A key for a Clockwork Orange

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Preamble

Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel *A Clockwork Orange* became infamous after the 1971 film adaptation by Stanley Kubrick. The director's withdrawal of the film from UK circulation inspired decades of mythologising about it, adding to its notoriety and aura. Critical arguments about the role of violence in the suppression of the film have never been convincing. Such violence as occurs in the film is confined to the first third, and is heavily orchestrated and balletic. It is hard now to imagine that the violence of Kubrick's film was more alarming to viewers in the 1970s than that of Sam Peckinpah's blood-spattered *Straw Dogs*, released the same year.

Kubrick's adaptation is usually classified as science-fiction, like its parent novel. But this too has never seemed really plausible. There is nothing in the film that says this is taking place in some future Britain. Quite the opposite. Its plastic miniskirts, thigh-high boots, fly-away collars and above all its gaudy interior chic (right down to the off-the-shelf paintings from Woolworth's, seen in Alex's home) all show that this was a contemporary Britain, or at least one not far removed from it. The vision of the future provided by Kubrick in *2001: A Space Odyssey* is convincingly coherent by contrast, and very 'high-tech'.[1]

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1 This brief summary could be greatly expanded. The car stolen by Alex is not some futurist prop, but a real car produced in 1969, and Alex is seen using it to force a VW Beetle off the road; the displays in the record shop scene show albums by Pink Floyd ('Atom Heart Mother'), Crosby Stills Nash and Young ('Deja Vu') and Neil Young ('After the Gold Rush'), all released in 1970; and, conclusively, a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* refers to the previous month's Audited Bureau of Circulations figures as 'August 1970'.

In the conditioning scene, in which *A Clockwork Orange's* anti-hero Alex is being brainwashed into renouncing violence, the head scientist (Dr Brodsky) says the following lines:

> 'Very soon now the drug will cause the subject to experience a death-like paralysis together with deep feelings of terror and helplessness. One of our earlier test subjects described it as being like death, a sense of stifling and drowning [...]'

These lines are not from Burgess's novel, which Kubrick used as the basis of his screenplay (encouraging actors to ad-lib around the book's dialogue and writing it up afterward). They are plainly related to quoted speech in a newspaper story that appeared while Kubrick was making his film.

> '[The drug produces] sensations of suffocation and drowning. The subject experiences feelings of horror and terror, as though he were on the brink of death.'

The story in question appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on 18 October 1970 (the month after Kubrick began filming), and concerned human conditioning experiments then taking place at California Medical Facility at Vacaville, using violent prisoners as subjects.

The speaker was Dr Arthur Nugent, in charge of the program, and the drug was anectine, a strong muscle relaxant still in use today in some surgical settings. The effect on the human guinea-pigs was to halt all muscular actions, voluntary or involuntary, causing temporary paralysis and preventing them from even breathing, rendering them totally reliant on external assistance in order to survive. While incapacitated and terrified, the prisoners would be scolded harshly by psychologists, with the intent that this would condition the prisoners into renouncing crime due to a learned association with their ordeal. Dr Nugent told the *Chronicle*: 'Even the toughest inmates have come to hate and fear the drug. I don't blame them. I wouldn't have one treatment myself for the world.'

Kubrick's 'dystopian future' wasn't science-fiction at all. It wasn't even the future.

The novel

There have been persistent rumours that Anthony Burgess's novel (published by Heinemann, London, in May 1962) was in some way related to espionage. These rumours were given the proverbial 'shot in the arm' with the 2002 publication of Roger Lewis's scurrilous biography, entitled simply *Anthony Burgess* (published by Faber and Faber).[2] Lewis engages in much speculation but the most substantial material concerns what Lewis was told when he made contact with an intelligence officer:

> ' "You realise,"said the spook, as we sat on a bench in Berkeley Square, opposite Maggs Bros. Ltd, by appointment to Her Majesty the Queen, purveyors of rare books and manuscripts, "that the capitalised lines on page twenty-nine of A Clockwork Orange give the HQ location of the psychotronic warfare technology?"'

