

Antilanguage and a Gentleman's Goloss: Style, Register, and Entitlement To Irony in *A Clockwork Orange*

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In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex and his inferiors, the droogs, speak a teen-language, nadsat. This teen-language functions as a means to separate themselves from the novel's hegemonic dystopian culture, depicted as either tyrannical and inhumane or lifeless and unthinking. While the teens in the novel escape their surroundings and build community through nadsat, my analysis of episodes of linguistic performance will show that nadsat also provides gang members (Alex, Dim, Pete, George) with an internal means to recognize leadership, submission, and challenge to authority in their own four-member gang. Nadsat, a register of teen criminal *antilanguage*, will be a means of establishing hierarchy amongst not only Alex and his droogs, but also with teen gang members with similar teen criminal nadsat during Alex's jailing. During the jail scene, Alex, normally a master of lexicon and grammar of both formal English and nadsat, will falter. Poor syntactic performance and a nadsat lexicon different than those of the older gang members' nadsats will lead to a loss of power for Alex. The result is his receiving of a murder charge despite the murder being a group beating. In this article, I suggest that both register selection and the adherence to formal lexicon and grammar of the context-appropriate register provide power or deny power to a speaker. When irony, sarcasm, or mockery appear, only those speaking a lexicon and grammar appropriate to the social context (register) enjoy a verbal power that parallels the physical

actions of the immediate social hierarchy.

The World of A Clockwork Orange

The world of *A Clockwork Orange* is ‘a tyrannously dull society’ (Stinson 1991, p.54) where ‘the state [...] has regulated everyone’s life: [...] it represses free speech and free expression of individuality’ (Coleman 1983, p.62). It is a world where main character Alex and his teenage gang roam the streets committing crimes from theft to burglary to murder. It is also a world where F. Alexander, Alex’s foil and victim in the novel, is a liberal progressive intellectual writing a book also entitled *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex reads aloud F. Alexander’s own definition of the collision of this dystopian society and free will while burglarizing him. F. Alexander’s clockwork orange is ‘the attempt to impose upon man [...] laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen’ (Burgess 1986, p.21-22). F. Alexander’s situating of anti-humanistic tyranny, and the ability of language to be a violent reactionary force (the ‘sword-pen’), adumbrates and parallels the development of nadsat as an antilanguage. John L. Stinson suggests that in the novel

the distinct teenage language serves to reawaken the reader’s awareness of the anarchic impulse of the teenager and the instinct to be one with the herd, to regard other groups just as ‘other’, utterly alien, in no way like the self. (1991, p.56)

Similarly, social semiotician John Bushnell is speaking of teen culture in general when he states that

the shocking alienness of the subculture’s speech mirrors the frantic but random assaults of youth on their elders. [...] There is, after all, an association between linguistic

and social deviance, and between social deviance and violence. (1990, p.239)

In Part Two of the novel, Dr. Brodsky, the fictional behaviorist and symbol of the totalitarian state reeducating criminal Alex, will later imply this same idea of a criminal subculture at war with a dominant homogenized culture. When Alex speaks in nadsat before receiving the reeducational Ludovico technique, Brodsky says drolly, ‘Quaint, [...] the dialect of the tribe’ (Burgess 1986, p.114). This is a good example of how the socially powerful in the novel are entitled to irony. Clearly, some characters, such as Alex and F. Alexander, believe that language can be wielded as a weapon; yet the novel also suggests, through characters like Brodsky and the aging, reformed Alex, that neither language nor antilanguage can defeat the physical or legal power of the state.

Social Structures and Antilanguage

In *Language as Social Semiotic*, M.A.K. Halliday defines antilanguage as a *social* construct, not simply a *linguistic* construct. Halliday notes that ‘an antisociety is a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it. It is a mode of resistance, [...] an antilanguage is not only parallel to an antisociety; it is in fact generated by it’ (1978, p.164). Thus, society and its antisocieties share a social system, but they have separate social structures (1978, p.166), and the antilanguage ‘clearly foregrounds [the] social values’ of the antisociety (1978, p.166). Antilanguage is a process of resocialization that not only expresses reality, but ‘creates and maintains’ (1978, p.170) this separate antisocietal reality. The resocialization process’s ‘plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must

establish strongly affective identification' (1978, p.170). Antisocieties, then, are hierarchical with group leaders mediating values, possibility, and hierarchy to followers. These leaders provide the internal pressure that sustains the 'alternative social reality' (1978, p.167).

Moving beyond the social system and into language, antisocieties will display internal variation on the individual level and group level (1978, p.178-79). On the sociolinguistic level, antilanguage is both the 'limiting case of a social dialect', yet it also functions as a language (1978, p.179). As a language, antilanguage creates a shared reality. Roger Fowler notes that, 'There is a Whorfian argument here: the anti-language creates an anti-world view' (1981, p.147). As a dialect, antilanguage provides the possibility of social hierarchy through performance: syntax, lexicon, and pronunciation will mark a user as either proficient or deficient, just as dialect variance of any language holds the possibility of prejudice and therefore social hierarchy.

