

Beethoven's Music and Russian Words: A Curious Mix in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*

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Introduction

The twentieth-century British writer and composer Anthony Burgess (John Anthony Burgess Wilson, 1917-1993), is probably best known for his 1962 novel *A Clockwork Orange*. It is a work that remains controversial largely because of the ways in which it was badly adapted in the 1971 film of the same title by Stanley Kubrick, matters I examine in Dryden (2016) and also in the present article. For the rest of his career Burgess often returned to *A Clockwork Orange*, finding it a haven where he could develop ideas for later works. Some of those works, also discussed in Dryden (2016), attempt to refute the undeserved notoriety of the novel as a supposed glorification of violence.

Far from being a sensational entertainment, however, *A Clockwork Orange* is a well-made work of art with a strong moral center. Burgess scholar Blake Morrison describes it as “the most carefully constructed of novels” (Burgess, *A Clockwork* xx). One of the devices Burgess used to structure this novel was classical music, particularly Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. As Sandrine Sorlin, another Burgess scholar, explains, “The novel is filled with music. Mozart, Bach, Beethoven are brought to life again thanks to

Alex [the main character] making us rediscover their imposing works” (Jeannin 45). Because classical music is central to the structure of the novel, part I of this paper examines *A Clockwork Orange* in relation to what such music, especially Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, meant to the main character, young Alex. Part I also notes how Beethoven’s music is used in several other works by Burgess.

As the title of the present article suggests, however, the structural devices of *A Clockwork Orange* involve not only classical music but also selected Russian words that Burgess adapted and used throughout the novel. In fact, *A Clockwork Orange* was inspired in part by a trip to Russia that Burgess and his wife Lynne took in 1961. Before and during the trip to Leningrad, Burgess read Dostoyevsky in English while he studied and became acquainted with the Russian language.

As discussed in Dryden (2016) the preparations for the Russian trip and then the trip itself to such a distant place may have created the conditions for Burgess to reflect on some personal tragedies in his earlier life. Among them, for example, before Burgess was two years old his mother died, and he was raised thereafter by an aunt and then by an unloving step-mother. Later, as a young soldier serving overseas during the Second World War, Burgess received news that his young wife Lynne had been beaten and raped by U.S. Army deserters in London and subsequently had suffered a miscarriage of the Burgesses’ child; Burgess requested but was denied leave to visit his battered and hospitalized wife. It is conjectured that Burgess drew together his tortured experiences and transformed them into an early draft of *A Clockwork Orange*, a work whose protagonist is estranged from his parents and who commits brutal acts of savage violence against both women and men.

A Clockwork Orange was written in the aftermath of Burgess’s visit

to Russia in 1961. The second part of the present article, then, examines how Burgess composed and structured the novel in part by filtering his own painful experiences through Russian culture and language. Without visiting Russia, Burgess might not have conceived and completed the novel. Learning some Russian also enabled Burgess to invent an artificial dialect called *Nadsat*, consisting of modified Russian words and spoken in the novel only by the protagonist, Alex. Through this dialect and its slang Alex constructs a personal identity during his life of crime; he retains his identity through *Nadsat* even after being subjected to some torturous behavior-modification “treatments” known as the Ludovico Technique, as discussed later in the present article.

A Clockwork Orange can be interpreted as an experiment by Burgess, one in which he himself “re-composes” Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony by using his invented artificial dialect called *Nadsat*, derived from Russian and vernacular English, in order to make Beethoven’s symphony resonate in ways more attuned to the modern world. Morrison notes Burgess’s complementary abilities as both writer and composer, observing that “in his own mind, he was a composer by nature and a fiction writer by default; one day, he hoped, his musical works would be as well known as *A Clockwork Orange* and *Earthly Powers*” (Morrison 1).