The lines in question refer to the words on a pennant in Alex's bedroom (described in part one, chapter three), a souvenir of his time in correctional school, and they read: 'SOUTH 4; METRO COR-SKOL BLUE DIVISION; THE BOYS OF ALPHA.' Lewis remarks: 'It does sound like an encryption. But of what precisely?' He goes on:

> 'It was patiently explained to me [by the spook] that if you look at a map of America, then Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico are the only states with a right-angled four-corner conjunction ("4...COR") and that there is a military reservation to the "SOUTH". It runs north into New Mexico and is based around the metropolitan area called El Paso. It is a training school ("SKOL" – Russian). The Navy ("BLUE DIVISION") were initially in charge of the technology. Analysing, isolating, and interfering with the "ALPHA" wavelengths of the human collective unconscious was part of the set-up. The name of the establishment is Fort Bliss. The word

2 Blake Morrison, reviewing Lewis's biography in *The Guardian*, mentions that he had been told the same thing by a retired security officer. See <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/nov/09/biography.highereducation>.

bliss appears on page twenty-nine of Burgess's novel no less than six times.'

Lewis's reaction to this information is expressed in his description of himself 'polishing my glasses with the fat end of my tie and looking simultaneously inscrutable and bewildered.' Mr Lewis can't really be blamed here. He was, after all, writing a biography of the writer, not researching Cold War espionage. But he had been set a puzzle, if only he had realised it. And a little more examination would have led him toward an unexpected solution.

The message (once 'decrypted' – which is an inferential process of word-association and allusion, rather than a true decryption) is really there, but there's a huge problem. *It's all lies and nonsense.*

Fort Bliss really is situated at the four-state square conjunction as specified, but it had no role whatsoever in any of the USA's mind control research. Nor is it connected to the US Navy, being a US Army post. The Navy's early mind control research, Project CHATTER, was abandoned in 1953 and had no formal relationship with the newer projects being undertaken by the CIA at the time *A Clockwork Orange* was published in 1962. The only connection between CHATTER and Fort Bliss is that some of the USA's 'captured' Operation Paperclip Nazi scientists were held there, and it was Nazi human experiments, as described by other Paperclip 'captives', that led to US mind control projects. But the Nazis kept at Fort Bliss were working on the USA's fledgling rocket programs, and had nothing whatsoever to do with mind control programs.[3]

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3 The use of the word 'psychotronic' itself should have been a big clue, but Lewis doesn't appear to have even consulted a dictionary. It denotes interference with the brain via electromagnetic fields. No secret research was taking place in this field at the time the novel appeared or before it. The microwave auditory effect (also known as the Frey Effect, and sometimes referred to as 'synthetic telepathy') was first noticed by radar operators during WWII. However, it was totally ignored by science until Allan Frey published the first paper on the subject in July 1962 – two months after *A Clockwork Orange* had appeared in bookshops. See <http://jap.physiology.org/content/17/4/689.abstract?sid=7c073ad2-6324-4b47-94e1-124dc0a5f154>.

These 'coded' references in *A Clockwork Orange* seem designed to mislead, to lure their intended readers into a maze of dead-ends and false connections. And what on earth would have been the reason for jumbling all this information together, hidden in the text of a popular novel, rather than relaying it via normal espionage routes? Unless Lewis's intelligence contact was playing some obscure game for his own amusement, wasting the biographer's time with pointless riddles, he was obliquely drawing attention to the fact that the information encrypted in Burgess's novel is actually disinformation; and – in as much as it invited speculation about codes being published 'in plain sight' in literature – it was also a psy-op. With this insight, we can examine the text for other instances of similarly-embedded clusters of associations where the text appears to bear closer examination, and see what disinformation they might have been intended to convey.

