Anthony Burgess, (Auto-)Biographer

by John Fletcher

I always think Pontius Pilate has had a bad press. To my mind (and I am not alone in thinking this: Anthony Burgess makes the same point in *Little Wilson and Big God*), Pilate's famous question, 'what is truth?' raises an issue of far-reaching importance. Even academic historians now take the matter seriously. They have to: there are people out there who claim that historiography is a kind of fiction, that no 'history' can be entirely truthful (especially --feminist critics would argue-- if it ignores 'her-story'). So historians of the Holocaust --to take an example-- must confront head-on this seemingly innocent proposition (that historiography is fiction), lest they fail to halt a slide down a slippery slope that can end up in what is called 'Holocaust-denial', the refusal to accept that the mass-murder of Jews during World War II occurred at all.

In the case of Anthony Burgess, Pilate's question raises interesting issues which I explored in the fourth annual Anthony Burgess lecture on 13 November 2001 and in subsequent discussions and follow-up seminars. The present essay is a more formal, less discursive and more detailed presentation of my argument, which in essence is that the three related genres which Burgess practised so well --autobiography, literary biography and fictionalised biography-- are but different shades on a colour-spectrum that merge into each other *sans solution de continuité* : that they are different kinds of fiction, different kinds of truth.
What I was arguing in Angers (picking up something said by Stanley Gontarski of Samuel Beckett) was that memories are not historical but fictive --selected, reordered, re-emphasised versions of past events-- and that in Burgess's case this remains essentially true whether autobiography, literary biography or fictionalised biography are concerned.
Note 1.

The autobiographies are *Little Wilson and Big God* (1987) and *You've Had Your Time* (1990),

which fill out and complement the more purely musical biography, 'Biographia Musicalis', included in
This Man and Music
(1982).

The literary biographies are contained in the books on Shakespeare (1970), Joyce (especially *H ere Comes Everybody*
, 1965), D .H. Lawrence (1985) and Ernest Hemingway (1978), and in the profile of Samuel Beckett published in
The Times
in 1986.

The fictionalised biographies are on Shakespeare (*Nothing Like the Sun*, 1964), Christopher Marlowe (*A Dead Man in Deptford* , 1993), Keats and Belli (
ABBA ABBA
, 1977), and Somerset Maugham (
Earthly Powers
, 1980).

The Autobiographies

In the preface to the first volume of his autobiography, *Little Wilson and Big God*, Anthony Burgess says that like St Augustine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau before him, he is writing "confessions", but "without the promise of such basic spiritual revelations as they provide". He is setting down "pure memories", he tells us, but warns that while "memories sometimes lie in relation to facts" (it being "difficult to draw a boundary between the remembered and the imagined"), "facts also lie in respect of memory". In this he is following Marcel Proust, albeit without naming him. He does, however, record at least one Proustian experience: the heating grilles in Manchester's Free Trade Hall, he says, "gave off a strange musty smell which I was to meet again in Fraser and Neave"s tonic water in Singapore' (
MM
, p.16). In
A la recherche du temps perdu
, Proust famously demonstrates that what he calls "involontary memory" --the sort that is triggered by sensations like the smell of tonic water-- purveys and conveys more truth than any other form of registering the past; or, as Burgess puts it, "the truth is fabled by the daughters of memory". As for reliability, "the human brain is an inadequate storage and retrieval system",

Burgess concedes, with a sidelong glance at the CD Rom, an invention which would have intrigued Proust greatly had he known it. Nevertheless, though "I trust my own [brain] little," Burgess goes on, "still I trust it". And as for the worth of the autobiographical undertaking, "any life will serve as a type of all lives...the autobiographer provides the raw material for the social historian, demonstrating what it was like to be imprisoned in a particular segment of time". His book, he maintains, "is about somebody else, connected by the ligature of a common track in time and space to the writer of this last segment [the preface]", and that this "somebody else" can represent others of his generation and background.