Throughout his artistic career, Burgess remained interested, as I see it, in putting “words to music” and “music to words.” Will Self describes the musical elements in Burgess’s works, saying that “Burgess rather heroically attempted [to] recreat[e] the structure of the classical symphonic form,” which set him in contrast with most other novelists who “usually confine themselves to describing the impact of music on the individual or collective psyche” (Self 2). Another Burgess scholar, Paul Phillips, explains Burgess’s efforts in his later years to transform the 1962 novel into a musical play,

also entitled *A Clockwork Orange*, which appeared in (1986): “A quarter century after writing *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess transformed his most famous opus into what he called ‘a play with music.’ The change in tone from the novel is startling. What had been a serious fable about good and evil becomes, in the stage version, a satirical black comedy closer to Monty Python than Harold Pinter” (Phillips 302; underlining mine).

In his 1986 musical drama, *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess transformed his enduring frustration and bitterness over the ways in which the 1971 Stanley Kubrick film adaptation by the same title had distorted the meaning of Burgess’s 1962 novel. As discussed in Dryden (2016), Kubrick had based his film on the American version of the novel, which did not include the original twenty-first chapter in which the violent protagonist young Alex renounces violence and chooses to become a mature and responsible member of society.

It could be argued, however, that even in the original 1962 novel Burgess had transformed his painful experiences of his motherless childhood and his young wife’s vicious assault into “a satirical black comedy,” though one with a moral center, by structuring the novel with Beethoven’s music and *Nadsat* dialect slang. Alex searches for his “real home,” which, for him, is a place where he can listen to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and can be at relative peace with himself by using *Nadsat*, which means “teenage” in his Russian-derived dialect. But eventually, at least in the original British edition of the novel, in the twenty-first chapter Alex grows up, embraces adulthood, and leaves behind his wild teenaged self for good. Beethoven’s music and *Nadsat*, which carry young Alex through the many trials that he experiences, structure the rites of passage that transform Alex from a violent adolescent into a mature adult.

I. “The Beethoven Spirit Must Be Here”

Beethoven’s music is one of two structural themes which run throughout *A Clockwork Orange*. Underlying the novel, however, is a more fundamental structure, a foundation with thematic implications of its own, as explained by Burgess himself nearly thirty years later in *You’ve Had Your Time* (1990):

I had structured the work with some care. It was divided into three sections of seven chapters each, the total figure being, in traditional arithmology, the symbol of human maturity. My young narrator, the music-loving thug Alex, ends the story by growing up and renouncing violence as a childish toy. This was the subject of the final chapter, and it was the capacity of this character to accept change which, in my view, made the work into a genuine if brief novel.

(*You’ve Had* 60; underlining mine)

Although Burgess worked on the novel “with some care” as he notes above, his publisher of the American edition insisted (for marketing purposes) on deleting the most important chapter, the twenty-first. In the version published in the U.S. until 1986, as Burgess is pained and even offended to remember, “Alex ends Chapter 20 [and with it, the novel] saying: ‘I was cured all right,’ [of the inhibiting effects of the Ludovico Technique] and he resumes joy in evil” (*You’ve Had* 60). Because the American edition had deleted the redemptive twenty-first chapter, many Americans, including evidently the filmmaker Stanley Kubrick, were left with the impression that the novel was an amoral glorification of senseless violence. This is one of many reasons why Burgess remained unhappy with the novel for failing, despite his best efforts, to deliver to readers and filmgoers his originally intended message of the possibility of redemption. Consequently, long after the original publication, Burgess felt the need to clarify his consciously intended meaning of the novel.

Burgess's music play, *A Clockwork Orange* (1986), seemed to satisfy him much more than the 1962 novel had. As Phillips explains:

But, arguably, Burgess's chief motivation in creating this version of *A Clockwork Orange* was musical. Naturally, he composed his own score for the play. Throughout his career he favored artistic projects that allowed him to merge his creativity with that of his favorite authors and composers, and transforming his novella into a "play with music" was, literally, a chance for Burgess to play with music, Beethoven's above all: "It is appropriate that the music chosen for the setting of my harmless little lyrics should be derived from Beethoven . . . the Beethoven spirit must be here—the spirit of the mature creative mind which can reconcile the creative and the destructive." (Phillips 303; underlining mine)

For his satiric drama, Burgess composed a musical score to express "Beethoven's spirit," through which the audience, it was hoped, could hear and understand what Burgess had intended to say in the 1962 novel with twenty-one chapters. He has wanted "Beethoven's spirit" to be seen and understood as the heart of the novel, and the musical play gave him a chance to make this intention clear. He did not have to worry over the ending of the story anymore, since it was no longer the crucial matter that it had been in the novel.

