The Picture of an Anti-hero in A Clockwork Orange

Bachelor Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the sources listed in the primary and secondary sources section.
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1. INTRODUCTION

My final thesis is supposed to an analysis of composition and a literary study on *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess focusing on the main character, a violent teenager Alex. Due to Stanley Kubrick’s film adaptation it is his most famous book reputable among both readers and literary authorities.

*A Clockwork Orange* is a sort of book which is well-known and thus people are convinced that they know what it is about because were taught *something* about it at school and because they saw the film. But, in fact, only few people actually read it. Because of this, the main disadvantage on such well-known books is that they are misunderstood and mispronounced very often.

My point is to make a complex and comprehensible study, from which it would be clear that Burgess’ main aim was not an adoration of violence but a defence of individuality and free will. Moreover, the clue for this book is its protagonist, which means that through understanding the main character one can fully comprehends the whole book.

Secondly, when one is concerned in a work of art, which do not have to be only a book but whatever, it is very important to be interested also in the context to be able to fully understand it. This is why the political and social background and the author’s biography are included in my thesis.

Thirdly, this analysis is also a preparation for my diploma work, in which I would like to broaden the topic by comparing *A Clockwork Orange* to another book with similar protagonist. Nevertheless, in spite of this similarity, there are lot of differences as well, of which confrontation could bring new aspects – maybe not only – on the compared books.
2. CHANGES IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE 1950´S AND 1960´S

During the whole 1950´s and in the first half of the 1960´s, exactly until 1964, Britain was ruled by the Conservative Party. There were thirteen eventful years of its persistent leadership, during which three Tories alternated at the position of Britain´s Prime Minister.

In 1955 Sir Anthony Eden replaced Winston Churchill with great social support but by only a year his reputation has became worse, which could have been caused not only by society´s great expectations but also by the fact that during the era of his governing, the second half of the 1950´s, the British firstly realized that they are not an internationally respected power any longer, which led into public disillusion and Eden´s resignation in 1957. The main cause of this was the so-called Suez affair, which means the Egyptian unauthorized takeover of the Suez Canal, a very important international communication, which showed decrease in British influence in both Africa and Asia and its dependence on United States of America.

1960´s in Britain started with Harold Macmillan, who governed as Prime Minister since January 1957. Unlike Eden, who has been considered to be a foreign affairs expert, Macmillan focused on material condition of the British. Nevertheless, the importance of British Empire and Commonwealth was still decreasing. Moreover, the mid-1950´s are supposed to be the beginning of making Commonwealth nations, of which character had changed a lot, independent, which covers many violent oppositions and protests from both sides caused by different opinions on native people´s ability to govern as an independent state.

But what was the worst problem of Commonwealth was the racial segregation in the South Africa called apartheid, which had been firstly ignored
but due to rising African nationalism became an important issue in Britain’s business.

Another inconvenience was caused by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Selwyn Lloyd, who denied increasing wages to nurses, hospital workers and teachers, which have been considered to be publicly respected jobs, which lowered Government’s popularity among British people as well. Moreover, there appeared problems with unions that demanded guaranteed increase of wages, which culminated to strikes by nurses, post officers and railway offices.

In 1961 Harold Macmillan applied to join the Europe Common Market. His official announcement declared that continental industries would have meant a good competition to the British, which would boost the British economy but, in fact, his saw a possibility how to play an important role in both European and international affairs again. In general, the Common Market was supported by both public and the commonwealth states, which saw a possibility to participate in European market and matters but, consequently, the entry was refused by General de Gaulle.

Conservatives’ failures led to their removal by Labour party, who became governing party after long thirteen years, in the next general election in 1964. Labour Government with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister had to deal with economical difficulties as well. They preferred their social policies to monetary problems. On one hand, they made incitement to racial hate a criminal offence in 1965 but, on the other hand, their governing led to financial crisis.

In the first ten years of the second half of the twentieth century there fully developed and spread so-called consumer society, which started in the fifties in the United States. Nevertheless, the boom of consumerism in modern states in America and Europe is connected with the sixties.

Changeover that affected the post-war society was mainly caused by technological development, which started to essentially impact people’s living in the fifties.
New unified technologies facilitated to increase production, which markedly lowered prices of consumer goods and encouraged common people to buy more things more often. Subsequently, the higher spending increased companies’ emoluments and better organized trades enforced higher wages for employees.