He decided to write his autobiography, he informs us, to pre-empt two attempts to write his life for him, one by a "Canadian academic", the other by "a well-regarded literary hack". To date there is, indeed, no book-length literary biography of Anthony Burgess in print, so that there is no objective, external check on what he is telling us, which may therefore, he admits, have been distorted by factors such as "sheer shame at the banality of my life", the inescapable circumstance that "autobiography has to be egocentric", and the fact that "a good deal of real life has got into my fiction; I forbear to unscramble it all, though I have unscrambled some".

Interestingly, this last point --that "the novelist siphons his inner life into the work he has already published"-- was picked up by David Lodge (a novelist and critic almost as distinguished as Burgess, and a great admirer of his work), in his review of *Little Wilson and Big God*. "The novelist works his effect," Lodge wrote, "partly by concealing the seams that join what he has experienced to what he has researched or invented. To publish one's autobiography is an invitation to literal-minded readers to unpick the stitching. We can only salute the mysterious process by which [Burgess's often] negative experience can be turned to positive account in artistic creation" (
Times Literary Supplement
, 27 February 1987, pp. 203-4). Lodge was clearly thinking here of the infamous assault on Lynne Burgess fictionalised in
A Clockwork Orange
: in the autobiography (John Sutherland noted later in his review of
You've Had Your Time
), the traumatic event "is dealt with so cursorily as to suggest that forty years on, the episode was still unbearable" (
Times Literary Supplement
, 26 October 1990, p. 1143). This is how, in
Little Wilson and Big God
, Burgess recalls the attack on his wife:

'Major Meldrum....seemed to me to have little justice in his inventory. Nor any compassion.

There is no resonance in the term "compassionate leave", for which I was now driven to apply. That was in April of 1944. I received a letter from Sonia Brownwell, later to become Sonia Orwell, who was an occasional drinking friend of Lynne's. The letter was about Lynne, and Lynne was too ill to write it herself. Lynne had been working late at the Ministry of War Transport on the scales of victualling for the small craft of Operation Overlord. Leaving the office at midnight she had been set upon by four men who, though in civilian dress, were evidently GI deserters. Their accents were southern. The attack was not sexual but in the service of robbery. The four snatched her handbag and one of them tried to pull off her tight gold wedding ring. He was prepared to break or even cut the finger. Lynne screamed to no response of help. Her screams were stilled by blows. She remembered being kicked before losing consciousness. She was pregnant and she aborted. She was sick now with perpetual bleeding glossed as dysmenorrhoea. If had been concerned about not receiving letters from her, here was the reason. *My response need not be described*. I went at once to Meldrum and demanded home leave. He would not grant it. So, I said, it is more important to keep up this farce of Army Education than to fly to the bedside of a desperately sick wife? That is how the Army sees it. God fuck the army. You're a bad officer, sir. I demand a posting. You will not get it. I already have one posting on my hands.' (*LWBG*, p.301; my italics)

The short sentences, together with the omission of speech marks in the heated exchange between Burgess and his commanding officer, add considerably to the dramatic impact of this reminiscence, so fertile in later developments. But the sentence which I have italicised is, in the present context, even more interesting. It implies not just that the author's feelings need not be described, but that they cannot be described: i.e., that fiction does it a lot better than autobiography, and that fiction, in the shape of *A Clockwork Orange*, did so, triumphantly. So we should not take too seriously --trop
au pied de la lettre
-- this throw-away remark in
Flame into Being
, the biography of D.H.Lawrence (a book which I shall come to in a minute):

"It is unfortunate that the name D.H. Lawrence should, in the common mind, be associated with only one book, and that one [*Lady Chatterley's Lover*] far from his best. We all suffer from the popular desire to make the known notorious. The book I am best known for [
A Clockwork Orange
], or only known for, is a novel I am prepared to repudiate: written a quarter of a century ago, a *jeu d'esprit*
knocked off for money in three weeks, it became known as the raw material for a film which seemed to glorify sex and violence."