Structurally speaking, antilanguages can utilize any level of language, from phonetics to pragmatics, to maintain their alternative reality. In *A Clockwork Orange*, relexification, new words for old words, is a key feature of nadsat. This is generally true of antilanguages, although relexification needn't be a characteristic of antilanguages. In antilanguages such as nadsat, performing the new lexicon along with any other lexico-grammatical realizations determines status. Halliday notes that antilanguage often takes a form of 'verbal competition and display' (1978, p.166), and Halliday cites Adam Podgorecki's account of antilanguage in Polish prisons, where social downgrading to the level of 'sucker' is based upon breaking the rules of verbal contest. (Podgorecki 1973, cited in Halliday 1978, p.166). The novel's verbal competition and display, based in lexicon

and grammar, I shall refer to as *performance*; this performance will provide characters speaking the antilanguage nadsat appropriate upgrades or downgrades in the social hierarchy. Those who poorly perform the lexico-grammatical features of the antilanguage nadsat will not be entitled in particular to the verbal power of irony and sarcasm. Yet when leader Alex speaks nadsat to authority figures who speak a formal register, he will not be entitled to irony. He may attempt irony, but it will not serve as a tool of power. In these cases, only those of the formal register, the formal and accepted language of the social system, are entitled to irony. This underscores the relationship in the novel between not just performance and irony, but register and irony. Choosing the proper register and lexico-grammatical features are a part of one's performance in the world of *A Clockwork Orange*.

Stylistics, Antilanguage, and Nadsat

Stylistics has long held a place in investigations of society, culture, and language. Richard Bradford notes that

[T]he fundamental units and principles of all linguistic usage: phonemes, rhythmic sequences, grammatical classes, forms of syntactic organization and so on [are fundamentals of communication that] underpin [...] structuralism and semiotics, discourse theory, sociolinguistics, gender studies, linguistic philosophy, [and other disciplines that involve] context and pragmatic purpose of communication. (1997, p.xii)

Through pragmatics, Bradford finds formal textual stylistics relevant to all cultural interdisciplinary scholarship. Nikolas Coupland's *Style: Language Variation and Identity* addresses the relevance of *sociolinguistic* research to interdisciplinary work, stating that

Sociolinguistics is an exploration of 'the social

significance of language', although we can unpack this idea in different ways. Linguists might assume that the domain of meaning belongs to them, but in fact social meaning is a core concern of many disciplines. (2007, p. 18)

Barbara A. Fennell & John Bennett similarly note the 'social significance of language' in 'Sociolinguistic Concepts and Literary Analysis'. They report that 'remarks about the limitations of linguistics can apply only to a narrow definition of the field, one which targets sentence-level grammar and largely ignores the social characteristics of language' (1991, p.371). Treating grammar and lexicon as a context-dependent 'grammatical metaphor' (Eggins 2004, p.119) allows grammar alone to create meanings. Susan Eggins speaks directly on the relationship between lexicon, grammar and register when she insists that

there is a correlation between the situational dimensions of context and these different types of lexico-grammatical patterns. [...] The lexico-grammatical organization of language is itself a realization of the semantic organization of language. (2004, p.110)

Lexicon and grammar, or lexico-grammar, are, as Bradford, Coupland, Fennell & Bennett, and Eggins suggest, purveyors of social characteristics. Sociolinguistic field work on non-antilanguage monolingual situations bears this out as well. Mark Sebba & Tony Wooten state that the results of Caribbean Creole field work of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller conceive of 'social action being performed linguistically, for example through choice of lexis, grammar or pronunciation' (1998, p.276). Furthermore, Sebba & Wooten suggest, it seems 'often to be overlooked [...] that so called 'monolinguals' can also perform "acts of identity" though talk, through using different resources' (1998, p.276).

Sociolinguistics provides the literary critic and the discourse theorist tools for assessing subvarieties of a language based in performance (phonemic to pragmatic), social meaning, and social organization that are often the subjects of investigation for the social sciences and cultural theory. For this article, the lexico-grammar of sociolinguistic registers will allow for an analysis of the English antilanguage nadsat in all its variants, and nadsat's contact with formal registers as well. I will be using sociolinguistic register to analyze the lexico-grammatical properties of antilanguage as they relate to power in general and entitlement to irony, sarcasm, and mockery in particular.

