



Universidad de Chile  
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades  
Departamento de Lingüística

## London as a corpse in Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick*

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Alumna

Yeisil Carolina Peña Contreras

Profesor Patrocinante

Hector Andrés Ferrada Aguilar

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## Introduction

“Words, he realized, words,  
words, words. He had lived too much with  
words and not what words stood for”  
(Burgess 152)

Little research has been done about any of Anthony Burgess’ novels that are not *A Clockwork Orange*. Specifically, his wide literary production in his ‘gold years’ i.e. starting in 1960, has been neglected along with his literary re-enchantment with London after coming back from Burma. There, Burgess started a production that ended with more than 8 novels in a period of 9 years. Nobody, either, seemed to notice that probably his masterpiece was not *A Clockwork Orange* but another ignored by the critic and by the public.

I could not start writing about Burgess without referring to *A Clockwork Orange*. Many literary pieces have dealt with its multiple interpretations, although Burgess found it a poor literary piece. I could not deny, however, the linguistic richness of the droogs, or the modern aspects of its protagonist, Alex Delarge, who actually has been compared with Holden Caulfield and with the anti-heroes of modernity. Along with its linguistic expertise by creating a new language, and by giving space for transgressions to occur, the adventures of Alex Delarge are relevant because of its literary transcendence in modernity. For example, morality is one of the most current issues; moral decay and dystopian society, ethical values, the anti-ethics inside the pseudo-family and finally, transgressions and violence. All of them commenting on the ambivalent but strong Burgessian position in which transgression, violence –and all that seems anti-religion, is a way of finding a place in a modern society, a way to be seen and to find an identity.

Other works also include discussions about *The Wanting Seed* and *1985*. Mikulaková, finally, is the most interesting work. In her work titled *Aspects of Postmodernism in Anthony Burgess’ Novels* she establishes that all Burgess’ novels portray a cyclical theory of human development, which includes the problems of declination of individuality in society and also the power of authorities behind.

As stated before, not only many novels have been displaced from the literary perspective but also many topics that are relevant in Burgess’ novels. This work deals with *The Doctor is Sick*. There is not any piece of research about this novel, so that any background is found. Furthermore, any of those novels has been analysed from the urban perspective or the role of the city.

The aim of the present work is to demonstrate that *The Doctor is Sick* sets out the way in which the subject abandons the institutionalized boundaries of the sign, understood under the structuralism constraints, and discovers a New World characterized by the sign deconstruction. The analogy for that purpose is an Old World that functions as a living body machine, and a New World that is unstable, infinite and subject-dependent; characterized as an anti-hegemonic corpse. As a patient/doctor, the subject dissects what was unknown and invisible by providing an anatomical reading of his lethargic route.

Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* overshadows its other partners. *A Clockwork Orange* is sufficiently fingered up to this point. Albeit we can recognize its protagonist as the modern hero, definitely he demonstrates the strongest height of this period, which has been sufficiently discussed and analyzed. Eventually, this hero becomes an anti hero because in chapter 21 we can see how he endorses the modern 'normal' life. In 1960 –what I have called the first year of Burgess' golden years-, he also produces *A Right to an Answer*, another novel darkened by its non-existent criticism. This narrative deals with how the modern subject intends to break the steady models of institutionalization, which reflects the first attempts towards another stage beyond modernity, a discussion that will be developed in the analysis. The main issue in this novel is the contradictions of societies: “No quieren libertad en el mundo moderno: Quieren estabilidad. Y no se pueden tener las dos cosas al mismo tiempo”(Burgess 9). One of the main examples of this conflict is that people adore marriage but at the same time they adore stability “adulterio: El único pecado es contra la estabilidad”(Burgess 120). Furthermore, we see how modernity is only seen as a contradiction that includes the advantage of fixed identifications in steady models. Nevertheless, there is not any attempt to surpass modernity, and the main character only satisfies itself by criticism and contemplation of the modern decadence.

The Norton Paper Edition of *The Doctor is Sick* used for this discussion is from 1997, and provides some critiques about the comedic elements in the novel and the linguistics varieties that are portrayed through the post-war characters in the novel. Although interrupted by the sentence “By the author of *A Clockwork Orange*” in the cover, this edition was first published in 1979, which helps us to understand that although written in 1960, this novel was excluded even for publication. However, this narrative is completed and is supposed to be the same that Burgess wanted to publish before the history of Alex Delarge.

But why scrutinizing *The Doctor is Sick* and not any other novel? It is the only novel in which we find “una modificación casi permanente de los posibles parámetros de identificación”(Diaz 97). This is not only one of the many novels that are ignored but one that seems to be of major importance and literary transcendentalism from historical and literary perspective.

As Burgess has always been related to modernity, this work presents a whole new paradigm that, as Mikulaková seemed to forecast, are also current and pertinent for the literary discussions that have taken place among critics these days i.e. deconstruction as the ideology behind post-structuralism and the destabilization of the sign.

*The Doctor is Sick* is a long sketch or a novel of the urban society in XX century, and a representation of how the individual actually seeks for detachment of the arbitrary associations. Perhaps, by disintegrating the parts of this novel we can also infer that, probably, Burgess’ novel put forward variety of discussions that the story of the droogs or any other of his following novels was incapable of going beyond, especially because of his tremendous and revolutionary ideas that have been ignored until now.

Finally, as a way to integrate all these aspects and their non-dynamism in the New World, deconstruction is going to be taken not only as a theme in the novel and a discussion that is set up, but also as a way to make ruptures among the relationships that Edwin, the protagonist, establishes with the strangers and with his relatives or friends, as well as the way in which he deconstructs the relations with the city taking as a ground post-structuralism features.

The general objective of the present work is to establish to what extent Burgess’ novel can be understood as a visionary narrative that provides empirical examples of contemporary literary discussions: Deconstruction and Post Structuralism ideas. This will re-define some assumptions that authors make, especially after the 1980’s, about the establishment of new paradigms only and exclusively after that date. This objective will be possible by carrying out the following two more specific ones.

The first specific objective is to understand the process by which the subject abandons the Old World and goes into a new reality characterized by infiniteness. When we understand the hospital constraints, we are fully capable of comprehend the liquids and motionlessness that take place outside the hospital. The dead body, the city of London, expels the relations between Edwin

and the post-war characters. They are visible thanks to the anatomist wrecking that shows the inner processes of the former living machine by discovering the sickness.

Finally, under the two main analogies, this examination will give the reader the opportunity to also become an anatomist; a new way of approaching the novel by leaving behind the modern constructions so that is capable of deconstructing his/her own reality.

## Theoretical Framework

I will make reference to secondary sources that will be useful in the analysis of Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick*. In the analysis, the novel will be examined according to the main analogy of this thesis: the living body as the Old World and the corpse as the New World. All sources are contemporary to the novel, except for Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (1954). The analysis will provide, then, the relation among these post-Burgess classifications and the narrative episodes from this 1960's novel.

In order to develop the first objective, it is important to clarify some concepts. The ideas of Old and New world have been taken from Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*. "A man consists of what I may call an Old World of personal consciousness and, beyond, a dividing sea, a series of New Worlds"(72). In the first world the subject follows the social conventions; he is attached to the anthropomorphic wonderings about the man and its transcendence. The transition to the New World, however, is not spontaneous; "the drug takes its passengers further into a terra incognita" (73), a terra that allows for the examination of new realities and intensities that are possible because of drug effects. As a whole, Huxley's drug effect allows a new approach to understand Edwin's own reality throughout scrutinizing the features of this new terra, the New World.

Huxley's New World is approachable because the drugs are the medium to become a visionary. He takes Blake's example to relate hallucinations with new understandings of reality. The subject is a visionary of the infiniteness<sup>1</sup> that exists out there, under an "everyday consciousness"(72).

But the proposal of the present work goes beyond this dichotomy and establishes that the Old World, inside the hospital, is full of the so called structuralist rules (following the linguistic categorization) and the New World, London, would be composed of the overcoming of these rules, taking the sign to a different level of understanding. These differences are possible not only because of the plot but because of the language crisis that is portrayed in the narration.

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<sup>1</sup> Huxley and Julia Kristeva refer to this concept. The former does it by focusing in the area of language: She claims that there is "una infinitización del pensamiento que se escribe, por lo tanto exige también una ausencia de significado programados"(237). That is to say, the signifiers that were somehow fixed are altered due to the presence of the subject's thoughts that allows for the existence of other signifiers.



For Ferdinand de Saussure and the structuralists, language is made up of signs that are a product of an arbitrary, stable and immanent relation between a signified, a mental image, and a signifier, the uttered word. Between them there is not any *natural* relation more than the convention among institutions endorsed by a common agreement. Under these constraints, it is pertinent to isolate the subject and to manipulate him/her in order to accept and carry out those rules<sup>2</sup>. The subject, then, must be movable and condescending: “Un cuerpo singular que se convierte en un elemento que se puede colocar, mover, articular sobre otros”(Foucault 168). But in Edwin’s body not also these rules have been applied, but also, following the same author, he is someone to which the pedagogical practices have been put into practice, in such a manner that a trade is imposed, establishing different times, programs and stages that the subject has followed. Certainly, the fact that Edwin is a Doctor in the 1960 makes him a docile body even more.