(*FiB*, p.205)

The crime against Lynne was not witnessed by Burgess, nor indeed by anyone else. He got his information at third hand, from Sonia Brownwell, who presumably got hers partly from Lynne and partly from the police and hospital authorities (understandably, Burgess cannot be bothered to go into that kind of trivial detail where such a painful subject is concerned). In the case of an occurrence to which he referred several times in the course of his life (not just, of course, in *A Clockwork Orange*), he was not drawing on personal recollection, on what he calls the "retrieval system" of his own memory.

So there could be an element of distortion here. "Is Burgess aware of distortion?" John Stinson wonders.

Note 2.

I am sure he was. But there are other kinds of distortion, not attributable to imperfections in the transmission of information to which the autobiographer is prone.

If we are honest, we will all admit that we are occasionally guilty of editing, embroidering, embellishing, even distorting a good story to make it better, more effective, in the retelling. I myself freely own up to doing so, and I gave an example in the lecture.

Note 3

The writer, however, is a professional teller of tales, a fabulator, a person who makes up stories for a living. Burgess was well aware of this: "I was a faker, a patcher, something of a showman", he admits (*MM*, p. 33), and some of his stories do seem like tall ones. Are we having our leg pulled, for instance, when we are informed, *pince sans rire*, that the drummer in Burgess's army band was called "Styx" Williams (*MM*, p. 28)? He was undoubtedly called "Sticks", as an electrician on a building site is called "Sparkie" and a carpenter "Chippie". But "Styx"? This is a pun of Joycean proportions, and I take leave to doubt whether the members of the Entertainments Section to which Burgess was posted had ever heard of the river in Hades across which Charon ferried his passengers for a fee. My suspicions about having my leg pulled are further increased when Burgess tells me, again with a completely straight face, that chemistry --"an essential subject", as he rightly says-- had ceased to be taught in his Manchester school "after the blowing-up by a disaffected South American pupil of the chemistry laboratory". I sense that Burgess made this up so that he could kid us that, in order to take the "highly competitive" examination for recruitment to a government department, that of Customs and Excise, he had to learn chemistry "from a book and set up experiments in the lab of my mind" (*MM*, p. 22). Pull the other one, Anthony, I am tempted to say...

Carol Dix reminds us that Vladimir Nabokov (he of such serious literary jokes as *Pale Fire*) was one of the few writers whom Burgess envied or emulated,
Note 4
and Nabokov's own autobiography,
Speak, Memory
, is a fascinating illustration of my theme. The complex issues involved here have been well analysed by another critic, John Stinson, who explains that in telling his life story Burgess, aka Wilson, is

"aware of, and admits to, playing a kind of game with the reader and with himself. His awareness that the boundaries between fiction and biography are nebulous is sophisticated…The "Wilson" that we meet is, like a character in a complex, ironic, modern fiction, one that is both rich and elusive. ...Burgess is frequently concealing even as he seems to be revealing, an unsurprising phenomenon given that irony is his usual métier in fiction. He knows that "objectivity" is impossible; one's own "truth" will shift and change. Fact and myth, past actuality and memory, often blur…We learn a very great deal about Burgess in *Little Wilson and Big God*
, most of it as accurate as the material in any usual, good autobiography, but we are also reminded that [like Nabokov] he knows how to play some cunning games". (
JSS
, pp. 12-13)