Register and Stylistics

Having discussed lexico-grammar, I would like to briefly define the limits sociolinguistic *register* in general and as different from dialect in particular. I find several definitions helpful in solidifying the parameters of register. Charles A. Ferguson identifies the qualities of register as:

A communication situation that recurs regularly in a society (in terms of participants, setting, communicative functions, and so forth) will tend over time to develop identifying markers of language structure and language use, different from the language of other communication situations (author's italics). (1994, p.20)

R.A. Hudson makes the discrimination between register and dialect by stating that

the same person may use very different linguistic items to express more or less the same meaning on different occasions, and the concept of 'dialect' cannot reasonably be extended to include such variation. (1996, 45-46)

To these, I would also add Paul Simpson's inclusion of register as a 'regular, fixed pattern of vocabulary and grammar' (2004, p.104) to identify lexico-grammar as part of the communicational, pragmatic definitions given by Ferguson and Hudson.

These definitions are important to my use of register in analyzing *A Clockwork Orange*. First, the emphasis on *situational use* or *variation due to use* of language is important in establishing the empowering aspects of *A Clockwork Orange*'s register nadsat, where and when this register can be powerful, and who can correctly wield the power this subversive antilanguage provides. As Halliday's work in antilanguage suggests, a verbal performance must be performed by or found acceptable by a *significant other* of the antisociety's *plausibility structure*; this significant other acts as a sort of grand master, maintaining the internal social pressure that constructs the antisociety's alternative reality (1978, p.164). Yet register's emphasis on *situational use* also demonstrates why Alex is not entitled to irony when in situations with authorities speaking formal registers. His nadsat register is not appropriate to the situation and functions as a dialect and/or an idiolect reinforcing his subversive and juvenile identity, and therein his powerlessness and his inability to wield irony.

Linguistic Features of Nadsat

The jail scene where Alex receives individual blame for a group murder suggests that Alex's nadsat is indeed a variant of a larger sociolinguistic *register* of nadsat spoken by the novel's teen gangs in general; lexicon varies slightly from gang to gang, but the uses of such varieties are identical and therefore function as a register of antilanguage. During this jail scene, Alex's interior voice analyzes

other gang members' nadsat during this jail scene. His interior analysis supports a critical, power-based view that a variant of nadsat's lexico-grammatical features can provide one with power or deny one power. Yet lexico-grammatical features must include not only a separate lexicon, but a syntactic competence/performance as well. As Roger Fowler has pointed out

beneath the provocative surface of the vocabulary, Alex's own language is thoroughly middle-class. Burgess gives Alex none of the signs of non-standard speech: no regional dialect, no ungrammaticality, no restricted code in Bernstein's sense. (1981, p.153)

Similarly, Rita K. Gladsky has noted that understanding the novel's strange lexicon depends upon 'Burgess' linguistic skill [...] as he capitalizes on the reader's understanding of English syntax, which enables him to activate the relevant schema' (1992, p.42). While Gladsky acknowledges that schemas are activated by contextual clues as well, she points out that Burgess limits his relexifications to concrete nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and Burgess retains syntactic cohesive elements to reduce misunderstanding (1992, p.44). Fowler and Gladsky outline the limits of nadsat's lexico-grammar. Relexified nouns, verbs, and adjectives delivered through a formal, middle-class syntax. For the teen criminals in the novel, their power will be directly linked to their lexico-grammar. They must perform a nadsat variant's lexicon masterfully, and they must perform this lexicon with formal 'middle-class' grammar.

Yet nadsat is not the only register present in *A Clockwork Orange*. The characters in the novel, through adoption, modification, or abandonment of the register nadsat, attempt to appease and manipulate and users of 'adult' formal registers. These most often include Alex's victims and his parole officer. Thus, usage or

abandonment of nadsat proves language in general a useful weapon in certain situations, and at least a potential weapon of power in all instances. However, as the novel progresses, the antilanguage nadsat proves to be part of a system that confers only *temporary* identity and provisional power. As for provisional power, Halliday's definition of antilanguage extends into the *social* aspects of language: one's position in the social hierarchy is dependent upon one's performance of antilanguage (1978, p.166). This will certainly be true of antilanguage in *A Clockwork Orange*. A character's immediate fortunes change according to their use of nadsat's formal qualities.

As for the former, temporary identity, the last chapter of the novel shows older, reformed or reforming gang members, including leader Alex himself. Thus, the antilanguage of nadsat does not promise permanent identity or victorious rebellion against institutions and their standard registers of membership. Antilanguage in general, nadsat in particular, is useful only to the members included in a social structure. Adults as well as reformed gang members using formal registers do not hold the violent values of the criminal antisociety; the antisociety's antilanguage is neither powerful nor identity-bearing to those in the world of formal registers and standard social structures.