But in order to displace the subject into the New World and to understand Edwin struggle, I plan to replace the Saussure characteristics of the sign: arbitrariness, immanent and stability, by a sign that is subject-dependent<sup>3</sup>, polysemic and fractal. The first term is taken from Huxley who says that the creation of the experience is based on a unique reality. The second term is taken from Corinne Enaudeau in *La Paradoja de la Representación* who states that “the polysemic characteristic obtains the displacement that allows modifying the sign’s aspect”(232). Finally, the fractal characteristic is taken from Jean-Luc Nancy’s *La Comunidad Desobrada*, who says that it is “una difracción y espaciamiento<sup>4</sup> de las historias lineales y acumulativas”(182). The lineal and accumulative characteristic of the static rules are displaced to be confronted in a new reality, a New World that establishes a dynamic disposition of them so that they are infinite and independent. It seems that, as Huxley, Kristeva and Blake claim, the subject faces this experience as part of a new way to understand their reality.

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<sup>2</sup> In Foucault’s *History of Madness*, he emphasizes that schizophrenics are isolated from society because they cannot make these arbitrary associations. Jameson adds that this subject is a surplus of society that must be excluded. For Derridá, it is an incapability called *Juncture*. It is worth noticing that while for Foucault the impossibility is made from the subject and implies incapability, for Derridá it is a characteristic of the sign, beyond the subject that utters it. Huxley, finally, reflects its incapability by uttering: “Words, even the pregnant words of poets, do not evoke pictures in my mind”(15). For him, “every individual is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition”(22).

<sup>3</sup> But not for that reason the relationships are related to paroxysm. They are personal but based on the subject’s observations due to the examination of the city as a corpse.

<sup>4</sup> Derridá in *De la Gramatología* also refers to this term by acknowledging the fact that the signifier is movable and therefore may be infinite; one signifier refers to another and so on. From my perspective, Nancy makes reference to this characteristic in the sign but more explicitly, refers to the unbreakable nature of institutions that under the fractal characteristics are disrupted and therefore independent and easily manipulated.

In this way, new parameters of understanding existence are going to take place in the city. The schizophrenic or the sick subject is going to suffer the transition from this Old World and will apply the rules described above to enter into the New World of the dead body. The New World overcomes the Old one, because it becomes deconstructed.

Deconstruction as a movement, according to Eagleton, started in the late sixties. However, Edwin Spindrift's story reflects the principles stated in Derrida's *De la Gramatología* that can be found in the setting of a New World. Here, the parameters of reality are not seen as stable, but full of fractures. By carrying out the *differance*, everything known as a reality is put in disarray. Language specially, which characterizes humans as communicational beings, spreads out from the representational systems to be part of another power, the personal one.

Institutions were pivotal for the stability that structuralism boasted of. Its foundations allow for breaking these rules under a new movement that promotes a shift in power establishment. The power, in this sense, moves to the dominance of the language per se, being in permanent aperture under the subject's articulation. It is language that as any other sign is naturally capable of inner identification: "Todo viviente es capaz de auto-afección. Y sólo un ser capaz de simbolizar, es decir de auto-afectarse, puede dejarse afectar por el otro en general"(Derridá 206). By identifying actually the metonymies and the own inner meaning of symbols, the movements portrayed in the narrative can be understood not under hegemonic rules but under new perspectives that are justified by the subject experience. We can be capable of finding our own signifiers and mental images that Saussure's rules told us were common and apprehended, because "la dispersión, como ley del espaciamento, es por tanto a la vez la pura naturaleza, el principio de vida y el principio de muerte de la sociedad"(Derridá 345).

The existence of a New World is justified by the management of the sign in the narrative. For that purpose, we must consider the ideology behind deconstruction, post structuralism<sup>5</sup>. Contrary to the conception that the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary, post-structuralism establishes that meaning is an endlessly progression of signifiers, where "one signifier relays me to another, and that to another, earlier meanings are modified by later ones, and although the sentence may come to an end the process of language itself does not"(Eagleton

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<sup>5</sup> Notice that Selden et al. words do not classify post structuralism in a certain date: "At some point in the late 1960s, structuralism gave birth to 'poststructuralism'" (156) which exactly portrays the ambiguity of time and the unsatisfactory seek for a starting point in modern and postmodern starting dates, a discussion that will be done in the analysis. At some point in 1960s, let's say, Burgess made a rack regarding modernism.

111). Therefore, not only language, but all the relations that once were imposed by modern institutions are disrupted, deconstructed because “If meaning, the signified, was a passing product of words or signifiers, always shifting and unstable, part-present and part-absent, how could there be any determinate truth or meaning at all?” (Eagleton 124) Outside the hospital we will find a bewildering surrounding, a body, a city that has to be re examined in order to find out its *raison d'être*: its sickness, lying inside the flesh. Here “images or words are the mere envelope or sign of a deeper one fundamental meaning”(Fuery & Mansfield 115) but at the same time there is “una resistencia al cambio, como si pretendiéramos volver a la aparente ‘seguridad’ que nos daban las relaciones tradicionales”(Díaz 99). De Man belongs to the deconstruction movement, establishing that “language does not communicate single, stable meaning but rather always signified a tangle of interconnected and contradictory senses<sup>6</sup>”(Spike 32). This approach allowed the development of a new world that will have its concrete reality in the city of London, in which Edwin “found it possible (...) to subvert the structures of language”(Eagleton 12). Both characteristics –polysemic and fractal-, however, permit to affirm that there is an endlessly progression of signifiers to which the subject is only capable of finding through the effects of drugs in experience, creating a New World that takes reality as a raw material<sup>7</sup>.

The body analogy endorses the process to which the sign is perceived differently. The validation for it is that alive or dead, dynamic or static, thinking the city as a body is not new. Mongin affirms that “la ciudad es una forma que podemos especificar; de entrada aún una doble dimensión corporal: La de la ciudad vista como cuerpo y la de la ciudad como una trama de trayectorias corporeales infinitas”(45). However, this work deals with a dimension of a body that does not only help to circumscribe the limits and the trajectories, but to understand the solids in the Old World and the liquids<sup>8</sup> in the New World, focused on the crisis of the sign.

The analogy used here is taken from Raphael Mandressi’s *History of the Body* and Bauman’s *Liquid Modernity*. The first author refers to “the work of an anatomist”, who examines a corpse, correlated with the New World, that does not provide the movements, the mixtures, the

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<sup>6</sup> Derridá in *De la Gramatología* says that the tyranny of the language is a pathology, an inversion of the natural relations; language becomes a monstruosity. This is very similar to Huxley’s approach, in which he says that the subject is a victim and also a beneficiary of language.

<sup>7</sup> For Mongin, London “yuxtapone, recorta, separa” (Mongin 49) and therefore seems ideal to experience the aperture of language, the fissure of tradition, and the scenario to experiment the infiniteness of language.

<sup>8</sup> This term is not only taken from Bauman in *Liquid Modernity*, but also from Díaz in *Posmodernidad*, who explains that the emergence of bodies is thanks to the social practices and discourses “en tanto son considerados sólidos”(Díaz 106). The modern subject has colors, volume, concrete practices, corporeal surface, gestures, etc. It is a real subject.

flux of the alive, in this case, of the machine analogy that I will correlate with the Old World: “El cadáver no proporciona sino líquidos, que además son huidizos, difícilmente aprehensibles, perdidos. Científicamente mudos, pero más molestos. Ensucian los sólidos y emborronan su examen”(Mandressi 321). The corpse is brought from its marginality as a putrefied body to serve as an incarnation of the realities that were once brilliantly hidden by the flesh<sup>9</sup>. The living machine, meanwhile, is circumscribed along the limits and prohibitions in which it is docile and part of a hegemonic society. To make visible the invisible and indemonstrable, and therefore to penetrate the causes of sickness is possible because of the doctor can dissect this corpse, understood as an anti hegemonic dispositive.

The aesthetic usefulness of the corpse serves to demonstrate how this New World is a characterization of the post-war characters Edwin knows in conjunction with the non-relations, the static and fixed meaning: they are movable, displaced, interchanged within each other because the sign can be deconstructed into his own experience, beyond an institutionalized conjecture. From docile to emancipated, Edwin, the doctor who is sick, penetrates the flesh or the structural boundaries of the city to actually observe into them. Edwin’s progression will allow dissecting London, to rupture the sign theorization that was hidden by the living body, and to provide a reading that will be correlated with an anatomist view of the city, where the “lectura de un texto se convierte en la lectura de un cuerpo”(Mandressi 313).

