A Clockwork Orange: Ultra-Violence Rewritten

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Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.
– Isaac Asimov

“What’s it going to be then, eh?”

A bit of scandal is good for business, goes the old marketing adage. Or something to that effect, at any rate. Although controversy has not always been a desirable outcome of artistic production and, historically, offenders have often been relegated to much-dreaded obscurity, it cannot be denied that over the years we have seen a number of examples to the contrary.

A case in point: Anthony Burgess’ 1962 *A Clockwork Orange*, which may have never been a bestseller, but Stanley Kubrick’s film adaptation and controversy surrounding its release a decade later certainly popularized the novel among movie-goers and bookstore-browsers alike, ultimately giving rise to a cult following. Both the book and the film owed this intense reception in part to their depiction, or glorification, as some critics alleged, of violence.

This paper attempts to analyse *A Clockwork Orange* through the theoretical framework proposed by André Lefevere of the Manipulation School of translation studies, as well as Lawrence Venuti’s concept of translational violence. Whenever it appears relevant to the subject at hand, we should also venture to examine some distinctive features of the cultural, transmedia phenomenon that is *A Clockwork Orange*, focusing on three of its many incarnations: the original novel by Burgess, its American editions, and Kubrick’s film adaptation. All violent, violating, and violated, in one way or another, as we are about to demonstrate.

**Cruelty Unfolds**

Besides violence, what the three incarnations have in common is basically the same story. Set in a dystopian, near-futuristic society, it follows Alex, the

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1 The opening words of *A Clockwork Orange* the novel (Burgess 1).
narrator and a clever teenage sociopath, as he leads his gang of doped young hoodlums on a violent terror campaign across the neighbourhood, assaulting, battering, raping, joyriding, and burglarizing their merry way into the night. Betrayed by his comrades during a botched home invasion, he is apprehended and sentenced to jail for murder. Doomed to spend a long time in prison, Alex eagerly embraces a fast, yet experimental, method of rehabilitation: he is drugged and strapped to a chair with his eyes fixed on violent scenes before him. After a few weeks of this behaviour-conditioning therapy, he is deemed completely reformed, and released, with the success of the new technique widely reported by the government-supporting media on the wake of re-election. A kind of poetic justice has Alex face his former misdeeds, as he finds himself on the receiving end of brutality this time around, unable to strike back due to the conditioned aversion to all violence; bewildered and bloodied, he ends up nursing his injuries in a home he has previously invaded, his real identity unknown to the owner, an anti-establishment writer, who plots to use Alex as a proof of the government’s tyranny. The protagonist, once again betrayed and detained, is driven to a failed suicide attempt that leaves him bedridden in a hospital, where he is courted by the authorities and restored to his former self, the violent inclinations unbound. Upon release, Alex reverts to his criminal ways, leading yet another gang on a renewed spree of wanton brutality.

All incarnations share also recurrent themes, from popular music, fashion and teenage subculture through socialist society with totalitarian overtones plagued with juvenile delinquency and drug addiction, to authority, morality and free will, manipulation and propaganda, behavioural psychology and scientific progress, etc.

For the most part the story is narrated in an argot created for the novel by Burgess, called Nadsat after the Russian suffix -надцать, or -nadcat', for “-teen”. This slang, or sociolect used by Alex and his crew, bears high Slavic, mainly Russian, influences, blended with some Cockney rhyming slang, schoolboy colloquialisms, and German- and Romany-derived borrowings. Despite its diverse roots and vividness, however, one of the doctors in the novel disparages it as nothing more than “propaganda” and “subliminal penetration” (Burgess, ACO 116), as if Nadsat were a subversive technique employed by some malicious power to covertly indoctrinate youth. The argot, Burgess

2 Burgess was a polyglot, having spent considerable time abroad, and a would-be linguist who also invented a prehistoric language for the film Quest for Fire (1981).
explains, is “another aspect of [his] cowardice” that makes him do the “raping and ripping by proxy” and “depute to imaginary personalities the sins he is too cautious to commit for himself.” By creating the fictional and obscure language, he wanted to “muffle the raw response” of pornography (“ACO Resucked” IX), to screen, as it were, the readers from direct exposure to the intratextual violence. Indeed, the slang, acting as “a kind of mist half-hiding the mayhem” (Burgess, *You’ve Had Your Time* 38), makes it difficult at first to follow the story, leaving the readers to infer the meaning from the context. The more they understand the language, however, the more they turn from mere incredulous spectators into one of Alex’s “droogs”, or brothers, vicariously participating in his exploits, “the old ultra-violence.”

