The Quest for Selfhood in Anthony Burgess' Dystopian Novel *A Clockwork Orange*

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Abstract: This paper attempts to study Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and its portrayal of a crisis-ridden dystopian society wherein individuals struggle to hold onto a fixed foundation of knowledge. The paper investigates the human condition, and how the novel posits the notional failure of perfectibility. *A Clockwork Orange* showcases a wasted youth culture bolstered by a decadent society. It envisions a dark near future society where young boys are seen engaging in acts of unthinkable violence, sexual perversion and substance abuse. The paper delineates on the treatment of the juvenile delinquents and their subsequent fate within a police state.

Alex, the protagonist, represents an adolescent community on the verge of disillusionment and decay. Given the severity of the crimes committed by Alex, the government officials imprison him and inflict a reformative conditioning technique to purge him of his desire to commit crime and eventually rob him of his agency. Alex is reduced to a pawn in the hands of the state and is made to suffer immeasurably. The dystopian state functions as a system of transforming the subjects; and in the process rendering them docile. Drawing from the conceptions of prison, surveillance and disciplining mechanism put forth by Foucault, the paper questions the corrective measures of the prison and how the state becomes complicit in the heinous crimes committed by the delinquents. Alex becomes a passive spectator to the evils inflicted upon him by the harbingers of justice. Despite the uncertainty and the gloom, Alex keeps questing for meanings, harbouring a hope for a better future.
Keywords: Dystopia, state, prison, surveillance, selfhood

I. The dystopian fiction and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed an emergence of dystopian fiction as a response to overwhelming advances in science and technology, dramatic socio-historical changes and intellectual currents. Numerous philosophers and authors were involved in conjuring dark visions of an imaginary future. Their works explore themes of dystopian societies, repressive social orders, and coercive government systems, ill-effects of advanced technology on human life, lack of freedom, sexual perversion, class distinctions, oppression and terror. A dystopian society is a futuristic projection of an imagined universe with the illusion of perfection; it exists by maintaining totalitarian control, and is a world which is potentially a 'bad place'.

The dystopian fiction becomes an important site to chronicle the struggles of man living in a rather chaotic modern world. The dystopian fiction reflects the social mores and the topical issues of the twentieth century, highlighting the changing historical conditions that provided an impetus to the rise in dystopic novels during this time. These novels register nightmarish conditions of human life, which are often pessimistic in tone and are projected into the future. They embody the bitterness felt because of the political upheavals, wars, and society's rapid pace of technological advances enslaving humans and ultimately leading to dehumanization. Dystopian fiction revolves around the deprivations brought about by modern life; it perceives insensitivity to emotions, destruction of

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deep social bonds, effacement of memories and hostility to stable grounds of all human knowledge. It is a nightmarish vision where individuality is endangered, with a complete dismantling of fixed notions of the self. It is often reflective of a quest for foundation and stability. As the world witnesses a collapse of order and sanity, it is accompanied by a desire to make sense of the existence in these times. The quest reflects upon the idea of resistance and an exploration of a realm beyond hope and despair. Dystopian fiction attempts to posit an alternate possibility to make sense of an otherwise chaotic world, often by resorting to fantasy. And this also highlights the modernist quest to master the unknown by imaginary projection of fictive futuristic societies. It is interesting to note that a contested genre of dystopia is chosen to articulate dystopian thought and implicit in it is the frantic search for fixed foundations.

The dystopian fiction highlights the individual's quest for selfhood, contemplating alternate possibilities by ways of rebellion, self-assertion and questioning. This notion of quest is essentially a part of plots in contemporary fiction. The dystopian fiction upholds a vision of alterity, a difference, a prorogation of the historical time, by envisaging a world antithetical to the reality, however having familiar undercurrents. It is an attempt to make sense of a crisis-ridden world by projecting alternate possibilities of the world. The dystopian novel investigates the human condition, documenting the notional failure of perfectibility. The dystopian fiction hurls a decentered individual into a world which is potentially a bad place, perennially in the throes of disillusionment with the world. It is a place that runs counter to the vision of a perfect world. One has to discern that utopia and dystopia are concepts which cannot be regarded as polar opposites. But it can be viewed as a utopian dream gone awry. Exiled from their real homelands and caught amidst the deafening cacophony of the new home, the individual subject is left incapacitated to assert his or her choice. The tyranny of a society that is technologically driven reduces man to the status of mere automatons. The citizens with their fragmented inner selves are constantly made to experience doubts, frustration and conflict. The pessimism associated thus, reflects man's condition in the modern world.

Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) is a dystopian novel showcasing a wasted youth culture bolstered by a decadent society. The novel envisions a dark near future society where young boys are seen engaging in acts of unthinkable violence, sexual perversion and substance abuse. A society informed by representations of Soviet-style communism and American capitalism, the novel attempts to show contemporary conditions of those times. At the same time portraying a far worse projection of a near future vision of the world. Alex and his friends commit heinous crimes under the watchful eyes of the state. The government rails against the criminals and at the same time gets involved in acts worse than the ones committed by the protagonist Alex. Alex represents a youth culture on the verge of disillusionment and decay. Given the severity of the crimes committed by Alex, the government officials imprison him and inflict a reformative conditioning technique to purge him of his desire to commit crime and eventually rob him of his agency. Alex is reduced to a pawn in the hands of the state and is made to suffer immeasurably. The procedure called the "Ludovico's technique" (Burgess 62) transforms Alex into a clockwork orange or a person capable of only sweetness (Burgess 18). The process however, has no real reformative effect, instead of redeeming Alex; it tragically robs his ability to assert his will and choice. Even the banal things he used to like prior to the procedure appear distasteful. Alex starts abhorring music, his own actions and all things related to his criminal past. The violence that Alex faces in the prison followed by the exposure to the inhuman coercive procedure with its collateral damages, pushes Alex into a deep sense of despair and gloom.

II. The dystopian society, prison and surveillance

The dystopian society turns into a prison-like place where the subject is incessantly monitored and the erring subjects are duly punished. The spectacle of public punishment becomes an assertion of the power of the state. It becomes a ruthless reminder to the subjects, about the overarching power that the state holds over them. Every action, every moment of their lives is constantly under the

supervision of the state. The offender is castigated and held as panoply for the society at large to witness. The offender is punished not merely for himself but as an example for the general populace. The subject becomes hapless before this mammoth power of the state with its reserve of knowledge.

Much like the prison, which is "an apparatus for transforming individuals" (Foucault, *Discipline* 233), the dystopian state functions as a system of transforming the subjects; and in the process rendering them docile. Punishment is regarded as an important part of the penal system. "Torture" as a "technique" is used by the state to contain the criminal impulse in an offender (Foucault, *Discipline* 33). The public execution, through its "policy of terror" makes everyone aware of the power of the state (Foucault, *Discipline* 49). The spectacle of public torture is an extension of the political strategy of the state to exhibit and humiliate the condemned for the people to "know", "see" and "be afraid" of the power of the state (Foucault, *Discipline* 58). Foucault regarding the punishment of offenders also observes that these offenders who are deemed as dangerous for the society can be corrected, cured and readjusted (Foucault, *Discipline* 19). The state thus through corrective measures can nullify the dangerous potential of the criminal subject.

In "Prison Talk" from *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings* 1972-1977, Foucault comments on the "great upheavals", "change of political regime" and the "mechanisms of power" in England and France in the 18th and early 19th century (Foucault 40) including topics like surveillance and prison. Prison was supposed to be a perfect instrument akin to schools, barracks or hospitals. But later, after the failure of the project in 1976 it was seen that prisons "serve only to manufacture new criminals" (Foucault 40). It was then as a mechanics of power, a strategy was devised to use the delinquents for political gains, where "criminals came handy" (Foucault 40). Foucault gives instances from history in this regard. There was no reformative power of the prison, it stripped a person of "his civil status" who became "a criminal once again" (Foucault 42). In *A Clockwork Orange* a dystopian vision is rooted in the present, acquiring monstrous implications of the future. Alex is conditioned by the state for its own gains to become a crusade against the voice of dissent in the society. He cannot become a hero of the populace but rather a "criminal hero" (Foucault 42). In "Prison Talk" Foucault asserts that "exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault 52). Power and knowledge are intrinsically related to each other. Foucault rejects the dichotomous relationship between power and the notion that those who govern go blind or mad. Power to be operated cannot be exercised without engendering knowledge. The power of a state has a control over discourses and its articulation. Power in a way operates through the production of discourses wherein individual subjects become a vehicle for its dissemination and continuance. The subjects residing within the prison-like enclosed dystopian society are under constant observation, knowledge and supervision of the state. The state has recourse to all knowledge that sustains its unrelenting power and supremacy.

The subjects in dystopian societies are conditioned and trained to become docile, law-abiding, and servile, existing only for the betterment of the state. Any kind discrepancy is deftly dealt with stricter mechanisms of control and manipulation. Foucault also describes confinement as a disciplinary mechanism. The production of docile bodies in the dystopian state translates into a strategy of social control. The passive, subjugated subjects kept in confinements facilitate surveillance thus asserting the powerful control and gaze of the state. The body of the subject in the service of the state, has no individuality, it is viewed upon as a subject working towards the common good of the state. The body is perennially condemned to a servile existence. The subjects are made to lead slave-like existence, voluntarily accepting their position of subjugation. Naomi Jacobs in "Dissent, Assent, and the Body in Nineteen Eighty-Four", observes that the body of the human subject is central to "dystopian transformation, whether it is to be brought about by liberating the body or by more effectively subduing it" (Jacobs 3). The state maintains its power by controlling the bodies of the subjects. The body of the subject in the dystopian fiction undergoes transformation through different ways of, disciplining, regimentation, torture, subjection to hallucinogenic drugs and sexual

slavery. The effects of the transformation on the body of the subject are constantly monitored by the state through its pointed gaze. "Enclosure" (Foucault, *Discipline* 141) or a specified place of confinement facilitates effective governance. Maintenance of such a system ensured "order and discipline" (Foucault, *Discipline* 142) effected to "supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits" (Foucault, *Discipline* 143). The purpose of such a disciplinary machinery was to know, master and use the body of the subjects for meeting political ends. Describing the monastic cells, Foucault draws an analogy of the dormitory-like spaces to burial chambers, arranged conveniently for the authority to supervise (Foucault, *Discipline* 143). This kind of architectural system also has resemblance to the hospitals and schools.