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9 Besides, he refers to this process as a “modern” one that allows intervening in the inner processes that were once known only in theory. However, it is worth mentioning how the technology allows also for the autopsy without dissection, which is the invention of x ray, stethoscope, thermometer, etc. They make possible to observe the inner causes of sickness without a corpse but a body.

## Analysis

Old World: The characterization of the living machine

*If the doors of perception were cleansed,  
Everything will appear to man as it is, infinite.  
William Blake.*

George Simmel determines that a society can be understood as a complicated organization similar to machinery (227), which according to Mandressi, was the privileged metaphor of the alive (321). The Old World can be understood under this metaphor including the characterization of solids social practices to which Diaz refers to (106). They get on thanks to a dynamic setting that involves gear-like organization.

Reference to Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment* has already been done, where the hospital serves as a setting for continual observation, imposition and regulation. "But when he (Edwin) was particularly docile and plastic he was elevated to a pet's level and patted" (Burgess 47). Under these circumstances, the hospital becomes a closed-wall room in which restrictions are set and valid for that space solely. The narrator illustrates how this imprisonment is carried out: "A patient imprisoned in cages and snaked of rubber tubing" (2). The use of the word *snaked* attributively, can be related to the symbolism behind snakes, which is the treachery nature of an animal that crawls and tempts us toward sin, or forbidden acts. Thus, it is an artificial reality in which we find canonical traditions that seem to help, but that rather diminishes the thinking of the subject to the minimum. The fact that as a patient he is confiscated from an outside, on the other hand, makes us come back to Foucault's terminology to assert that Edwin is, without precedents, a docile body that is fulfilled with artificial relations and interactions that are imposed within and across him. Sheila, his wife, accounts for:

While you're in here I get a feeling that it isn't really you at all. And it isn't, is it? It's you sick. It's you sort of suspended-you know what I mean, suspended animation. And I hate this lack of privacy and this clock-watching and the artificiality of it all. So would you mind very much if I didn't come in every night? (Burgess 46)

Sheila refers to his state as *suspended* or *suspended animation*, along with *clock-watching* and *artificiality*. The recognition of his state as a subject out of a motion i.e., docile, is the same state that puts him in the level of a pet in the ward. This stillness is contrasted with the clock-watching motion of the ward, encapsulating both lack of privacy and continual remembering that

it is him, but *sick*. Edwin, on the other hand, rejects the meaning of being *sick* by presenting himself as a doctor, nor even as a patient:

‘Sorry, Sir.’ Said the porter, ‘I’m new on here. What name would it be, sir?’  
‘Dr Edwin Spindrift’ said Dr. Edwin Spindrift.  
‘Thank you, sir. Sorry, sir. I’ll just open up for you, sir. (Burgess 261)

The dynamic to which Sheila points out is the whole hospital institution, understood as a reflection of the city machine that somehow has collapsed after the Second World War. In that specific context we can acknowledge the meaning “shelter for the needy”, from Old French *hospital*, *ospital* “hostel”, modern French *hôpital*, from Latin *hospitale*, “guest-house, inn” (“hospital”). Edwin probably refers to this meaning when he is melancholic about the ward, even though he does not feel comfortable in there. “He had a perverse longing for the sick warmth he has just left” (20) but at the same time he recognizes that “death, anyway, was in the hospital: you could hear it snoring in the ward. Life was outside”(75). At this point, Foucault’s description of the ward can serve to understand its rules where, for example, “se reglamenta la ida y la venida, (se) obliga a permanecer en sus salas; cada lecho con su nombre, cada individuo en un registro; aislamiento, separación por riesgo de contagio”(148). Patients are prevented from contagious diseases and from the outside that is promoted as chaotic because inside there is regulation.

The subject faces two different ways of acknowledging that reality: first, rejection towards this place because its hegemonic atmosphere is pregnant with individualization: “(se) tiende a individualizar los cuerpos, las enfermedades, los síntomas, las vidas y las muertes”(Foucault 148), and secondly, the fact that Edwin is actually a refugee from the outside he is, somehow, protected. The institutions, in this sense, are needed in order to provide the subject a feel of guaranty, which is a well-recognized necessity throughout the narration. Strangeness is to be outside, but comfortableness is found inside: “He groped in his inner pocket and felt reassured by the solid walls of his passport” (Burgess 81). The medical terms that are found in a closed space follow a hierarchy order that begins with the patient and ends with a medical authority. Its organization represents the modern society: On the one hand there is a register for subjects, obligation towards regularization of schedules and isolation from each other in order to assure complete and individual subjugation. As individuals, they become parts of crowds because of their sameness allowing for the uniformity of the masses. Outside, however, as no walls are found, the medical terms drop value and intensify the subject will: neither

organization nor regularization by limited space is found. Edwin is, in fact, sent to the hospital in Burma by Dr. Wall. The wall is the limit and barrier, the dot and rampart that separate a tradition and a new out coming understanding, unmasked by Edwin's way out. Furthermore, the ward is made up of four walls. The city has none, therefore it allows for the openness of what was closed.

The ambivalence between the apparent security under a shelter and the chaos that is presented outside is, without precedents, valuable. Following Diaz, there is a destruction of traditional and conventional features but at the same time resistance towards eventual changes because they destabilize the comfortableness tradition provides (99). She says that this resistance exists as if subjects seek the security institutions promote. It is, then, convenient to have an implicit subjugation will, to yield just as Edwin claims: "It was, in a way, refreshing to be prescribed complete passivity, to be ordered to become a mere thing. It was satisfying, too, to know that one was contributing to the uniformity of the ward"(11). Notice that the phrases including the verbs 'prescribe' and 'order' are in passive voice; no agent is needed, it is implicit. It is an apparent contradiction that is socially productive, just as Bauman asserts, "it is just the duty and the necessity to cope with contradictions that are being individualized"(34). Actually it could be more comfortably "If only the head could be, perhaps painlessly, temporarily severed and then, with some epoxy resin or other, fitted back"(Burgess 58). Bauman also relates this necessity with the apparent contradiction between dependence and liberation: "there is no other way to pursue the liberation but to 'submit to society' and to follow its norms"(20).

Urban characters are brought to Edwin from the outside. One of the most remarkable is Charlie, who is introduced by Sheila, Edwin's wife. Apparently, she replaces the normal interaction between citizens towards an artificial way of meeting them. The city's artificiality is underpinned by Mongin who says that the city exists when there are links among individuals, created in a determined place in such a way that they become citizens (64). Short-termed, but established by Sheila, Edwin's urban relations are fake yet imposed.

Charlie, who does window-cleaning because it "does not affect the brain" (Burgess 8), represents the state of solids that Edwin encounters with. According to Diaz, a solid entity is "un sujeto que contiene volumen, superficie corporal, textura, colores, aire respirado y exhalado, miradas con aura de presencia, gestos, guiños; en fin, es un sujeto real"(106). He acknowledges the easiness to which art like literature is reduced to trivialities; reduced to magazines and newspapers. He brings Edwin gaudy magazines, because "your wife here tells me you're a

reading man, same as I am myself, and nothing passes the time better when you're ill than a good read" (8) thus literature is understood as a matter of spending time rather than learning or appreciating art, activities that, actually, would suit for a scholar as Edwin.

Charlie sheds a light on the main issues of modernity by warning "Your brain's your own propriety and you do not want them fiddling about with it. Catch them trying to see inside my brain(...)Very delicate piece of machinery the brain is, not unlike a watch or a clock" (9) He has, indeed, a corporeal surface and a texture so that he brain is a piece of machinery. Burgess is probably thinking in *A Clockwork Orange*, where the protagonist is treated as a machine of good moral and principles in the whole narrative. The difference this time is that characters will have the possibility to abandon the place where words are "wild and whirling"(Burgess 155) the alliteration of the sound voiced labiovelar approximant /w/ emphasizes the confusion they may provoke. Charlie's irruption might be considered as a conscious restriction to reduce his own existence to an examination of his brain, that working as a machine, can be actually used as a synecdoche of the functionality of the entire body. This displacement allows for the representation of the city as a changeable and modifiable artefact portrayed through its gear-like organisation. London is whirling as it promotes the change of state from alive to death, where the movement changes of direction when it becomes a corpse. While everything is understood as mechanical in the living machine, then in the dead body there is another kind of dynamics that allows for some pieces to adjust and others to maintain its motion, although it does not guarantee the whole entire body movement. This approximation is not atomistic as where every organ functions independently, but as a whole. Entire parts act as a whole but they do not ensure the functionality of the entire body, which is, in fact, the role of the brain understood as the main gear of the machinery.

The protagonist interacts with machines more than humans; he actually feels more comfortable in that way. He has breakfast "without human intermediacy" (85), for example. The machine is described as out of human interaction, just as the ward state has been portrayed. A machine has a purpose, that of avoiding human recklessness.