In the summer of 1961 Burgess was either writing his novel, or had already written it, when he suddenly decided to go on holiday. Where else would one go for a relaxing break, at the height of the Cold War, if not the Soviet Union? Burgess's literary biographer, Andrew Biswell, remarks: 'If someone had asked Burgess why he and [his wife] Lynne were proposing to visit Leningrad in the summer of 1961, he would have found it difficult to formulate a straightforward reply.' [4] Biswell relates that the novelist's principal motivations were immersing himself in the Russian language (for the purposes of novelistic research and personal learning) and straightforward curiosity. The biographer has little truck with theories concerning Burgess's purported espionage career, obliquely slighting Lewis's rival biography by saying: 'There is no foundation to the rumour, originally put forward by a downmarket London newspaper in 2002, that Burgess went to Russia for reasons of Cold War espionage.' 'No foundation' is not the same as 'no truth', and Biswell provides a moment of unintentional comedy in the following passage:

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4 Andrew Biswell, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess*, (London: Picador, 2006) p.236

> ‘When I asked a former diplomat from the Russian embassy about the possibility that Burgess was secretly employed by British intelligence, he told me that a volubly indiscreet drunk such as Burgess, who also happened to be married to a suicidal alcoholic, would have been solidly at the bottom of the list when it came to recruiting potential secret agents, in spite of his considerable linguistic talents.’[5]

The diplomat’s irony here is heavy and poisonous. Minus the wife, the diplomat’s dismissal is an exact fit for Burgess’s namesake Guy, the British intelligence officer who had defected to the USSR ten years before Anthony Burgess began writing *A Clockwork Orange*. This irony was not lost on Heinemann’s chief reader Marie Lindt who remarked to Biswell: ‘It was almost inevitable that having christened him Burgess, *we would send him to Russia.’* [emphasis added]

So whose idea was this excursion, exactly? Heinemann subsidised Burgess’s jaunt and a vague promise was made by the author that a novel might result from it, although not necessarily in that order. In later years it irritated Burgess that he was still being identified with his traitorous namesake (Roy Jenkins introduced him to a formal banquet as ‘Guy Burgess’) but although he frequently threatened to sue over this ongoing misidentification, he never did. Perhaps he feared what might happen under cross-examination.[6]

It must be said at once that concrete evidence of Burgess’s supposed intelligence work has not surfaced, and nor would it be realistic to imagine that such evidence exists outside of currently withheld official documents. Anna

5 Biswell – see note 4 – p. 236

It is a measure of the intellectual gulf that Biswell perceived between his work and that of his rival (to whom he privately referred as ‘the showbiz biographer’) that the ‘downmarket London newspaper’ in question was actually *The Independent on Sunday*. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/cia-mind-control-trials-revealed-as-secret-inspiration-behind-a-clockwork-orange-139895.html>.

6 Biswell – see note 4 – p. 236. Ms Lindt’s remark about ‘christening him’ is a reference to the fact that Burgess’s real name was John Anthony Burgess Wilson, and his two middle names became his pen-name as a novelist.

Edwards, archivist at Manchester's International Anthony Burgess Foundation, confirmed by e-mail: 'We've not yet come across any records within our collection which support the claim that Burgess worked for MI5.' Note that careful 'not yet'. And note also the reference is only to MI5 and not MI6.

But by the same token, there is absolutely nothing inherently improbable about a British novelist having a second job in intelligence: think of Graham Greene, Frederick Forsyth, Roald Dahl or (more obviously) the pseudonymous John Le Carré. It might be simply coincidence that Burgess's publisher (Heinemann) was also Graham Greene's, and that Burgess's agent, Peter Janson-Smith, was also Ian Fleming's.

Burgess in Leningrad

The aspects of Burgess's Leningrad visit that are of interest here can be related briefly, since we only have his word for them (and he doesn't tell us much) in the second volume of his autobiography, *You've Had Your Time*, (Heinemann, 1990). Burgess took with him a number of western-manufactured dresses, intent on selling them on the black market, which he began doing (in an underground public toilet) before he and his wife had even checked in to their hotel. A plan better designed to draw KGB attention can hardly be imagined and such attention was duly forthcoming. This was in the form of an officer who Burgess calls simply 'Oleg', who materialised alongside the Burgesses while they were eating in a restaurant later that evening. Oleg became a more or less constant presence in the background of the trip. He even located Burgess when the writer later quit his hotel room and dossed down on the floor of a friendly Leningrader referred to as 'Sasha'. Oleg watched as Burgess held court surrounded by a number of eager Soviet youths, who visited him at Sasha's apartment, wanting to know more about life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Later Oleg would personally see Burgess and his wife off from the quayside as they embarked for their return voyage to Britain. He even demonstrated how easy it was to smuggle oneself out of Russia if one so desired – though Oleg declared that he did not.

