

‘Burgess and Shakespeare’ Workshop

March 20, 2009

at the Maison des Sciences Humaines

Faculté des Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines

University of Angers, France

Speakers:

Dominique Goy-Blanquet (University of Picardie, France)

Andrew Biswell (Manchester Metropolitan University, England)

Introduction and discussion leader: Graham Woodroffe

Reporter: Marc Jeannin

Aims of the workshop:

The main purpose was to explore Shakespeare as a source of inspiration in Burgess's work. This was to be the preliminary phase of examining the more general topic of 'Burgess and the Elizabethans' in preparation for an ABC symposium on that theme in the autumn of 2010.

Summary of talks and debate:

Graham Woodroffe introduced the main purpose and theme of the workshop. He presented a survey of what Burgess wrote about Shakespeare, demonstrated how Burgess was linked to the Elizabethan period, and showed the extent of Shakespeare's influence on Burgess (see [Burgess and Shakespeare survey](#)).

Dominique Goy-Blanquet, in her talk entitled 'Enter as Balthazar: Burgess in Shakespeare's Company', emphasised how/what Burgess thought about Shakespeare and Marlowe. Burgess was influenced by his Catholic upbringing in particular and his view of the Reformation in general. She also dealt with Burgess's awareness of the relation between sexuality and artistic ingenuousness in Shakespeare's creative life. She finally pointed up the fact that Burgess ultimately seemed more interested in the language of the Elizabethans (and particularly the

sonority of sonnets) than plays, and viewed literature as a sister discipline of music.

Andrew Biswell concentrated on Burgess's interest in Marlowe on the basis that he was as important an influence on the author of *A Dead Man in Deptford* as

Shakespeare was. That novel as well as the MA thesis on Marlowe's

Dr Faustus

and

Nothing Like the Sun

provided the main sources for his observations about the twin poles of Burgess's intellectual and historical interest in the Elizabethan period. He showed that Burgess, in addition to being fascinated by Marlowe's approach to evilness, strongly identified himself with Marlowe's mysterious and ambiguous character (e.g., playing with names, double agent, religious convictions).

Most significantly, both Goy-Blanquet and Biswell brought out how important Marlowe was to Burgess, and how he initiated him to Shakespeare who had in his own way learned much from the Canterbury poet and dramatist. Burgess's affinities with both playwrights were dealt with at length. In the discussion that ensued among the fourteen participants, it became apparent that much more emphasis should be given to Marlowe in the planned symposium.

As a result, it was later decided that the focus/title of the 4th international symposium of the ABC to be held on 18-20 November 2010 would be 'Marlowe – Shakespeare – Burgess: Anthony Burgess and his Elizabethan Affiliations' (see [call for papers](#))