In fact, the improvement affected people’s both professional and personal life. There were many new devices and improvements as disinfectants, frozen and dehydrated food and more effectual refrigerators, washing machines, spin-driers, televisions, telephones etc. Not only these products were invented but they were also becoming available for – almost – everyone.

Most of the new technologies used assembly lines, with which the work was repetitive and boring but not as hard and demanding as before. People had more leisure time and thus could focus on making their lives as comfortable as possible.

They realized that they spend the most of their time – and most of their life – at work and became interested in conditions they work in. Moreover, in the second half of the sixties scientists began researches of working conditions and their influence on people’s physical and mental condition. Although the main purpose was to increase the efficiency of workers, it improved the conditions.

Not only workers but mainly women’s life was becoming better. There were many new machines that performed the domestic labour or, at least, made it easier. Moreover, there was also a pill that essentially changed their life. There were hormonal oral contraceptives, which allowed women to plan their pregnancy and of which importance can be easily demonstrated on the fact that sixties are sometimes called the era of the Pill.

As was mentioned, consumerism has its roots in the United States of America and in the fifties and sixties was spreading in European states that, however, adapted also American attitudes and way of life.
There were mainly youth who were influenced by American ideas and consumerism. Because of their higher standard of living they could afford more spending and because of the fact that major part of the family outgoings was spent on goods for children they became the centre of commercial interests. This is the beginning of modern youth-orientated society, which, sequentially, brought pop-culture.

Moreover, youth were influenced by Angry Young Men and their adoration of individuality and free mind, which was supported by American ideas and idols.

Nevertheless, not everybody was so fascinated by such changes in society. On one hand, big factories and supermarkets provided all the conveniences but, on the other hand, they invaded and destroyed environment in both aesthetical and natural way.

There were many critics, mostly intellectuals and the faithful, who commented on demoralization, caused by materialism and consumerism and criticised life of frivolousness and no moral values, in which the main people’s aim is to earn utmost money which they are persuaded that they cannot live without but which, in fact, they do not need at all. At the bottom, they are so busy with the pointless cycle of earning and spending that they forget to be concerned with the real essence of their being.
3. THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ANTHONY BURGESS

John Anthony Burgess Wilson, which is his full name and was shortened to make his pen name, was born on 25th February 1917 in Harpurhey, Manchester, to a Roman Catholic family with Irish and Scottish ancestry. Religion influenced Burgess’ opinions and thoughts a lot, which reflects in many of his works.

Both his parents were artists. Anthony’s mother, Elizabeth Burgess Wilson, was a dancer. Unfortunately, she and Anthony’s only sister, Muriel, died in the influenza epidemic when he was a baby. His father, Joseph Wilson, was - among other things – a pianist.

Although he wrote poetry in his childhood, he wanted to become a musician the most. Finally, he studied English language and literature at university in Manchester, where he graduated in 1940. The theme of his final thesis was Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus for Elizabethan era was one of his interests.

Not long after finishing the university, in 1942, he married his first wife, Llewela Jones, who was inspiration for many female characters, mainly wives, in Burgess’ novels. Two years after their marriage Llewela was brutally assaulted by American soldiers, this appeared in A Clockwork Orange (1962). This fact seems to be too personal and improper but is important for better understanding the book. Briefly said, this shows that Burgess’ main idea of this book absolutely was not simple adoration of violence, of which he has been often accused of.

During the Second World War he set up the first of his long ways. As a member of Royal Army Medical Corps and Army Educational Corps he travelled to Gibraltar, where he stayed until 1946, when he left army, returned back to Britain, settled down in Adderbury, Oxfordshire, and started to teach at local grammar school.
As was said before, journey to Gibraltar was only the first of his travels. In the 1950’s he, for this time also with his wife Llewela, spent two years in Kuala Kangsar, Malaya, where he worked for the English colonial civil service.

The year 1959 significantly changed Burgess’ life – and his career too. After moving to Brunei he collapsed while teaching and was transferred home with suspended brain tumour. Given only one year to live he wrote five novels in order to financially ensure his wife. Eventually, the doctors were, fortunately, wrong. Since this unhappy year Burgess had became very copious writer.

The visit in Soviet Union in 1961 influenced his next works; however, the second half of the 1960’s was important mainly for his personal life. In a year he both lost his first wife and married again. His second wife was an Italian linguist and translator, Liliana (Liana) Macellari. Burgess and his new family left England and travelled around Europe for some time. At the end of 1960’s and in the 1970’s they lived in turns at Malta, in Italy, United States, Monaco, France and Switzerland.