The similarities all but end there, and begins what Lefevere, in one of his major books on translation, refers to as rewriting and the manipulation of literary fame.

**THE BOOK: VIOLENCE CURBED AND PATRONIZED**

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) published *A Clockwork Orange* in the United Kingdom in 1962, a few years after his return to native England following a prolonged stint abroad. To his surprise, he found himself at odds with the post-war British society that was stricken with many problems he had not expected, such as hooligan groups terrorizing the streets. Having been diagnosed with a terminal cerebral tumour a few years earlier, which only later proved to be a mistake, he was determined to provide for his wife, and obsessively engaged in what marked the most prolific time of his literary career (Burgess, *You’ve Had Your Time* 3ff.). Often autobiographical, in *A Clockwork Orange* he not only showed his visceral dislike for authority, but also did use at least two events from his own life: a recent stay in Russia, which inspired him to create Nadsat (ibid. 37-53), as well as the assault of his wife Lynne during the war by some G.I. deserters and the resulting miscarriage when he was at his military post abroad (Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God* 301).

The novel, a knockoff born out of “the popular desire to make the know notorious” and *jeu d'esprit* allegedly written purely for money in just three weeks, was not Burgess’ first writing venture nor his favourite, as the author himself openly admitted (*Flame into Being* 205). It was and continues to be,

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3 Born John Anthony Burgess Wilson, he published under the pen name combining his confirmation name and his late mother’s maiden name.
however, the most famous of his works and the one that has defined his literary career ever since. A cult classic for its followers and a prominent feature on some recommended lists, it has never been a popular success; the initial reviews were mixed and sales so poor, in fact, (Biswell xxiii) that there is no use trying to find it on any bestselling list, even on its native British book market.\(^4\)

The above considerations aside, it is far more interesting to turn our attention elsewhere at this point: across the Atlantic, to the American editions of the novel. The reason for so abrupt a change of scenery is one relatively small, yet major, change in the original text introduced by its very first publisher in the United States, the prestigious W.W. Norton.

Our reader may find it surprising, as a British transatlantic traveller familiar with the original text at the time may have found it, that the edition made available on American bookshelves in 1963 ends with Alex’s relapse into depravity; whereas Burgess offers a different conclusion altogether: one where the protagonist meets his former crewman and decides to exercise his newly reacquired free will to renounce his evil ways and follow the path of the righteous instead.

Apparently, the final chapter was truncated from the first American edition on the publisher’s insistence, and the financially pressed author accepted the decision in order to have the book out at all, as his agent had warned him that “its pornography of violence would be certain to make it unacceptable” (Burgess, “Preface” v). But the publisher’s contention was not with the excessive violence of the novel in general, it seems, but with its epilogue that was deemed not relatable enough, or maybe too unrealistic and sententious, for the American audience. Considering the conclusion too British a “sellout”, the New York-based W.W. Norton rejected its “Pelagian unwillingness to accept that a human being could be a model of unregenerable evil” and its “Kennedyan (…) notion of moral progress”, as the Americans were “tougher than the British and could face up to reality”; the effect was a book more “Nyxonian” in its message with “no shred of optimism in it” (Burgess, “AOC Resucked” viii).

In his autobiographical *You’ve Had Your Time*.… Burgess blames one editor at W.W. Norton in particular: to wit, Eric Swenson (60). The person in question, however, offers an entirely different recollection of the matter at hand:

\(^4\) Partly due to the lack of reliable sales data: the available aggregators, e.g. Nielsen BookScan, list mainly the titles published since 2000s onwards and often do not include such major authors as Shakespeare or Dickens.
What I remember is that he responded to my comments by telling me that I was right, that he had added the twenty-first upbeat chapter because his British publisher wanted a happy ending. My memory also claims that he urged me to publish an American edition without that last chapter, which was, again as I remember it, how he had originally ended the novel. We did just that. (qtd. in Biswell xxii-iii)

Whoever was actually responsible, though, Burgess appears to have fallen victim to the confusion of partially his own making. Not only because he consented to the book’s abridgement, but also because the twentieth chapter of his original typescript ends with a handwritten note that reads: “Should we end there? An optional ‘epilogue’ follows” (qtd. in ibid. xxii). It follows indeed, but only in the British original, as the publisher decided to include this “optional” ending, whereas the American simply did not. But although Burgess’ subsequent claims do not mention the typescript at all, Swenson’s decision not to publish the work in its entirety, as his British counterparts did, is still a dangerous practice that should not be endorsed.