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, recounting the plague of the seventeenth century elaborates on the surveillance system and how power operated through the enclosed spaces. Select officials were appointed to make the people adhere to the rules of the authority. Expanding further on the surveillance system during the great plague, Foucault discusses the disciplinary mechanism of the authorities to contain and control the contagion. Disorder and confusion resulting from such conditions required the state to exercise "disciplinary power" (Foucault 198). Foucault borrows Bentham's concept of panopticon to describe the buildings where the inmates were being kept. Foucault notes that such architectural designs facilitated effective surveillance. It was to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 201). The living spaces within the dystopian societies have remarkable resemblance to such panopticon-like structures. In a dystopian society such a design served as an apparatus to keep a check on the activities of the subjects as well as the overall functioning of the state. According to Foucault the panopticon is not a "dream building" but "a cruel, ingenious cage" (Foucault 205) that aids in the exercise of power by the state. This aspect ruefully mirrors the condition of the subjects within the dystopian state. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* analyzes the idea of 'Panopticism' and reasons the choice of such structures:

This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead- all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism (Foucault197).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault uses the metaphor of panopticon to expand on the system of surveillance used by the state as a mechanism of control. Panopticon is an architectural design that characterizes the construction of schools, prisons, barracks and hospitals for effective surveillance. Foucault uses the concept of panopticon as a disciplinary trope to show the forces of surveillance. Regulation of life and constant supervision is what characterize the existence of the subjects within the dystopian state. The gaze of the state constantly supervises the actions and the body of the subject. The perfectibility of the dystopian state rests on the attempt to transform its subjects to become "subordinated cogs of a machine" (Foucault, *Discipline* 169), as mentioned by Foucault in describing the perfect society of the eighteenth century. The visibility of the subjects facilitates recognition and monitoring. It is a way through which subjects can be differentiated and judged (Foucault, *Discipline* 184). The state aids in the production of delinquents, who in turn are used by the state for political gains. They are the pawns in the hands of the authority to contain the general populace. The delinquents in a society also functions as a surveillance apparatus of the State and referred to as a "political observatory" (Foucault, *Discipline* 281). In the system of law and order, the delinquents are not outside the law; the system propels him from "deviation to offence" and in all likelihood the "prison punishes delinquency" and in turn the prison also "perpetuates" it (Foucault, *Discipline* 301).

The disciplinary power of the state asserts on its subjects "a principle of compulsory visibility" (Foucault, *Discipline* 187). The subjects need to be constantly under the powerful gaze of the state, as Foucault notes "their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them" (Foucault,

Discipline 187). It is given in a dystopian society that the subjects must be monitored and are to be kept under the controlling purview of the state for their common good. The state however works through its tactics by being an invisible disciplinary force. The condition of visibility of the subjects can be viewed as a 'trap' (Foucault, *Discipline* 200) which is used by the state as a strategy to contain their movements. The "faceless gaze" (Foucault, *Discipline* 214) of the state is omnipresent, continually observing and supervising the body of the subjects. What results is a disciplinary society, following the panoptic principle. Such societies appear to be almost akin to an enclosed fortress, barricaded from the outside world. The subjects of these societies are perennially found in a state of "social quarantine" (Foucault, *Discipline* 216) unquestioningly accepting the position of being docile bodies. This power of the state is effectively brought out by the dystopian fiction, through its portrayal of the totalitarian state.

III. Depiction of the State and its subjects in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*

Anthony Burgess through *A Clockwork Orange* creates a dystopian vision of a corrupt youth culture, with a growing propensity to crime. The role of the state in creating juvenile delinquents is an issue that is deftly addressed in the text. The juvenile delinquents are effectively deployed by state to contain the general population; they are increasingly criminalized and, in the process, also become victims to the machinations of the state. Alex, a representative of the youth culture defined by barbaric violence is an outright criminal. The narrative charts the journey of Alex, first as a victimizer and latter as a victim of his circumstances. In creating both the scenarios, the state has a pivotal role to play. He along with his companions his "droogs…Pete, George, and Dim" (Burgess 3) unleash atrocious violence upon innocent civilians, killing, plundering, looting, raping, and creating utter mayhem on the streets. The presence of the delinquents patrolling on the night streets prevents the general populace from venturing out from their house at night. The Part One of the narrative focuses greatly on the heinous crimes committed by Alex and his comrades. They consume "milk plus" a kind of hallucinogenic substance, the effect of which translates into barbaric and violent acts committed by the delinquents. Alex takes immense pride in his violent acts, "Stealing and roughing. Two hospitalization" (Burgess 11). Alex and his go about exploiting innocent people as and when they were caught in a "hate and murder mood" (Burgess 20).

