

# Introduction

By [Ben Forkner](#)

## "New Online Format"

For those of you who have followed the Anthony Burgess Center online from the beginning, you will have noticed (particularly during the past few weeks) several changes in the original presentation, all intended to improve the clarity and readability of the Center's various activities, including the *Newsletter*. These changes are all the inspired work of Valérie Neveu, who in addition to her tasks as chief librarian of special collections at the University Library has been willing to devote her considerable skills and time to our website. She deserves far more than this brief tribute, of course, but as editor of the *Newsletter*, I would like to emphasize how much I, and all the other active members of the Center, appreciate her efforts. By the way, please note that all email messages to me and to the Center should be addressed to Valérie Neveu. Since the Center is based in the University Library, and since we will increasingly need to transfer messages and *Newsletter* articles directly to the website, we think it best to have a single address for all correspondence.

## "Anthony Burgess Society"

In the first issue of the *Newsletter* I mentioned the movement to found an Anthony Burgess Society. I am pleased to announce that the Society has now been officially created, and legally registered with the French authorities. Jean-Jacques Annaud, the French film director who worked with Burgess on *La Guerre du Feu* (*Quest for Fire*) is president, and Umberto Eco is one of the vice presidents, along with Liana Burgess and Patrice Monmousseau, director of the Society's sponsor Bouvet-Ladubay, well known wine-makers in Saumur, a few miles upriver from Angers. A number of Burgess friends and admirers have already joined the Society as Honorary Members: Seamus Heaney, A.S. Byatt, Gore Vidal, Martin Scorsese, Malcolm McDowell, Riccardo Muti, and John McGahern, to mention only a few. More details on the Society can be found by turning to the Anthony Burgess Society page on our website. There you will also find a registered form to be printed, filled out, and sent along with your membership fee to the address in Saumur. I encourage all of our regular

correspondents, and all interested readers, to do so as soon as possible. The Society is a non profit organization, and will need a large body of individual supporters in order to thrive.

Members will receive a printed version of the

*Newsletter*

published annually as a single-volume

*Anthony Burgess Journal*

. Members will also receive regular mailings of the Society's activities. The Society was announced locally last December 19 with a wonderful concert of Burgess music chosen and performed by pianist Maureen Turquet (our musical counselor) and soprano Amanda Broome. See the "Musical Notes" at the end of the

*Newsletter*

for more details. The official announcement of the Society will be made in Saumur this April 15 and 16 during the Salon du Vin et du Livre, a remarkably libertarian gathering of French writers and artists celebrating the spirit of Rabelais, native of the region, and patron saint of all such celebrations. Burgess of course greatly admired Rabelais, and may very well have sent off the hyperborean signals to help arrange the creation of the Society in Saumur. It is good to think of them together, Rabelais and Burgess (and their friends), smiling down celestially at the ceremonies. There will be a round table discussion of Burgess to be televised by a French national channel, and a number of special tributes. More details will be given in our next

*Newsletter*

. Again, I urge all of you to join the Society as soon as possible.

## **"Six Essays"**

I am delighted to report that the first issue of the *Newsletter* seems to have made quite an impact worldwide. We have received hundreds of messages, many asking for more information about the Center, and virtually all praising the quality of the first three essays. From the beginning, I had no idea about the number of pieces to expect from our correspondents during a single year. The three original essays in the first issue seemed to suggest that we might reasonably hope for at least three more this time. Apparently, as far as the bounty of Burgess is concerned, ordinary editorial caution and reason should not be too surprised when hope is generously overpaid by experience. This has now happened twice. Actually, I have received more than these six essays over the past few months. And there are several more now being written, including an essay by Frank Kermode on the novel

*MF*

that we will publish in the next issue. At any rate, the

*Anthony Burgess Newsletter*

seems to be well on its way to becoming something more than the modest literary newsletter we had aimed for at the beginning, as readers of these six new essays will be able to judge for themselves. In every case, the essays are fully original appreciations, increasingly rare in the academic world today, and in every case they add to a better understanding of the man and his work. Liana Burgess leads off with an account of her recent speculations on

