purgatory that Western culture has could be very well said to find its origin in Dante's text rather than in Christian teachings. In fact, the introduction and the significance of purgatory both into the religious and secular spheres are heavily indebted to the writings of the Florentine, especially given that it has no Scriptural foundations. Although as a location purgatory certainly preexists Dante, its understanding and experience cannot be separated from the author who defined, delimited and established it in an indelible form in the collective mind of his own society as well as those that followed. It is inherently bound to Dante's own conception of good and evil which, though sourced in the human mind of its maker, was portrayed as being originated in the Creator Himself.

Were we to focus on the literature written in English, we would find practically the same impact of the *Comedy* over it that in the traditions of Mediterranean countries, as Dante's influence can be spotted in authors from Chaucer onwards (Axson 1921; Toynbee 1909; Kuhns 1904). In the two last centuries, it has captivated the minds of each succeeding generation of artists: romantic poets like Shelley, the Pre-Raphaelites and of modernist poets like Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, who showed how this fascination with Dante made its way to the New World as well. This reverence is to be found as well in the literary works produced in the postwar period, as English authors still resort to the *Comedy* as a mirror upon which to reflect their writings and their society.

Embedded in this tradition, Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* will be studied in relation to Dante's *Comedy*, analyzing how various elements that compose the narration of its protagonist, Alex, are sourced or find analogies in the journey of Dante through hell, purgatory and heaven. These similarities concentrate at the levels of both structure and themes since, on the one hand, the design of Burgess' work presents parallels to that of Dante and, on the other hand, they both tackle with the necessity of free will in the choice between good and evil as part of the path to redemption and salvation. Before starting with the reading of Burgess' novel, some of the basic aspects of the *Comedy* are going to be addressed briefly since these highlight evident resemblances between the works of both authors.

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante introduces himself into the text as he becomes the protagonist of his narrative who in a confessional form relates to us, the audience, the journey underwent through the realms of hell, purgatory and heaven, describing them and their inhabitants. In doing so, he is committing an act of disobedience because he is revealing the truth of the afterlife as admonished in *II Corinthians*: "I knew a man in Christ [...] caught up to the third heaven. [...] How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (12: 2-4 King James Bible). Moreover, Dante's work epitomizes the Western hero's journey through the underworld, which find precursors in myths like that of Orpheus and Eurydice and in Classical literary works like Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*; both authors present in the *Comedy* as dwellers of Limbo (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 62). In fact, the *Comedy* is one of the central works studied by Joseph Campbell (2004) in his

description of the hero's quest in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, as it is addressed throughout Campbell's analysis (pp. 20, 65, 164, 168, 176, 239, 268, 295, 340). The *Comedy* is divided in three parts, "Hell", "Purgatory" and "Paradise", which are composed by 33 chants each and written in Italian *terza rima*.² It is at this level that similarities between Dante's text and *A Clockwork Orange* can already be spotted and delineated since Burgess' novel is likewise divided into three parts, though in this case each separated into seven chapters.³ Such design, however, is not present in the American version of the novel –from which Kubrick's film adaptation was made– since in it the last chapter is missing. This results in significant differences and, Morrison argues (2000), in "the violation of the book's structural – even numerological – unity." (p. xx) The significance of this numerological unity is, according to Morrison (2000), that the intended structure, 21 chapters, represents "the age at which children traditionally become adult, and it is in the twenty-first chapter that Alex sees the light and puts the errors of youth behind him." (p. xx). In the last chapter we witness what seems to be Alex' rejection of his former life and his decision to find a new beginning. Morrison also regards the importance of the structural design in reference to the works of other authors. For instance, he indicates that the division of each section into seven chapters is "an implicit allusion to Shakespeare's seven ages of man", which leads the author to conclude that "*A Clockwork Orange* is the most carefully constructed of novels." (Morrison, 2000, p. xx)

In his introduction to the restored edition of *A Clockwork Orange*, Biswell (2012), Burgess' biographer, provides some background information on the composition and editorial process of the novel. He indicates that in the early plans for *A Clockwork Orange* Burgess conceived a novel divided into three sections of 70 pages. The first of them deals with the crimes of a character named Fred Verity, the second with his imprisonment and release after undergoing a brainwashing treatment and the last with his cure and return to his former life (Biswell, 2012, p. viii). Although the endings of the early draft and the final novel differ, the symmetry of the structure remains, which stresses Burgess' utmost care and attention concerning his work's

² An initial canticle provides de perfection of the number 100.