In the early 1990’s he and his family came back to England and settled down in Twickenham, London. Anthony Burgess died on 22th November 1993 in London.

Many novels and magazine articles, critical works, book reviews, television plays and screenplays indicate that Burgess was not only copious but also multilateral writer.

Although he joined literature in the early 1950’s simultaneously with so-called Angry Young Men their works differ, in spite of the same historical background and few similarities, in many points. Burgess and Angry Young Men were all intellectuals interested in society they lived in and were all very critical to it. Nevertheless, Burgess’ works get over simple rebellion as the main idea and go deeper to the roots of status quo. Unlike their, his point of view is that of a conservative who, however, experiment with literature, which they disclaimed. Lastly, Angry Young Men adored strong and independent
personalities as “the rebel without cause” and made them the main characters of their book unlike Burgess, whose characters are rather anti-heroes.

For similar opinions and strong criticism of post-war society, Burgess has been more likely connected with Angus Wilson, Iris Murdoch, William Golding and Muriel Spark. Firstly, the main point which brackets these writers together is pessimism and a sceptical theory, influenced by Karl Popper and Jean Paul Sartre, that refused any utopian ideas because, according to them, the nightmares of the twentieth century, fascism and communism, had their ideal origin in a utopianism. Secondly, for all the ideologies, an individual is nothing. They all counts only with mass understood just as a means of their lust for power, not as a group of free individualities. This happened in modern post-war society as well. Finally, these authors were interested in rising violence and its causes. ¹

Gibraltar became the setting for Burgess´ first novel A vision of Battlements (written 1949, edited 1965), which has clear autobiographical features and in which he took advantage of his own experience of staying as a soldier in a British overseas territory and compare the British with other Europeans. According to the strong criticism to his compatriots, Burgess was not a nationalist.

The difference between cold and dispassionate Englishmen and other more warm-hearted nationalities occur also in other Burgess´ books. Southern and Asian nations seem to be more primitive and uncultivated because of their impetuousness but that is exactly the point why Burgess prefers them to the cool and cold. To him, a conservative, they are not so deformed by civilization and thus are more genuine.

This appears also in the Malayan Trilogy (in America published as The Long Day Wanes), consisting of Time for a Tiger (1956), The Enemy in the Blanket (1958) and Beds in the East (1959), in which the topic is specified to the conflict between British colonialists, who are losing both their colonies and
a position of a world power, and Malays. Nevertheless, there is a significant similarity with author’s life as well as in his other books.

The Trilogy is followed by five novels written with deathward feelings. These are *Doctor is Sick* (1960), *One Hand Clapping* (1961), *The Worm and the Ring* (1961), *The Wanting Seed* (1962) and *Inside Mr Enderby* (1963). Because such productivity was not supported by editors, the second and the last were published under the pseudonym Joseph Kell.

*The Worm and the Ring* deals with the second Burgess’ favourite topic. In this book he evolved his opinions about his native country influenced by American way of life, in which people are trying to fill their houses with washing-machines, televisions and other products of modern technology but their lives and minds are empty. To him, focus on material things, striving for profit and disaffection became the main features of contemporary society.

Characters of this book, a common English family, do not live together but only next to each other with no interest in each other. The main character, a world-weary grammar school teacher, is enchained in grey, monotonous and desperately uniform life with neither hopes nor expectations. Then he finds new essence of his life when meets a new colleague.

The same topic is evolved in a social satire with black humour features *The Right to an Answer*, written and published one year later, in 1962, in which one murder is followed by another. In this book, a provincial town in Midlands and its common inhabitants are observed by a man who had been abroad for a long time and thus has an open-minded view of his native country. On the other hand, there is an oppositional character, an Asian immigrant, who came to England to start new and, primarily, to revenge all the long years of British dominion.

Burgess’ travel to Leningrad at the beginning of sixties influenced two his following novels *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), in which he used his knowledge of Russian language and which will be analyzed in detail in next chapter, and *Honey for the Bears* (1963).
The latter one combines a story of an adventure and a social satire. The title is metaphorical. *Honey* is a metaphor of an American materialistic way of life and *bears* stand for Russians. This metaphorical utterance means that, according to Burgess, there is no hope for the United States, which will be ruined by aggressive Soviet Union just like a bear gluttonizes honey.

