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This review of the novel "A Clockwork Orange" was written by Mockingbird Lit Crit, a New York Times critic. The novel, written by Anthony Burgess, tells the story of a young man named Alex who is a member of the droogs, a gang of teenagers engaged in petty crime and violence. The narrative is set in a dystopian future where crime is rife and the government is trying to control the population through a system of conditioning. The narrative is powerful and thought-provoking, raising questions about the nature of free will and the role of the state in shaping individuals.
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Chris Semansky teaches literature and composition online. His essays, stories, and poems appear regularly in magazines and journals. In this essay, Semansky examines Burgess’s narrative technique.

When we tell stories or listen to them, there is always a teller, someone describing the situation and relating the action, often commenting on it. When the person telling the story is also involved in the story, the teller is called a first-person nar-
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A Clockwork Orange

Novel, 1962
British Writer (1917 - 1993)
Other Names Used: Wilson, John Anthony Burgess; Wilson, John Burgess; Kell, Joseph (British writer);
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The reviews the novel received were generally favorable and emphasized both its thematic elements and its style. As an anonymous reviewer for the New York Times calls the book "brilliant," and writes, "A Clockwork Orange is a tour-de-force in nastiness, an inventive primer in total violence, a savage satire on the distortions of the single and collective minds." The 1987 American edition carries a blurb from Time magazine which states, "Anthony Burgess has written what looks like a nasty little shocker, but is really that rare thing in English letters—a philosophical novel."

The novel has received its share of attention from academic critics as well. John W. Titton, writing in Cosmic Satire in the Contemporary Novel, praises Burgess's use of Nabokov, saying that Burgess used it "to assure the survival of the novel by creating a slang idiom for Alex that would not grow stale or unmoded as real slang does." In his study of Burgess's novels entitled The Clockwork Universe of Anthony Burgess, critic Richard Mathews writes that "A Clockwork Orange is a masterpiece as both a novel and a film."

The novel is one of Burgess's most famous novels, and his most obvious clash of values is between the lawless hero and society that hopes to be able to control the human mind. In A Clockwork Orange, Burgess uses a first-person central narrator, Alex, who describes his violent and amoral existence. In so doing, Burgess creates sympathy for a character who in most ways is admirable. Burgess often uses such a narrator to "humanize" the monstrous acts of the main character. In A Clockwork Orange, the reader is given a glimpse of the narrator's world through his eyes.

In the following essay, Rabkinovitz examines ethical values in Burgess's Clockwork Orange. In Anthony Burgess's most famous novel, A Clockwork Orange, the most obvious clash of values is between the hero and society. This struggle obscures another conflict which is nevertheless very important: the opposing views of libertarians and authoritarian views on how best to provide social control. The theme of libertarian authoritarian opposition recurs throughout Burgess's novels, often as a conflict between points of view that Burgess has called Pelagian and Augustinian. The best exposition of this idea is given by Tristram Foye, the protagonist of Burgess's novel The War Zone. Foye, who is a history teacher, explains that Pelagianism is named for Pelagius, a monk whose teachings were condemned by the church. Pelagius argued against the doctrine of original sin and advanced the idea of human perfectibility, hence the patron of libertarian societies. St. Augustine, a contemporary of Pelagius, reaffirmed the doctrine of original human imperfection, he said, was possible only with God's grace. Because grace is not unconditionally granted, there must always be sin, war, crime, and hence the need for social control. Augustine therefore emerges as patron of the authoritarian. Burgess often presents social history as a cyclical alternation between Pelagian and Augustinian parties which oppose one another like yin and yang. With the Augustinians in power, there is a period of social stability which comes as the result of a rigidly enforced authoritarian moral code. Such controls make it appear that the populace is inherently ethical and encourage a growing faith in human perfections. Eventually, the anarchy of the Augustinians seems superficial. The populace begins to demand more freedom, libertarian arguments gain credibility, and finally there is a transition to a Pelagian form of government.

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