³ It could be argued that Burgess' structure is not as complete as the *Comedy's* since the reference to Limbo would be missing as the additional chant that breaks the structure based on the number 3. It could be stated, however, that Burgess is aware of this since just as *A Clockwork Orange* lacks a number to reach the perfection of the number 100 as the *Comedy* does, so Alex's identification number, 665321, lacks a number to reach the number of the Beast, taking into account that $3+2+1 = 6$.

structure. If, as Morrison argues, through structure Burgess refers to the works of authors like Shakespeare, then what seems to have eluded Morrison completely is the remarkable resemblance of the design to that of Dante's *Comedy*. Under this perspective, each of the novel's sections would represent the equivalent part of Dante's journey through the spiritual realms. However, this resemblance is completely destroyed in the American version, a similarity that is too remarkable so as not to have been intentionally devised.

Biswell (2012) clarifies that "At the end of Part 3, chapter 6, the typescript contains a note in Burgess' handwriting: 'Should we end here? An optional 'epilogue' follows.'" (p. xiv) While the UK editor chose this "optional" epilogue to be included, the American editor rejected it. This seems to point towards the idea that Burgess might not have been so resolute in his composition. In fact, Biswell (2012) collects the comments of the American editor, Eric Swenson, who affirmed that Burgess congratulated him on his decision since he had added the last chapter to please the desire of his British publisher to have a happy ending (p. xiv). Bearing in mind the different endings of the final novel and the early draft, Biswell concludes that "it is clear from the 1961 typescript that Burgess' intentions about the ending of his novel were ambiguous from the start." (2012, p. xv)

On the other hand, Morrison (2000) paints quite a different picture as he maintains that whether Burgess may have been "gently invited or brusquely told to drop the ending" he "felt in no position to argue" with his American editor due to economic constraints (p. xvii). Morrison's opinion is based on Burgess' own stance concerning the matter that he presented in the introduction to the 1986 edition of the novel. In it, he makes his editor as the sole responsible for the alteration:

But my first New York publisher believed that my twenty-first chapter [...] bland and showed a Pelagian unwillingness to accept that a human being could be a model of unregenerable evil. The Americans, he said in effect, were tougher than the British and could face up to reality. [...]. 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. [...] Such a book would be sensational, and so it is. But I do not think it is a fair picture of human life. (Burgess, 1961/1986, p. xii-xiii)

The misrepresentation of life that Burgess (1961/1986) accuses the American version to have is that the final chapter, and the overall idea behind the novel, endows the work with “the quality of genuine fiction, an art founded on the principle that human beings change.” (p. xii) Even if Burgess initially might have been dubitative to include his “epilogue” he eventually became an ardent defender of its composition and inclusion within his novel, as seen in his introduction to the 1986 edition and in the inclusion of the final chapter in Burgess’ 1987 dramatic adaptation of the novel (Morrison, 2000, p. xix). Like his character, Burgess could also change his former views. Even though in his edition of the novel Biswell may have doubted Burgess’ intention for the ending, in the end he also includes chapter 21. In any case, and regardless of authorial intention, the present work is based on the British edition of the novel as originally published, paying attention to what the text offers regardless of what his author intended or how he viewed it at one time or other.

If the similar division into three main sections of both Burgess’ and Dante’s works might suggest that Burgess is trying to imitate the structure of the *Comedy*, there is a quite significant feature that reinforces such view. In the final canto of each section of Dante’s narrative, the poet concludes with lines that end with the word *stella* (star): “E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.” (Alighieri 1994), “puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.” (Alighieri 1994) and “l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle.” (Alighieri 1994)⁴ *A Clockwork Orange* mirrors this design but reversely since its three parts begin with the same sentence: “What’s it going to be then, eh?” (Burgess, 1961/2000, pp. 3, 57, 97). This might suggest that *A Clockwork Orange* could be read as a *Divine Comedy* backwards, as the inversion of the structure of Dante’s work.