Another adventurous story is a spy novel *Tremor of Intent* (1966) which has a similar plot to Ian Fleming’s James Bond but, moreover, Burgess’ book provides a philosophical theory of dualism which says that world is propelled by the basic polarity of God and Devil, good and bad etc. For Burgess, the West and the East and the cold war between them made this fundamental duality in the contemporary world. What is dangerous for both human mankind and the entire world is neutrality and passivity, which could led to disastrous totalitarianism.

Different Burgess’ theory deals with the world’s progress, which is, according to him, perpetually cycling in three periods. The first stadium is an era of humanity and liberalism, which is followed by stadium of conversion and finally, there is a stadium of discipline and punishment. Then, it goes back to the first stadium.

This theory is described in *The Wanting Seed* (1962), which is often compared with *A Clockwork Orange* and *1985* (1983), which are also influenced by this theory and take place in unspecified future. The first one shows the world in the first phase and the latter in its third phase. Consequently, they make a closed cycle of Burgess’ theory about world’s development.
4. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

This novel, or rather novella, first published in 1962, is the first of Burgess´ dystopian books set in future. According to his cyclic theory of human development, *A Clockwork Orange* is set in its first phase of liberality and humanism, in which reformation is preferred to punishment. To Burgess, a traditionalist with a sceptic view on either modern civilization or the development of British post-war society, it is a stadium of neither discipline nor order.

In spite of Burgess´ own latter critical opinion to this book, it became his most famous work due to Stanley Kubrick´s film adaptation from 1971 of the same name as the book with Malcolm McDowell playing the role of Alex DeLarge – the surname appears only in the film and was chosen from Alex´s episode with two young girls after which he calls himself Alex the Large. Incidentally, there are more distinctions between the book and the famous film.

The film adaptation does not contain the last chapter, which Burgess did not approved of and which led to an idea of his drama adaptation *A Clockwork Orange: A Play with Music Based on His Novella of the Same Name* (1987).

Notwithstanding there is also an earlier black and white experimental adaptation by Andy Warhol, called *Vinyl* (1965), shot in the famous Factory.

**Composition**

The story of a violent teenager Alex being cured by the Reclamation Treatment after his assault on an old lady who finally died is quite simple. What are the most important parts of the book are the ethic question of human essence and experimental language based on a fictional slang.
The title is adapted from a piece of slang as well. It is a part of a Cockney expression as queer as a clockwork orange, which could, but not necessarily, be a sexual allusion to homosexuality.

The composition is premeditated. The book has three untitled parts, of which each contains seven numerated chapters. This is one of the reasons why Burgess disliked the omission of the last chapter in Kubrick’s adaptation. Each chapter starts with the same utterance What is going to be then, eh? This repeats during the whole book many times and expresses the idea that, in spite of the effort not to be, Alex’s and his friends’ life is monotonous and empty as their parents’. In fact, drugs and violence every day could become the same monotonous after some time as going to work.

There is a first person narration used in the book. Alex is a so-called autodiegetic narrator. Besides being a narrator he is also the protagonist, which heighten authenticity and expressivity of the story. His tale is devoted to narratees, who are biblically addressed as O my brothers and with whom the narrator directly communicates in few paragraphs.

Narrative pace is gradually changing. In the first chapter starting in medias res the discourse is longer than narration, which is expressed by Alex’s thoughts framed by the same repetitive utterance mentioned above. Later, descriptions are summarized. On the other hand, in all the incidents which show Alex’s and his band’s violence and brutality the pace is more slowly and described as scenes with a lot of details and direct speeches included. Alex really enjoys portrayal of these almost disgusting moments and focuses on such scenes.

Because of all these literary techniques mentioned in the two previous paragraphs the narrator, Alex, is very believable and persuasive and, moreover, as close to the reader as possible, which made the novel very expressive and demanding for common readers from the sixties and seventies. This is the point why it used to be so controversial in those days.
Time and Setting

The novel is set in unspecified time in future and in unspecified metropolitan city. A reader only knows that it happens after the Second World War and after 1960’s, which are the only two time references in the book. The indefinite setting emphasises timelessness, a possibility than it could happen at any time. Moreover, according to Burgess’ attitude, this phase of human existence regularly repeats without end.

The place has a symbolic dimension. Simultaneously with Alex’s condition there are indoor and outdoor places changing. In the first part, when Alex is free and independent person, there is the Korova bar, street, the place of their violence, and Alex’s home. The places are arbitrarily changing. However, in the next part, when Alex is imprisoned and kept at State Jail, only indoors, prison, his room, room for screening films, appear in his narration, which raises his feelings of enchainment and submission. Finally, Alex is physically free but is in turn abused by revolutionists and government. During this time there are still only indoors but when he realizes he has matured, there appeared more pleasant places, streets and a café.