Human immediacy is understood as the knowledge humans gain when complementing the brain function. However, its function is avoided. Huxley adds that "the function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of useless and irrelevant knowledge" (21) giving the brain a function of narrowing down, of actually



reducing the awareness to the minimum in terms of intellectual information, giving more space to empirical knowledge. Both perspectives are united by the analogy that is portrayed in the entire hospital relations: if the brain works as a machine, then the entire body dynamics is understood as governed by a mechanism that implies the existence of a particular kind of organisation. It is visible especially when the visitors leave the ward and Edwin observes how there is an established order inside:

With the departure of the visitors a sight of quiet satisfaction seemed to be exhaled through the ward: the bell had rung what where, after all, aliens. They were, with their bright voices and natty clothes, the frivolous world. Not everyone could go back to the serious business of disease, disease being ultimately the true human state. (Burgess 11)

Inside implies the real state, insanity. Outside implies healthy, “for the healthy world outside,” (11) a world of aliens are dominated by bells and clocks. Unaware of their reality, they are outside or ignore their true state. Those who are inside are truly honest and recognize themselves as sick people. The reference to disease being the ultimately true human state is a case of irony, where this difference between sanity/insanity is hyperbolized as the true human state. Anne Marie Moulin in *El cuerpo frente a la medicina* says that it is the disease, in fact, what characterizes the alive (31). As disease is “the true human state” (Burgess 11) following Moulin, health is only a utopia for the body.

The reference to alienation is a synecdoche for modernity. Alienation, as understood when the narrator mentions “aliens”, is part of the human impotence towards their state of producers and workers in modernity, to which it cannot be avoided to relate to Baudelaire’s *The Parisian Prowler*. In “To each his chimera”, the flâneur describes the way in which crowds are composed of people who are alienated from themselves and just follow their way: Every man is carrying a chimera, as if they are not carrying nothing, because “apparently, they were all headed somewhere, as they were all driven by an irresistible need to walk”(12). The chimera serves as an illusion, a weight that the modern man carries that it has been increasingly ignored. The state of alienation implies to ignore an imprisonment that is not always visible but that should be consciously understood as an abnormal human state.

Huxley refers to this world by also recalling the most obscure passages of this dynamic: “the world of selves, of time, of moral judgments and utilitarian considerations, the world (and it was this aspect of human life which I wished, above all else, to forget) of self-assertion, of

cocksureness, of overvalued words and idolatrously worshiped notions”(10). The New World, following Huxley’s terminology, will leave behind self-assertion, cocksureness and overvalued words. The idolatrously worshiped notions are conventions that reflect the power of hegemony, i.e., the weight walkers are carrying: well-known structures, worshiped by several language movements as structuralism. Explicitly, Edwin categorizes workers under utilitarian considerations of the nurses that “were giggling about something which belonged to their world without uniform, world of frocks and dances”(19) making an inference about their daily routine. According to Charlie’s present, including the aspects discussed in the previous passage, these Old World people take advantage of the only piece of art available for them: magazines, frustrated reproduction of literature that help to delimitate their world of frocks and dances.

In another passage, Edwin is proposing a rupture of the traditional and medical procedures in which he is considered only as a patient, by only receiving orders about how to behave. Edwin is told “We want you muzzy and half-dead” and he reacts “something used that’s all I am, something used and then discarded” (Borges 120) Thus Edwin is treated as a mechanical device with defects, as a mere patient, from Latin *patientem*, meaning “suffering under medical treatment” (“patient”).

Dr. Railton asks Edwin the difference between ‘gay’ and ‘melancholy’. Edwin’s answer is pretty obvious: “There are various kinds of difference (...)One is monosyllabic, the other tetrasyllabic. One is of French, the other of Greek, derivation. Both can be used as qualifiers, but one can also be used as a noun”(16) The states of gay and melancholy under the relations of a city are fixed towards an understanding of present and past, correspondingly. There is no simple antonym relation, but a fluent one, intermediated by the subject’s experience, where both serve to be qualifiers, independently of their arbitrary conditions.

Edwin has already complained about the sham pleasures of the city, yet he knows the suitable answers include the contrast between gay and melancholy as opposites. His current interpretation is delivered thanks to Edwin’s education as a linguist, deconstructing the answer that he knows Dr. Railton is waiting for. In the narration, we are witnesses of this process in which he seeks the infinite progression of meaning, which is not limited neither fixed. Edwin anticipates his state in the New World, where words are not classified in just contradictions, for example between gay and melancholy, but as a brunch of realities that are juxtaposed together but never absolutely. Edwin becomes a deconstructor that “merely uncovers the hidden power

and results of the disruptive logic inherent in language” (Spikes 23): “Out in the street, enjoying a free smoke, he hailed (Icelandic *heil*: health; hence a greeting; hence a call) a taxi.”(170) In the city, while shambling, he demonstrates how the inherence of language is trespassed to the corporeal city because as well as language, it receives the heir of the tradition. He uses an Icelandic word; he does not only show the multiplicity of voices that English as a language has tried to ignore, but also promotes combination of institutions so stable as the language, leaving behind apparent contradictions and simple definitions fixed by convention. The city is apparently contradictory, yet full of machinery-like gears that somehow complement each other. For example, gay and melancholy can be set as antonymous, but far more differences and similarities can be seen, just as Edwin said.

There is, besides, an attempt to clarify this specificity around the issue of words that is stated in Edwin’s former context: He was in Burma describing the nature of foreign words: “‘It’s really a question of assimilating the unknown to the known, you see, refusing to admit that a foreign word is really foreign’”(6). There is, then, a tradition approach towards hierarchy and classification of words in Edwin’s immediate context. “‘It isn’t pain that’s the real trouble ever, you know. It’s the feeling of disintegration, however subjective’” (Burgess 38). As a thing, he is disintegrated into parts just as the city. His experience highlights the inner feelings that are lurking in the body and in the mind “‘Again, it was not a matter of pain: it was a matter of sick realization of what perverse experiences lurk waiting in the body.’” (Burgess 50) The perverse past and experiences of the city, especially the Second World War, have been a past made up of what the hospital represents, i.e., not only its hegemonic representation but its participation as a core institution where war, paradoxically, could not burst in. London is the overcoming of the hospital state, but it has the scars from it.

London is a constant fluid in which there is “‘un movimiento permanente entre dos limites, un ida y vuelta incesante’” (Mongin 54); its parts were at once dynamic and they were, besides, classified according to its form. Historically, for example, London was the centre of economics; naturally it became the capital city of England thanks to its proximity with seaports and international trading. In artistic terms, one of the first important literary approximation of London can be traced to William Blake, where his poem *London* reflected the plurality of voices that harks back even to that time. London functioned as the main gear to actually move England towards its economic peak, though its declining after Second World War is also recognized: “‘The

square was a mess of cars, parked and crawling” (Burgess 170) the centre is not the prototypical gear but London Eye performs that work. The centrality of London as a symbol, in this sense, overcomes the historical referent in which it is placed, for example, in this novel. Language, which has been put in doubt in the narrative, is pregnant with symbolisms that London cannot avoid; history will never be capable of encapsulating and taking responsibility for the infinite progression of signifiers attributed to London and the symbolism of London Eye. This city is continuously re-defined by narratives, progressively moving into the significance of subject experiences; it is neither fixed nor absolute, but always decontextualized. Due to this characteristic we find its richness: there is fluent movement of crowds that never follow the same trajectory and are never composed of the same subjects. That is why, as Mongin asserts, it is always in permanent movement between two motions, the there and back of London Eye translation.

Huxley claims that “to formulate and express the contents of this reduced awareness, man has invented and endlessly elaborated those symbol systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages”(22), which is in fact what most disturbs Edwin’s existence: The implicit philosophies, ideologies or hegemonies that are established in the processes of the X-Ray department come to be internalized by Edwin. He claims “I have a feeling that I’ll survive somehow without anybody mucking about inside my head”(Burgess 63). As Barthes explains, when choosing a dominant relation, in this case of words glued to certain things, there is an implication of an ideology (212). The reference to “anybody mucking about inside my head” tells us that impersonalised history has given the sign its “historicity” but also subject’s experiences determine the significance of words. For example, Edwin as a sign has been converted into a signifier of the signified that some time ago has helped to form a sign: Sheila.<sup>10</sup> In that context we observe how subjects are normalized: “the bell had rung what where, after all, aliens. They were, with their bright voices and natty clothes, the frivolous world” (Burgess 11) which demonstrates the regularization of behaviour when receiving visits (probably making allusion to behaviourism<sup>11</sup>) and the manipulation of people as meeting the sick ones artificially.

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<sup>10</sup> One of the claims of the post-structuralism thought is that signifiers are at the same time signs that can be divided into signified and signifiers. This is what happens with Edwin, who at the same time performs the role of a signifier in his relation with Sheila.

<sup>11</sup> There is an explicit reference to the famous Pavlov’s experiment with a dog. From the behaviourist psychology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, he formulated that all human behaviour is learned through stimulus-response sequence.