Two hypotheses on the equivalences between the journeys of Dante and Alex can be delineated. The first considers that Alex’ days as a criminal represent hell, his imprisonment and the treatment through Ludovico’s technique is purgatory and the final section constitutes the entrance to paradise. In the second, Alex journeys from his own lawless paradise to the hell of being rehabilitated into British society. In any case, Ludovico’s technique would still be purgatory in structural terms, since as will be seen it presents quite a different picture from Dante’s realm in thematic terms. Both

⁴ The translation for the quoted lines are, respectively, the following: “And then we emerged to see the stars again” (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 195), “Clear and ready to go up the stars” (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pág. 347) and “By the love which moves the sun and the other stars.” (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pág. 499)

hypotheses can, in fact, coexist if we attend to another of the similarities between the *Comedy* and *A Clockwork Orange*, the metafictional play with authorial figures.

At the beginning of his journey, Dante meets and is helped by Virgil (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pp. 48-50), the Roman poet. He had been chosen by Beatrice to guide Dante through hell and purgatory, at the end of which she could replace him (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pp. 52-53). This results from the impossibility for Beatrice to enter hell as she is among the blessed and due to the fact that as a pagan Virgil could not continue his journey beyond purgatory as he explains to Dante before they set out (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 50). The choice of Virgil among other poets is not arbitrary but answers to Dante's veneration of the Roman poet (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pp. 51-52) and, primarily, to the fact that Virgil had described a similar journey of descent into the Underworld in his *Aeneid* from whose protagonist, Aeneas, was able to return. Thus, through his character Aeneas, Virgil was able to descend and return safely from Hades, a knowledge that may serve Dante as well for his own narrative. This game between author and characters is once more seen in the inclusion of Homer as one of Limbo's inhabitants and of his character Odysseus in the lowest parts of the eighth circle of hell (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pp. 157-159), both figures forming part of the same reality.

A Clockwork Orange also features a similar metaliterary playfulness. It is clear from the start that Alex is narrating the story, in which he is the protagonist. Thus, beyond the authorial figure of Burgess, we have two additional ones, Alex the narrator and Alex the character. Burgess (1961/2000) takes this design further by including the fictional writer F. Alexander –“another Alex” (p. 117)– as the author of a book titled “*A Clockwork Orange*” (pp. 18-19, 117). Thus, just as Dante is author, narrator and protagonist of his account so we have three Alex being in charge of each corresponding dimension. When Alex reads aloud a fragment of it during the assault of Alexander's home we discover that it deals with the same themes that Burgess' novel. This view can be deduced from the fragment read: “The attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, [...] laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen” (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 18). This is not that different from the reading of *A Clockwork Orange* as a “counter-argument to the mechanistic determinism of Skinner and his followers.” (Biswell, 2012, p. xii) Even more, the resemblance is also stylistic in that when Alex later reads the published novel,

he cannot understand “what the book was about” since “It was written in a very bezoomny like style” (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 117). This constitutes a mockery of Burgess’ design and use of the ‘nadsat’ language, an Anglo-Russian slang devised by him for the novel.

As a result, we should differentiate the journey of Alex in his roles of protagonist and narrator.⁵ The protagonist of the narrative would undergo the journey of Dante reversely. He goes from his Paradise of ‘ultra-violence’ to the purgatory represented by ‘Staja’, the jail, and his treatment through Ludovico’s technique, concluding in the hell of being incapable of resuming his former life after his release, until he is eventually restored to his natural state. After his recovery from his suicide attempt, Alex is reconditioned to once more be able to enjoy violence and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, offering him the possibility to return to the paradise of his former lawless days. As a result, the journey of Alex could be envisioned under a cyclical pattern in which the new beginning represents as much of a promising future as an ominous hint at future violence, in other words, a sort of paradise regained. Such a reading, in fact, would fit the design of the American version and Kubrick’s adaptation by considering that new beginning to be Alex’ return to his former way of life instead of his moral reform. Indeed, in chapter 21 Alex has resumed his former customs, as we find him sitting in the Korova Milkbar with his new gang in preparation for another night of violence (Burgess, 1961/2000, pp. 132-134). This time, however, Alex is “not in the mood” for neither violence, alcohol nor sex, leaving his friends to go for a walk instead (Burgess, 1961/2000, pp. 136), after which he decides to enter a coffee shop. Once he has ordered a chai tea, he becomes aware that the man sitting in one of the tables is his old friend Pete, who is there alongside his wife.