London is often considered to be the city of the story but there are no clear and direct references. The mentioned places are fictional. The author named the avenues, ways and places according to famous people, writers, politicians etc. There are, among others, Kingsley Avenue, Attlee Avenue, Wilsonsway, and Priestly Place.

Characters

Characters could be divided into two groups. There are Alex and his droogs and society standing in unforgiving opposition to each other. However, the point is not to declare that these are bad and these are good because, according to the fundamental duality of existence, both the goodness and
badness are two sides of a coin and always exist as an inseparable pair. The point is to realize what does the word humanity truly means.

Each of the two groups contains one strong individual character that, in compliance with romantic ideas, stands above their community being disconsolately misunderstood for their exceptionality. There are Alex and the prison chaplain, who epitomizes Burgess’ thoughts.

“I must confess I share those doubts. The question is whether such a technique can really make a man good. Goodness comes from within, 6655321. Goodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man.”

All the names are neutral, rootless and do not refer to any culture. Characters are not described in detail. There are only few remarks. Other members of the band, Pete, Georgie and Dim, are described as a group with typical image inspired by the subculture of the fifties and sixties.

The narrator, Alex, is also the protagonist. He is violent but witty, honestly, unlike his friends, and considers himself to be the leader of the group, which afterwards leads to a conflict with his three companions, in which he hits Dim, whose name is significative. He is not only brutal but also barbaric. Georgie supersedes Alex after the conflict and later, when Alex is in a prison, is killed, which Alex takes as a justice.

His parents are grey and world-weary people chained by society and government and encapsulated in front of their television. When Alex is back from prison they are so shattered by all his previous riots and unable to refuse their nice new leaseholder that they do not want him at home any longer.

The way of the portrayal of Alex’s family is clear criticism to the character of the post-war British society which has been Americanised and lost its representativeness.

Burgess is ironically playing with names and allusions not omitting himself. Firstly, Alex’s victim and latter oppressor has a similar name,
F. Alexander. Moreover, he is an author of a fictional theoretical book named *A Clockwork Orange* and later turns maniac revolutionist. Alex destroys the book with no mercy.

Secondly, the cure he undergoes in the “*State Institute for Reclamation of Criminal Type*” ³ is called *Ludovico’s Technique* which is alike Alex’s favourite composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

The police officers, politicians, doctors and Alex’s Post-Corrective Advisor, P. R. Deltoid, are supposed to be the men of law and order but, in fact, they are even worse than the naughty teenagers. Consequently, delinquents cannot be reclamationed because of the fact that their governors are even more demoralized than they are.

**Language**

Important part of novel, which could be and has been studied in detail separately, is its original language worked out by the author. The experimental slang, by which the *droogs* speak, consists of about 200 nouns and verbs and is called Nadsat, which is a Russian suffix for teen. The origin of it is explained by one of the characters, Dr Brodsky, whose name is, however, also Slavonic. The nadsat-talk is mixing rhyming slang, items from gypsy talk and Slavonic words. The last mentioned illustrates Soviet influence; its propaganda and subliminal penetration impacting people’s mind. The Jugoslav beaches advertisement in a magazine and the shortcut of the State Jail, *Staja*, could be taken as other examples of Russian intervention. The latter epitomizes popularity of abbreviation in Soviet Union.

Yet the grammar is English, which can be shown on used words and their forms. There are phrasal verbs made from words with Russian origin as *gooly up* and other verbs have their past participle (including the sound variations) and gerund and nouns have plural form ending with the letter s, e.g. *viddy – viddied; govoreet – govoreeting; rooker – rookers, noga – nogas.*
The language is figurative. There are many figures as onomatopoeia – "bell ringringringring, cough kashl kashl kashl"; epizeuxis – "after page after page after page after"; alliteration – “I’m blind, Bog bust and bleed you, you ghrazny bastards;”\(^4\) puns – "pretty polly or appy polly loggy, eggiiwegg, squeeeeeeak.

There are also shortened words as doc and kot, interjections – "hauwww hauwww hauwww" and ambiguities as the word rabbit (work) made from Russian rabotat, which is also similar to rab (slave) and to robot, which clearly shows us group’s opinion on work. Another example of ambiguity is the term droog from Russian drugi (a friend, companion) which is alike English a drug. As was said before, the nadsat-talk is based on rhyming slang so there are also pararhymes as wishy washy or filthy fatty.