Those characters above are the solids that are going to liquidate in the following section. The metaphor of the machine allows for the characterization of citizens like aliens, overwhelmed by a tradition that contributes towards uniformity characterized by mass behaviour. They count with the security provided by institutional walls that at the same time carry out regularization in there and back, classifying them according the city organisation, as well as what happens with words and language. As such, London eye functions as the core gear that although static promotes the motion of the city where the brain functions as a synecdoche of the whole functionality of the living machine body. How the citizens dissociate from this modern surrounding, is the topic of the next section.

## New World: The characterization of London as a corpse

By wrecking the body or in concrete words, by separating signifiers from signifieds, the corpse “revela formas, colores, texturas, consistencias, temperaturas” says Mandressi, who actually emphasized that the aim in doing it is to “abolir la distancia que separa al sabio de la naturaleza<sup>12</sup>”(311). By dissecting our semantic memories, it is possible to make visible what was invisible, to go deeper into the flesh, turning it out to be a measurable and comparable body. Edwin participates in a “desequilibrio creciente entre los flujos y los lugares” (Mongin 141) because by viewing what the alive body was composed of, it is possible to deconstruct and to understand why the machine did not work properly; to find the real essence not only of language, but of the sickness. By knowing, therefore, what the city has beyond the flesh that covers it, we know the cause of its sickness that is translated into knowledge of the urban subjects themselves.

What was most invisible while Edwin was in the hospital was himself as a doctor, i.e., what is the real meaning of being one and dedicate his life to linguistics. Edwin takes advantage of the most common meaning of doctor as a medical one. “Structuralism is 'anti-humanist', which means not that its devotees rob children of their sweets but that they reject the myth that meaning begins and ends in the individual's 'experience'” (Eagleton 98). Edwin puts in practice his individual experience by laughing at this structuralist state of the word doctor. Taking advantage of the convention, a characteristic of the sign, the signifier is someone who practices medicine and should be allowed to go in and out from a hospital. Consequently, Edwin denies on purpose the meaning of doctor that his individual experience contains, a doctor in linguistics, and fulfils the meaning with the conventional signifier. Deconstruction allows us to consider the meaning of this word from an etymological perspective, in which we found the meaning “alter, disguise, falsify” from 1774 (“doctor”). For the purpose of the narration, this meaning fits into the role Edwin occupies by cheating the porter and the authorities in the ward by running away to discover the dead London.

Edwin is a doctor that actually acts as a thief, and deceives those who surround him. Dressed up, with a wig and slippers, he cheats in a restaurant and eats for free. He takes them off, limps out and takes his time. “Then he limped to the door, looked right and left tremulous

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<sup>12</sup> In the section *Reading and Dissecting* of his essay “Disecciones y anatomía”, Mandressi asserts that the exploration of a cadaver is understood by the subject as a reading, by understanding the surface and then enquiring into its more deep meanings.

indecision, and shambled slowly round the corner. Easy, too easy” (Burgess 189). He is capable of robbing a book on heraldry from a public library and selling it to “the shadiest-looking shop”(191) in a street of second-hand books. The following litany he creates for himself is notable:

Ineffectual fornicator,  
Purge of poor publicans,  
Kettle-mob catamite,  
Cheater of Chasper,  
Furniture-fracturer,  
Light-hearted liar,  
Counterfeit-crashman,  
Free meal filcher,  
Prey on us. (188)

The conventional meanings for fornicator, cheater, liar, crashman and filcher have all the same signified: someone who is false. This meaning is trespassed, moved or displaced also to the state of this city. There is an *espaciamiento* of those adjectives, where the realization of him having other meanings is also applicable to the falseness of the city. Its organisation is superficial and institutionalized; it is neither organic nor fluid. He empathises with it because he has fallen in the same category as well: “Edwin, so much himself a sham, felt a sort of kinship with the sham pleasures of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street as they travelled painfully towards Soho.”(83)

Much can be said about this new state of perception. Edwin, at this point, will not only dissent about his state, but his own body will reflect the visionary state in which he is. He is told: “Tomorrow we want you to be nice and muzzy, half-dead, if you see what I mean.” But also, he is obliged to sluice some pills down in such a way that “he was soon asleep” (73). Seemingly, for that specific action, Edwin does not walk, prowl or wander. He shambles, “he shambled despondently along a grey street, under a grey sky” (96). As a verb, the word means “to walk or move along in an awkward or unsteady way”(“shamble”), as a noun, it is “a place where animals are brought to be slaughtered”. Interestingly enough, by noticing the way he moves, he is portraying the corporeal space where death may take place: “While the rest was following your corpse upstairs”(135).

His state is characterized by an intense sensitivity as a classifier of words. Edwin is determined in terms of purpose and immediate space. Induced, that is, in another state of

perception characterized by the estrangement of the Old World, he recognizes his misunderstandings:

Full aware of where he was, what he was there for. He had no idea of the time, but it was full night, with brilliant plenilunar light washing London (...)that nobody should cut his head open, that there should be no excision of any tumour, that he should live –however briefly- and die –however soon- as he was, whether sick or well. (Burgess 75)

Fully aware he is surrounded by liquids, time does not count anymore for Edwin. This difference is noticeable when we are told his state is not abnormal: “He salivated with a profound hanger for, at least, the appearance of normality” (138). The determination seems encouraged by the brilliant plenilunar light washing London. On the stretcher, the body is at Edwin immediate comprehension. He is going to live or die. No matter the drug, he is aware of his space and why he is here. London will live, or die, whether sick or well. Edwin’s state is profoundly different from the distractions he had in the hospital, there is *something* about *something* that intrigues him:

Edwin saw the word tumble back to Anglo-Saxon and beyond, and its cognate Teutonic forms (...) Fascinating. But there was something about the word that should be even more fascinating, to the man if not to the philologist: its real significance when used in such a locution as ‘Edwin loves Sheila’. And Edwin realised that he didn’t find it fascinating. Let him loose in the real world, where words are glued to things, and see what he did: stole, swore, lied, committed acts of violence on things and people. (152)

Words move in his head; he can see all the linguistic hierarchies he has learnt. However, Edwin is capable of separating the man from the philologist. The man that feels “love” and the philologist that classifies the word “love”, among many others. Huxley portrays this new state of comprehension of words thanks to this new state of perception: “the mind was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning.”(19) Edwin notices words are artificially glued to things, as cognates and hierarchy of trees depending on the mother tongue, all of them belonging to the “real world” where no real significance is attached to them. Love does not mean a feeling when he considers the meaning in a sentence that includes the word *Sheila*; meaning mutates especially if he compares the traditional meaning of love with what he feels for his wife. The same, in fact, is observable in his own meaning as a subject: “The face, he thought, eyes, mouth. And then he paused, shocked beyond the measure at his rapid



degeneration. What on earth had got into him? (...) Did he really know the meaning of any one word? Love, for instance” (Burgess 152). The change of paradigm is now what Huxley describes as the state of self-awareness, where in looking for meaning he realises there is a vacant, a void gap which must be fulfilled with his own experience, where

to be enlightened is to be aware, always, of total reality in its immanent otherness-  
to be aware of it and yet to remain in a condition to survive as an animal, to think  
and feel as a human being, to resort whenever expedient to systematic reasoning.  
(63)

Habermas also contributes to this awareness by saying that the exclusion of spatio-temporal structures of everyday life is a characteristic of modernity along with the objectification of a self-experiencing that decentres subjectivity (4). Those characteristics are valid for Edwin’s hospital state so that subjectivity and spatio-temporal realization takes place in the city.

The self-realization and space-realization starts with Edwin’s own name. At this stage, he is capable of separating the signifiers *Spindrifft* from signifieds by recognizing the triviality under the opaque surface meaning of words or, as the narrator calls it, “a mere chunk of morphology”(76). In this New World, he sees this propaganda on television:

‘Spindrifft, Spindrifft  
Is so cheap yet so posh  
For a snowier wash  
Get Spindrifft, get Spindrifft Today’ (154)

“What are you, Spindrifft, a powder or a machine?”(155) Is he really a powder to clean or a machine to be used as a thing? His own signifier, as a Doctor in Linguistics, the most appropriate person to talk about words, has been reduced not only to a thing, but to a degeneration of his own self. In the context of the hospital, his name meant a thing at the level of a patient, but now he is related to a completely different meaning *spindrifft* (“spindrifft”) c.1600, which following the etymological dictionary, comes from verb *spene*, alteration of *spoon* "to sail before the wind" (1570s, of uncertain origin) + *drift*. Edwin, as a subject, not only swings as a body between two realities, but between what is the real signifier of his own existence. Hence, as it is, Spindrifft can also be understood by a variety scope of signifiers, portraying what I have called, following Kristeva, the infiniteness of the sign. In this respect I must mention Charles Baudelaire poem 126 *The Voyage* in “Flowers of Evil”. There is a reference to the journey as a motif of discovering, which is related to the discoveries Edwin is capable of doing with his own self and the others.