Alex and his droogs, spread chaos, disorder and anarchy, in the society which in turn aided the state to exert control over the general population. Characters like the Minister of the Interior, the prison Governor, the prison Chaplain and Dr Brodsky, all of them represented the power of the state. The state draws its supremacy from the presence of its subjects. The state permits the delinquents to spread terror and conduct their rampages within the city spaces. The state in fact greatly encourages the burgeoning of delinquents. It is a system that produces delinquents and makes it possible for these criminals to carry out ghastly crimes. The state inadvertently encourages such behaviour, fabricates violence and becomes complicit in the heinous crimes committed by the truant delinquents. The state requires dissipated people like Alex, to rule over the general populace. It is later seen in the narrative that Alex's friend Dim and his arch enemy become representative of police. The state uses the criminal impulse in them to further its own motives. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* asserts that the delinquents are essentially different from other offenders; it is not his acts but his life that serves the purpose of the state (Foucault 251). They are conveniently deployed by the prison authorities to fill the gaps in knowledge (Foucault, *Discipline* 252). The delinquents aid the state to conduct experimentations and reformative practices or treatments to contain the criminal impulse within the subject, exactly how Alex submits to the reformative conditioning of the state. The use of delinquents by the State for political reasons, is something that had existed even prior to the nineteenth century, mainly as informers or agitators (Foucault, *Discipline* 280). Gradually, organized "recruitment of thugs" and "sub-police" working with the "legal police" became a commonplace trope, and the "mass of reserve labour" was "constituted by the delinquents" (Foucault, *Discipline*

280). Thus, the delinquents constituted a secret "police force and standby army at the disposal of the state" (Foucault, *Discipline* 280). The delinquents also functioned as a surveillance apparatus of the State and referred to as a "political observatory" (Foucault, *Discipline* 281). In the system of law and order, the delinquents are not outside the law; the system propels him from "deviation to offence" and in all likelihood the "prison punishes delinquency" and in turn the prison also "perpetuates" it (Foucault, *Discipline* 301). Thus, it can be said that the state apparatus lead select subjects into delinquency, and in all possibility the "delinquent is an institutional product" (Foucault, *Discipline* 301).

Alex and his delinquent friends aid the police to control the general populace usually by instilling fear and by inflicting violence. However, during an incident Alex's friends betray him, by helping the authorities in arresting Alex for his crimes. A reversal in his fortune follows, where the victimizer becomes the victim. For his criminal attempt to kill an elderly woman Alex is apprehended by the State. He is uprooted from his familiar surroundings and placed inside the grim world of the prison. There is a sense of acceptance of his position of docility when Alex says that he is no more the "little droog Alex" but is known as the number "6655321" (Burgess 57). He is robbed of his name and identity in the prison, and is addressed by a number. The Staja Prison posits a hell-like world which further victimizes Alex. The inmates of the prison continuously violate him. The torments, disorder, decay and degeneration within the prison world almost makes it appear like a Nazi concentration camp. Grisly crimes are committed within the walls of the Staja prison amongst the prison inmates. Alex laments that "he had become a thing" (Burgess 53) inside the prison, he was no more a thinking human being, but merely an object of torture. The prison thus is made to "manufacture new criminals" (Foucault, Power 40). The prison becomes this enclosed space that facilitates the transformation of the subjects. The prison is where the criminal subject is classified, a conducive place to train the body of the offenders, it also ensures complete visibility of the subjects, with "an apparatus of observation" forming around them, that records and registers all the information about the offenders (Foucault, *Discipline* 231). The prison, a powerful state apparatus, thus endeavours to control every aspect of the life of the prisoners. The prison building, like a panopticon, acts as a place of "penalty" as well as a place of "observation" of offenders (Foucault, *Discipline* 249). The control of the prison extends from the transformation of the body to bringing about cerebral changes within the criminal subject.

Alex is lured into Ludovico's Technique. He willingly submits to it, having the presumption that it would help him get out of the prison, back to his world. The Minister of the Interior mentions that Alex is "to be reformed" (Burgess 70). It added further that this reformation would turn him into a "good boy" and would never be able to commit any offense "in a way whatsoever against the state" (Burgess 71). The state thus makes promises for the enrichment of the subjects, but often ends up deceiving them. The desire to be good makes Alex sign up for something he had no idea about, "Most certainly I will sign '' (Burgess 71) he says without a hint about the actuality of the Ludovico's Technique. This technique is used by the state as a strategy to control the erring subjects by curtailing any kind of criminal impulse. The basic premise behind the technique was to "Kill the criminal reflex" (Burgess 69). Through the reformative process of Ludovico's Technique, Alex is inflicted with extreme torturous violence, obscene visuals that results in great physical pain within him. The purpose of this process was to correlate acts of violence with "strong feelings of physical distress" (Burgess 94). After having injected with some unknown substance Alex is subjected to grotesque films, the sinister visuals horrify Alex, he almost breaks down. The process continued for some time, with intervals in between. Alex repeatedly mentions "Stop the film…stop it! I can't stand it anymore" (Burgess 79). The technique proves to be "a real show of horrors" (Burgess 76). He is effectively conditioned to detest violence; he becomes too weak to form any assumption, or to assert his own choice. Alex, thus gets doubly punished by the state, first for his criminal offenses and secondly having saddled with a clockwork within him. The process is a telling commentary on the vicious nature of the state, defined by its infinite capacity for violence. After the successful completion of the reformative process, Dr Brodsky addresses an audience to describe the technique and its impact on