As the narrative techniques the slang is made in order to hold readers’ interest by its emotivity and expressivity, which is supported by the fact that the Nadsat is, due to Burgess interest in music and its connection with words, acoustically sophisticated as well.

Another purpose of the imaginative language were author’s effort to make the text believable and the band’s effort to separate from society and other teen groups. On one hand, credibility is a very important matter but, on the other hand, actual teen slang is only momentary fad making the book outdated by some time. Fictional language is thus the perfect choice.

Finally, in addition to the Soviet subliminal influence, Burgess also intended to make his own impact on reader by compulsion to look up the Nadsat terms in a Russian dictionary. And that is the fact why he did not approved of an old American edition with an appendix of a Nadsat glossary. Nevertheless, in spite of the Burgess’ disapproval, the glossary is added to other foreign language editions, the Czech one including, too.
Motives

There are many other motives important for full understanding the book and its ideological meaning due to which we can better explain the significance and mispronouncing of the book.

The important point, which has been already mentioned, is Burgess’ critical and ironical view on humanism and boundless belief in human goodness, which seemed pathetic to him. This is the reason why the irony is so spread in this novel; it shows the author’s opinion on behaviourism and Pavlov’s conditioned response as well. Not only because of the fact that Burgess was a Christian, had he disapproved of purely scientific view on personality.

Additionally, there is the ambiguous last chapter and its ending, which is quite pathetic as well. The unanswered question is whether it was author’s intention or failure. There are strong supports for both possibilities. One has already been explained and the other is frequent critics of Burgess’ building-ups of his book’s ends.

Secondly, although there are so many details about Alex’s present life, there is no information about past. The reader is aware of neither society nor politics. The only exception is omnipresent American and Russian intervention. The former is clearly perceptible from the people’s style of living; its focus on materialism and passivity. The latter is not outward because it caught people’s minds.

What is striking is, in spite of Alex’s intelligence, absolute absence of knowledge of history, which could be owed to Orwell’s 1984.

“We put our maskies... they were like faces of historical personalities (they gave you the names when you bought) and I had Disraeli, Pete had Elvis Presley, Georgie had Henry VIII and poor old Dim had a poet veck called PeeBee Shelley...” 5
All the ideas are explicitly given to the reader. Firstly, there is Alex’s explanation of his badness, in which he declared that he chose being bad just because he wanted. It was his free will. And, moreover, it is exactly the possibility to choose which signifies free will and existence of the self. Secondly, The Burgess’ thoughts are given into the words of the prison chaplain, the opponent of the Reclamation Treatment. Lastly, there is the old drunken as the representative of criticism of violence and the degeneration of world which is technically developed but in which moral values are not worth any longer.

There are also many allusions to actual writers, musicians and politicians. Some of them are clear but some of them are obscure and somehow encoded. Moreover, there is an actual music band named according to the imaginary Russian singer from this book, Johny Zhivago. As we can see, the influence of this almost fifty years old book still persists.
5. THE PORTRAYAL OF THE ANTI-HERO

An anti-hero is a literary concept with a long tradition. Nevertheless, to specify or date beginning of its first appear in literature is very uneasy for the definition of the term is very general and could be understood in many different ways. Moreover, the term could be further divided into more specifying subtypes according to various conditions as period of time, literary genres etc. Thus there are many possible theories on the development of an antihero.

According to J. A. CUDDON, the idea of an antithesis to a hero could be found as early as in the Greek New Comedy. Nevertheless the ancient notion of this character was quite different than the contemporary one. The anti-hero of these times was rather rough and simple object of satire and irony than unique and individualistic figure. A character standing in opposition to the majority appeared also in the literature of medieval times but the bloom of an anti-hero is connected with the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th, the period of Romanticism, in which we can find the origin the modern type of an anti-hero.

The dark era of radical political changes and social disturbances brought a new type of a character whose unfulfilled ideas led to their strong feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration raised by their strong individuality. Their negativism finally led to a desperate act threatening themselves or the others or both.