The meaning of Spindrift as “to sail before the wind” can be understood under the parameters of Baudelaire’s poem, first and last stanza just for the aim of exemplification. As it is, he sails and starts his journey from the commodity of the ward to discover the new and the myriad of signs as follows:

One morning we set sail, with brains on fire,  
And hearts swelled up with rancorous emotion,  
Balancing, to the rhythm of its lyre,  
Our infinite upon the finite ocean.  
(...)  
Pour us your poison to revive our soul!  
It cheers the burning quest that we pursue,  
Careless if Hell or Heaven be our goal,  
Beyond the known world to seek out the New! (293)

Here the goal of the journey is a new, unknown world, produced by the sailing that has been encouraged by “brains on fire”, an aspect that is also taken by Huxley when describing his new kind of perception. The ocean is infinite, but the view from the shore seems finite. The view of the city happens to fit in the same category; it seems finite if we consider the hospital and the world of frocks. It is an endless progression of signifiers; however, it is now polysemic as the one for Spindrift and subject-dependent as the meaning of doctor. The corpse, in this sense, is presented just as Mandressi explains when he refers that science has developed new ways to uncover the flesh a journey that started with X ray. The journey is concrete by the sea image, and sensitive to the subject’s immersion. The city is frightening not only because it is new, but because it does not provide us the warmth we find in the four-wall ward; it is concrete and sensitive to the subject’s experience. The fact it is closed it assures us its vigilance; the fact the city is open equalities it with the ocean Edwin must navigate.

The poison sailors receive is the sleeping drugs that Edwin has taken. Due to its effect, he will immerse himself into the unknown, towards heaven or hell. The insecurity of his infinite existence is differentiated with a supposed finite ocean, translated into the image of the city. As the sea, it changes and moves; in a contemporary society the citizens must accommodate to the movement of the waves: To the movement of the liquids that prevail in the urban landscape.

This travel towards the unknown is determined by the new state of perception, as can be appreciated in the following passage:

He had never been sufficiently interested in words, that was the trouble. And then all that business about resenting being treated as a thing. That was very much the pot calling the kettle black-arse, wasn't it? He'd treated words as things, things to be analyzed and classified, and not as part of the warm current of life. (Burgess 153).

As stated before, the warm current of life is a characteristic Edwin appreciated inside the hospital. Dissection, or disruption, is the tool for comprehension, advanced by Edwin's relation with psychotropic substances. Huxley clarifies how language is the first broken institution: "The more I think of it, there is something futile, mediocre, even (I am tempted to say) foppish about speech" (22). As he has never been sufficiently interested in words, the corpse has never been interested in the meaning of being a former living body. "Words, he realized, word, words, words. He had lived too much with words and not what words stood for"(Burgess 152). Edwin "has lived too much with words". This phrase has at least two connotations. On the one hand, he refers to the "living" characteristic of the Old World, in accordance with it having the current warm of life. On the other hand, the allusion to live "with" words puts him and words in the same level where "words are treacherous things" (Burgess 244) as well as him. He and lexemes have been classified under categories, but the problem lies in the implicated restrictions, that were not random but fixed. Reluctance to dispersed interpretations is replaced by the encounter with the spreading and diffusion of signifiers.

In this way, the city portrays this displacement of meaning also in his relation with Sheila. Her name also suffers of displacement. Edwin looks for her in a Bar of painters, encouraged by money she has received on his behalf. He screams her name, but in the scenario the singer goes down and claims: "Bad manners are something I can't stand. I can stand deliberate insults even less (...) You called me a Sheila. I heard you distinctly. You've been getting at me all evening"(Burgess 179). According to the etymological dictionary, Sheila is a standard type of an Irish women's name since 1828; slang for "girlfriend, young woman" dates from 1839 ("Sheila"). Its existence as Edwin's wife is not by chance, since he meant literally "prosperity-friend." So, does he know the meaning of words? "Did he really know the meaning of any one word? Love, for instance" (Burgess 152). Again we encounter the infiniteness of the sign that puts Dr. Spindrift into a paradoxical understanding of his most proximate complementation with Sheila. What is the real meaning of Sheila then?

The recklessness to confront the sign without conventional moorings is also translated into the city organisation. “The street basked in the week-day calm of a residential area, hardly disfigured by men or vehicles”(Burgess 158). Residential areas, as well as those “policeless” areas that are going to be analyzed further in the post mortem stage, are not combined, but differentiated, as well as Edwin and Sheila, albeit they are part of the same sign. The division is understood as divided into arteries and streets that are specialized in certain part:

He walked down the street to a wide thoroughfare of shop-windows and offices. This, he assumed, was one of the main arteries of London, a city he did not know very well. There were sodium street-lights, lights in windows. Occasional cars sped by. (Burgess 81)

Thoroughfares, shop-windows, and offices were the main arteries of London, those that circulate continuously; however, with occasional cars. London, the city when Edwin was born, is strange. He is, precisely, getting to know it in its profundities more than in its arteries. Furthermore, the street is categorized as abnormal, disfigured not only because of vehicles but because the lack of traffic pattern that confuses him: “The traffic confused him and made him sweat – as good as a pullover. Oxford Street, Bond Street, an anonymous right turn, Berkeley Square”(91).

The most striking descriptions about these multiple understandings are observed in the innumerable bars and hotels that are described in the narrative. Bar of painters are specially pointed up, because Sheila is supposed to be found there. If it is a bar of painters we suppose only painters and artist are going to be in there. However, the same woman complaining about being called a Sheila is described as follows: “She was no artist: a tradeswoman merely, driven to the membership of many clubs by the Home Office ban on street paddling” and also “She had flesh – better than paint – to offer to rich Edwin” (Burgess 178). As an establishment, the bar is exemplified as a source of pleasures for those who visit it. The position of this place is, at the same time, chaotic:

“Edwin walked a long way without finding a club for painters. There were restaurants offering everything in the world but roast beef and Yorkshire. There were coffe-bars with gimmicks: Heaven above, Hell below, and the W.C. called Purgatory; Necrophiles’ Nest; The Vampire, with bloody lighting to encarnadine the coffee. There were pubs in plenty.” (171)

Those entertainment places or sham pleasures as Edwin calls them, seem to acquire a personality depending on the target public. Pubs, coming from public, are specialized even for

Necrophiles and Vampires. Bars or pubs are understood not only as clubs for artists but also for special necessities. Sheila is supposed to be Edwin's wife, Bar of Painters are supposed to be crowded with painters. But public necessities, again, gain their place of importance beyond conventionalisms.

Both Sheila and Edwin are complements of the same sign: marriage. It is the institution of stability, of mutual cooperation, as well as the cooperation of language as a system, in which signifier and signifieds form a unique sign. Certainly, once parts of the sign are separated both must seek for a correspondence in order to signify something, which is why "the future would have to be replanned when Sheila had been removed from the future" (Burgess 245). The removal, then, is translated into the separation of the parts of the sign that compound it. We must think about the word *replanned* and *removed*. Not easily, the removal implies to ignore a tradition that has prevailed in the classification of words and cities. If the state of decomposition continues, city limbs probably would have to be forcibly glued and others forcibly burst out.

We know what happens in the Old World, but what is the treatment to subjects in this new one?

The first consequence of the death in a body is that it reduces its temperature to the minimum. The characters in the novel swing from the warm that they feel in the hospital, which represents the warm of a living body, and the cold that characterizes the corpse, felt outside. The narrator, for example, says that Edwin misses the "warm he has just left" (Burgess 20). Furthermore, it is wet and restless, just as a body that has lost signs of life: "Edwin walked out into the cold and wet night"(228). Sheila, the character that hardly visits the warm of the ward also complains about this difference: "now you can dream about in your beloved bilabial fricatives. Brrrr, it's so cold outside"(258). Somehow, she envies Edwin's state while he is protected from outside: "Anyway, England's so cold, isn't it? I envy you, lying in that nice warm bed. And I have to go out and brave the cold, cold autumn night"(257).

Cora, a prostitute Edwin knows in London night, also denounces their condition: "what is it? Christ, it's freezing out here". And the narrator adds "It was certainly cold; cold sat in the streets as a personification of cold"(182). The feeling of frivolity is trespassed reciprocally from the streets to the characters. Cold moves actually in the characters, in the body, acting as another character in the narrative; it is presented in this English autumn as something that nips and sticks, infinitely cold near the death state: "The doggy wind leapt about him and nipped; leaves skirred

along the pavement, the scrape of the ferrules of sticks; melancholy, that tetrasyllable, sat on a plinth in the middle of the square. English autumn, and the whistling tiny soul of the dead round the war memorial”(20). There are scrapes that surround the dead, those dead that have resulted from war, especially.