For my purposes, I will concentrate on three major premises in the novel: First, Alex's constant observation or usage of a change in 'goloss' that is often accompanied by suddenly elevated grammar and vocabulary, marking his adoption of a standard register that will effectively give him access to people's homes; second, I will focus upon performative exchanges between the Alex and his gang's nadsat variant that show instances of a mastery by Alex that his droogs do not achieve; and third, by looking at nadsat in relation to other teen

nadsat variants that are part of the register nadsat while Alex is in prison, I will show his own nadsat's grammar and vocabulary to be insufficient to gain status amongst older teen criminals. Each of these situations will underscore my major claim about power and language in the novel: in the novel, the most skillful language performers also solely exhibit the right to use sarcasm, irony, and mockery; these are the qualities of nadsat that underscore yet cleanse the horrific performances of physical violence against victims in the novel.

I will be including the controversial twenty-first chapter from the British version of the novel. This final chapter suggests that Alex is leaving behind the social structure of the antisociety and therefore the benefits of antilanguage, such as power through linguistic performance, entitlement to irony, and a subversive identity through membership in the antisociety. As Todd Davis & Kenneth Womack have noted, '*A Clockwork Orange* [...] demonstrates not only the necessity of the twenty-first chapter as the fruition of Burgess's moral vision, but also the centrality of family structures as catalysts for interpersonal development' (2002, p.20). I agree with Davis and Womack. I find that in this closing chapter Alex is growing up and leaving behind his violent past. But I also find that the novel's use and discussion of language parallels this growing up. By the closing chapter, language is no longer tantamount to violence and subversion. It gives way to the hegemonic, socialized world of responsible 'adult' language, politics, life, and responsibility against which Alex and his droogs previously fought.

Pronouns and Power

In her article 'Pronominalization in *A Clockwork Orange*', Julie Carson notes that,

Alec (sic) is the only character who deviates from the standard pronoun system. Burgess sets him off in two ways from general society: by giving him the nadsat vocabulary, and from his own group, with the pronoun distinction. [A deviation from within] an argot carries greater implications, revealing Alec's position of power relative to both society and his droogs. (1976, p.201)

In the text of her article, Carson gives a detailed list of Alex's pronoun usage, finding that in Part One of the novel he uses 'thou', the address of an equal, when looking to thumb his nose at an adult or superior or when looking to assuage a droog. Alex's use of 'thou' and 'you' changes depending upon whom he is speaking to and what his intended effects are. After Alex has been cured of violence and subversive thoughts, he addresses people with polite, proper, standard pronoun usage. But in Part Three, after the Ludovico technique is reversed and his ability to think violent or subversive thought is restored, he again addresses superiors with improper, impolite, and perhaps insulting, pronoun usage. Burgess, then, has given Alex the ability to manipulate language and manipulate through language. Alex's manipulative performance proves him to be one of Halliday's *significant others* who enforce not only adherence to an antilanguage, but to the antisociety that is created through antilanguage; however, his insults and language manipulations in Part Three do not achieve the ironic or sarcastic stance that they did during his ultra-violent crimes in Part One. His nadsat is ineffective in situations where a register of formal English prevails, as in the state hospital of Part Three.

Shifting Registers for Criminal Purposes

Alex demonstrates his linguistic abilities through more than simply pronoun usage. His 'gentleman's goloss' may be a description of his

tone of voice, but it is also accompanied by the continuance of formal grammar as well as the loss of all nadsat lexical features. Before looking at his register shifts, here is a sample of nadsat:

Our pockets were full of deng, so there was no real need from the point of view of crasting any more pretty polly to tolchock some old veck in an alley and vidy him swim in his blood while we counted the takings and divided by four, nor to do the ultra-violent on some shivering starry grey-haired ptitsa in a shop and go smecking off with the till's guts. (Burgess 1986, p.1-2)

The above example is rife with relexifications presented through formal grammar. In the following example, Alex's interior monologue is presented through nadsat, yet his address shifts register to a formal (middle-class) register, lexicon and grammar. In fact, the tie between changes in register and recurring social situation can be seen most distinctly during the two episodes in which Alex and the droogs attempt to gain entry to homes to burglarize them. During the gang's first burglary in the novel, Alex describes his entry.

I could vidy this one glaz looking out at me and the door was on a chain. "Yes? Who is it?" It was a sharp's goloss, a youngish devotchka by her sound, so I said in a very refined manner of speech, a real gentleman's goloss: "Pardon, madam, most sorry to disturb you, but my friend and me were out for a walk, and my friend has taken bad all of a sudden with a very troublesome turn, [...] Would you have the goodness to let me use your telephone to telephone for an ambulance?" (Burgess 1986, p.20)

Notice the disappearance of nadsat's lexicon entirely as well as the retained formal English grammar that nadsat uses. Tellingly, Alex chooses this 'refined manner', or as he calls it, this 'gentleman's goloss'. Due to his change in register, he and his droogs gain access

to the house and begin to terrorize the occupants. Once inside, his speech quickly returns to nadsat, for he no longer needs to use a formal register to negotiate access to the home; he is again in charge and need not speak the formal register that is so influential in society that it convinces one stranger to open the door to another. Later, as Alex attempts entry to the house of the woman he will accidentally murder, he again attempts to gain entry by adopting a ‘refined goloss’ and devoid of nadsat and keeping with a formal grammar.