The Literary Biographies

Anthony Burgess makes no bones about the fact that his biographies are second-hand. He is quite open in acknowledging the extent of his debt to Richard Ellmann in a range of writings on James Joyce, for instance, and to Carlos Baker in the case of the little book on Hemingway. But no-one goes to a Burgess biography for information not already in the public domain; one reads him for a fresh, personal slant on a great writer (and he only bothered with authors of the first rank) and for literary criticism of a high order. His approach --and that is our loss-- is now rather old-fashioned. He uses the life to illuminate the work, and vice-versa, a critical sin against which anathemas were first hurled by Marcel Proust in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (anathemas since repeated *ad nauseam* by every earnest scholar convinced --as they now all seem to be-- that works spring into being *ex nihilo*
through a kind of literary parthenogenesis). He is also old-fashioned --and again, that is our loss-- in being quite uncomplexed about his willingness to make value judgements. Not for him the current fad of assuming that everything a writer produces is of equal aesthetic value, or worse, that it is

de mauvais goût
to claim that Shakespeare has greater cultural significance than soap-opera or that Mozart counts for more,
sub specie aeternitatis
, than the Beatles. (As I write this, there is much wailing and gnashing of teeth in the world's media over the death of George Harrison, whose ashes have been scattered at no small expense in the River Ganges; it reminds me that Mozart was given a pauper's funeral and lies in an unmarked grave; but there can be no doubt,
pace
the regnant cultural egalitarians, whose music will still be listened to a hundred years from now.)

I do not cite the names of Shakespeare and Mozart at random; Burgess has written enlightening criticism on both. "His *Shakespeare*" (1970) --writes Geoffrey Aggeler in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* (vol. 14, p. 186)-- "is an entertaining biography, full of fanciful conjecture, and useful to the beginning student." I find that an uncharacteristically perfunctory judgement on the part of Professor Aggeler, imposed upon him no doubt by the
DLB
format.
Shakespeare
is in fact replete with insights, not least this one, about the magpie nature of every great writer, a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles":

'The writer needs a scrap of psychoanalytical terminology: he does not have to read the whole of Freud; he merely has to filch something from a paperback glossary or a learned man on a bus…You may know the fiction-writer by his library, whose contents flatter neither the eye nor the owner's capacity for systematic reading. Instead of phalanges of rich uniform bindings, there are old racing guides, dog-eared astrological almanacs, comic periodicals, secondhand dictionaries, unscholarly history books, notebooks full of odd facts picked up in lying-in hospitals or taxidermist's shops. When Shakespeare achieved a library, if he ever did, we can be sure it was not like [Francis] Bacon's.'

(*S*, p. 39)

This reminds me of something the great Ibsen scholar, James McFarlane, once told me. Ibsen,

he said, had a great respect for Nietzsche, but he did not read him in the original, let alone in the *Gesammelte Werke*. He picked up all he needed to know about the German philosopher from Norwegian periodicals, particularly from what we would now call "literary supplements". I am sure Burgess is right that Shakespeare acquired all the learning he possessed in a not dissimilar manner. All great writers do. What would be considered sloppy scholarship in an academic is perfectly acceptable in a creative writer (after all, how many academics have become great writers?).

If Burgess revered Shakespeare, he worshipped James Joyce ("hero-worship" is nearer the mark), to the extent of becoming, Gore Vidal has said, "a one-man Joyce industry". Note 5. Burgess's enthusiasm for the great Irish writer is perfectly understandable. They were both cosmopolitan polyglots --the reverse of narrowly provincial minds-- effortlessly taking their place in the great European tradition which they embraced with uncomplicated enthusiasm, indeed took completely for granted. Joyce, while immortalising Dublin, "turn[ing] it into an archetypal city, eventually into a dream city" (
HCE
, p. 34), was not interested in Erse or Celtic Twilight (except to pun on both in
Finnegans Wake
). "His aim" --Burgess remarks wittily, with a characteristically refreshing disdain for political correctness-- "was to be a European artist rather than a bard-senator [
sc
. W.B.Yeats] of a backwater republic [
sc
. Eire]" (
HCE
, p. 33). Similarly, Burgess, while never repudiating his Mancunian and Lancastrian roots --on the contrary, he celebrated them-- was a man of the world in the literal sense of the term, to the extent of mastering languages, like Malay, which even Joyce did not attempt to learn.