In Edwin’s condition, there is also an established relation between cold and the current “freedom” that the city represents for the character once he escapes from the ward: “But head and ankles were still cold. This was the great free world. He almost decided to return to hospital”(86). There is, again, a necessity for the warmth. However, the narrator is not referring to Edwin’s head and ankles. It is the body, the city that he has discovered as being the great free world. Both parts of London’s body, put in very extreme different, make us infer that all the body’s sensitiveness is experience the lack of warm. People that normally belong to this ‘freedom’ “were, with their bright voices and natty clothes, the frivolous world”(11). Frivolous, as absence of life and thus cold, is related also to this initial state of the corpse.

The 20th century is characterized by the two most awful events in the history of humanity. They include not only political and economic issues, but interracial relationships were put in doubt as well. The most memorable ones are the struggle between black and white people, and the discrimination against the Jew race that took place in the Second World War. At this stage, the relationship between sign and race is established. Harry and Leo Stone, Jew twins that have a dog called Nigger are found in trouble with Edwin just by calling aloud and screaming its name. We are told that “they had reached a region already well-known in the world’s press as a cockpit of racial dissension, a curiously policeless district with static mobs lounging in doorways and at corners”(204). We are warned this is a place where no law reigns and where we found “a crazy synthesis of rebellion and conformity”(204). By calling “Nigger! Nigger! Nigger! Come here, you silly bastard!”(204) not only the black men around feel identified and try to start a fight, but also the same name Nigger have been displaced into what I have called the infiniteness of the sign. The dog, to which many Jews were compared with, was known called “Nigger” an insult to black people, especially if coming from English men, one of them being Jew. That is why, most likely, Edwin was “amazed at the twisted variations possible on what, in his healthy days, had seemed so simple a theme”(148).

These variations are not casual at this point of the death event. This confusion is because the city is rigid, and has parts that are static and motionless. These places are categorized as

*policeless*; they are chaotic because no institution is there. Thus, there is no circulation of urban groups, no development of urban categories, but one in which imperatives are solely valid for those places. The group tries to explain the mistake, however, but the “niggers” were unconvinced. “I don’t like all them(sic) long words” starts arguing one of them “If I’m not educated whose fault is that? There was no education in them slave ships, man. Who sent us out there in them slave ships?” (207). History has been playing with the fate of these characters. They are in a static and stationary place, intellectual and physically speaking<sup>13</sup> they are paralysed; rigid, a state of exception while movement is normality: “Tubes both meant normality and escape”(Burgess 20).

If we bring James Joyce into discussion, who has been actually recognised as one of Burgess’ most important influences, rigidity and urban features are inevitably linked. In *Dubliners*, citizens of a capital city are characterized by their inability to move on. Dryness and paralysis characterize the state of Dubliners that cannot associate mobility with a state of economic progress as stated in London. The influence is quite clear when the author presents the confrontation between them: “Edwin picked up the telephone, dialled – remembered his James Joyce – EDenville 0000 (...) If you hadn’t existed I wouldn’t exist” (Burgess 132). In the case of Burgess’ novel, however, the paralysis is characterized by the lack of circulation of crowds that liquidate themselves in order to be part of the body putrefaction. Crowds like those of Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Man in the Crowd* and Hemingway’s *The Sun also Rises*, who configure an important hallmark of urban modernity, are no longer the blood running through the vein but the results of “tiny crowds (that) broke up”(Burgess 98) made up of individuals that “travelled painfully towards Soho”(Burgess 84): “All seemed somehow mixed in one moving mush, like pease pudding”(Burgess 25). They are not liquids that flow but those that the body expels as rests when the death event has started to take place.

The above lack of circulation is called the *Post mortem* status of London, where we find, following Mongin, a juxtaposition of organs set in a particular way (47). Every rigid limb, then, is represented by every place in which some people are forbidden to approximate; where there is no course of crowds, those who are supposed to move the city. Actually, London, as a state of

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<sup>13</sup> The rigidity state can be contrasted with the continual intellectual movement of Edwin. Following Foucault’s terminology, we have made reference to his state as a doctor that reflects the disciplined state of mind. In contrast, the group of “niggers” are obstructed intellectually and physically speaking; they complain precisely because their lack of fluidity.

vegetation is also implicit when Edwin speaks with Les: “Don’t you eat many vegetables, then?” asks Edwin, and he answers: “See too many of them, really. Surrounded by them most of the time”(166). The rigidity that the corpse advances is not only associated with Joyce’s legacy, but with the failure of the modern continuity that is observed in London: “Edwin read all the visas with close attention, growing colder and colder. Then he noticed that there was, as an enclave of this terminus, a station of the Underground”(Burgess 86). Temperature is reflecting the advanced state of the corpse, as well as the relation with the station of the underground, but it seems unreachable; it is not seen as a source of movement as modernity has classified it, yet as a stationary place.

Modern artefacts are supposed to provide motion and effectiveness to reach a station. However, these modern devices are in decline at this stage. “Edwin saw: a block of flats built in pre-war days, when flats spelt somehow Teutonic vigour, now, in the dark, cheerless-looking as a great workhouse”(143). He is told “They used to have lifts once, so they tell me” movement has disappeared: “Funny how a lift could just disappear, isn’t it?”(143). Movement also implies sudden appearance and disappearance. The idea is not to generalize, however, the general effects of these modern devices as temporally or definitely stopped. In this respect, we must take into account Bauman words: “Fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change it” thus “descriptions of fluids are all snapshots”(2) so that temporality cannot be assert when describing fluids; they are constantly changing so they do not take part of the physicality that the body includes because of its molten characteristic.

We cannot associate paralysis or rigidity with a state of complete motionless. Some limbs are still working and others are on hold only temporally. For example, hair and nail cells are still reproducing themselves while blood pressure simply stops. When Edwin is in the hospital, we can see this difference. In the New World lifts are broken down, while in the Old one they were the option: “Those stairs had become a mere appendix, an unwanted organ, for lifts were the order in descending to the torture-rooms”(78). Stairs are just an organ for decoration, while lifts are the rule for transportation and therefore symbol of efficient movement.

Following the same argument, hotels maintain their fluidity by always being the organ that only loses its force progressively. “Yesterday, day before, who knows? Here today, gone tomorrow is rule of hotels”(Burgess 89). Hotels maintain their place in the city, because they are not an indispensable organ to maintain London working. “It was a street which specialised in



private hotels, some of them squalid”(87) Specialisation of the city contributes to its progress: As the limbs of a corpse, city’s parts are examined by highlighting its fragility, specialisation and fragmented nature.

When the event of death is advanced, decomposition of the corpse can be observed. There is also change of colour of the limbs where Edwin, for example, “sank neatly to the ground into sheer restful blackness. He came to to (sic) find faces bending over him, not delicate brown Burmese but hard London white”(128). Probably because of the coldness, London is related to whiteness of snow and ice, although solely rain is mentioned. Yet, it is remarkable that white is the colour limbs acquire when blood pressure has stopped.

We are never told the exact smell of London, which is actually one of the most remarkable features of a cadaver. Receptive to new perspectives, becoming a kind of visionary following Huxley terms, Edwin has locked his capacity to smell, perhaps as a direct consequence of the soporific: “The minimum identifiable odour or MIO (...) in about seventy-five percent of patients with tumors in the frontal lobes, or about the area, the MIO was invariably found to be somewhat elevated”(Burgess 150). As readers: “Edwin smelt freedom and London autumn – decay, smoke, cold, motor oil”(79) and more than once he finds himself “lurching from one delightful street-smell to another - merds, garlic, mutton-fat, urine, food-tins, dirty children”(Burgess 111). As Edwin cannot distinguish different smells, we can infer he is not receiving the putrefaction and decomposition that London expels, in fact we are said that those smells are “perpetually cooling in the London air”(88). Perpetually, a key word to understand the state of the body, and increasingly, cold and smells are directly related. For those reasons, we can understand, perhaps, the very beginning of the novel:

‘And what is this smell?’ asked Dr. Railton. He thrust a sort of ink-well under Edwin’s nose.

‘I may be wrong, but I should say peppermint’(...)

‘You’re wrong, I’m afraid’ said Dr. Railton. ‘Lavender’(...) ‘And this?’

‘Probably something citrous’

‘Wrong again. *Terribly* wrong. Cloves’. (Burgess 1)

The wrong perception is guided by Dr. Railton. It has been guided, in other words, by an authority. Sense organs, however, should be guided by the subject’s intuition, sensitivity and above all, experience. Edwin’s lethargic route in London has been determined by the smells of motor oil and autumn night, but it only demonstrates how senses become accurate and sensible

towards a definition of Edwin's most immediate physical space, not only focused on the institution's arbitrariness.

Is it possible, then, to draw a line separating the Old and the New World? Should they be analyzed as a whole or differently? At this point I cannot avoid referring to the issues of modernity and the differences with post modernity. We could easily fit the first period into the Old World and the second into the New World since many characteristics stated in those aesthetics seem to be similar. However, the discussion is far more complex than matching one with another.