By removing the final chapter from its edition, W.W. Norton effectively dispossessed all the potential readers in the United States of their free will to experience the work in its entirety and decide for themselves whether the conclusion suited their preferences, as if the editors had known better what the readers might have wanted, a patronizing practice if nothing else. This kind of censorship, preventive or self-conscious, seems all the more strange in a book that is so much concerned with freedom, liberty, independence, the intrinsic American values, some would think.

In terms adopted by the Manipulation School of translation studies, the American publisher’s omission of the final chapter certainly constitutes a case of rewriting, as defined by Lefevere:

All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of
literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain… (vii)

Although Lefevere has mainly translation in mind, rewriting is by no means limited to it, and includes any type of adaptation, interpretation, anthologization, canonization, criticism, etc., based on the original artistic creation and manipulated to serve a specific purpose (6-7).\(^5\)

To explain this particular move of the American editor, one more of Lefevere’s key terms needs to be introduced: that of patronage. No artistic performance functions in a vacuum; each is positioned within a polysystem, to borrow Itamar Even-Zohar’s phrase, drawn in turn from the Russian Formalists and their concept of culture as a “system of systems” (cf. Even-Zohar 192-197). Far from being deterministic, this (poly)system is dynamic and “acts as a series of “constraints” (…) on the reader, writer, and rewriter” (Lefevere 12-13); these “constraints” include poetics, ideology, universe of discourse, and, last but not least, patronage, or “something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature” (Lefevere 15).

A force generally external to a literary system, patronage influences its ideology rather than poetics, entrusting the latter to the professionals in the hope that they conform to the imperative doctrine. Apart from this ideological aspect, patronage has also two more components: economic in granting remuneration for services, and status in conferring recognition and prestige; the two are used to award the professionals for their compliance or penalize them for defiance. The (poly)system can be controlled by two types of patronage: differentiated, typical of liberal economies, with the three components dispersed and a relatively slight influence of ideology on commercial success; and undifferentiated, typical of totalitarian regimes, with the three components in exclusive possession of a single power and success highly contingent on abiding doctrinal considerations (Lefevere 16-17).

Coming back to our example, W.W. Norton, acting as a patron in an obviously differentiated system of the American book market, decided to rewrite Burgess’ original so as to omit the final chapter, deemed too defiant, it seems, not because of the violence, but the “unrealistic” plot twist. They did so on ideological grounds, for one, not quite arbitrary but to satisfy some perceived

\(^5\) Manipulation in this context does not necessarily entail devious intents, merely a change implemented in some manner, whether skillfully and cleverly or forcibly and crudely.
preferences of its readers; but still in a condescending fashion. The economic element was also involved, as Burgess had no choice but to abide by the publisher’s wishes if he wanted his book to be brought out in the United States in the first place, and his financial pressures to be over thanks to the received royalties. His state of mind at the time is easily relatable: if the novel had not been published then, it may never have been, so it might have seemed better to yield and profit than resist and remain penniless and relatively unknown to the greater American public. In fact, his potential obstinacy could have cost him an oft-coveted status of literary personage, attainable only by being a published author on the major market, and Burgess was a vain enough man not to dig his heels in too deep on the matter.

Either way, it was not until more than twenty years later that the Americans did justice to the text by including the ending as the author intended all along. The 1986 edition, by the very same W.W. Norton, came not only with the final chapter, but also with an introduction. Subtitled *A Clockwork Orange Resucked*, it gave Burgess a chance to explain the circumstances of the previous confusion, explicitly blaming the unnamed, but easily identifiable, publisher for misleading the readers:

I could, of course, have demurred at this [cutting off the epilogue] and taken my book elsewhere, but it was considered that he was being charitable in accepting the work at all, and that all other New York, or Boston, publishers would kick out the manuscript on its dog-ear. I needed money back in 1961, even the pittance I was being offered as an advance, and if the condition of the book’s acceptance was also its truncation — well, so be it. (vi)

The original division of the novel into three parts of seven chapters each, giving a total of twenty one, argues the author, was not arbitrary, but meant to have a symbolic meaning: for that number is often associated with the age of maturity, when adolescents are supposed to redefine their life in grown-up terms, much as Alex did in the end, renouncing wanton violence, which is:

[A] prerogative of youth, which has much energy but little talent for the constructive. Its dynamism has to find an outlet in smashing telephone kiosks, derailing trains, stealing cars and smashing them and, of course, in the much more satisfactory activity of destroying
human beings. There comes a time, however, when violence is seen as juvenile and boring. It is the repartee of the stupid and ignorant. My young hoodlum comes to the revelation of the need to get something done in life — to marry, to beget children, to keep the orange of the world turning in the rookers of Bog, or hands of God, and perhaps even create something — music, say. (ibid. vii)

The redemptive ending, or simply a possibility of moral change, Burgess goes on to say, is what separates a novel from a fairy tale or allegory, and because the first American edition is wanting in this respect he considers it the latter, a mere fable very much inferior to his original work (ibid. vii–viii).