The significance of this scene is crucial since it is when the journeys of Alex the narrator and the character cross one another as it is precisely the actual point in which Alex’ narrative is framed. Initially, Alex’ account seems to be a confession of his past, a period that in some fragments he gives the impression of being quite a long time ago. Indeed Alex would have us believe so, perhaps in order to distance his past from his alleged new life, “But now as I end this story, brothers, I am not young, not no longer,

⁵ This division was clear enough for John Godber who in his 1980 stage adaptation of the novel presented Alex as two separate characters, “Alex I” or “Alex-who-acts” and his “post-reformation” counterpart, “Alex II” or “Alex-who-narrates” (Hutchins, 1991, págs. 36, 40)

oh no. Alex like groweth up, oh yes.” (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 141) The truth of the matter is that his account is rather not about the past but about the future as indicated by the sentence “I would have to start on that tomorrow.” (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 141) This implies that the narrative begins and ends during that reunion with Pete. Alex does not conceive his narration neither tomorrow nor yesterday, but rather in his present, today, between the “I ittied inside [...] and bought me a nice hot chai with plenty of moloko,” and “ I was left [...] with my milky chai, which was getting cold now, like thinking and wondering.” (Burgess, 1961/2000, pp. 138-139). One could hypothesize that the meeting with Pete stirred in him the memories of his past, going over them as he narrates them until he catches up with the action in the present, as well as the craving for a future: his desire to have a son and his decision to find a woman. As Alex states, “But first of all, brothers, there was this veshch of finding some devotchka or other who would be a mother to this son. I would have to start on that tomorrow.” (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 141)

As previously stated, it is at this point that the division between Alex the character, representing his past, and Alex the narrator, who looks towards the future, is easily spotted. When he concludes his narrative saying goodbye to the audience, “But you, O my brothers, remember sometimes thy little Alex that was. Amen. And all that cal.” (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 141), he is distancing himself from the “little Alex”, marking him as a character that exists no more, departing simultaneously from us and from him. The journey of Alex the character is complete at that point; on the contrary, the journey of the narrator is not. His path could be read in parallel to that of Dante, setting out from a troublesome period of life, as represented by the forest at the beginning of the *Comedy*, “[...] at that point of my journey/When somehow I left the proper way” (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 47). Thus, the first part of *A Clockwork Orange* can be read as Alex’ trip through hell, reaching the shores of purgatory once he is sentenced to prison, where he remains for the rest of the narration. Unlike in the case of the character, the narrator’s journey is not complete and, as a result, does not establish an exact equivalence between its sections and the three parts of Dante’s *Comedy*. However, its absence *within* Alex narration does not hinder the analogous relationship proposed in these pages but, in fact, reinforces such reading of Burgess’ novel. As a narrator Alex –and Burgess as the author– separates his story into three distinct sections, designing his character and his journey as a model, based on the inversion of

Dante's *Comedy*, for him to follow. In addition, it is clear from Alex' farewell that his journey is going to continue but that we are not invited to accompany him in it. This points towards an episode outside the narrative that, as will be presently discussed, confirms the tripartite structure and that is modelled after Dante's "Paradise".

As previously stated, in the *Comedy* Virgil acts as Dante's guide through hell and purgatory leaving him before the threshold that separates the latter from the Earthly Paradise (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 319) since as a pagan, Virgil is not allowed to enter paradise as he clarifies to Dante on their first meeting (Alighieri, trans. 2008, p. 50). At first sight, in *A Clockwork Orange* Alex seems not to have any guiding figure as significant and constant as that of Virgil. Far from it, the truth is that Alex is not alone in his path: his character and also the reader accompany him throughout the narrative. As he states at the end, "You have been everywhere with your little droog Alex, suffering with him," (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 141). This quote shows one of the stylistic features of Alex' narration, namely, his recurrent appeals to the reader, addressing us in friendly terms as "droogs" or as "brothers" (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 141). This, in addition to his presentation as "Your Friend and Humble Narrator" (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 57) and the 'nadsat' set the reader as part of Alex' community, as his intimate friend, his confident and even his accomplice. This is the result of the process of linguistic immersion that the reader experiences, being progressively able to understand better his expressions without the aid of a dictionary or glossary, which emphasizes our desire and readiness to become part of Alex' group and to look at the world in the way Alex does. Thus, we are liable to be manipulated by him. According to Burgess (1961/1986), the 'nadsat' also performs the function of being a "curtain" that is "meant to muffle" the violence portrayed (p. xiv). However, this produces a side effect: it fills Alex' narration of his crimes with gaps that the reader completes. Ultimately, it is the reader who gives life to the multiple acts of violence, becoming Alex' accomplices by visualizing them. The understanding of the reader as Alex' guide also stems from another fact. As previously discussed, Alex is in control of the narrative voice and his story is framed in the meeting with Pete. In that moment, as Alex goes over through his memories and narrates them we are experiencing them simultaneously. Thus, from a metafictional perspective, we lead Alex by reading each word of the text.

