

## Introduction

By [Ben Forkner](#)

### Essays

Over the years I have heard a number of scholars and readers of Burgess vainly inquire about the contents of one of the few essays on his work that Burgess ever mentioned. Vainly, because the essay was delivered once, and once only, in the form of a faculty lecture at the University of North Carolina in the Fall of 1969, and never published. Burgess happened to be present at the lecture, since he had just been invited for a short stay at the university as writer-in-residence. It was a revelation to him, in many respects. He singled it out for praise twice in print, once in each volume of his autobiography. Here is what he writes in *You've Had Your Time*

(Heineman:London, 1990, p.206):

Tom Stumpf, a young professor of English with children he taught to sing Purcell, kindly laid on a post-Thanksgiving turkey dinner for us. He did more. He arranged to give an evening lecture on my work. I was embarrassed at this and decided not to attend, though I was impelled to stay close to the hall where it was given, perhaps in the hope of at least hearing occasional laughter. The rain was heavy as I patrolled the perimeter, so I went in. I was in time to hear Tom dealing with my first hero, Sgt R. Ennis of *A Vision of Battlements*. The name R. Ennis, Tom said, was a palinlogue of 'sinner.' I was surprised to hear this, since I had chosen 'Ennis' because, signifying an island, it pointed at the loneliness of the possessor of the name. But I could not deny that what he said was so. The best literary insights were coming from the Americans. They were prepared to look at a writer's unconscious. They were ready too to take contemporary literature with academic seriousness, thus helping contemporary authors to understand themselves. British universities shut us entirely out.

Most readers of the *Newsletter* will need to be told that Professor Tom Stumpf has become somewhat of a living legend in Chapel Hill. Worshipped by his students for his wit and wisdom, he has delivered countless lectures of the sort throughout his career. Since I knew he has often been too busy to type them up, and worry them into print, I had little hope that he would be able to find the Burgess lecture thirty years after the event. I am delighted to report that he has not only found it, he has allowed us to publish it for the first time in our

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. The lecture has lost none of its luster and originality after all these years at the bottom of a cardboard box. It remains one of the best surveys of the first half of Burgess's career, but its freshest (and wholly convincing) insight lies in its analysis of cultural determinism in the novels. Most critics have identified the necessity of moral choice as one of Burgess's central themes, but few have defined as clearly as Professor Stumpf the powerful historical and biological forces in Burgess's work that are always there to oppose the possibility of a fully independent human act or expression. The Anthony Burgess Center is extremely grateful to Professor Stumpf. Let us hope he will now turn his attentions to the second half of Burgess's career. We would also

like to thank Sir Frank Kermode for reaching into his past to retrieve an important piece of Burgess commentary, and for sending it to us with a new presentation. This is his review of *MF*

that first appeared in

*The Listener*

shortly after the novel was published early in 1971. This was the only review of *MF*

that brought to the book the intellectual depth and curiosity necessary to discern the mythic (and structuralist) patterns of the narrative, and Burgess was deeply touched. He mentions the review, together with a lengthy quotation, in

*You*

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*ve Had Your Time*

, pp. 231-232. Given that Sir Frank refers (in his new presentation of the review) to Burgess's own essay on the novel, "Oedipus Wrecks," from

*This Man and Music*

(Hutchinson: London, 1982, pp. 162-179), Liana Burgess suggested that we print the essay along with the review. We are grateful for the suggestion, especially since

*This Man and Music*

is now unfortunately out-of-print. The other three articles we publish were written directly for the *Newsletter*

. Professor Alan Roughley's stimulating analysis of

*Nothing Like the Sun*

reassesses Harold Bloom's reading of Burgess through Joyce, and offers new reasons to appreciate the originality of Burgess's Shakespeare. Joyceans, who seldom agree with each other, may take issue with Professor Roughley's dismissive attitude towards Stephen Dedalus (the attitude can be traced back to Hugh Kenner's seminal study,

*Dublin's Joyce*

, first published in 1956), but even so, they will find more to discover than to debate in the essay. Alan Massie's article on

*The Malayan Trilogy*

was written to honor the new printing of the novels in a single volume in Great Britain. There have been two new printings of Burgess novels since our last

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*The Maylayan Trilogy*

, and

*Abba, Abba*

(with a new introduction by A.S. Byatt). Both books are published by Vintage. The

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concludes with a short appreciation by Peter French Hodges of Burgess's last novel,

*Byrne*

, written in verse, and composed on his death bed. In a career filled with original forms and new departures,

*Byrne*

may be the most original and unpredictable of all.

## **News and Announcements**

The main news, of course, is the organization underway to set up our December colloquium on "The Avatars of *A Clockwork Orange*." Please see the full announcement elsewhere on our website, and please feel free to contact directly (by e-mail) the members of our Organizing Committee (D. Arnaud, J. Cassini, E. Vernadakis).

In addition to the colloquium, the Anthony Burgess Center will sponsor two separate events during the year 2001. To begin with, Professor Vernadakis will be leading a university seminar on *A Clockwork Orange* at the University of Angers. The seminar is given primarily for faculty and students within the University, but the general public is invited to attend. The first meeting of the seminar will be held on January 16 at 11 a.m. in the Anthony Burgess Room at the University Library. Subsequent meetings will be announced in the *News letter*

. Finally, later on in the year, probably in April, Professor Kay Smith of Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, will be giving the annual Anthony Burgess lecture. Her topic will be "Anthony Burgess and Shakespeare Biography." As soon as the dates are set, we will announce them in the *Newsletter*

. Once more, I would like to thank everyone who has helped with the *Newsletter*

over the past several months, especially Liana Burgess (for her suggestions and interest), and, as always, Valérie Neveu (without whose good will and unfailing skills the *Newsletter*

would simply not exist).

## **Newsletter Schedule**

Despite our best efforts, it has not always been possible to respect a precise monthly date of publication. Though we will continue to publish two issues a year, in the future they will carry the notice of Fall or Spring. The next issue of the *Newsletter* will appear in May or June of this year. Please send your contributions to the Editor by mid-April.

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