THE MOVIE: HORROR SHOWN AND ADAPTED
So much has been written about Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) over the years, both in his lifetime and after his death, that any description that comes to mind seems to border on the cliché, if not to cross this invisible verge altogether. A movie-making genius, visionary director, cinema innovator, meticulous screenwriter, authoritative perfectionist and control freak who demanded what went above and beyond the call of duty from himself and his collaborators; all true, and all necessary, but each insufficient to describe the peculiar brand of personage he was and continues to be in popular estimation. If we were to settle on one easy label that describes him best, we would be hard-pressed to choose this: a controversial adapter; if only because it readily suits our purpose here.

When Kubrick released his *A Clockwork Orange* in 1971, he had already made a name for himself in Hollywood as a director and screenwriter of such memorable films as *Lolita* (1962), *Dr Strangelove* (1964), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). All adaptations of various literary texts, which earned a total of seven nominations for the Academy Awards, a distinction he personally was never to receive despite his critical acclaim and illustrious movie career that spanned over more than four decades.6

Few directors of his standing have consistently produced movies that generated so much hue and cry, not least due to the daring topics he tackled and

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6 He went on to direct and write such film classics as *The Shinning* (1980) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), each based on a novel; Kubrick’s untimely death occurred when he was about to release the long-awaited *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), again an adaptation, more than a decade after his previous feature.
their bold, no-holds-barred depiction on the screen which he was famous, or infamous, for. Some of the controversy could be attributable to the fact that Kubrick’s major releases coincided with the time when the long-repressed American movie industry was finally freeing itself from the moral constraints, or patronage in Lefevere’s terms, of the Hays Code and its dos and don’ts; in wake of this relaxation the New Hollywood wave of film-makers arrived, no longer forbidden to show sex and violence in ways never before imagined.

And show them Kubrick did, and explicitly at that, in A Clockwork Orange. The movie became notorious straight away with all kinds of outraged critics who branded it immoral, violent, obscene, excessive, revolting, abominable, depraved and depraving, pornographic even, and every intense and nasty word in between. Since such opinions are a matter of personal judgement and the rather fierce debate seems to be deeply entrenched in inextricable ontological deliberations, it is not of our primary concern to evaluate their merits more than is warranted by the purpose of this paper. Admittedly, though, the film is relatively faithful to the book, with only minor plot modifications to be expected from a movie adaptation, and every bit as violent as the book.

But in translating, or rewriting, the text for the screen, the film-makers unavoidably made what is left to the readers’ imagination immediately conspicuous, almost palpable, lending to the on-screen proceedings a sort of immediacy that the novel is lacking. The highly stylized sex and violence of the movie adaptation are not mediated, filtered, and moderated through the written word, but have the viewers fully exposed to scenes that are vivid, graphic, and explicit in their content; it is image, of course, that makes those taboo topics inevitably more suggestive.

The film’s apparent sexualisation, however, that is inscribing the adaptation with nudity, phallic or vaginal imagery, homoerotic, if not downright homosexual, undertones, all not directly present in the text, is an independent artistic choice of Kubrick’s crew; certainly not inescapable, but arguably integral to their vision of the story. So is their take on violence: people still get rapped and raped, of course, but it is rather mild, considering, with no bones actually shown being broken or heads smashed as a result of the “tolchocking”, i.e.

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7 The Motion Picture Production Code, nicknamed after the chief censor of his age, William H. Hays, refers to the strict moral guidelines adapted by major American studios from the early 1930s to the late 1960s.

8 For a more detailed outline of the controversy see Staiger (40-55).
beating, and sexual penetration, or the euphemistic “in-out”, only implied. Even the infamous scene of the home invasion, when a writer is restrained and kicked repeatedly as he watches his wife being raped, is somewhat mitigated by the fact that it all happens to the cheerful tune of “Singin’ In the Rain”, which makes it unreal, dreamlike, and imbued with grotesque. The film-makers also avoid possible cringes by offsetting the impact of the scene in the book that has Alex drugging and sexually taking advantage of two ten-year-old girls. They all are simply made older, and while Alex is a fifteen-year-old in the novel, in the film he and the girls are roughly the same age, adolescents or young adults who engage in what seems to be consensual intercourse, with the scene filmed playfully in one fast-forward take.