*A Clockwork Orange*

and

*The Wanting Seed*

inspired by the cover on the new Penguin edition of

*A Clockwork Orange*

in England. Kevin Jackson's essay on the making of the BBC documentary mentioned in the last issue of the Newsletter is somewhat of a Burgessian feat of heroic concentration in itself. I can confirm that it was written all at once early one morning in January, a bitterly cold morning if I can judge from the barely thawed vocal chords of the writer when he called me at 9 a.m. to tell me he had finished. This is a wonderfully witty and informative story of an outstanding documentary, one of the best literary biographies I have seen on television. It was shown on BBC 2 on December 26 and 27, and I hope will be made available soon in other countries. John Stinson's essay on Burgess as a fictional character in recent works by Paul Theroux and A.S. Byatt is another original, informed, and razor-sharp study, to be expected by the author of one of the few full-length books on Burgess,

*Anthony Burgess Revisited*

(Twayne Publishers: Boston, 1991). I would be more than happy to have (and to print) Paul Theroux's reply, perhaps after he goes back and rereads his own interview with Jorge Luis Borges in

*The Old Patagonian Express*

. Paul Phillips returns to the

*Newsletter*

with his second essay on Burgess's music, an analysis of Burgess's Third Symphony in the light of its major literary source, Shakespeare's

*Love's Labour's Lost*

. Paul Phillips, the Center's musical correspondent in the United States, is in the midst of writing a book about Burgess's music. With these two essays as evidence, I firmly believe the finished work will profoundly affect all future evaluations of Burgess, as a composer, of course, but also as a novelist whose music is essential to an understanding of his literary art. The role of Shakespeare in Burgess's life brings us to the two-part essay written by Lord Birkett and Anthony Wilkinson, both of whom worked with Burgess on a never-to-be-made film on Beethoven and his nephew. For me, and I expect for other readers, the Birkett-Wilkinson-Burgess collaboration is a complete revelation. I do not remember reading about it in any of the standard sources, including either of the two Burgess autobiographies. I want to thank Lord Birkett for his delightful recovery in print of a lost episode in Burgess's life, and also for putting me in touch with Anthony Wilkinson who has been kind enough to add to his Beethoven reminiscences an account of the film on Bohuslav Martinu he made for the BBC in the late 1960s, with Burgess as the writer of the script. We are hoping to arrange for Mr Wilkinson to present his film at a special showing for the Burgess Society in Saumur, sometime next year.

## **"Plans and Projects"**

Plans are now underway for the Center to organize a symposium on Burgess at the University of Angers in November or December, 2001. The symposium will concentrate on the different versions of *A Clockwork Orange*: the two published versions of the novel, the Kubrick film, and the theatrical adaptation (with music) written (and composed) by Burgess several years after the film. More details on the symposium will be available on the website in several weeks. Should readers have ideas or suggestions, please send them to the Center via email to Valérie Neveu's address.

Plans are also being considered to organize a large international Burgess colloquium a year or so after the *Clockwork Orange* symposium. We have not yet decided on a general theme, though I would like to propose something along the lines of Burgess and Elizabethan England. Again, suggestions are welcome.

It has been suggested that the Center publish on the website old articles on Burgess and interviews, that are not easily available, or that have never appeared in English. Again, I would like to know what our readers and correspondents think about the idea.

## **"Other News"**

The annual schedule for the two issues of the *Newsletter* has been changed. From now on, the *Newsletter* will appear in October and in March. Thus, the next issue of the *Newsletter* will appear in October, 2000.

The second annual Anthony Burgess Conference will take place on April 11 at 6 p.m. at the University of Angers. Sponsored by the English Department, directed by John Cassini, this year's Conference will be given by Paul Phillips from Brown University, familiar to our readers as our music correspondent from the United States, and author of two articles on Burgess's music in the *Newsletter*.

The next meeting of the Anthony Burgess Center will be held in the Anthony Burgess Room of the University Library on the morning of April 10, at 10:30. All interested readers are invited to

attend.

Readers from French universities will know that the annual congress of the SAES, the French national association for university teachers of English, will take place in Angers this year on May 19-21. The Anthony Burgess Center has been asked to open the Anthony Burgess Room in the University Library during the congress, and to present the Center's activities to all interested members of the SAES. We all look forward to welcoming these members to Angers, and to discussing with them our various projects for the future.

Finally, I would like to repeat my apologies in the first *News/etter* to the effect that I have been unable to answer all the generous email messages of support. With the help of the other members of the Center, I will do my best to answer the most urgent. But please keep the messages coming. Whether or not you receive a timely answer, they will have done me timeless good. I also would like to invite anyone wanting to send an article for the next *Newsletter*

to write to me with the proposed topic via the Center's email address. Ideally, we would like to have received all articles by mid-September 2000.

Ben Forkner, Director  
Anthony Burgess Center