There are multiple situations in which Alex observes people’s attempt to distinguish social position or communicate attitude through a particular goloss or usage of register. The following passage shows Alex wishing to appease his correctional officer during a home visit the night after a crime. Alex begins the dialogue.

‘To what do I owe the extreme pleasure? Is anything wrong, sir?’

‘Wrong? [...] ‘Why should there be anything wrong? Have you been doing something you shouldn’t, yes?’

‘Just a manner of speech’, I said, ‘sir’. [...] I’ve been doing nothing I shouldn’t, sir’, I said. ‘The millicents have nothing on me, brother, sir I mean’.

‘Cut out this clever talk about millicents. [...] But I’m warning you, little Alex, being a good friend to you as always, the one man in this sore and sick community who wants to save you from yourself’.

‘I appreciate all that, sir’, I said, ‘very sincerely’.

‘Yes, you do, don’t you?’ he sort of sneered. (Burgess 1986, p.37-39)

There are two notable features of register in the above passage: first, there is Alex’s use of formal register in the lines, so similar to the ‘gentleman’s goloss’ he used to attempt entry to victims’ houses; second, there is the adoption of formal tags, in this case, ‘sir’. Yet there is, unlike the burglary attempts, a bit of nadsat interwoven into the exchange. I suggest this is due to Alex’s recognition of Deltoid as

a member of both the bureaucratic/legal discourse community which is his employer, and to the teens who comprise his cases, all of which speak a variant of nadsat and would make Deltoid privy to this vocabulary. In the above passage, Alex corrects his nadsat address of ‘brother’ to ‘sir’ to continue appeasement and a display of respect. Yet, when proper address is not part of the sentence, he does not bother correcting his usage of the common noun ‘millicent’ for ‘police officer’. As the long exchange between the two continues, this pattern does not change. One must note, however, that Deltoid as mentor/corrector/socializer of ‘little Alex’ rebukes Alex for using nadsat vocabulary, thereby encouraging him to leave behind his linguistic ties to teen gangs, and thus abandon violent gang behavior itself.

This influence and advice of Deltoid does not go unabsorbed by Alex. After their exchange, Alex joins up with his droogs that evening, and he has added a bit of Deltoid’s own style of speech to his own. As he apologizes for being late he says:

‘I had something of a pain in the gulliver so had to sleep. I was not wakened when I gave order for wakening. Still, here we all are, ready for what the old nochy offers, yes?’ I seemed to have picked up that yes? from P.R. Deltoid, my Post-Corrective Adviser. Very strange. (Burgess 1986, p.51)

Alex again shows an awareness of language, mainly in his borrowing or incorporation of Deltoid’s speech style. This adopting of his Post-Corrective Adviser’s speech may be Burgess’s own nod to Alex’s actual and natural moral correction in the final chapter. As Alex absorbs the language of the power structure around him, he also absorbs their standard morality as well. As the lexico-grammatical features of nadsat fall from his speech, so will the values of the

antisociety created through antilanguage.

The passage between Deltoid and Alex demonstrates another facet of language in *A Clockwork Orange*. Deltoid, when spoken to in nadsat, tells Alex to ‘cut out this clever talk about millicents’ (Burgess 1986, p.38). Deltoid realizes not only the antisocietal potential of nadsat, but also its inability to provide access to the larger, non-criminal, adult community in the way that only standardized speech can. Additionally, the ‘clever talk about millicents’ is Deltoid’s warning that Alex is guilty, even if the police have not caught him. Thus, Deltoid does not allow Alex to abuse standardized speech or accept him as part of the adult community simply because Alex adopts its grammar and ‘gentleman’s’ register. Deltoid has denied Alex’s sarcasm any type of power in a standard ‘adult’ register. The sardonic titles spoken and standard grammar Alex adopts have not provided him with symbolic power because, as a criminal and speaker of antilanguage, the power of language and sarcasm belong to the state’s representative, Deltoid. It is Deltoid who can be, if not sarcastic, empowered in this formal, retributive proceeding. The situation of the correction facility places nadsat in a position of the inferior register, and Alex cannot be privy to ironic or sarcastic use of language that disguises his violence.

This parallels later situations in which Alex finds his inferior droogy, Dim, to be using sarcasm in powermongering manners that are inappropriate for Dim’s inferior linguistic performance and social position in the gang. The result is Alex’s beating or wounding of Dim, proving again that sarcasm is not a weapon of the powerless, but only of the powerful. While it is most likely not arguable that in the novel linguistic power supersedes the power of physical violence or imprisonment, Alex’s physical violence upon Dim for attempting

sarcasm through poor linguistic performance equates with that of Halliday's *significant others* who enforce the values of the antisociety by maintaining linguistic codes.