Andrew Biswell dismisses the espionage rumours with the comment: '[T]here is nothing among Burgess's private diaries or financial papers to suggest that he was paid to spy on the Russians.' Indeed not but, in any case, that is not what Burgess's Leningrad adventures appear to suggest. This episode is unmistakably a 'dangle': Burgess going to the Soviet Union, deliberately drawing attention to himself, courting a KGB officer, and establishing a personal relationship with that officer before finally returning home to Britain with some shared (or ostensibly shared) purpose in mind. Since this episode took place a third of the way through writing *A Clockwork Orange* (according to Biswell) or perhaps when it was actually finished (according to Lewis), there is a clear connection between the novel and the voyage. The 'Russian novel' anticipated by Heinemann, which in this interpretation was mainly a cover story for this Leningrad operation, was called *Honey for the Bears* and did not appear until 1963. This was two years after Burgess's trip and after he had published another two novels (*A Clockwork Orange*, and *The Wanting Seed*, both 1962), which might indicate that the Russian novel was treated somewhat perfunctorily.

Honey for the Bears has a curious plotline in which a married man visits Russia and returns having discovered (through various adventures) that he is bisexual, a clear symbol of some kind of ambiguity and all the more striking since the Soviet Union proscribed homosexual activity. Moreover, according to Biswell the novel 'gives every appearance of having been written up out of a diary (perhaps compiled purely as an aide-memoire and then discarded) that Burgess kept while he was in Russia in 1961.'[7] Or as debriefing material for his return to Britain, which would also explain why this document has vanished from among his voluminous personal effects. Whether *Honey for the Bears* has any greater significance is a matter of conjecture, although given its themes and its title it is worth observing that the novel's publication occurred against the backdrop of the then recent (September 1962) Vassall spy scandal. John Vassall, a homosexual civil servant, was exposed as a Soviet agent,

7 Biswell – see note 4 – p. 239.

having been blackmailed into the role by the KGB using explicit photographs obtained during a type of sting known as a honeytrap.[8]

In the light of the above appraisal of the information relayed (unsuccessfully) to Roger Lewis, *A Clockwork Orange* can be examined as a 'suspect' text containing deliberate disinformation intended for Soviet intelligence that would be unnoticed by general readers. Given the central theme of Burgess's novel – that of behavioral engineering, more simply 'mind control' – the only realistic interpretation is that the disinformation project concerned the CIA's then ongoing Project MKULTRA (hereinafter MKUltra), in which MI6 was also involved.[9]

An exhaustive analysis of the novel along these lines would be a lengthy work of determined scholarship. What follows is an exploration of a few of the more readily-observed 'clusters' that resemble the clusters in the passage to which Lewis's attention was drawn. Since it is the present thesis that Burgess's novel was a disinformation project, it must be stressed that the analysis is not an attempt to find precise

8 More speculatively, if *Honey for the Bears* were intended as some kind of 'signal' to the KGB, then it is interesting to note that the last novel Burgess published before going to Russia, *One Hand Clapping* (1961), concerns the escape of a young woman from a husband who foresees the decline and collapse of Western civilisation. It is seldom remarked upon that the novel was published under a new pseudonym and not linked to Burgess by any publicity, indeed it was barely publicised at all. Burgess remarks (on pages 28-29 of *You've Had Your Time*) that the novel consequently 'sank like a stone' at home but sold well in the Soviet bloc where it was taken as 'a condemnation of money-making, a debased culture, [and] the whole capitalist Western life'. It is a strange sort of publisher that takes a new work by one of their established authors and publishes it under a new name but makes no effort to promote it. The *nom de plume* chosen for *One Hand Clapping*, never explained by Burgess, was Joseph Kell, a name whose similarity to that of Major-General Sir Vernon Kell may not, given the present research, be entirely coincidental.