Later, in the 20th century there was another type of an anti-hero established. The period after the World War II is another example of disturbing times full of political and social changes and, in fact, such times always incline to romantic tendencies. The post-war anti-hero is typical for the works of so-called Angry Young Men. In works of John Waine, Kingsley Amis, John Osbourne and others picture of the status of common people in those uneasy days was the main idea. For everybody, the post-war era was another possibility
of a new start which, unfortunately, turned into disillusion. To Angry Young Men, noble ideas were superseded by lust for power and money, bureaucracy and oppression of class. Main purpose of their books was social critics and comprehension of the social problems through the view of an anti-hero.

On the contrary, Anthony Burgess focused on the human essence and the self and social deficiencies were of secondary importance. But the important fact is that this besteads only for A Clockwork Orange and its anti-hero, Alex. In fact, this book and Alex being strong individualist are quite exceptional in Burgess’ works.

As was said before, there are many ways how to define an anti-hero. We can find two types of it in Burgess´works. Firstly, there are his common men chained by society and their own trivialism and unsuccessfully trying to make their life any better. Their inability is usually expressed by their asexuality and impotency. This kind of characters could be called an anti-hero for the absolute lack of masculinity and heroism and appears in many Burgess´ novels. The main purpose of these characters is to provide a critical mirror to the society. They are Victor Crabbe in the Malayan trilogy, Christopher Howarth in The Worm and the Ring, Mr Denham in The Right to an Answer and Richard Ennis in A Vision of Battlements.

On the other side stands Alex, an anti-hero for his brutality. The interesting point is that by his representation he is more alike the characters of the Angry Young Men but his intention, or rather author´s intention which should be acquired through the Alex´s character, is different. It primarily focuses on the self and the social critique is secondary.

Another point which links Alex and the characters of Angry Young Men is a feeling of frustration caused by the lack of serious matters a young man needs to fight for.

“But, myself, I couldn’t help a bit of disappointment at things as they were those days. Nothing to fight against really. Everything as easy as kiss-my-sharries.”

7
As Alistair Davies and Peter Saunders declare in their article in SINFIELD, previous generations of men had a possibility to prove themselves in the Spanish Civil War and in the World War II. New generation of the fifties had nothing to fight for, nothing in which they could have proved their bravery and manliness. The only left is frustration upheld by raising women’s self-reliance.

**Alex’s Characterisation**

As was mentioned, Burgess played with names and connotations in *A Clockwork Orange* and it is also the case of its main character. The name Alex is attributive. It, or to the letter the term a-lex, means without or outside the law.

There is an internal focalizer, which means that Alex, calling himself *Your Faithful Narrator* or *Your Humble Narrator*, tells the story from his personal point of view. He is overt and unreliable narrator. He shows his internal feeling and thoughts, which are, however, different than the author’s. Having peculiar features and his own register he carries conviction.

Moreover, he is a very intelligent fifteen years old man who likes classical music and persuasively pretends good manners in particular situations. Not knowing him one could say that he is a very good boy. But he still is a young violent criminal with no respect to anything.

Other typical features of him are his aversion to everything which is dirty and primitive and his feel of superiority. He despises either his friend Dim or homeless and drunken people. On the other hand, when talking about violation a typical adjective he uses is *lovely*, from which is clear that he considers his violent behaviour an enjoyable game and drugs are mainly an instrument to make it funnier. Moreover, this causes the conflict with his friends who want to rob not for fun but for more money. To him, violence is like dancing waltz and is caused by his immaturity and ignorance of what the human life really is about. He also shows his naivety when he is given
injections in the institute for the reclamation and think that they are only vitamins and, secondly, when he follows F. Alexander’s group with no doubts and almost dies.

To him, violence is amusing until it turns against him. After the conflict with his friends he experiences one betrayal after another. His friends turn traitors and he is send to a State Jail, where he is betrayed once more by his fellow-prisoners, and then undergo the Reclamation Treatment, which is supposed to be a perfect cure for criminals’ reformation to government for it is short-time and apparently effectual. Unfortunately, their aim is to reach only external result, which means to decrease the number of crimes not to reform deliquents by an adequate penalty. This cure is an extreme consequence of society which avoids punishment and tries to substitute it by re-education in any case.

The point is that, according to Burgess, such a treatment is nonsensical. Human life is too complicated to have easy solutions. Punishment is a natural way how to learn from the mistakes. To understand the principle of effects of one’s doing and one’s own responsibility needs experiencing punishment with all its negative factors and results.

In fact, Alex is cured not by the treatment, which only made him unable, but by all the inconveniences he has to experience, which are cruel but equitable, and, as Blake Morrison says in his introduction to *A Clockwork Orange* \(^{10}\) time and experience, which is exactly what people need to became mature and responsible.