What then is meant by "Beethoven's spirit"? It can be understood, I believe, through a "close listening" to the Ninth Symphony itself, but also by attending to the ways it is mentioned in the novel. References to the Ninth Symphony recur frequently in *A Clockwork Orange* in order to keep the great musical work in mind, not simply for young Alex who loves it, but for the readers as well. Sorlin observes that "while Beethoven sets Schiller's words to music, Burgess sets music to words in his novel" (Jeannin 48).

This pithy observation suggests that Burgess is re-writing Schiller's idealistic words into the novel by alluding so often to the choral symphony's "Ode to Joy." If so, what lies at the heart of Schiller's words? As Phillips explains, "The fundamental idea that man's humanity is determined through freedom of choice is reinforced in *A Clockwork Orange* by the novel's thematic emphasis on Beethoven's Ninth and its setting of Friedrich von Schiller's 'Ode to Joy', which Burgess believed, erroneously, to have been originally an ode to freedom" (Phillips 83; underlining mine).

Indeed, "free will" is the central moral issue in the novel, which is why the prison chaplain (whom Alex nicknames "prison charlie," after Charlie Chaplin) is so deeply worried about Alex losing his freedom of choice. Paradoxically, then, the spirit of the Ninth Symphony and Schiller's "Ode to Joy" lose their meaning in the course of the "treatment" young Alex receives in prison to "cure" him of his violent behavior. Alex undergoes a government-approved and scientifically-designed treatment called the "Ludovico Technique," a torturous behavior-modification procedure which Burgess ironically names after Beethoven's given name, Ludwig. The Ludovico Technique, in which Alex is physically restrained and forced to view brutal images and listen to classical music while under the influence of nausea-inducing drugs, is designed to render him incapable of committing violence. But, as the prison chaplain conscientiously observes, "The question is whether such a technique can really make a man good" (*A Clockwork* 63). In effect, the chaplain asks, can human beings be truly "good" if they have been deprived of their ability to make their moral choices freely.

Burgess's apparent confusion of "freedom" and "joy," however, complicates matters somewhat. As Phillips notes, "In an essay on the Ninth [Symphony] written in 1990 (and also in *Mozart and the Wolf Gang*, published the following year), Burgess avows his belief in the discredited myth,

claiming that *Freiheit*—a word, like *Freude*, whose meaning was gruesomely distorted by the Nazis—was the original subject of Schiller’s Ode” (Phillips 83). (Interestingly, Burgess is not alone in interchanging these two terms. When the American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein conducted performances of Beethoven’s Ninth to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, to mark this historic event he deliberately replaced “Freude” with “Freiheit” in the choral movement.) Burgess, however, emphasizes the differences between “joy” and “freedom” in his own way:

The words . . . by Friedrich von Schiller, who dies in 1805, between the third and fourth symphonies . . . belong to his “Ode to Joy”—*An die Freude*. Originally this had been *An die Freiheit*—to freedom. But joy is a less controversial and subversive subject than freedom. Strength through joy. *Arbeit macht frei*. Neither term meant very much in the Nazi vocabulary One is, or should be, doubtful about addressing joy in this manner. Joy can come from anything—even, to the Nazis, from liquidating Jews. The joy of a punch-up. The joy of gang-rape. Give me *Freiheit* or give me death. We can all do without joy, unless we have a wife or sweetheart of that name.

(cited in Phillips 83)

Indeed, in Burgess’s view, “joy” can be viewed as applicable to potentially any situation. Even evil can own it by taking others’ “joy” away. Behind his explanation of “joy” and “freedom,” Burgess expresses his profound regret over the constant possibility that anyone can experience “joy” by giving others pain instead.