Maintaining Nadsat and the Antisociety

Having seen the means and results when Alex uses language as a weapon to influence or negotiate with the adult world, whether it be the strangers he can manipulate or the correctional officer he cannot, let us now look at the power relationships and language competency inside of the gang of Alex and his three droogs, George, Pete, and Dim. Alex is the leader of the gang--of this there is no doubt. He chooses and plans the crimes. He also metes out punishment, either physical or verbal, when George, Pete, or Dim challenge his authority. This is most obvious during the squabble where Alex wounds two of the three droogies with his knife and does not relent until all three relinquish the crime-planning to him. Dim, the dimmest of the three members, has the most contradictory dialogue with Alex. The words of George and Pete seem to share the linguistic competence of Alex without Alex's large nadsat vocabulary. However, Dim's verbal competence is farthest from Alex's own competence, which sets the standard for prestige and power inside the gang. During several episodes, we see Dim challenge Alex's authority on linguistic terms, mainly through the use of grammatical competence and the aforementioned sarcasm not allowed the linguistically underprivileged.

The first instance of Dim's attempt to move beyond his position as the least powerful intelligence of the gang occurs as the gang assaults an elderly man leaving the library. As usual, Alex approaches the man without nadsat and with formal grammar. He

quickly begins to accost him. Pete follows, also addressing the elderly man with proper grammar while accusing him of being a dirty old man. Alex does not mentally rebuke Pete. Rather, it is a continuation of the gang's use of proper grammar to sardonically and ironically underscore their criminal behavior. When Dim speaks, however, it is not in formal grammar, and Alex is not pleased. The sarcasm and irony created by proper grammar for improper behavior are ruined.

Then I said in a very shocked type go-loss: 'But what is this here? What is this filthy slovo? I blush to look at this word. You disappoint me, brother, you do, really'.
[...] 'Now', said Georgie, 'here is what I should call real dirt. There's one slovo beginning with an f and another with a c'. He had a book called *The Miracle of the Snowflake*.
'Oh', said poor old Dim, smotting over Pete's shoulder and going too far, like he always did, 'it says here what he done to her, and there's a picture and all. Why', he said, 'you're nothing but a filthy-minded old skitebird'.
(Burgess 1986, p.6)

Alex and George prove themselves literate and able to engage in linguistic wordplay, making a joke of the *f* and *c* in the title. Dim, however, goes too far in Alex's estimation. And certainly this does not pertain to physical affront, for the gang beats the man senseless soon after. Rather, Alex notices that Dim abandons and therefore ruins the word play that Alex and George have developed. Dim, in his dim-wittedness, can only call the old man names and notice pictures outside the codes of alphabetic literacy and language-driven sarcasm. He cannot continue or create the linguistic and alphabetic riffing that George started by noting the *f* and *c*. Furthermore, through his lack of grammatical competence (improper verb conjugation: 'done', not 'did'), Dim breaks the formal grammar that created the verbal irony during the gang's asocial and criminal act.

By undermining the antilanguage, Dim has threatened the violence, the values, and the alternative reality of the antisociety. As Roger Fowler suggests, the poetic quality of the language of *A Clockwork Orange* is 'meant to signify energy, confidence, creativity; to emphasise their freedom from the patterns of the language and so their freedom from the norms of society' (1981, p.153). The antisociety crumbles when their antilanguage isn't both normalized for hierarchy yet also creative to negotiate status. As Halliday reports, antilanguage must constantly renew itself because the speaker is trying to secure the rewards of the antisociety (1978, p.180). Dim's dim creativity, however, threatens the very alternative reality of the antisociety by interrupting its related linguistic system.

Later, as Part One ends and Alex's gang turn on him, leaving him temporarily blinded with the police coming, Dim gets the last words. The words, referring to Alex's earlier stabbing of Dim to reaffirm control of the gang, are again without grammatical competence. 'I don't like you should do what you done, old droogy. Not right it wasn't to get on me like the way you done, brat' (Burgess 1986, p.64). This change of position, of linguistically competent Alex losing his power and ability to assert himself, parallels the loss of freedom that begins with his arrest and lasts throughout Part Two of the novel. No longer will language be enough to allow Alex real or symbolic agency to fight society's power structure. The alternative reality of the antisociety is threatened by the larger standard social structure. Likewise, the next time Dim and Alex meet, Dim's grammatical competence has not improved, but with Dim a police officer, Alex will once again be at Dim's mercy and the intransigent power structure Dim represents.

Power, Irony, and Nadsat Variants

While in prison, Alex spends time with his cellmates, each a member of other teenage gangs similar to his own. Although the examples are slim, each teen seems to speak a variant of nadsat different than Alex's own, yet comprehensible to all other teens in the cell. However, with such a high density network of so many competing variants of nadsat, Alex's variant and his competence may not lead to prestige and attendant leadership of his cellmates.