the criminal. He says that through this process the offender "ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice" (Burgess 94). Different justifications are forwarded, for instance Dr Brodsky opines that it would cut down crimes, the Minister says that it would lessen the congestion in the prison, and so forth (Burgess 94). Alex soon realizes that the technique has reduced him to an animal-like position, turning him into a clockwork orange, making him incapable of asserting a choice. Thus, the power of the State operates through his body, to make him even more docile and kill all criminal reflexes within him. The process here is evocative of the great operation conducted on D-503 in Zamyatin's *We* (1924), to remove imaginative capacities in order to reduce rebellion against the State. Like D-503, Alex is also corrected and readjusted to the ideals of the State (Foucault, *Discipline* 19).

After his release from the prison Alex seems to be a different person. Sadly, after reaching home Alex is denounced by his own parents. He then chances upon Dim his old friend and Billyboy, his arch enemy from his delinquent days. They represent the police force of the State, it astonishes Alex that delinquents like them could become representatives of the power of the State. Dim and Billyboy still retain their thuggish tendencies; they attack Alex for no grave reason, but primarily to assert their power over him. Billyboy claims that the "streets must be kept clean in more than one way" (Burgess 111). It highlights how the State strategically and effectively uses criminals to remove crimes within the purview of the state. This also ironically reminds Alex of their delinquent days when they would terrorize random people on the streets without any discretion. Now that the tables have turned, Alex seems to be at the receiving end of things. His transformation after the reformative process and its eventual reversal brings out a different Alex in him. Alex after having been released from the prison starts identifying more with the victim's position. He becomes less dangerous and more pathetic. Alex doesn't try to resist being called a victim; he indeed believes that he is a "poor victim" (Burgess 113). Alex meets F. Alexander, a man he had wronged once after returning from the prison. He considers Ludovico's Technique to be a "full apparatus of totalitarianism" (Burgess 118). The character of F. Alexander is fraught with a lot of mystery as at various occasions he comes across as a foil to Alex, including sharing a part of his name. He overtly opposes the workings of the Government. He criticizes the "evil and wicked Government" for the way it has been handling crimes (Burgess 118). F. Alexander temporarily instills a spirit of dissent in Alex to rebel against the state. He has all the requisite information on how the young adolescents are used by the state to further its own interests and when the time comes, they are conveniently made pliant through conditioning techniques. He adds that he had "seen it all before" (Burgess 118). This comes as a revelation to Alex. F. Alexander continues to hurl charges at the corrupt State. Describing its machinations as "diabolical proposals" (Burgess 118). He expresses his anguish regarding the common people who cannot ever imagine questioning the corrupt state. He adds that people "sell their liberty for a quieter life" (Burgess 119) and that gives the state its power to rule over them. Hence, they accept their docility over dissent. He writes without any apprehension or fear against the workings of the state. He decides to bring Alex's story to the fore, portraying Alex as an "unfortunate victim" (Burgess 119) in the hands of the state, as part of his crusade against the state. However, F. Alexander is soon regarded as "a writer of subversive literature", "a menace" (Burgess 131), by the Minister of the Interior. The state also victimizes F. Alexander, he is put away by the state for the protection of all (Burgess 131). The Minister thus informs that F. Alexander has been imprisoned for his anti-government stance.

In a system that viciously manufactures criminals, Alex is conditioned by the state to fight against the voice of dissent in the society. He cannot become a hero of the society but rather gravitates into becoming a "criminal hero" (Foucault, Power 42). Alex becomes a pawn in the hands of the state first by resorting to criminal acts and then becoming a scapegoat for the state to further its machinations. Burgess through the portrayal of the subversive potential of the state paints a rather doleful dystopian picture of a society.

IV. Alex's Quest for selfhood

In *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess depicts a decadent society, where young boys are seen engaged in acts of unthinkable violence, sexual perversion and substance abuse. A society informed by representations of Soviet-style communism and American capitalism, the novel attempts to show contemporary conditions of those times. At the same time portraying a far worse projection of a near future vision of the world. The government rails the criminals and also gets involved in acts more heinous than the ones committed by the protagonist Alex. Alex represents a youth culture on the verge of disillusionment and decay. Given the severity of the crimes committed by Alex, the government officials inflict a reformative conditioning technique to purge him of his desire to commit crime and eventually his free will. The procedure of "Ludovico's technique" (Burgess 62) reduces Alex into a clockwork orange or a person capable of only sweetness (Burgess 18). The process however, has no real reformative effect; instead of redeeming Alex it tragically robs his ability to assert his will and choice. Even the banal things he used to like prior to the procedure appear distasteful. Alex starts abhorring music, his own actions and all things related to his criminal past. Due to the exposure to this coercive procedure Alex is reduced to a pawn in the hands of the state.