Burgess’s technique of combining music and words involving “joy” and “freedom” will be discussed in part II (*Slovo* in Russian-derived Artificial Slang Dialect), below, and then a final attempt at a synthesis of the two thematic structures of music and Russian words will occur later in part III

(Relationships of Words and Music). Phillips argues that “it is the music of Ludwig van Beethoven that animates Alex above all” (Phillips 85). But Alex’s linguistic play in the creation of his personal dialect *Nadsat* is another motivating source of his identity that needs to be considered in itself as well as in relation to Beethoven’s music.

II. *Slovo* in Russian-derived Artificial Slang Dialect

Burgess chose a first-person point of view for *A Clockwork Orange* in order to let Alex narrate in his own words and voice the story of the trials of his violent and amoral youth and his eventual transformation into a mature adult. Phillips interprets the words Alex uses to give an account of himself: “The story is narrated in the first person by Alex, a young gang leader who is fifteen years old as the tale begins and who speaks in a bizarre teen dialect. Realizing that the contemporary slang of his first draft would need to be altered to avoid being out of date by the time the book was published, Burgess resolved to invent an artificial dialect instead” (Phillips 82; underlining mine). As a complement to the structural element of Beethoven’s music, Alex’s use of an artificial dialect give an undoubtedly fresh and unique rhythm to the novel. Notably, the protagonist Alex is the only character to use any artificial dialect slang *slovo* (“word” in Russian). The text is full of his remarks in his *Nadsat* dialect, which Burgess devised after encountering Russian and demotic (or hybrid) English. Sorlin says that “the music is inscribed at the very heart of the language of the novel, called *Nadsat*, which Burgess has tuned like a real musical instrument” (Jeannin 45). Achieving a believable tone of voice in the words of a novel is one of the writer’s hardest tasks but also perhaps the most necessary one. In *A Clockwork Orange*, however, it is Alex alone who speaks in a truly different language from the others, and consequently the story “plays

the tune” (or “tone”) of Alex’s distinctive voice. By inventing the artificial dialect of *Nadsat* for Alex, Burgess succeeds in giving the novel a rich and enduring tone of voice.

Burgess laid the foundations for developing “an artificial dialect,” *Nadsat*, while reading Russian literature and studying the Russian language before going to Russia in 1961 with his wife Lynne on a summer holiday. Phillips says that “in preparation for the trip, Burgess set about improving his Russian” (Phillips 82; underlining mine). Had his publisher not advised him, together with Lynne, to visit Russia in order to get some ideas for the book, Burgess may well not have succeeded in giving life to the story that became the novel, since, according to Phillips, he was still “not knowing how to accomplish” the many tasks required by the new work (Phillips 82). Biswell similarly observes preparations that Burgess made: starting to teach himself Russian early in 1961 and reading Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* in English translation shortly before he sailed. Consequently, Biswell concludes, “Dostoyevsky was at the front of his mind as he was at work on the early section of the novel” (Biswell 237). In fact, *A Clockwork Orange* is full of “crime and punishment,” at least some of which may well have been inspired by Dostoyevsky’s title *Crime and Punishment*.

Indeed, *Crime and Punishment*—with its protagonist who commits a brutal ax murder and, after much soul-searching, chooses a hard but honorable path to redemption—hangs like a specter over *A Clockwork Orange*. Nevertheless, other influences may have led Burgess to create something like a twentieth-century comic British response to the somber nineteenth-century Russian novel, in the form of a modern or even postmodern “satirical black comedy” (as mentioned earlier in the Introduction to this article), rather than as a straightforwardly serious novel. In this case, one possible influence