We are introduced to the cellmates and a bit of each's nadsat. First, there is Zophar, a wan boy who Alex derides for his poor vocabulary. When Zophar says 'And at that time you couldn't get hold of a poggy' (Burgess 1986, p.83), Alex follows Zophar's relexicalized noun with a tool of linguistic power in the novel, sarcasm. Alex parenthetically tells the reader '(whatever that was, brothers)' of the term 'poggy', and notes that Zophar's lexicon was an 'old-time real criminal's slang' (Burgess 1986, p.83). Clearly Alex is mentally positioning his own nadsat as the prestige lexicon, therein setting his position as this antisociety's 'significant other' (Halliday 1978, p.164) and gang leader.

During the night, a new boy is put into the cell and tells Alex that he should surrender his bed because Alex is the youngest. Alex refuses. His cellmates support him, and each takes a turn beating the new boy. Before or after the beating, the reader is treated to bits of each boy's variant of nadsat. Alex remembers and translates the new boy's final words before the beating began. "'Crash your dermott, yid", meaning to shut up' (Burgess 1986, p.88). This translation is further evidence that Alex sees the new boy's variant as one that is foreign to his own. Thus, Alex again mentally presupposes his own variant as the preferred form of nadsat. This is par for the course. He

believes his lexicon is the lexicon of all gang members' nadsat.

Alex's blows, the final blows, kill the boy. The next day, when a culprit must be found for the boy's death, and each boy wishes to exonerate himself, we see that each exhibits a grammatical competence equaling Alex's own. Furthermore, during this time of Alex's self-defense, the nadsat rhyming slang each teen spoke during the beating is now absent, replaced by a formal register for both Big Jew and Doctor, despite Big Jew's pronunciation problems. Again, proper register selection and syntactic performance determines power. In the jail cell amongst the boys, as earlier with Deltoid and later with Dr. Brodsky's experimenting upon him in Part Two, Alex cannot use his nadsat variant as a weapon. Among cellmates JoJohn, Big Jew, and Doctor, JoJohn speaks first and is, initially, not against Alex. JoJohn says:

'Come come, doc, you weren't all that backward yourself in giving him a sly bit of fist'. Then Big Jew turned on me, saying: 'Alekth, you were too impetuouth. That latht kick wath a very very nathty one'. I began to get razdraz about this and said: 'Who started it, eh? I only got in at the end, didn't I?' I pointed at JoJohn and said: 'It was your idea'. Wall snored a bit loud, so I said 'Wake that vonny bratchny up. It was him that kept on at his rot while Big Jew here had him up against the bars'. The Doctor said: 'Nobody will deny having a gentle little hit at the man, to teach him a lesson so to speak, but it's apparent that you, my dear boy, with the forcefulness and, shall I say, heedlessness of youth, dealt him the coo de grass. It's a great pity'. 'Traitors', I said. 'Traitors and liars', because I could viddy it was all like before, two years before, when my so-called droogs had left me [...] (Burgess 1986, p.90)

Only Alex incorporates nadsat into the dialogue. The others employ a high register of standard vocabulary and grammar that extends into the same type of ironic understatement (Doctor's 'a gentle little hit')

that Alex and George practiced on the elderly man exiting the library. But here Alex is the victim of the ironic use of language, as well as the boys' shift to a formal register. Doctor uses the formal register and irony to downplay his own violence and assert Alex as the murderer. His proper register shift entitles him to this irony. Also, Alex's grammar breaks down during his defense. When saying 'It was him that kept on at his rot', his grammar falters, resulting in a cleft sentence. More indicatively, it falters in the same manner that Dim's sometimes falters – the replacing of the subjective pronoun with the objective case. Recalling the mastery of the second-person pronoun and pronoun usage in general that Alex exhibits often, it would seem that he misreads the situation or simply falters during a moment when he requires language as a weapon to achieve dominance or, at least, equality, in order to dismiss his guilt in murdering the new boy.

The End of Nadsat and an Antisociety

The novel's final chapter, included in Britain since the first edition, but omitted in the original and many subsequent American editions, finds Alex out of prison and with a new gang, Len, Rick, and Bully, that mirrors the old gang of Pete, George, and Dim. But Alex, now eighteen, is an adult and has a job working in the state's music archives. Furthermore, he has inexplicably cut a photo of a baby from the paper and is carrying it with him. He has tired of violence and does not accompany his new droogs on their night of ultra-violence. Instead, he has a drink, leaves the bar, and closes the novel making a decision to begin searching for a wife. Appropriately, this final chapter opens the same as the first, in the Korova milkbar with the gang around. And appropriately, it also begins with the initial