But the most significant thing which Joyce and Burgess had in common, of course, was their former Roman Catholic faith. As Christopher Burstall (the dedicatee of *Here Comes Everybody*) says, it is difficult to disentangle the two writers:
"Burgess had a feeling of kinship for the whole undertow of Catholicism, exile and cunning in Joyce, who summed it all up for him in the famous hell-fire sermon in
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
".
Note 6.
In this assessment (written while Burgess was still alive), Geoffrey Aggeler puts the matter well:

'With regard to religion, Burgess still maintains a "renegade Catholic" stance that is oddly conservative in some respects. He despises liberal Catholicism [of the Vatican II variety], which seems [to him] to have become another religion in the process of gaining acceptance in the modern world. The ecumenical movement repels him, as do the liturgical changes and the use of the vernacular: " ...when I say that I am a Catholic now, I mean solely that I have a Catholic background, that my emotions, my responses are Catholic, and that my intellectual convictions, such as they are, are very meagre compared with the fundamental emotional convictions. Certainly, when I write, I tend to write from a Catholic point of view -either from the point of view of a believing Catholic, or a renegade Catholic, which is I think James Joyce's position. Reading *Ulysses*, you are aware of this conflict within a man who knows the Church thoroughly and yet has totally rejected it with a blasphemous kind of vigour".'

(*DLB*, p. 167)

The vigorous blasphemies in *Ulysses* were very much to Burgess's taste, and he quotes them with relish in *Here Comes Everybody* (such as the parodies of the *Credo*, "they believe in rod, the scourger almighty, creator of hell upon earth, and in Jacky Tar, the son of a gun, who was conceived of unholy boast, born of the fighting navy, suffered under rump and dozen, was scarified, flayed and curried...", and of the *Ave Maria*, "Hail Mary, full of grease, the lard is with thee...", *HCE*, p. 31). But Burgess is far too intelligent not to perceive that

'Joyce's rejection of Catholicism was far from absolute...the disciplines and, in a tortured renegade form, the very fundamentals of Catholic Christianity stayed with him all his life...As Buck Mulligan says of Stephen Dedalus [and as we might say of Anthony Burgess], he has the Jesuit strain injected the wrong way…All through *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* we catch echoes of the liturgy in parodic form, but we also meet learned chunks of theological speculation, as well as close Thomistic reasoning. It is typical of Joyce that, creating a religion of art to replace his Catholicism, he has to formulate his aesthetic in the terms of the schoolmen, and that his very premises come out of Aquinas. He cannot slough the Church off, he can never become completely emancipated. In *Ulysses* he is obsessed with the mystical identity of Father and Son; in *Finnegans Wake*

his only real theme is that of the Resurrection.'

(*HCE*, p. 31)

Certainly, despite the modest disclaimer in the Foreword to *Here Comes Everybody* ("my book does not pretend to scholarship, only to a desire to help the average reader who wants to know Joyce's work but has been scared off by the professors"), this volume must rank as one of the best critical studies of Joyce ever written. It covers the entire *opus*, from the earliest pieces of juvenilia to that "book of dreams", *Finnegans Wake*, and it is not afraid to show (as I suggested above) that parts of that *opus* --the verse and the play Exiles in particular-- are not worth much. But if Burgess can see what is weak, he perceives with even greater clarity what is strong. After a masterly analysis of Molly Bloom's "Penelope" monologue (in which Odysseus, in the guise of Leopold Bloom, "kill[s] all the suitors"), Burgess concludes with the "classic quotation" which is "incapable of being wearied or staled by repetition", and says of it --as all will agree who, like me, have willed that it be read at their secular funeral-- "there is noting in all literature more joyous";

'and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes'
(*HCE*, p. 176)

Chapter 12 of *Here Comes Everybody* is a masterly essay which sums up Joyce's achievement in *Ulysses*. Firstly, Burgess says, *"Ulysses* is a great comic novel"; and secondly, it "is one of the most humane novels ever written". Joyce is "no Wellsian optimist", and for him "history is a mess", but his book "accepts the world as it is" and "relishes man's creations", in art, science, and above all, language. In a mere six pages (177-182), Burgess writes more sense about *Ulysses* than some of the "professors" in six hundred.