was both literary and experiential and occurred during the Russian trip, in a conversation between Burgess and a waiter in a Leningrad restaurant. Speaking of Dostoyevsky's novel, the waiter sardonically told Burgess that "it was 'a crime to write it and a punishment to read it'" (Biswell 237). Later, writing his own "crime and punishment" novel, Burgess may have felt guilty of a crime himself, as reflected in his concerns that "my horrible juvenile delinquent hero is emerging as too sympathetic a character—almost Christ-like" (Biswell 238). Of course, Alex is hardly a Christ-like figure of vicarious suffering. In the first part of the novel he is far too much absorbed in inflicting pain on others. However, Alex might qualify as a borderline Christ figure by his penchant for occasionally crying out in his anguished *Nadsat* to *Bog* (God). In this way readers (devout ones, anyway) might identify with Alex by recalling times in which they had previously prayed to or even bargained with God to release them from suffering. During his incarceration, however, Alex's suffering does bear a resemblance to the passion of Christ, when Alex is subjected to horrific physical and mental pain administered through the Ludovico Technique. He is thereby conditioned to recoil from his love of both violence and Beethoven, and his desires for them are exorcised. Curiously, though, even after enduring the Ludovico Technique, Alex retains his *Nadsat* way of speaking. This suggests that even though he has lost his "freedom" to enjoy listening to music (and to the cries of his victims), he retains his "freedom" to continue speaking, even if it occurs only in the privacy of his own mind.

The musical theme, however, refuses to be completely driven from the universe of *A Clockwork Orange*. In Sorlin's view, "the text is a musical score" (Jeannin 53). Metaphorically, then, the events and characters of the entire novel might be regarded collectively as an orchestra, following the text as if it were a musical score and joining together in a performance

of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. By metaphoric extension, Alex is the conductor. He speaks *Nadsat* as if it were his conductor's baton to manage the symphony by maintaining the rhythm, strength and harmony. Even if the orchestra, or Alex's authority over it, were eliminated by the Ludovico's Technique, Alex still holds the baton of "*Nadsat*." No one, it seems, can take his "*Nadsat*" baton away from him. Therefore, the operation of *Nadsat* in the novel is a critical support for the notion that Alex retains his core identity, even after all the punishment he endures.

The structural element of music retains its resilience in other ways, as well. Sorlin notes: "Burgess recalls that music is above any ethical consideration, beyond the distinction between good and evil. Music does not necessarily raise us up to goodness and greatness" (Jeannin 54; underlining mine). To be good, humans must be able to choose freely, without being forced. The prison chaplain, "charlie," also says to Alex, "Goodness comes from within, 6655321. Goodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man" (*A Clockwork* 63). Even though Alex's free choice seems to be taken away, he remains free to choose to speak *Nadsat*. Consequently, the *raison d'être* of *Nadsat* must be understood in its context within the novel. Nothing, evidently, can completely change a human being. Individuals must change of their own free will or by themselves if change is necessary. Alex could not rely on music to enable him to ask for God's help because the torturous "treatments" of the Ludovico Technique rendered Alex unable to bear, let alone enjoy, the sound of music. Alex was, however, still able to use *Nadsat* to ask for the help of *Bog* (God). Perhaps this is one reason why Beethoven adapted Schiller's words into his Ninth Symphony. He needed "words" after all. Humans cannot have conversations in music, but they can in words.

In the course of narrating the novel from beginning to end, Alex gradually

grows up and becomes a mature adult. It was not the Ludovico Technique, however, that allowed Alex to grow up into an adult; in fact the “treatments” rendered Alex incapable of making any serious choices beyond acting out of self-preservation. Instead, after the effects of the Ludovico Technique wore off, Alex himself freely chose to renounce his violent past and become a responsible adult. It was, I believe, the converging influence of words and music that mediated Alex’s transformation, a topic considered in the final section, below.

III. Relationships between Words and Music

Marc Jeannin observes in the preface to *Anthony Burgess: Music in Literature and Literature in Music*: “Music and literature—both human systems of artistic expression responding to conventional codes within their own frame of reference—are commonly and traditionally brought together in many cultures through vocal music” (Jeannin x). If Beethoven had not set Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” to music in his Ninth Symphony, the poem might well not have gained the international recognition it has enjoyed for nearly two centuries. In such ways, words and music support each other and make each other memorable.