9 If the novel was indeed a disinformation project, this suggests a rationale for the title of the 1974-5 MI5 project Clockwork Orange, a campaign of psychological warfare. The usual reasoning – that it was simply named after Kubrick's 1971 movie – is weak and unsatisfactory. The idea that the title was more of an *homage* to a successful (and still-secret) psychological operation related to the 1962 novel that inspired the film makes far more sense.

and accurate meanings hidden in the text, but to identify some areas designed to promote misdirection and erroneous speculation.

Drugs and the psychocivilised society

Comment on *A Clockwork Orange* returns again and again to the theme of violence, that of the hooligan and that of the state. What no-one seems to care to mention is that, at the dawn of the 1960s, an author was predicting a future in which recreational drug use was commonplace – a prediction that was fulfilled before the end of that decade. In fact the novel even looked beyond the Summer of Love and Woodstock, to a time that would be better symbolised by the Tate murders committed by the LSD-raddled Manson Family in 1969. In 1962 there was no sign of this coming to pass, nor was there any idea that the use of psychedelic drugs would be counter-cultural. Most people's experience of the early 1960s was not dissimilar to that of the 1950s but with better television programmes. What little social concern existed in Britain about drugs revolved around the very limited use of cannabis, a narcotic that doesn't even merit a reference, let alone a namecheck, in *A Clockwork Orange*.

The classic vision of psychotopia at the time was Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*, in which the euphoriant Soma (named after the mystical plant of the Vedas) is issued by the world-state's church-surrogate as a sacrament to a compliant and grateful populace. Burgess's novel stands this on its head. Alex's world has an array of drugs available on tap at 'milk bars' that are very different establishments from their real-life counterparts of the 1950s and 60s. The novel's drugs, or at least those identified by Alex, reward closer examination. They aren't even concealed or buried in the text, making their appearance on the very first page of the novel as 'synthemesc', 'drencrom' and 'vellocet'.[10]

10 The relationship between MKUltra and the psychedelic sixties has been the subject of great speculation. At one extreme, it is theorised that LSD 'escaped' the laboratory as a result of careless procedures and poor safeguarding; at the other it is suggested that

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'Synthemesc' is obviously 'synthetic mescaline', the artificial version of the hallucinogen used for shamanistic purposes for centuries among the indigenous people of what is now central America. It was first produced in a laboratory in 1919 but remained little more than a curiosity until research began in the 1950s into potential psychiatric applications of such drugs. It had previously been used in experiments conducted by Nazi scientists at Dachau and was taken up as a potential 'truth serum' by the OSS, before being 'inherited' by the CIA.

Less obviously, 'Drencrom' is adrenochrome, a substance produced during the metabolism of adrenaline, and identified as a psychoactive in Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (1954). In the same year, it became a substance that interested researchers Abram Hoffer and Humphry Osmond in their developing theory that there was a biological basis for schizophrenia.[11] The two scientists were involved in early experimental uses of LSD and mescaline in a psychiatric setting, specifically for 'curing' alcoholics.[12] Osmond had been recruited to MKUltra by Allen Dulles in 1952 and his

Footnote 10 continued:
the CIA deliberately propagated their pet hallucinogen to the public in order to study it 'in field' or perhaps to even subvert the growing US 'counter-culture'. All that can be said for certain is that in 1960 Timothy Leary, godfather of acid-heads, was encouraged to set up the ground-breaking Harvard Psylocibin Project by CIA-funded psychologist Dr Henry Murray. Both were tenured academics at Harvard's Social Relations Department, where Murray was its director. Just before Leary began exploring inner space at Harvard, Murray had conducted the MKUltra interrogation experiments that broke the mind of student Theodore Kaczynski, later to become infamous as the Unabomber. In his 1983 autobiography *Flashbacks*, Leary wrote: '[Murray was] the wizard of personality assessment who, as OSS chief psychologist, had monitored military experiments on brainwashing and sodium amytal interrogation. Murray expressed great interest in our drug-research project and offered his support.'

