

THE LIVES OF ANTHONY BURGESS: AUTO(BIOGRAPHY) AND BURGESS, ANGERS, FRANCE, December 9 – 11, 2004.

Thursday December 9

The second international symposium of the Anthony Burgess Centre kicked off on Thursday December 9 with an [exhibition on the 'lives' theme](#) at the University Library. Created and designed by Valérie Neveu, the curator of the Burgess archives, it ingeniously displayed, in pictures and in text, the main facets of the man's life and works:



Guests had the opportunity to visit the Centre's collection of books, manuscripts and effects that belonged to Burgess and to attend an open lecture by Philippe Lejeune on diaries before welcoming local bubbly began to flow. The welcome was followed by an informal dinner at the Brasserie du Théâtre in the Place du Ralliement, a short squelch (for the weather was not so welcoming) from the participants' headquarters at the Hôtel Continental.

Friday December 10

The next day, the symposium was officially opened in the auditorium of the newly restored Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Angers with speeches from the Vice-President of the University, Richard Lescure, then from the directors of the CRILA (Centre de Recherche Inter-Langues Angevin), Laurent Lepaludier and the Anthony Burgess Centre on which it depends, Ben Forkner.



The early part of the first day's programme was focused on the autobiography itself, *Little Wilson and Big God* and *You've Had Your Time*, notably with Philippe Lejeune, France's leading specialist of the genre, magnificently rising to the challenge of taking on an autobiography – and an author – he had been unfamiliar with. There followed papers on recent research into biographical material, including diaries and correspondence. That was not all: the day was also to see a moving reading of an original play in verse by Richard Matthews, 'The Bronze Staircase (Burgess at Colonus)' as well as a performance of Burgess's 1976 song cycle, *The Brides of Enderby*.

The concert

Maureen Turquet, a specialist of Burgess's music, who created and performed 'A Clockwork Hour' of pieces by him at the first symposium in December 2001 (available on CD as part of *Portraits of the Artist in A Clockwork Orange*, Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 2004) was responsible for staging this European première of what was not just a concert but also a lecture and – a pun for the French, this – a reading, for the Enderby poems were introduced by Andrew Biswell, Burgess's biographer and read by one of France's leading English-speaking actors, Peter Hudson.

THE ANTHONY BURGESS CENTRE
presents
the European première of



THE BRIDES OF ENDERBY

Six poems by Anthony Burgess in his own musical setting

It was a theatrical concert too, for the three female musicians had been imaginatively dressed as eccentric brides by Nathalie Turquet. The musicians, Armelle Orioux the soprano voice, Yves Muller on flute, Frédéric Potet on oboe, Cécile Grizard on cello and Maureen Turquet playing both the piano and the harpsichord (instruments kindly loaned by the CNR de Musique d'Angers) had come from different corners of the hexagon and spent many hours rehearsing.



For the Musée des Beaux-Arts too, the concert was a first, for a musical event had never been staged there. It took place in the foyer of the Museum (under the watchful eye of Yves Klein whose work was the object of a major exhibition) and was open to the public, about forty of whom were discerning enough to attend.



The concert was followed by the chance to taste the very best of Bouvet-Ladubay's sparkling Saumur *brut* that the winery had generously supplied us with. Bouvet-Ladubay, whose Director General, Patrice Monmousseau is a great admirer of Burgess, had hosted the December 2001 concert and banquet in their premises at Saumur.

It was a short walk from the delicate fan-vaulted gallery in the Museum where this cocktail party took place to the Belle-Epoque dining room of the Hôtel Jeanne de Laval where a banquet dinner was held for forty.

Saturday December 11

Saturday was a day of new talent and lively discussion. Four young scholars from far and wide would deliver their first papers on Burgess with considerable aplomb and some of the more experienced hands got us into a stimulating discussion about his Mancunian and Irish background and influences. All contributed to the impression that there are promising days ahead for Burgess scholarship.

The film

A documentary film had been made for the occasion by Nina Mudrac and John Cassini from archive footage of interviews with Burgess and some of the television programmes he was involved in. The material, which had been donated to the Anthony Burgess Centre by the BBC, thus allowed us to make an original hour-long document that we called 'Burgess on Burgess' being a montage of sequences where the author talks autobiographically. He makes an excellent entertainer.

The symposium's organizers, Graham Woodroffe and John Cassini then thanked all those who had put so much time and effort into planning it, in particular Marc Jeannin and Valérie Neveu, and finally congratulated the participants for coming and making the whole event so worthwhile.



John Cassini



Graham Woodroffe