The duet or dance of music and language are, in fact, a time-honored association. The first page of Paul Phillips’s *A Clockwork Counterpoint: The Music and Literature of Anthony Burgess* includes quotations from Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*: As Phillips notes, “Music and language, [Mann] insisted, belonged together, were fundamentally one. Language was music, music a language, and when separated each always recalled the other, imitated the other, made use of the other’s means, always to be understood as the substitute for the other” (Phillips vi). In vocal music, words and music cannot be separated. If they are separated, one does not

carry the same quality as they both do when operating together.

Sorlin notes that “as a linguistic symphony, *A Clockwork Orange* appeals to both the reader’s ears and eyes” (Jeannin 53). If so, as Sorlin argues, the Ninth Symphony and *Nadsat* cannot be separated. Since *Nadsat* differs from English in the text, it appeals to the reader’s eyes. Unless listening to the book on audio CD, the reader cannot “hear” to the novel, but in Burgess’s 1986 music play, Alex’s *Nadsat* appeals to the ear along with Beethoven’s Ninth. While other musical pieces appear in both the novel and the musical play, nevertheless, the Ninth Symphony is most frequently emphasized by Alex throughout both works, and its melodies and harmonies are recalled when Alex is speaking in *Nadsat*. Phillips explains Burgess’s artfulness by quoting from Burgess himself: “The reader is tricked into learning some basic Russian, with meanings gradually revealed through context (although a glossary was included, against Burgess’s wishes, in early editions): *Nadsat* ‘was meant to turn *A Clockwork Orange* into, among other things, a brainwashing primer. You read the book . . . and at the end you should find yourself in possession of a minimal Russian vocabulary—without effort, with surprise. This is the way brainwashing works” (Phillips 82).

In other subtle ways, however, brainwashing may (or may not) give way to appeals to thoughtful reflection. In *A Clockwork Orange*, at one point Alex asks himself, “Am I just to be like a clock-work orange?” (*A Clockwork* 94; underlining mine). This question is, by implication, directed toward the readers. What is it like to be “a clock-work orange”? Perhaps it is an unnatural and unwholesome creation, a bizarre fusion of a mechanistic man-made time piece and the organic product of a living tree. Readers may need to ask this question for themselves. Since “a clock-work orange” appears unhyphenated in the title of the novel, its prominence should be a cause for reflection. Alex fails to turn into “a clock-work orange” largely

because he continues to choose to speak *Nadsat*. His dialect slang keeps his spirit and his identity alive and thereby saves him from being dehumanized and reduced to “a clock-work orange.”

If, however, Alex is not “a clock-work orange,” then why does the phrase appear in the title? Perhaps Burgess has set a trap. If readers can learn and remember *Nadsat* without any effort, they might be examples of “a clock-work orange.” If readers hear the Ninth Symphony in their heads after seeing the title of the novel they again might be turning into automata, like “a clock-work orange.” In effect, there is always a chance that anyone might become dehumanized and reduced to “a clock-work orange,” especially if people forget that such situations await them everywhere. In fact, the “other Alex” in the novel, the character named F. Alexander, wrote a book-within-a-book, also entitled *A Clockwork Orange*, with the intention of warning everyone against the encroachment of the dehumanizing mind-control of an all-powerful State.

Consequently, readers might well consider whether they themselves retain “free will” while reading the novel and, if so, whether music and words have any influence in helping them maintain their identity and integrity as human beings. Alex himself passes through several trials in the novel; similarly, readers may also experience trials that test their “free will” while reading the novel or watching the music play. In both works, words and music operate together, even though each one represents a distinct medium. Regarding the interaction of words and music in *A Clockwork Orange*, Sorlin says of the novel, “Through its structure *and* theme, its meaning *and* form, this linguistic symphony is an Ode to liberty” (Jeannin 55; italics in original; underlining mine). In Sorlin’s view, the novel is a “linguistic symphony” constructed by words and music.

For Burgess, questions of human dignity can be addressed in words and

music, but they have, as a consequence, theological implications. Reflecting on a religious understanding of his novel as a “linguistic symphony,” Burgess remarked in a 1978 conversation with Samuel Coale: “The experience of God is the experience of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, infinitely magnified” (Ingersoll 124). Alex experiences Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in several ways, and he sometimes asks God for help, crying out, “Oh, Bog in Heaven help me” (*A Clockwork* 124). God, it is sometimes said, is in the details. In *A Clockwork Orange*, evidently God (or Bog) is also in the base, the structures, and the themes.