phrase 'What's it going to be then, eh?'. Thus, we have a framework to compare the fifteen-year-old and the eighteen-year-old Alex, and we see that things are changing. Throughout the novel, Alex has noted various clothing styles as much as vocal registers, leading one to equate clothing and speech as similar structural systems of register, prestige and change. We see both have changed during the gap in narrative time. 'What we were peeting was the old moloko with knives it, as we used to say [...]. We were dressed in the height of fashion, which in those days was these very wide trousers and a very loose black shiny leather like jerkin over an open-necked shirt with a like scarf tucked in' (Burgess 1986, p.180). These changes that Alex mentions, whether in speech or fashion, show that he is not the controller of prestige in the system, nor is he Halliday's significant other acting as the internal pressure that constructs the antisociety. The antisocietal mindset is no longer constituted through adherence to nadsat; his verbal tag, 'as we used to say', implies that he is no longer performing the antilanguage that creates the antisociety. Alex's moral reversal is nearing completion. Language has moved from an act violent and dangerous constructing an alternative world of values to an act whose forms tarnish and become impotent due to change in the individual's relation to the social system over time.

The last chapter offers two strong examples of Alex's own linguistic prestige and violence diminishing through a direct encounter with his past. While in the milkbar, he bumps into his old droogy Pete, now nearly twenty and married. Alex begins speaking the old nadsat to Pete, and while Pete understands Alex, he does not respond in nadsat. In fact, before Pete can begin a conversation with Alex, his wife interjects, saying, 'He talks funny, doesn't he', and she starts giggling (Burgess 1986, p.188). When she asks Pete if he used

to speak nadsat, he provides an answer, then continues speaking to Alex: "'Well', said Pete, 'I'm nearly twenty. Old enough to be hitched, and it's been two months already. You were very young and very forward, remember' (Burgess 1986, p.188). Pete answers Alex's nadsat in a standard variety that suggests that Pete has outgrown the speech and the forwardness that drives teen subcultures to create antilanguage, and to commit the criminal acts that are part of the antisociety's moral schema. Pete's inclusion of 'hitched' as a slang term for marriage is standard slang representing an adult rite-of-passage, marriage.

In a less obvious yet wittier detail, Burgess suggests what rebellion through language and wordplay may truly accomplish against large power structures such as the modern nation-state, especially the freedomless and tyrannous one which frames *A Clockwork Orange*. After so much time attaching language and wordplay to violence, the twenty-first chapter suggests that not only is Alex's nadsat variant outmoded, but that for the fully grown George, wordplay is now simply a night's domestic entertainment. George and his wife are on their way to one of many 'little parties [...]. Mostly wine-cup and word-games. But very nice, very pleasant, you know. Harmless, if you see what I mean' (Burgess 1986, p.189). 'Harmless' seems to modify word-games and language as much as the party itself. In opposition to this idea, it could easily be said that these word games are a middle-class partygoer's revolt against the dull life afforded the characters of the novel. But whether these word games are escapist or conformist, they are certainly not dangerous. And neither is the view of language in *A Clockwork Orange's* final chapter. Language is, as George proclaims the word games, harmless.

Growing Up A Clockwork Orange

As discussed previously, *nadsat*, which pairs violence with irony, sarcasm, and mockery, mirrors the moral course of young Alex himself. As the novel opens with the young Alex, antilanguage and violence carve out a social structure distinct from a ubiquitous and traditional mother tongue and existence. Although the equating of language and violence dissipates by novel's end, language can still be seen as escapist, as a way to carve out personal space and pass the time. This is the hopeful, and perhaps unchanging, view of language and power that the novel provides.

I would suggest that even by the end of Part One, a grand notion of language superseding or circumventing power structures disappears as the language-deprived Dim blinds Alex. This symbolically ends language's ability to provide the individual with a weapon to gain freedom against an oppressive nation-state. Thus, when reflecting on Alex's linguistic success, one finds that his success was never against the state but only against his victims, an elderly man leaving the library, a non-violent liberal author and his wife, and an old lady who adored Beethoven as much as he. The dream of changing homogenized society or liberating oneself from it, through antilanguage, antisociety, and even physical violence, is an impossibility if one wishes to remain part of the overall community. Language, nation, and their social system are too powerful. One must return to this system and live by its standards to reap their benefits. In the end, one is socialized into conformity and appropriate, sanctioned measures of escape. As Burgess himself noted of linguistic and 'slang' novelties similar to *nadsat*: 'The lure of the up-to-date is a sad one, but even flashy coinages keep language vigorous and remind us that it is a reflection of man's very mortal

changeability' (1975, p.197). Alex outgrows 'the lure of the up-to-date' along with the youthful need to make any attempt to fight the system, proving nadsat a register inside the field of antilanguage, but also only a phase that the young may pass through creating antisocieties to counter a social structure Alex himself wishes to join by novel's end.

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