11 <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1080%2F10298420290015827#page-1>

12 On the early use of LSD in mental ilness 'treatments' see <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=exhibit_home&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000363&pg=0> On the use of LSD on alcolhol dependents, and the intelligence agency connection, see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC381240/>

experimental results were fed back to the CIA and to MI6. The publication of Osmond and Hoffer's peer-reviewed findings concerning adrenochrome and mescaline would have been virtually unnoticed by all but the most specialist researchers, so it is a surprise to see both drugs appear in a mass-marketed novel and identified as popular intoxicants.

However there is a far more extraordinary reference in the name of the third of Alex's drugs of choice: 'vellocet'. It appears to have escaped notice until now, perhaps due to the fact that *A Clockwork Orange* has a cult readership that is generally not familiar with the rest of Burgess's novels. It gives definite new significance to the references to mescaline and adrenochrome. Four years after *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess published *Tremor of Intent*, which has the subtitle 'An eschatological spy novel'. This is a parody of Fleming's James Bond fiction, containing outlandish exaggerations of Bond's sexual and gastronomic excesses, and dealing with the Cold War as a manichean 'Good-versus-Evil' conflict. In chapter six, the protagonist spy Hillier is captured and surreptitiously injected with something. The mastermind-villain of the story, Theodorescu, tells Hillier:

> 'It was a special injection, slow-working but efficacious. A substance developed by Dr Pobedonostev of Yuzovo called, I believe, B-type vellocet.'

Theodorescu goes on to explain the effects of vellocet (which indeed ensue for Hillier) as follows:

> 'You see, you will not fall into a trance, answering from a dream, as with so many of the so-called truth drugs. You will be thoroughly conscious but possessed of a euphoria which will make concealment of the truth seem a crime against the deep and lasting friendship you will be convinced subsists between us.'

So here we have one of the drugs taken by Alex and his droogs explicitly identified as a truth serum developed for the purposes of espionage. Furthermore, it has been developed for use in interrogations, simplifying the standard process in which the interrogator encourages the subject to trust and

confide in him. It does away with the necessity of the psychological (and probably physical) assault which would normally precede that outcome. The documented schedule of an MKUltra sub-project, initiated in May 1955,[13] provides an almost exact fit for this fictional vellocet. It set out a list of criteria that include the following three sequential research ambitions:

> '11. Substances which will produce "pure" euphoria with no subsequent let-down.
>
> 12. Substances which alter personality structure in such a way that the tendency of the recipient to become dependent upon another person is enhanced.
>
> 13. A material which will cause mental confusion of such a type that the individual under its influence will find it difficult to maintain a fabrication under questioning.'

A euphoriant, manufactured for intelligence purposes as a 'truth serum', is explicitly identified by Burgess himself as one of the recreational drugs in *A Clockwork Orange*. The description of the drug's effects tallies with stated priorities of MKUltra pharmaceutical research, unknown to the public at the time and for more than a decade afterward.

The inventor of vellocet

The surname of vellocet's fictional creator, Pobedonostev, was obviously not chosen at random. Throughout the early-to-mid 20th Century, Constantine Pobedonostev (1827-1907), tutor and advisor to Tsar Alexander III, was of some interest to historians.[14] Pobedonostev was an authoritarian and strict censor who viewed the public as children and the state as parent, and he posthumously united the two superpowers in their distrust and dislike of him – an ambiguity that is significant in the context of the present research.

13 See <https://web.archive.org/web/20071128230208/http://www.arts.rpi.edu/~pellr/lansberry/mkultra.pdf> at p. 167.

14 It does not seem to be a coincidence that Burgess links the name Pobedonostev to the name 'Alex(ander)'. Nor does it seem likely to be happenstance that the names of Alex's droogs – Pete, Georgie and Dim – are respectively those of a Tsar (Pyotr), the patron Saint of Moscow (Yuri is 'George' in Russian), and another Tsar 'Dim(itri)'.