The prison chaplain (charlie) himself invokes divine assistance several times in the novel, as if trying to talk directly to God by praying for Alex. The chaplain also tries to talk with Alex, and by doing so he shows himself to be the only character in the novel who genuinely cares about Alex and feels sorry for him in his pitiful state. The prison chaplain’s talks with Alex seem to be among the most significant features of the novel, as if the chaplain were Burgess’s spokesman on moral and philosophical issues. Burgess himself framed the discussion of such issues in relation to human interaction when, in a 1971 conversation with G. Riemer, Burgess asked, “Is there anything more important than people talking together? I can’t think of anything” (Ingersoll 45). Burgess the author who is, in effect, the God or Bog of the novel, uses the conversations between the prison chaplain and Alex, together with the interaction of the themes of words and music, to engage in an implicit conversation with the readers about what is most important in human life and experience.

Conclusion

The struggles of creating living characters and themes out of words on a page, and out of “the music of language” and “the language of music,”

are among the most difficult but potentially the most inspiring efforts that a writer can undertake. According to Blake Morrison, in *A Clockwork Orange*, “[Burgess] also learned how hard it is to write even a bad book” (Morrison 3). *A Clockwork Orange* is often criticized, mostly unfairly, as a violent novel (rather than, more properly, as a novel about violence and its moral implications). As always, it remains for readers themselves to judge whether this or any other book is a bad one or not. Unfortunately not all readers are in a position to judge wisely or even fairly. Many people have judged *A Clockwork Orange* not even by its cover but instead by watching the seriously flawed 1971 film adaptation or even through hearsay.

In all fairness, though, Burgess himself seemed to have struggled in making sense of the ending of *A Clockwork Orange*. According to Biswell, “the ending of the novel was an area of particular difficulty” (Biswell 246). As a further indication of Burgess’s difficulties with the ending, “He was still revising and reworking it more than thirty years later” (Biswell 246-247). One thing, however, is certain: the novel ends as it began, with Alex’s narrative voice, in both the UK Heinemann edition (1962) and the US Norton edition (1963). The difference between these two versions, as noted earlier in this article, is, so to speak, the “final” ending. While the UK edition ends with twenty-one chapters, the US one ends with only twenty—that is, without the original final chapter in which Alex breaks the cycle of adolescent violence and reaches adult maturity and even a measure of serenity.

But theological questions persist. Biswell adds considerable insight into Burgess’s concern about the novel’s ending and its moral implications: Although Burgess believed that the presence or absence of this twenty-first chapter made a significant difference to the meaning of the novel, it is evident from his writings on the subject that he held different opinions

at different times as to which ending was “correct.” The difference in emphasis between the two versions is best explained with reference to the theological contention that underpins so much of Burgess’s thinking: between Augustinianism and Pelagianism, as first expressed in *A Vision of Battlements* (Biswell 247).

The references above are to the contrasting positions of two major 5th-century C.E. Christian theologians: 1) St. Augustine’s belief in the importance of free will, mediated by divine grace in matters of human choice; and 2) Pelagius’s contrasting view that divine grace was unnecessary in such matters and that people could freely work out their own salvation on their own terms. Such theological issues operate in the background of the novel, at least in Burgess’s Catholic imagination, and without them the story might not stand by itself or even hold together through words and music alone.

Such theological matters come to the novel’s foreground through the prison chaplain’s conversations with Alex and with God. Issues of crime and punishment, both earthly and divine, are raised by the novel. Nearly all of the characters in the novel seem to be guilty of something, but not all of them are punished. In effect, only Alex and F. Alexander are punished. Paradoxically, these characters may be reflections of Burgess himself, inspired in part at least by Burgess’s own heartbreaking experiences in childhood and early in his married life. Framed in such terms, the novel might be seen as a confession by Burgess himself, especially in the twenty-first chapter which holds out hope for redemption in a fallen world. If, however, words and music operate together in the novel, and should they be unguided by a higher order of ethics through love and charity, then the book may appear, as it does to some of its readers and critics, as, in Pauline terms, “only sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal,”

that is, a profane cacophony of words and music out of tune.