Imitation, as is well known, is the sincerest form of flattery, and Burgess does not hesitate to copy the master who stretched the English language "to the limit" in providing a "heroic background for an advertising canvasser who is also a cuckold" (*HCE*, p.182). Spindthrift's quest for his faithless wife in
The Doctor is Sick
(1960) "parallels the quest of Leopold Bloom in
Ulysses
[; this] novel, like a number of Burgess's others, structurally parallels Joyce's masterpiece…Burgess builds deliberately upon mythic frames and, like his master Joyce, even reveals some mythopoeic tendencies[, so that many] of Burgess's characters are ironically modified archetypes" (
DLB
, pp. 172, 181). This is notably the case (as David Lodge noted in the
Times Literary Supplement
review cited above, and as Ben Forkner pointed out in a discussion at Angers), with
A Vision of Battlements
(1965), the narrative of which is based on the
Aeneid
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In writing about Joyce Anthony Burgess was discussing a writer with whom he felt a deep personal rapport, founded largely, as I have said, on a shared religious background (Burgess point outs that he and Joyce were "cradle Catholics", unlike latter-day converts such as Graham Greene, who was more of a "Jansenist" anyway, and Evelyn Waugh, who snobbishly pined after "an unbroken tradition of English Catholic aristocracy", *HCE*, p. 31). When it came to writing the "centennial tribute" to D.H.Lawrence, Burgess was well aware that they were very dissimilar people, but he admired the Nottingham writer for "penetrating into the heart of life". Burgess generously concludes --but then generosity towards other authors characterised all his critical writing-- that notwithstanding Lawrence's "hit-and-miss" literary technique and a "diffuseness which looks for what he is trying to say while he is saying it", "to read him is to feel oneself in contact with a personality which has broken through form and rhetoric and confronts one in a kind of nakedness" (*F*
iB
, pp. ix, x, 4, 9).

The book on Hemingway is notable chiefly for demonstrating --on the basis of such excellent illustrations as a facsimile of the holograph manuscript of the first page of *A Farewell to Arms*-- that his prose is "artless-looking while being the product of very cunning art" (
FiB
, p. 8), a "highly-wrought verbal artefact in which meaning resides wholly in the rhythms of the language" and "in the very shape of sentences which...cannot resist a dying fall". "The Hemingway tune", Burgess perceptively concludes, "is elegiac even when it most celebrates

joy" (
EH
, pp. 56, 116). As always, in support of his point, he chooses an apt quotation:

Now you were accustomed to see the bare trees against the sky and you walked on the fresh-washed gravel paths through the Luxembourg gardens in the clear sharp wind. The trees were sculpture without their leaves when you were reconciled to them, and the winter winds blew across the surfaces of the ponds and the fountains blew in the bright light. All the distances were short now since we had been in the mountains.

(*EH*, p. 116)

Burgess wrote less about Samuel Beckett, though it is clear that he admired him greatly. He reviewed the prose works *Malone Dies* and *No's Knife* on publication, and bestowed generous praise on a couple of critical studies, including my own book,
The Novels of Samuel Beckett
(1964). In fact his piece on it reveals something of his working methods as a literary critic. On page 42 of my chapter on
Murphy
I reproduce a sample of Beckett's poetic writing as proof of what I call his "ability to fix in striking images the beauty of natural things":

'The leaves began to lift and scatter, the higher branches to complain, the sky broke and curdled over flecks of skim blue, the pine of smoke toppled into the east and vanished, the pond was suddenly a little panic of grey and white, of water and gulls and sails.'