The understanding of the reader as Alex' Virgil is reinforced when the story's conclusion is considered in detail. This, in addition, clarifies the vision of the narrative as a replication of Dante's *Comedy*. After imagining his son and thinking of what the future will have in store for him, Alex defines his search for a woman as a "new like chapter beginning" (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 141). We ought to consider the possibility that this "chapter" might not only be a metaphorical expression but a metatextual reference to the section that will be the equivalent to Dante's "Paradise". Such idea is supported by another of Alex' remarks:

Tomorrow is like all sweet flowers and the turning vonny earth and the stars
and the old Luna up there and your old droog Alex [...] seeking like a mate.
[...] But you, O my brothers, remember sometimes thy little Alex that was.
Amen." (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 141)

This sentence can be interpreted as a reference to the "May-time flowers" of the *Comedy's* Earthly Paradise (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pág. 321) and to Dante ascension through paradise, from the First Heaven of the Moon to the Empyrean, passing through the Eighth Heaven of Constellations. Alex' search for a woman could also be understood as parallel to the new guides of Dante, Matilda, who replaces Virgil during the brief stance in Earthly Paradise (Higgins, 2008, pág. 636), and Beatrice, who escorts him to the Empyrean.

Consequently, Alex's farewell could be framed in the moment when in the threshold between purgatory and Earthly Paradise, Virgil takes leave of Dante commending him to follow his will, as he leaves him "master of your body and soul." (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pág. 319) Compare such terms with Alex' farewell, "But where I itty now, O my brothers, is all on my oddy knocky, where you cannot go." (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 141) That Alex stresses that he is to be all on his own precisely underlines the freedom and independence not only from external forces like his community but from us readers as well. From a metatextual perspective, Alex' narration depends on the audience and their will to continue engaged with the story and their willingness to participate in his language and account. Since so far his narrative has only referred to the first two parts of the journey, hell and purgatory, he leaves us to search for his paradise and the woman that will lead him there. We cannot see her directly but only glimpse her in the distance because we are not allowed into Alex'

paradise. In this journey he leaves his accomplices, us and his character, “little Alex”, behind.

Concerning the implications of the notion of free will in Virgil’s farewell, Higgins (2008) notes that his words mean that Dante’s “judgment [...] no longer distorted or distracted by ignoble aims [...] is able to discern what is right for his soul’s ultimate good” (pág. 635). Indeed, a similar conclusion could be drawn from the last chapter of Alex’ narrative, albeit obviating the markedly Christian implications of Virgil’s farewell. In it, Alex becomes finally aware of what he desires for his future in a sort of epiphany in which he sees himself as an old man sitting by a fire (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 138) and as a family man coming home from work (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 140). He then decides his course of action, i.e. finding a woman to start a relationship, so that these may come true.

In fact, the subject of free will is one of the topics foregrounded in the *Comedy*, being the essential element in the purgation of sins and the difference between the souls eternally condemned to the flames of hell and the spirits that endure the fires of purgatory to be saved eventually. In his study of the *Comedy*, T. S. Eliot (1991) points out this difference arguing that “The souls in purgatory suffer because they wish to *suffer*, for purgation.” (pág. 256), contrasting them with the lack of choice of the inhabitants of limbo and hell and the hopelessness that stems from such absence. In other words, the ascension through mount purgatory requires of the willing choice of the souls to endure suffering with the certain hope that the ordeal eventually leads to Salvation. Free will is, in fact, a major motif discussed at length at various points of Dante’s “Purgatory”, for instance in the speech of Marco Lombardo. In it, he chides Dante and the living for their tendency to “attribute all causes/To the stars above,” (Alighieri, trans. 265), stressing how mistaken are such deterministic world views since “If it were so, that would mean the destruction/ Of your free will, and it would not be just,/ For good to be rewarded, and sinners punished. (Alighieri, trans. 2008, pág. 268) He contends that even if “the stars may initiate your movements” there is still “a light to tell good from evil” enabled by the gift of free will that can in fact overcome those impositions (Alighieri 2008: 268). Such views serve him to explain in detail his perspective on the corruption of the human soul, of society and of the world that is the result of uncontrolled human agency since the individuals and laws that should curb the

soul's desires for the "trifling good" –in this case kings, the Church and the Pope– also enjoy their free will and misuse it to pursue the same selfish endeavors (Alighieri, trans. 2008, págs. 268-269).