F. Alexander, a writer within the novel, calls Alex a "poor victim of the modern world" (Burgess 119). He is reduced to an unfeeling individual incapable of asserting choices. To attain stability in the state, persons like Alex are used as a scapegoat by the state apparatus. Alex is perennially victimized and made docile by his circumstances; there are several reminders of this condition of Alex in the text where he is addressed as "a victim of the modern age" (Burgess 113). He is turned into an unfeeling man incapable of asserting his choice. He is rendered powerless and fragile. "A martyr to the cause of liberty" (Burgess 121), Alex however keeps on treading, in hope of understanding his situation, despite the contingencies and unfathomable uncertainties.

Everyday life in *A Clockwork Orange* is seen shrouded in doubt and uncertainty. Society becomes a mute spectator to aimless mindless violence. Alex commits heinous crimes along with his truant cronies, the reason for which is hardly ever revealed. Adequate information is also withheld from Alex regarding his persecution and eventual treatment at the hands of the authority. This lends to the air of uncertainty that hovers around Alex's life. Caught in the cycles of repetitive violence, Alex in a way attempts to assert his selfhood through his acts of "badness" (Burgess 31). This selfhood is reduced to the identity of a number in the hellish world of Staja state jail. After Alex is incarcerated, he is addressed by a number "I was 6655321 and not your little droog Alex not no longer" (Burgess 57). This has echoes of Zamyatin's *We* (1924), where the citizens of One State have no name, but numbers. Alex, from his assertion of badness to his life after undergoing the Ludovico's technique, grows into a changed man. He still longs to be amidst violence, loathes the idea of being good and at the same time abhors the thought of "horrorshow" (Burgess 71). The self-contradictory stance is evident when he realizes "It may not be nice to be good…It may be horrible to be good" (Burgess 71). Unsure of his fate, Alex is uprooted for the second time from a place he had gotten comfortable in, the Staja jail. When he officially returns from the jail to his home, the very space epitomizing warmth and comfort becomes detestable. His mother doesn't receive him well, thinking he had escaped the jail, "oh, you wicked boy, disgracing us all" (Burgess 100). His father berates him and ousts him from the house. The pathos that Alex undergoes at this point as he evidently cannot go back home, a place of stability and comfort. From here on he sets off on another journey through pain and suffering. He seeks refuge in the bible to find answers to his plight, "the big book or bible, as it was called, thinking that might give me like comfort as it had" (Burgess 106). But that too couldn't assuage his pain, soon realizing that "life's become too much" (Burgess 106) for him.

Robbie B. H. Goh in ""Clockwork" Language Reconsidered: Iconicity and Narrative in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*" notes: "Structural repetition reinforces Burgess's vision of the constraints of social structures, which create merely a "clockwork" morality through Skinnerian conditioning and other less obvious, more insidious means- and language itself, as a socializing system,

is not exempt from this indictment" (Goh 263). Goh observes that the narrative is structured around repetitive patterns, effectively seen in the question posited at the beginning of each part (Goh 263). The three-part structure of the book begins with the same question "What's it going to be then, eh?" (Burgess 3, 57, 97). The question hints at the deep anguish and agony stemming from a sense of uncertainty that typically engulfs a modern man. Working through several patterns of repetitions, Alex assuredly loses a lot including the strong ground of family. Alex feels the lack of a family when he meets Pete after a long time. Alex undergoes a process of moral awakening along his journey towards adulthood. The trope of unsettling loneliness comes to the fore and becomes evident in the exchange he has with Pete. His language too transforms to become more socially acceptable. The disjointed unfathomable language that Alex uses, that is Nadsat, according to Goh is an extension of a sense of alienation that Alex undergoes (Goh 264). The complexity of the language is often misconstrued and is not understood by the "mainstream society" (Goh 264). It is perhaps Alex's reflection of his own struggle "for authenticity under dystopian conditions of social control" (Goh 264). As a result of his conditioning is rendered incapable of feeling any sense of pleasure but does feel excruciating pain because of his helplessness. The uncertainty of his situation and his loneliness is heightened, when he chances upon his old friend Pete, from his delinquent days. The alienation, uncertainty and deep resentment that he undergoes is highlighted towards the end of the novel where Alex says "what I wanted these days I did not know" (Burgess 137). Despite all the suffering and everything it can be noticed there is hope within him, particularly when he says "tomorrow is all like sweet flowers" (Burgess 141). He still is on a quest to find answers, relentlessly trying to make sense of his world.