Burgess was clearly as impressed with this sentence as I was, since he quoted it several times, the last in his *London Times* profile of Samuel Beckett, published on the occasion of the author's eightieth birthday in 1986. Note 7. *Oeuvre de circonstance* though it is, the article, like the book-length biographies I have been discussing, ably relates Beckett's biography to his work and his theme that life is "a wretched grey Saturday [which] has to be lived through" (a vivid phrase which Burgess uses more than once in discussing this writer).

And as with his evaluation of Joyce and the others, his general conclusion about Beckett's significance can hardly be bettered:

'Beckett is not an attractive author, whatever that term means, but he is immensely important. He has dared to incarnate everybody's true suspicions about the real nature of the universe, and to do this he has turned his back on the richness of his own literary inheritance and forged a highly personal language out of [French], a tongue not his own .'

(*The Guardian*, 24 July 1964, p.9)

The Fictionalised Biographies

These are racily written, highly entertaining novels, with the added spice that they are partially, even largely, "true" (to return to my starting point). In his 1982 Foreword to *Nothing Like the Sun* , Burgess admits that some of his views about Shakespeare's love life are speculative --particularly that the "dark lady" of the *Sonnets* came from the East Indies-- but claims that "the known history of Shakespeare's life has not been tampered with: the exterior biography is probably correct, and the interior, or invented, biography does not conflict with it."

"The virtue of a historical novel" (Burgess wrote in what was to be virtually his last book, *A Dead Man in Deptford*) "is its vice - the flatfooted affirmation of possibility as fact" (pp. 271-2). He was well aware that in writing fictionalised biography he was mining a fascinating literary seam, full of the rich potential inherent in the "affirmation of possibility as fact" .Why else would he have devoted such a large part of his total oeuvre to life-writing? After all, one of the best-loved books by Somerset Maugham --who is the subject of *Earthly Powers* , a Burgess novel which starts with a brilliant pastiche of a Maughamesque "arresting opening"-- is *The Moon and Sixpence* , a fictionalised account of the life of the painter Paul Gauguin. And so one could go on. As Burgess did, right up to the end.

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Notes

1. See *On Beckett: Essays and Criticism*, edited by S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1986), pp. 8-9. In what follows, these abbreviations are used:
LWBG
(
Little Wilson and Big God
),
FiB
(
Flame into Being
),
S
(
Shakespeare
),
HCE
(
Here Comes Everybody
),
MM
(

This Man and Music
),
EH
(
Ernest Hemingway and his World
),
JJS
(John J. Stinson's book: see endnote 2 below) and
DLB
(
Dictionary of Literary Biography
).
Return to article
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2. *Anthony Burgess Revisited* by John J. Stinson (Boston: Twayne, 1991), p. 12. Return to article .

3. In my reply to an enquiry from a British vice-chancellor about a candidate for a readership at his university , I wrote that in her research the aspirant had reported that the dimmer women students tended to enroll on courses in feminism, seeing it as a "soft option", only to be sadly disillusioned when faced with the rigours of complex discourse. I said that this confirmed my own experience, and I told the story of a clever male student of my acquaintance who found himself the only man on such a course. A girlfriend borrowed his carefully worked out notes to write her essay, thereby saving herself a lot of effort, and then promptly lost them, to his enormous chagrin, made all the worse by her total bafflement as to why he was making such a fuss ("it was only a loose-leaf binder, for God's sake", was her angry retort). I did not want to spoil a good story by weighting it down with irrelevant circumstance, so I omitted to mention that the male student was my own son... Return to article .

4. *Anthony Burgess*, by Carol M. Dix (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1971), p. 5. Return to article .

5. *The Burgess Variations* (video, Angers University Library NL 67). Return to article .

6. Ibid. Return to article .

7. Unfortunately, the speech marks were omitted in error from this quotation by the *Times*'s sub, which must have baffled readers who did not know their Murphy.
Return to article
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