A Clockwork Orange shows a similar stance regarding free will and morality portrayed during the second and third parts of the novel. The prison chaplain summarizes it when he states, "Goodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man." (Burgess, 1961/2000, p. 63) The difference between the moral opposites of 'good' and 'bad' relies precisely on the subject's possibility to choose between them, since otherwise one could not be distinguished from the other. In other words, in a deterministic system where any force, in this case the state, is able to impose a course of action that only contemplates a single way and purpose there would be no morality and thus neither faith nor religion. It would be impossible for the individual to make use of God's gift of free will and be rewarded or punished for his actions. Likewise, redemption or Salvation would be excluded from such a system and a transformation like that of Alex in chapter 21 could not exist. A similar understanding of this debate can be viewed in Burgess' comments on the matter (1961/1986), arguing that,

[...] by definition, a human being is endowed with free will. He can use this to choose between good and evil. If he can only perform good or only perform evil, then he is a clockwork orange — meaning that he has the appearance of an organism [...] but is in fact only a clockwork toy to be wound up by God or the Devil or [...] the Almighty State. It is as inhuman to be totally good as it is to be totally evil. The important thing is moral choice. Evil has to exist along with good, in order that moral choice may operate. Life is sustained by the grinding opposition of moral entities. [...] Unfortunately there is so much original sin in us all that we find evil rather attractive. To devastate is easier and more spectacular than to create. [...] Unfortunately my little squib of a book was found attractive to many because it was as odorous as a crateful of bad eggs with the miasma of original sin. (págs. xiii-xiv)

Indeed, the author stresses the necessity of choice in morality, though underlines the propensity of humans towards evil due to original sin. Biswell (2012) attributes the significance of this belief in the "tendency of humankind to do evil rather than good" to Burgess' religious education and faith as he is "an Augustinian Catholic at heart, and he could not altogether shake off the belief in original sin" (p. ix) In fact, this stance is also represented by the "Agustinians", the ruling political party in the novel that are opposed by the "seemingly liberal but no less ruthless Pelagians," (Morrison, 2000, p. xii). Each

represent the opposite stances of St. Augustine, who considers man to be born in original sin, and of the monk Pelagius, who denied such doctrine. (Morrison, 2000, pág. xii)

Aside of the debate between both theological stances, even if Burgess' belief on the influence of original sin on human agency is to be considered in the novel, we have to be reminded of Lombardo's words, understanding that, albeit prone to pursue sin, humans are ultimately free to choose and be accounted responsible for their actions accordingly. To believe that original sin completely predetermines action is to give credit to a deterministic imperative that renders change, free will and the moral choice between evil and good inexistent. If, as Biswell argues (2012), Burgess' disdain for Skinner and his theories results from the author's belief "in the primacy of free will" (p. xii), then it would be detrimental for the understanding of the novel to disregard Alex' reformation in the final chapter as Kubrick did when he considered it as "inconsistent with the rest of the book" (Biswell, 2012, p. xvii) At the same time, if Biswell is correct when stating that in the initial designs of the novel, when the protagonist was still Fred Verity, Burgess intended his character not to redeem himself and continue with his former life of crime, then the author would have in fact deprived the character of the free will that he defends. This is due to the fact that Alex would be determined by his former life, as well as by Fred Verity, the character that he is modelled after. Alex reformation is, then, central to the debate set up by Burgess in his novel and is sourced not on Alex' impossibility to think on violence after having undergone Ludovico's technique but rather on his decision to follow a new kind of life in pursuit of his desire for a wife and a son.