Pobedonostev was seen as an oppressive precursor to the Soviet Union by the west, and as an oppressive cause of the Russian revolution by the USSR. The most prominent academic paper on him was written by Dr Arthur Adams and published in the US and UK in 1952 under the title 'Pobedonostsev's Thought Control' – a correspondence with the purposes of MKUltra that would be discovered immediately by anyone checking on the name's associations.[15] Between 1961 and 1963, overlapping the creation and publication of Burgess's novel, Dr Adams was policy director of the CIA-funded propaganda station Radio Free Europe, broadcasting to Soviet satellite states.[16] So the name of vellocet's inventor is associated with repression, and the contemporary academic who calledn Pobedonostev a practitioner of 'thought control' was involved in a contemporaneous CIA propaganda project aimed at undermining the USSR. This, then, is a significant cluster of associations.

The Ludovico treatment

Another curious cluster of associations can be found in the section describing the conditioning undergone by Alex (in part two, chapters four to five). The usual observation by critics and commentators is that 'Ludovico' is the latinate version of the forename 'Ludwig' and that this ties in with Alex's admiration for Ludwig Van Beethoven and his ninth symphony. This two-step association process (from Ludovico to Ludwig to symphony) is almost too pat and Alex doesn't even remark on it in the novel, even though it would have been as obvious to him as to the reader. The name 'Ludovico' sits starkly on the page, unexplained but with a clear importance: who was the Ludovico who invented the fictional brainwashing technique? The name has another cultural association that is far more relevant, and like Beethoven's ninth symphony it is only two steps removed from the name Ludovico. The diminutive or

15 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/125559?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>
16 <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dispatch/obituary.aspx?pid=92179564>

familiar version of the name Ludovico is 'Vico'[17] and the lone historical figure known simply as Vico is Giambattista Vico (1688-1744) whose most famous work was the 1725 treatise *Scienza Nuovo* (*The New Science*).[18]

Vico was well-regarded in the Soviet Union during the 1960s, having been the subject of great interest ever since he was mentioned with approval a century earlier, in the first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital*. Vico was regarded in the USSR as the principal philosopher of history: his belief was that humans evolved alongside their societies, from barbarism to civilisation, which accorded well with Soviet ideas about the malleability of human nature. But there was another side to Vico's thinking that ran in direct contradiction to Soviet dogma. Vico's 'big idea', to which he returned again and again, was that the mechanistic reductions of René Descartes (1596-1650) had limited application and could not be extended to describe human interactions or learning. (Descartes held that organisms could be considered as automata, reacting to external stimuli in a quasi-mechanical way).

It is instructive to consider the context in which *A Clockwork Orange* would have been received by Soviet specialists. The work of Ivan Pavlov dominated Soviet psychiatry at the time since (like Vico's) it fitted well with Soviet notions of human adaptability, rather than with the early genetic theories that had been denounced by Stalin.[19] In 1950, the Soviets held the notorious 'Pavlovian Session', an attempt to purge Soviet psychiatry of supposed western influences, during which one faction of Pavlov's pupils was denounced by another faction. The result of the Session was

17 <http://www.behindthename.com/name/ludovico>

18 I don't pretend to have any knowledge about the influence of 18th Century Italian philosophers upon Soviet historians. I've taken my lead here from page 179 of Marcel Danesi's 1995 study 'Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American Science: Philosophy and Writing', which provided a good framework for understanding. Interestingly, Danesi notes that the USSR suddenly went cool on its former enthusiasm for Vico as soon as a Russian translation appeared (1940) and, although it never disappeared completely, the USSR's official interest in Vico declined somewhat after 1950, which was the year of the Pavlovian Session. See <http://tinyurl.com/hopd2ec> (Google Books link).

19 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/13592304>

that Soviet psychiatry withdrew from meaningful dialogue with the rest of the scientific world until the end of the USSR itself. Pavlov's epochal work on the conditional reflex has clear relevance to the central theme of *A Clockwork Orange*, and the entire field of 'Behaviourism' in which this relationship is nestled stretches directly back to none other than Rene Descartes and his notions of nervous automatism[20] – as derided by Vico and his New Science.

What is the upshot of all these interlinked associations? The repeated references to Vico (as the familiar version of 'Ludovico') in the novel's context of psychiatric innovation draw unwelcome attention to a glaring and inherent contradiction between Soviet historiography and Soviet psychiatry. If we pursue the hypothesis of *A Clockwork Orange* as a 'disinformation novel', the aim of this perceptive 'needling' might simply have been to sow confusion and uncertainty among Soviet researchers by exacerbating the ongoing and disruptive consequences of the Pavlovian Session. It might even represent an attempt to delude the Soviets into thinking that the USA had developed a 'New Science' of its own.