All in all, the film subjects its viewers to a feast of brutality not unlike the scenes Alex is forced to see during his experimental treatment, yet the movie audience is at least given a choice to avert their eyes in disgust, or savour the violence, if they so decide.

This uncompromising nature of the film met with some outrage in Kubrick’s native United States, even though its viewership was limited by its R rating; but the protests soon all but subsided. And all would have been “real horror show”, that is “very nice indeed” in Nadsat, if it had not been for the two arguable decisions made by none other than Kubrick himself.

For in Great Britain, the homeland of Burgess, no less, the controversies surrounding the movie’s release, coupled with the accusations linking it with a series of brutal copy-cat crimes, led the Warner Brothers studio to withdraw it from the theatres across the Isles on Kubrick’s insistence (McDougal 3-4). Because of the protests and death threats he and his wife had received, the American director and screenwriter elected to act as a Lefeverian patron and rewrite his movie into a kind of limited, British-only oblivion, out of sight, out of mind. Not until his death in 1999, after twenty-seven years, were the British finally able to see the film, when it was re-released in the cinemas.

The violence of the movie, however, does not lie just in what it shows, but also in what it does not: for Kubrick follows in the footsteps of the initial American edition in omitting Alex’s ultimate redemption, yet another case of rewriting. As Kubrick admitted in the 1980 interview with Michel Ciment, he

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9 Actually, the film was rated X (adults only) at first, but after Kubrick had replaced some 30 seconds of the explicit scenes with less offensive material, the movie was allowed to be seen even by minors, but under adult supervision.
read the American edition, not the British original, and was not aware of the final chapter until he had almost finished the script:

But [the original ending] is, as far as I am concerned, unconvincing and inconsistent with the style and intent of the book. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the publisher had somehow prevailed upon Burgess to tack on the extra chapter against his better judgment, so the book would end on a more positive note… I certainly never gave any serious consideration to using it. (Ciment 157)

It is a rationale strikingly similar to the one of W.W. Norton that we have previously discussed. Kubrick’s decision was no less patronizing to the audience; apparently, he knew better than Burgess himself what “the style and intent of the book” was meant to be. The effect was similar, as well, yet again excluding the possibility of Alex’s atonement and producing in the movie’s viewers worldwide, or at least in those unaware of the novelist’s intention, a false impression that the protagonist is doomed to criminality from the start, evil incarnate that he is.

Admittedly though, film adaptation is a special kind of translation, and a special kind of rewriting at that. There seems to be greater leniency towards what is allowable in transferring a book to the screen than in transferring it to a different book market. Although the American publisher and Kubrick perpetrated the very same act, if not the sin, of omission, the latter appears more justified on the grounds of a specific artistic vision and social commentary, whereas the former may be considered, to use a law idiom, a premeditated crime of wanton violence. After all, the text was not even translated into another language, or another medium, for that matter, just reprinted and published in a different Anglophone country. As it was, however, W.W. Norton violated not only Burgess’ *licentia poetica* but also what may be called textual integrity of his work. The only mitigating circumstance seems to be that all this was done with his permission, reluctant or otherwise, with “the moral right of the author” asserted, as the old copyright formula dictates.

As Burgess mentions in one of his autobiographies, he had nothing to do with the movie, apart from being acknowledged as the author of the book in the
Upon seeing the adaptation he could not help but feel ambivalent: he liked some parts of it, especially the music and Malcolm McDowell’s portrayal of Alex, but was nonetheless uneasy about the omission of the final redemptive chapter, for which he blamed not Kubrick, but, again, his American publisher. As a matter of fact, the two men rather seem to have developed a personal rapport, as they shared similar views on politics and society, and an interest in Napoleon Bonaparte (Burgess, You’ve Had Your Time 244-248).