After the treatment, Dr. Brodsky defines the new Alex as the "true Christian [...] sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly" and proclaims him one of "the Angels of God" (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 96). In fact, what he does is destroying the idea of 'Christian' by depriving the human subject from his choice to do evil and his choice to do good, as well as of the possibility of remorse, repentance and reform. Alex confirms that even at the mention of killing a fly he "felt just that tiny bit sick" as the treatment conditions him to feel nausea at any kind of violence (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 96), even if it is imaginary. Similarly, when Alex wants to find how he can die without violence and pain (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 105), he is unable to read a

medical book since its “drawings and photographs of horrible wounds and diseases” trigger the effects of the conditioning process (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 106). This shows that the effects of Ludovico’s technique go beyond the individual’s desires, ethics or morals concerning violence as they are also triggered by mere amoral facts, which renders the goal of the procedure arbitrary since there is neither good, bad nor violence in a wound *per se*.

In the same scene we also witness how the process of conditioning even prevents Alex from finding relief in the Bible. During his imprisonment Alex remarks that he often read the Bible to enjoy the violence portrayed in it (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 60); this time, however, he cannot find any solace in it as he feels nausea from its violent scenes (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 106). Turning to the Bible might have been indeed a step towards moral reform, yet Alex is unable to follow this path. If even the thought of violence or the image of a wound cause Alex to feel sick, he neither can consider the ethical and moral implications of his actions, nor can feel guilt or remorse. In the end, through Ludovico’s technique the system is achieving the opposite goal of what it initially attempted: the impossibility of any kind of reform and redemption by inhibiting the capacity to reflect and to choose.

The prerequisite for the eventual reform of Alex in the novel is that the conditioning is reverted and Alex is “cured all right” (Burgess, 1961/2000, pág. 132). This is due to the fact that the moral choice of good, and the reform of those that previously opted for evil, requires their capacity to distinguish between them and their freedom to decide one or the other. Even though this means that Alex can commit crimes once again, it also is what eventually enables him to reflect on his past deeds and to pledge himself to a life based on different premises. Thus, the narrative represents Alex’ confession, his desire if not to repent and redeem himself at least to reform. In his freedom of thinking and describing violence, which would have been impossible before his re-conditioning, he can begin the purgation or atonement for his sins in hopes of a new and better life as is the case of the souls in the purgatory of Dante’s *Comedy*.

Throughout the present study a reading of Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange* as a replication of some structural and thematic features of Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy* has been offered. Such analogy is suggested initially by the carefully planned division of the novel and of Alex’ narrative into three symmetrical parts.

Although the different editions of the novel harm the structure of Burgess' text and, by extension, any reading based on it, supportive evidence from various authors seem to clarify that Burgess resolved to defend the design of his book in which Alex' final reform is included. This would fit the discussion on the subject of morality as conditioned to human free will that the novel presents. In any case, the present analysis has understood the text not exclusively in the value of being a novel by Burgess but by being the narrative of Alex, a scope that might be useful if we regard the metafictional play with authors featured in the narration, which is moreover another point of connection to Dante's *Comedy*.

Concerning that nexus, we can see how in both texts their narrators are also their protagonist and authors, which results in the differentiation of Alex in his roles as character and narrator. Each of these two figures follow a different journey, albeit both can be read in analogy to Dante's trip through hell, purgatory and heaven. Whereas the character does offer the complete reflection of the three sections of Dante's journey, the narrator does not within the limits of the narrative/novel. However, the analysis of the final scene of Alex' story, the meeting with Pete, has shown how the whole narration is framed within that moment, which moreover can be read as the staging of Alex' entrance to paradise. Such reading, based on his departure from his companions through his story, his character and the reader, and on his search for a woman, offer the possibility to grasp at the existence of an extra-textual chapter equivalent to Dante's "Paradise", which, however, is not for the reader, like Virgil, to see.

By the end of the novel the similarities with Dante's work trespass the boundaries of the dimension of structure and start to include argumentative resemblances, which also reinforce the proposed reading. Both texts, the *Comedy* and *A Clockwork Orange* show significant similarities in their treatment of free will and the moral choice between evil and good as representatives of the road to damnation or salvation. In the *Comedy*, Marco Lombardo offers a critique on deterministic systems, laying the responsibility of human agency in the gift of free will, an understanding not strange to Burgess and his novel since he defends freedom of choice as the prerequisite for any moral decision or action. As a result, Alex' conditioning prevents the character from any reform or redemption that in fact only begin when he is recondition to his natural state. Alex' decision to narrate the story represents a sort of confession that

ultimately constitutes his desire to come to terms with the crimes of his past, creating the necessary foundation for the path to redemption that he initiates at the end of the text.

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