The authorities at the position of power condones the violence committed by young Alex and his droogs, eventually when it becomes no more feasible the law takes upon itself to rule out criminal impulses from within the delinquent. The delinquents are incarcerated once they become a threat for the sustenance of the power of the state. Through control mechanisms like Ludovico's technique the authority asserts its power over those ruled, in the process making them docile helpless beings incapable of making a choice. The freedom to choose right and the wrong is completely eliminated within Alex after he undergoes the reformative procedure. Initially if he could assert his selfhood by choosing "badness" (Burgess 31), later he is rendered incapacitated to make a choice. He is reduced to a "clockwork orange" by his own unrelenting circumstances. However, he still endeavours to make sense of his world and hopes for better times to come. He almost falls prey to the anti-state ideals of F. Alexander, a revolutionary writer, whom Alex had wronged before. When Alex learns he wants to use Alex in his crusade against the government, Alex is filled with a deep sense of remorse lamenting his terrible fate, "Tortured in jail, thrown out of…home…beaten by old men and near-killed by the millicents" (Burgess 121). Alex, unable to comprehend his situation, questions himself "What is to become of me?" (Burgess 121). In a frantic search for meanings, he literally tries to kill himself following the words of a pamphlet that read "Open the window to fresh air, fresh ideas, a new way of living" (Burgess 124). He finds assurance in those words and in a spurt of exuberance and delirium follows the words and jumps out of the window. Alex survives but with collateral damages. Through "Deep hypnopaedia" (Burgess 130), his conditioning is reversed, however he does not remain the same old Alex. He is rendered incapable of enjoying the music he was once fond of; violent acts of his delinquent days do not appease him, any more. He is not able to find solace anywhere; however, he still doesn't lose hope. There is an acquiescence of his growth within him, but he is yet to find the answers to his recurring question, "What's it going to be then, eh?" (Burgess 3, 57, 97). He doesn't have the freedom or will to inflict violence like in the old days, nor does he have a supportive family to fall back on. He harbours the hope of starting a family and to father a child.

The family in the dystopian world is either on the verge of disintegration or is completely negated. The individual is perennially made to feel alienated having no emotional affiliation with any other member of the society. The state strategically controls the connections that develop amongst its members. Any attempt to breach the decorum of the state is viewed as transgression. The indi-

viduals without the fixed foundation of a family are often led to believe in the perfectibility of the dystopian world. The individual in a dystopian world is uprooted from his own family and home. The concept of home appears as a misnomer. The lack of home, a stabilizing force, contributes to the individuals' further disillusionment with the world. The condition of the individual within the dystopian society is then analogous to the state of the modern man. Rootlessness and homelessness defines the condition of the individuals in the dystopian societies. The individual cannot return home, home is reduced to an unreachable, distant memory. Thus heightening a sense of alienation, a condition associated with the modern man. Dennis M. Weiss in "Digital Ambivalence: Utopia, Dystopia, and the Digital Cosmos" addresses the questions of home and homelessness particularly in connection to the condition of the modern man. The problem of homelessness is intrinsically related to contemporary fiction, writes Weiss (Weiss 67). Discussing a work of Karl Jaspers, Weiss argues that rootlessness and homelessness are characterizing features of modern man; the very destiny of a man in the modern times is related to the decisive trope of homelessness (Weiss 68). And man, at this juncture is continually caught in the process of trying to hold onto something that offers certitude and fixity.

Lefebvre in *Critique of Everyday Life* notes that the authors in most futuristic projections in literature often portray the fabulous and the unfamiliar, rarely looking deep into the plights of the everyday life of man in such settings (Lefebvre 246). The dystopian fiction, however, attempts to highlight the haplessness of the individuals which is reflective of the predicament of the modern man. An attempt to showcase the everyday life of the subjects and their position within the greater narrative comes across as acts of disruption and subversion. Lefebvre interpellates this predicament as a "moral crisis" (Lefebvre 248). He further states that–" deprived of the wisdom of Antiquity, which no longer has any meaning in a life so distanced from nature, modern man has not yet discovered a new wisdom…to understand himself, to direct his passions, to control his life" (Lefebvre 248). The total disconnect with the past, and the enclosed, gated spaces wherein the subjects in the dystopian societies reside and their inability to make sense of their reality almost encapsulates the condition of the modern man as laid down by Lefebvre. The citizens in the dystopian society much like the modern man are in a quest to find meaning of his life and his position and relation with the world around. There is a schism between the "private consciousness and the public consciousness" (Lefebvre 238) within the citizens, leaving them distraught and fragmented. Lefebvre dispels the triviality associated with the everyday inner life of individuals. He evokes Kierkegaard to explain the mysterious secret lives of people caught in the mundanities of life (Lefebvre 239). Discussing further on the plight of the modern man, Lefebvre expounds that the "everyday life of the modern man…is tragically controlled by unresolved contradictions" (Lefebvre 244), typically reflecting the condition of man in the dystopian world. The modern man is "deprived not only of social reality and truth, but of power over himself" (Lefebvre 248).

The individual self, thrown into the dystopian world is persistently trapped in a prison-like caged existence. What results is a deep sense of isolation and fragmentation. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* delineates largely on the issue of isolation of the prison inmates who are cut off from the rest of the world (Foucault 236). A characterizing feature of prison is to isolate the prisoner, stifling all emotional outbursts. 'Solitude' is used as an 'instrument' to bring about the required change within the inmates (Foucault 237), rendering them incapable of thinking. Thus, it is in this solitude that the subject awakens to a sense of disgruntled feeling of uncertainty about his future. Beyond his obligation to adhere to the dictum of the law of the state, there is a burgeoning desire to understand the situation at hand. This propels him to move towards a profound quest to find answers and certitude. This stirring engulfs the individual subject bringing onto him an acute awareness of his own conscience.