But Kubrick soon distanced himself from the controversies surrounding the movie, leaving Burgess alone to defend both his book and the film adaptation in numerous articles, interviews, and his other works. It was from that moment on that the British author apparently held a grudge against the American director, and his problems with A Clockwork Orange began anew. “Indeed much of my later life has been expended on Xeroxing statements of intention and the frustration of intention”, he puts it bluntly in the preface to the first unabridged American edition, “while both Kubrick and my New York publisher coolly bask in the rewards of their misdemeanour.” (“AOC Resucked” vii). He was particularly upset with the director when the latter published in 1972 his own illustrated book about the movie, which, in Burgess’ opinion, was Kubrick’s blatant attempt at hijacking the cultural phenomena, as if it had originated with the film, not the novel (Biswell xxv). Burgess seemed so eager to reclaim his rightful place as the seminal force behind the cult following that he even wrote two musicals based on the book, but both were released to some very mixed reviews. Interestingly enough, A Clockwork Orange: A Play with Music, the earlier of those musicals, ends with a character dressed as Kubrick, who enters playing “Singin’ In The Rain” on a trumpet only to be kicked off the stage (McDougal 2). In a fictional dialogue with Alex, which was to be published in newspapers before the play appeared in print, Burgess could not help but deride Kubrick again, having the hero call him “[t]he gloopy shoot that put [him] in the sinny – Lubric or Pubic or some such like naz…” (“Malenky Govoreet” 227). All rather crude, but unambiguous, suggestions what the author thought about his one-time colleague.

Despite Burgess’ personal views on Kubrick, the movie adaptation was a reasonable success with the audience: produced on a modest budget of 2.2

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10 In fact, he did pen an early screenplay for the movie, back when Kubrick was not yet involved with the project.
million dollars, it grossed 26.5 million dollars in the box office ("A Clockwork Orange"). It also won some critical acclaim, though not universal, given the bad press and publicity of its release, and was nominated to a number of prestigious awards, including four Oscar nods for best picture, director, screenplay, and editing, along with seven BAFTA Awards and three Golden Globe nominations. Often included high on a variety of best-film lists, Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange has been a staple of the industry ever since its release.

THE OLD ULTRA-VIOLENCE CONCLUDED
In the preceding sections we have seen how Burgess’ original novel was purposefully rewritten and manipulated by its American publisher and the director-screenwriter of its film adaptation. Both had arguably different reasons for doing so, but the effect was the same: the omission of the last redemptive chapter in order to tailor the novel’s overtones to their preference. Acting as Lefeverian patrons in differentiated systems of book and movie markets, they took it upon themselves to decide what was suitable for their respective audiences, essentially undermining Burgess’ decisions and intentions, and usurping his authorial prerogatives, as it were.

In other words, they violated the original text. Or, to borrow Lawrence Venuti’s phrase, they appropriated what was foreign, i.e. the British text, for their domestic, i.e. American, purposes. Although Venuti has mostly translation in mind when he writes about “violence” as the inherent attribute of domestication, some of his remarks strike a familiar note and as such seem relevant enough to our analysis.

For Venuti translation is “the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts.” It is “the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target-language reader”. In translating, any such difference is “imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its cannons and taboos, its codes and ideologies” (18). Should we substitute translation for adaptation in general within this paradigm, the violence, or rather the violations, of W.W. Norton and Kubrick

11 It ultimately received none of these accolades, having lost the majority to William Friedkin’s The French Connection starring Gene Hackman or Bob Fosse’s Cabaret with Liza Minnelli.
immediately become evident. The reasons given by both for the exclusion of the final chapter amount then to nothing more than their “canons and taboos”, their “codes and ideologies”, which the original text challenged, a cultural difference that had to be appropriated, assimilated, reconstructed, and forcibly replaced with the pre-existing target-language mind-set.

And indeed, all such operations serve “to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar... often in highly self-conscious projects.” Translation, or adaptation in our case, may convey the foreign text, but “it is always a communication limited by its address to a specific reading audience” (Venuti 18-19). Or viewing audience, for that matter.

Both Lefevere’s rewriting and Venuti’s violence of translation help explain the motivations of the violators in a number of fields other than translation. Their educated considerations are very much concerned with cultural change and power, or agents influencing cultures in general and literary (poly-)systems in particular, whether we call them “patrons” or “violent” and “highly self-conscious” usurpers and re-constructors, imperialistic, chauvinistic, ethnocentric. Redefined in those terms, the patronizing agency of W.W. Norton and Kubrick takes on a new meaning, not so much aggressively destructive as defensively preserving the status quo, the pre-configured “hierarchies of dominance and marginality” that may have been disturbed otherwise by the moralistic tone of Burgess’ intended ending.

But whereas the American publisher reconsidered their decision and finally included the missing chapter, the movie is always going to end with Alex returned to his former self, saying mischievously: “I was cured, all right.” And so the cycle of violence continues.

Works Cited