Nevertheless, the aim of the book is not a defence of Alex’s violence it is a defence of individuality and free will influenced by existentialism.\(^{11}\) According to which the main fault of modern society is its materialistic and outward focus due to which not only technical development is faster and faster but also human life is more stressful and demanding – also because of growing needs, which, in fact, people do not need at all. Because of all these circumstances one thing has been absolutely forgotten. And the thing is the self.
Burgess’ point was to defend free will in any condition because it is the first and the main privilege of a human being. What makes full-value human is their thinking, not only living. Thus Alex’s primary characterisation should not be his violence but his free choice to be violent unlike others, who are behaving as a herd.

**Meaning v. Significance**

According to BÍLEK\(^\text{12}\) it is important to distinguish between the terms *meaning*, which means what did the author intended by his book, and the *significance*, what does the book means for the addressee. The earlier is constant but the latter is variable according to the addressee, their social background, general knowledge and literary experience.

Ideally, these two elements are concurrent, which means that the addressee fully understands the author’s intention. But this is not, unfortunately, the case of A Clockwork Orange and its protagonist.

As was mentioned before, common mispronouncing of this book is a defence of violence. There could be find many reasons for such misunderstanding.

Omitting the addressees who have created their opinion on A Clockwork Orange only according to the Kubrick’s film adaptation, which is wrong at all, we can focus on the readers of the book.

People who read the book after its first edition, in 1960’s, were influenced by changes in society, which had to deal with a new post-war generation. Youth of these teenagers was different than their parents’ due to growing consumerism and Americanism. These young people had more leisure time, money and possibilities how to spend it.

This period is also connected with the beginning of youth subculture movements as The Teddy Boys and Mods (Modernists) established among teenagers from working class, whose aim was to differ from their parents’
culture in style of living, clothes and music. Moreover, so-called The Teds spend much of their time in milk bars listening to the American Rock and Roll music, which probably inspired Burgess in setting Alex and his *droogs* into a milk bar. Unfortunately, drugs and violence, another possible source of Burgess´ inspiration, were widely spread among these people, because of which they were unpopular in society.

Briefly said, readers just connected Alex and his companions with the source of inspiration – the actual movements they disapproved of for its rebellion, violence and taking drugs.

The second resource of mispronouncing is connected with addressee´s literary experience. Common mistake is the idea that the author and the narrator are one person, which is not true in this case. Actually, Alex´s ideas and thoughts are not Burgess’. The only figure who could epitomize Burgess is the prison chaplain. This misunderstanding is caused by the first person narration, which make the tale believable and emotive but also, on the other hand, could push the less experienced reader to consider author and narrator to be one.

In fact, the mispronouncing could be taken as Burgess´ great success because he made his character so persuasive and living that the readers believed that the literary figure is a living person and logically connected the character with its author.

As Alex bake so shall Burgess eat.
6. CONCLUSION

The cardinal themes of Burgess´ writings are social realism and the crisis of post-war Britain, philosophy and linguistics; *A Clockwork Orange* contains, at least partially, all of them and thus could be understood as a full-value representative of his work.

There is social criticism through the portrayal of Alex´s family influenced by Americanism and consumerism in its worst way, whose members do not live one with another but only next to another. According to Burgess, the essence of family, to give support and love to its members is lost.

Dealing with philosophy we can find two examples of Burgess´ ideas. The first and the main is a vindication of individuality in a world which, to the author, seems to approve of only ordinariness and human being behaving as a herd.

The second philosophical notion is connected with Burgess´ conception of the three phase development of society, according to which *A Clockwork Orange* represents its first phase of humanity, in which each offence is supposed to be removed not punished, which stands against author´s traditionalistic view on people and society.

Lastly, there is the teen slang, Nadsat, which is considered to be Burgess´ masterpiece. He succeeded in making up an original language functioning as a real one.

Not only for his creating such imaginary language he confirmed but also for his thoughts and ideas drawing people´s attention to important matters of post-war society Burgess confirmed his position among classic and respected modern writers.
7. NOTES


8. PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


9. RESUMÉ

10. ABSTRACT

The main points of this final thesis are a literary study and an analysis of the composition of *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess. The book is often mispronounced as being propagation of violence and brutality. Because of this fact, the thesis focuses on an analysis of the main character being the clue for the correct understanding the book. It also contains a political and social background and author’s biography, which are important for full comprehension of both the book and author’s purposes.