The characteristics already mentioned about schizophrenics and modern devices can be related to modernity. The tension between traditional forms and liberty is classified as part of the postmodernism according to Diaz. The separation between signifieds and signifiers belong to the post structuralist movement of the signifier, along with the disruption that Deconstruction allows for. Is there a necessity to classify the aspects of the novel as modern or postmodern? Clearly the limits are blurred and diffused; Burgess tried to portray the subjects' journey towards the infinite, not being absolute because it would be a contradiction to be the one who classifies. In this sense, I may assure that the reading of London can allow the reader to form a personal experience about the text; actually I am just repeating what Edwin lives when translating his experience into meaning. I do not intend to impose an institutional approach as a writer of an examination and believe myself as a doctor. I intend, however, to show the forces that circumscribe the corpse under traditional limits, which could have been uncovered through this reading, by presenting the categories they may belong to, but not to repeat the same vicious circle and classify it. The idea actually is to conceive its meaning. As readers, we must be capable of assuring what Edwin says: "I have a feeling that I'll survive somehow without anybody mucking about inside my head"(63).

I may assert two things. First, language is not a system, as Saussure used to claim, but a convergence of fractal and polysemic signs just as Burgess portrays. I can assure, on the other hand, that through the examination of London Edwin has been capable of knowing himself by rejecting the hegemony. It is difficult, because as it is experience, it is subjective. "It isn't pain that's the real trouble ever, you know. It's the feeling of disintegration, however subjective"(Burgess 38).

## Conclusions

Edwin comments “Life, after all, is a continuum, and language is an aspect of life”(Burgess 116) in one of the passages of the novel. The continuum has revealed an intensified experience of the city as progressively befalling the same sequential stages of a dead body. Decomposition only demonstrates the overcoming of the hospital state where gear-like dynamism characterized a state of full questioning but not in action. There are traces of this former state; scars of former parts of the machine. The sign out there is volatile, not arbitrary; Edwin’s name, his wife and the meaning of a hospital are bereft from the boundaries of institution. The parameters of a new experience, urban and liquid, underpin the openness of sign.

Transparent and modifiable, the protagonist experiences this process in conjunction with the openness of the doors of perception and of the city, where no doors are the limit. At the same time, the existence of different voices that describe the multiform and ambivalent London allow for the experimentation of new literary movements displacing the solids and giving space to liquid urban features. Postmodernism, which had its peak in the 1980’s, plays with the stream of consciousness and re-statement of conventional concepts that became pivotal for those narratives. This novel is one of the first to pursue a new urban understanding, where language has literally an implication and a prominence in conjunction with the protagonist. In this sense, the *flâneur* is no longer a solid character that moves in the streets, as in Baudelaire’s *To Each his Chimera*, and the machines are not only another part of the description of the movement but configure the synecdoche of what once was the entire body function. Liquidization translates into a blurry setting without restrictions regarding marriage, acquaintances, citizens, temperature, colour and smells. Each of them merges with the solid ground, and becomes part of a new infinite organic cycle; they remain and are, with the help of time, more and more liquid.

The decomposition of the corpse is also restricted by the circumstances it is exposed to. Exposure plays an important role in Edwin’s perception just as it plays with London’s development of features: Humidity, surface, size, etc., but especially history, what London was about in the past, determine the fragmented state of a body full of scars in soil and in its components. Experience endorses the process as its direct consequence.

Language is a ramification of the liquid state and the fractality that citizens face. The profundities of the being are reachable because of the comprehension of the most immanent

objective: death. Only by the consciousness of the end, of the infiniteness of the process after life, the way is clearer. This is why readers get the description of the way, not of the death. Again, the dissipation of the way exists because it is the following route after death starts. The body in this respect unleashes on behalf of language: Both form part of the continuum of life, both having its crisis, being organic, mutable and dependent of subject's experiences. Both body and language had to be deconstructed because that was the only way: To disrupt canon just as the revolutions have been made, to aggressively uncover what institutions have hidden. They covered the power with words as arbitrariness, with authorities dictating perceptions, and with cities that represented the hierarchy of historical events.

It is not coincidence, then, that the decomposition takes the form through a deconstructive move, because it is only possible in the dissection of parameters to observe what the corpse was made of. Baudelaire's *The Voyage* allows for the description of the subject immersing in the unknown, in the infinite of the language and probably in the infiniteness of the decomposition process. Baudelaire's metaphor surpasses the chimeras as well as the alienation, because he reveals the end of the voyage but at the same time it is implied its fractal progression, just as Burgess' treatment of Edwin's narrative.

There are two sensibilities, then. One strongly associated with how Burgess' novel is typically accepted and how it emerges with new aesthetic parameters that re-define urban features. Modern and postmodern classifications act in conjunction to produce a novel that is ambivalent between tradition and the unknown, that at the same time re-formulate the ordinary perspective where these two understandings are sequentially and historically lineal. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*(1759) may have, for example, traces of both sensibilities. It was placed in a totally different literary movement and it has contemporary aesthetic features. However, it is in the points of convergence that such works contribute towards a demystification of categories because of the unfolding they provoke. In this sense, Edwin's story takes charge of the contemporary sensibilities that historical precedents have avoided.

The most important implication in this respect is that all Burgess' novels have been understood under solid parameters of comparison, where only *A Clockwork Orange* had a space for modern discussion. Without neglecting the value of that narrative, *The Doctor is Sick* goes beyond pondering on the state of the modern man; it is appealing and attractive as if it were the discovery of a new illness.

The re-establishment and liquidization of concepts demonstrate that the machine metaphor worked only in a period of full categorization of subjects. London as a corpse is a circumscription for other discussion to emerge, where many literary aspects have been avoided because of being diffused and decentred, where authority has no voice to limit their spreading. The philosophy of experience, the penetrable body of hegemony have only shown its most superficial disruptions or symptoms, while the most arduous task is to reach the essence of ideology.

Regarding the Christian perspective, just to portray the reception of these implications, flesh processes lose meaning because the aim is the salvation of the transcendental soul. All form of power, religious or not, would look for the progression, regression or retrogression of London. The absence of an omniscient entity or local authority exacerbates the fragility when acknowledging blockage and impossibility when language is used without fixed parameters. It is an arduous task that belongs to the urban reader. It is suggested, for example, that the state of decomposition is infinite, while the analogy at the same time, encloses the process when the city and the body are treated as equals. Contradictions are, at the same time, part of the separation between signifieds and signifiers.

The organic emergence serves to demonstrate how impressive the characterization in Burgess' novel is. Every detail was a fragmented piece that only acquired a shape in front of the eyes that have experienced death. This is probably one of the most important discoveries in this work: There is movement, but in conjunction with rigidity; fluidity gets blocked because blood motion is restricted to the rigid limb, rigid neighbourhoods that are socially displaced of the progress of the centre. There is no end because it has been overcome, no mechanic organisation but a cycle towards the initiation and self-support, a re-birth, probably, of one branch of the human constructive power. London is another realization of human mechanisms that melted in naturalized terms: The city is organic and vulnerable to nature as well as the subject's experience.

Decomposition is a hybrid, unstable state. It harks back to life but at the same time cannot come back to it. As such, it cannot be absolute or definite. It is opened to discussion because its state is vulnerable to perceptions and analogies; it is endorsed by rupture and incompleteness. That is why the title of the narrative. The one that must guard the illness is the one that is sick. There are no binary oppositions; patient is no longer synonym of modern man. The consciousness of contraries, however, is only possible because of the urban experience. There is

neither singularity nor plurality but aqueous categories that blend with each other. The doctor is sick just Edwin is linguist and vice versa. Undermined, easily penetrable sutures represent the collapse of what has been thought as stable.

The projection of this work is fully recognized by the plot of the novel. London as a corpse only considers the first layers of the limbs and the processes as independent, while others concepts as the treatment of race, genre and art do not receive attention but to complement the arteries' (de)composition. It would be interesting to go deeper into the Bar of Painters and how Edwin approximates a work of art, for example. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze the relation between Burgess' novel and music, because in many chapters the sound descriptions exasperated Edwin's experience, making urban melodies complementing with the accurate sense perception accomplished by the protagonist. 32 chapters, without going any further, may help to re-interpret Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas, but always addressing to the detachment of traditional agreements.

It is only the beginning, and there is much to unfold out there, where no walls block the journey. The sutures are superficially sewed, glued together. The destabilization that implies to reject conventionalisms is a difficult task that only literary speaking it has been accomplished. Postmodernism in this sense has revealed some of the many aspects of the heterogeneous reality that different powers, along history, have protected. The vulnerability that implies to reject them, addresses experience as the key feature to unify what the subject is capable of doing. Edwin, at the end of his lethargic route, is "presented to the freedom of London night, smelling of autumn and oil and distant fires"(261). Freedom of language and freedom of organic devices are out there, waiting to be uncovered deeply. Burgess, at the end of his narration, recognizes he is too prompt to see more results of this anti-hegemonic movement that is only beginning. "There was no hurry, of course. Plenty of time for plenty of piquant adventures" (Burgess 261), plenty of time to observe the disruption of solids that starts to develop in the big city: London.

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