With the general decay and all-pervasive disillusionment, the fear of uncertainty of his condition imprisons the individual subject. A deep sense of despair and longing gnaws his sensibilities consequently turning him into a conflicted person. This aspect has clear reverberations to what the

individual undergoes in a dystopian society. What results is a sense of fragmentation and confusion regarding one's perception of reality. David Bohm in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* notes that fragmentation is widespread especially in the individuals that lead to further problems (Bohm 1). This hampers the person's ability to deal with the world which accentuates his or her pain. The individual self undergoes fragmentation the nature of which is evidently different for different people. According to Bohm there are "separate and conflicting compartments" depending on the desires of the person (Bohm 2). Some individuals also go beyond what is deemed as "normal limits of fragmentation"(Bohm 2) wherein they are conveniently tagged as 'delinquents', 'sick' or 'mad'. The individual often gets submerged into this pit of "helplessness and despair" (Bohm 2) predominantly because of a lack of certitude. The fragmentation brought about by modern life affects men's "deepest urges toward wholeness or integrity" (Bohm 4). There is a distinction between the inner thoughts and the reality of the world of the individual. This dichotomy subsequently contributes to fragmentation of the self. An aspect often associated with modern life.

V. Hope amidst uncertainty

The citizens in the dystopian fiction are seen searching for selfhood and stable grounds of knowledge. Entrapped in rather doleful circumstances, these individuals are occupied with the desire for a quest to find meanings. Rejecting the idea of human perfectibility, the characters seek a fixed foundation to rely on. Much like the plight of the modern man the characters in the dystopian fiction are in a search for answers and coherence amidst rampant uncertainty. A deep sense of resentment and alienation engulfs them as they proceed from a subject position to assert resistance. In a world full of pessimism stems a desire to see a changed world. Caught in the cycles of repetitions and forces of stifling uniformity, the individual can hardly see oneself apart from the collective. Stripped off all markers of individual identity the citizens of the dystopian society strive to find meanings within their crisis-ridden context. Akin to the condition of modern man in a mechanized world, the individuals in a dystopian society suffer singularly. Mark R. Hillegas in *The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-utopians*, mentions that one of the menaces of modern life is that "it makes creativity unnecessary and robs the majority of human beings of the very possibility of happiness" (Hillegas 114). Hillegas discussing Orwell comments that there is an inherent fear associated with mechanical progress and amidst this what becomes evident is the individual's "frantic struggle towards an objective" (Hillegas 127). This manifests in the inner quest of the characters to find answers, waiting for a ray of hope.

Lyman Tower Sargent in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" raises the question on whether the citizens within a dystopian society can make correct choices (Sargent 26). Sargent goes on to say that the deep pessimism inherent in a dystopia can "be seen as a continuation of the idea of original sin" (Sargent 26). To this Sargent says that like the inability to return to a state of bliss in the Garden of Eden, human beings too cannot possibly envision perfectibility (Sargent 26). Sargent mentions that this aspect in the dystopian fiction connotes a sense of warning or a prophetic vision. Hence the question of choice cannot completely be negated. Sargent writes "a warning implies that choice, and therefore hope, are still possible" (Sargent 26). The twentieth century is defined by a sense of hopelessness and despair. The pessimism, fear, lack of choice coupled with general decay and moral degeneration impacts the way people envision their world. This strain irreversibly reflects in the daunting journey of the characters in the dystopian fiction. Caught in the cycles of repetitions, uncertainty, chaos, and engulfed by a deep sense of alienation, the characters in the dystopian fiction are seen engaging in the quest to find stable grounds of knowledge. Characterized by a sense of open-ended endings the dystopian fiction thereby allows the characters to hope in a rather pessimistic world order.

Burgess through Alex's position highlights the philosophical stance on the condition of modern man in the contemporary times. Through the portrayal of a tormented juvenile delinquent, Burgess

connotes the ambiguous nature of man's existence in the world. Devoid of familial affection, Alex is completely robbed off of all agency and identity. Alex becomes a passive spectator to the evils inflicted upon him by the harbingers of justice. Burgess paints a dismal picture of a dystopian world informed by all-pervasive violence and moral decay. It is a stoic commentary on the inhuman punitive measures that conditions man to become unfeeling human beings. The novel documents Alex's journey to decipher his selfhood amidst this crisis-ridden dystopian world. Alex battles through the atrocious corrective measures meted out towards him by the so-called upholders of ethics. The prison changes him beyond recognition. He is transformed into supposedly a good citizen, ironically incapable of asserting a choice, and as Burgess declares "a man who cannot choose ceases to be a man" (Burgess 115). Despite the all-encompassing uncertainty and the gloom, Alex however keeps questing for meanings, even through his anguish and suffering. There is a hint of hope in his desire to reckon the changes within him, he doesn't stop searching for meanings, and keeps treading along the path life had chosen for him. Alex doesn't relinquish the desire to keep moving in spite of his lugubrious condition. And in there lies a hope for a better future, a hope to find meanings and the possibility to achieve a fixed foundation of knowledge. This aspect foregrounds the state of man within a dystopian world. Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* thus showcases a dark vision of a world wherein the individual caught in a no-exit situation does not lose the zest for life. Alex, who is no longer a teenager by the end of the novel, hopes for a better tomorrow. He notes that "Tomorrow is all like sweet flowers" (Burgess 141). Thus, it can be said that implicit in the dark visions of the dystopia is a hope to find meanings and semblance of order in a world defined by uncertainty, chaos and gloom.

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