The structural themes of words and music in *A Clockwork Orange*, then, reflect Burgess's view of life in terms of both the secular and the divine. As Will Self reflects on the history of both classical music and the novel, "For a century or so the symphony and the novel made love to each other, quite beautifully" (Self 4). They did so in what Self characterizes as "rather like a long-term marriage" (Self 1). Burgess, in *A Clockwork Orange*, tests whether such a marriage is still viable in the second half of the twentieth century. Similar tests of viability exist, of course, at the sociological level. To get married, people have to be adults; legally they have to be of the right age. In Britain, at least until 1970, the age of legal adulthood was twenty-one, which, Burgess explains, is why he structured his 1962 novel with twenty-one chapters, at least in the UK edition. Beauty, in a novel, as elsewhere, is in the eye and even in the ear of the beholder—that is, as through readers who are free to choose the words and the music that are to their liking.

How does *A Clockwork Orange*, "a linguistic symphony," sound to its many readers? And how, then, does that novel echo and resonate in relation to other works of Burgess? Alex would ask, "What's it going to be then, eh?" (*A Clockwork* 3). Further research, which in time I hope to undertake, should examine the ways in which Burgess makes use of music throughout his entire corpus, and thereby clarify further Burgess's purposes and achievements in using music together with words to give structure and meaning to his literary works.

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A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (UK Version). by ANTHONY BURGESS. Contents. Introduction (A Clockwork Orange Resucked). Part 1. Part 2. Part 3. which Beethoven composed only so that he could detest it. I have to go on living with A Clockwork Orange, and this means I have a sort of authorial duty to it. I have a very special duty to it in the United States, and I had better now explain what this duty is. Let me put the situation baldly. A Clockwork Orange has never been published entire in America. The book I wrote is divided into three sections of seven chapters each. Take out your pocket calculator and you will find that these add up to a total of twenty-one chapters. Anthony Burgess. November, 1986. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (UK Version). Part 1. 1. Clockwork. Orange. Anthony Burgess. W. w. norton & company. New york london. Let me put the situation baldly. A Clockwork Orange has never been published entire in America. The book I wrote is divided into three sections of seven chapters each. Take out your pocket calculator and you will find that these add up to a total of twenty-one chapters. A Clockwork Orange is Anthony Burgess's most famous novel and its impact on literary, musical and visual culture has been extensive. The novel is concerned with the conflict between the individual and the state, the punishment of young criminals, and the possibility or otherwise of redemption. The linguistic originality of the book, and the moral questions it raises, are as relevant now as they ever were. in this section. A Clockwork Orange. A Clockwork Orange on film. Burgess loved Beethoven's music as much as Alex does. He wrote that, "I accepted the Beethoven symphony as a kind of musical ultimate, something that the composers of our own age could not aspire to [!]. His sonatas and symphonies were dramas, storm and stress, revelations of personal struggle and triumph. A Clockwork Orange book. Read 13,867 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. In Anthony Burgess's influential nightmare vision of the fut... A Clockwork Orange is a dystopian novel by English writer Anthony Burgess, published in 1962. Set in a near future English society featuring a subculture of extreme youth violence, the teenage protagonist, Alex, narrates his violent exploits and his experiences with state authorities intent on reforming him. Russian, Shakespearean turns of phrase and Cockney slang actually blend beautifully, and the Nadsat words are used perfunctorily enough that when you read a sentence in context, you can quickly figure out what every word means. A Clockwork Orange is a dystopian satirical black comedy novel by English writer Anthony Burgess, published in 1962. It is set in a near-future society that has a youth subculture of extreme violence. The teenage protagonist, Alex, narrates his violent exploits and his experiences with state authorities intent on reforming him. The book is partially written in a Russian-influenced argot called "Nadsat", which takes its name from the Russian suffix that is equivalent to '-teen' in English. According to