Alex's suicide attempt

A third cluster of associations is in the climax of the novel, in part three, chapter five. Young Alex has undergone the conditioning treatment that renders him averse to violence. He then blunders into the hands of political activists whose interests lie in his potential as a propaganda weapon to be used against the government (which they identify as oppressive and dictatorial). They lock Alex in a room in an apartment (well above street level, in a towerblock), and play classical music very loudly through the walls. Since Alex's conditioning has also inadvertently caused him to react badly to music,[21] a fact known to his captors, he is driven to throw himself from the window in an attempt to escape the pain it

20 <http://www.personalityresearch.org/papers/naik.html>

21 In Pavlovian terms, Alex's aversion to classical music is a case of 'second-order conditioning'.

causes him. The (fictional) composer whose music is used to torment him is named as Otto Skadelig, who is identified as a Dane; and the word 'Skadelig' means 'damaging' in Danish.

Alex is inspired to seek suicidal escape from Skadelig's music by a political magazine left in the room with a headline that reads 'Death to the Government'. One of the conspirators who is attempting to drive Alex to his death has the surname 'da Silva', and the surname 'Silva' was known at the time of the novel's appearance due to the 1960 launch of a purported therapeutic method called simply 'Silva Mind Control' – like the Pobedostonsev reference, a direct allusion to the purpose of MKUltra.[22]

These flags in the text seem to be drawing attention to something of hidden significance in this section of narrative: but what is it?

Considering Burgess's novel as a disinformation project, one close parallel is the notorious 1953 death of CIA scientist Frank Olson. Olson fell from above the tenth floor of the Statler Hotel in Manhattan barely a week after being surreptitiously dosed with LSD by scientists working on MKUltra. Olson's death was widely reported at the time and has fascinated researchers of MKUltra for many years. The consensus has always been that Olson was in some way a non-consenting guinea-pig in an experiment that went badly wrong. This would dovetail neatly with the themes of *A Clockwork Orange*. But why would a disinformation project in the form of a novel draw attention to Olson's demise if it were such a sensitive matter?

Here we are in even murkier territory. Olson died in 1953. *A Clockwork Orange* appeared in 1962. At the time of the novel's publication, little had been made public about the circumstances of Olson's death. The fact that he had been covertly dosed with LSD prior to his death only emerged in 1975. But it turns out that the MKUltra connection might itself

22 The founder of the method was José Silva, a parapsychologist by inclination and an electrician by training. Silva conducted research into so-called 'remote viewing', a subject that the CIA is known to have examined during the 1970s, but there is no known indication that the Agency was interested in Silva's work.

have been a cover story. After decades of investigation Olson's family has become convinced that the MKUltra/LSD connection was concealing the fact that Olson knew too much about MKUltra's predecessor, Operation ARTICHOKE, and about illegal and secret US bioweapons programs. Olson, they claim, was going to speak out about these activities. Whatever the ethics of Olson's stance, this would have been seen as a threat to national security and of material use to the USSR, to say nothing of its great propaganda value. So (say the family) he was murdered, by being beaten to death and then thrown from the window. The forensic evidence recorded at a second post-mortem on Olson's corpse in 1994 appears to support that assertion.[23]

If the Olson family is correct – and they probably are – then the propagation of the 'experiment gone wrong' cover-story would fit very closely with the scenario that is presented in *A Clockwork Orange* and flagged up by the cluster of hints and nudges found in that section of the text. And there is another allusion here: Peer *de Silva* was a senior CIA officer at the time, head of the Agency's Soviet division when Frank Olson was killed.[24]

Is this a big enough set of hints to encourage readers within Soviet intelligence to believe that Olson had been deliberately driven to kill himself as a result of a successful US mind-control experiment?

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23 <http://www.frankolsonproject.org/Statements/FamilyStatement2002.html>

24 <http://apps.westpointaog.org/Memorials/Article/12560/>