

## The Image of the Artist in Enderby Novels by Anthony Burgess

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### Abstract

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) was an English author of intellectual novels and serious musical works. As a talented and an inventive person, he was very interested in art and its creative processes. Anthony Burgess's artistic creativity concept can be traced in most of his works on fictional and non-fictional writers (e.g. William Shakespeare, John Keats and Christopher Marlowe in novels titled *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love Life* respectively). The present paper analyzed the image of artist on the basis of Enderby novels, and a tetralogy about a contemporary fictional English poet named Enderby. The analysis indicated that the artist was a craftsman, whose artistic activity was closely connected with his sexual attraction, in Anthony Burgess's opinion. Furthermore, the author was characterized by the isolation as the main condition for the creative process and the total devotion to art.

**Keywords:** English literature research; Culture; Anthony Burgess; Enderby; Artistic creativity concept.



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### 1. Introduction

Anthony Burgess was an English novelist, poet, playwright and composer (1917-1993) with 33 novels, 25 non-fiction pieces and more than 250 musical works. From 1963 to 1984 he wrote 4 comic novels namely *Inside Mr Enderby*, *Enderby Outside*, *The Clockwork Testament or Enderby's End* and *Enderby's Dark Lady or No End to Enderby*. The binary theme which is characteristic of Burgess, has been studied in [Ekaterina and Liliya \(2016\)](#) on the example of Enderby novels, though all of his quartet of comic novels has not been studied at the same time yet. Anthony Burgess's artistic creativity concept can be traced in most of his works on fictional and non-fictional writers. For writers and readers alike, it's sometimes hard to tell the difference between fiction and nonfiction. In general, fiction refers to plot, settings, and characters created from the imagination, while nonfiction refers to factual stories focused on actual events and people. However, the difference between these two genres is sometimes blurred, as the two often intersect. Fiction is fabricated and based on the author's imagination. Short stories, novels, myths, legends, and fairy tales are all considered fiction. While settings, plot points, and characters in fiction are sometimes based on real-life events or people, writers use such things as jumping off points for their stories. Nonfiction, by contrast, is factual and reports on true events. Histories, biographies, journalism, and essays are all considered nonfiction. Usually, nonfiction has a higher standard to uphold than fiction. A few smatterings of fact in a work of fiction does not make it true, while a few fabrications in a nonfiction work can force that story to lose all credibility ([Grant, 2017](#)).

The novels about Enderby have been the subject of literary research many times, but they have been considered either in the context of the general study of Burgess's oeuvre, or from the position of an analysis of a particular novel aspect, as in L.F. Khabibullina's article about the comic element of the first novel of tetralogy ([Coale, 1981](#)), ([De Vitis, 1972](#)), ([Stinson, 1991](#)), ([Khabibullina, 2004](#)). English literature has always been studied in Russia. There are some studies by researchers who dedicated their scientific carrier to this issue at Kazan State University like; for instance, ([Burgess, 1977](#)) specialized in novels of the Late Victorian period, while ([Burgess, 1994](#))'s research focused on Anthony Burgess himself ([Burgess, 2012a](#)). Therefore, Enderby novels have already been under consideration of Russian and foreign scientists. However, the above-mentioned tetralogy has been analyzed either in the field of Burgess's creativity ([Burgess, 1964](#)) or due to specific aspects or main themes of these works ([Burgess, 1996](#)). The novelty of paper consisted of artist's image that was thoroughly studied in above-mentioned novels. It is worth mentioning that the research was conducted according to Anthony Burgess's creativity concept ([Burgess, 2012b](#)). In order to develop this theme, we will focus our attention on all of his quartet of comic novels written at different time.

### 2. Methods

The paper comprised the analysis of a fictional world in novels as a means of its consideration. The image of the artist is considered from writer's perspective reflecting in message of his works.

### 3. Results

The tetralogy included the following four books that were written in different periods: *Inside* ([Burgess, 2012c](#)), *The Clockwork Testament or:* ([Burgess, 2012d](#)), and *Enderby's Dark Lady or: No End to* [Coale \(1981\)](#). The protagonist of novels is F. X. Enderby, a forty-year-old modern English poet, frightening by the outside world and leading a hermit's way of life. He spends most of his time in the bathroom, and has to use it for dyspepsia caused by

fatty foods that he regularly cooks and eats. As J. Stinson, a well-known researcher of Burgess' works, states in his monograph, the name of Enderby sounds in English as "end" and "be" which fully corresponds to natural needs of every single man usually in the bathroom (for Enderby, it is the defecation as a consequence of digestion problems and the masturbation due to the absence of an active and satisfactory sexual life). Moreover, the restroom is a usual place of Enderby's work as a poet, as a place where the art is created and the creative process is easily intertwined with physiological one.

Obviously, Anthony Burgess contrasts Enderby's naturalistic image with the artist's romantic image. It can be explained by two basic reasons; first, early works by Burgess are characterized by the binary worldview, which was shaped by his Catholic upbringing and fascination with Manichaeism ideas, based on the world understanding as opposites' constant struggles (light/darkness, life/death, soul/flesh) (this concept is even reflected in the tetralogy structure as the first 2 novels about Enderby have the following opposed titles: *Inside* and *Outside*). Second, according to the author's concept of creativity, the artist is not a romanticized hero, but he is a simple person. The writer is also a good craftsman and a professional who earns his living by writing.

In the book "*Writers Revealed: Eight Contemporary Writers Talk about Faith, Religion and God*", Rosemary Hartill gives the following quotation from Anthony Burgess: "In those days, it was a great pleasure to see writing just as a job like any others, like the carpenter or shoe-maker, you had your own breakfast and got down to work. And I worked every day, as I still do, writing a thousand words before breakfast" (Cullinan, 2008). Burgess represents William Shakespeare exactly the same craftsman in *nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love Life*.

Like the modern poet, Enderby, the Elizabethan playwright is completely devoid of a romantic halo: Shakespeare's the only goal was to become famous, create wealth and support his family. The difference between two creators lies in the fact that Enderby is not characterized by such an ambition that is directly related to his creative infertility due to his sexual weakness. According to Burgess, art is a sublimated libido. In an interview with J. Cullinan, the writer says: "I mean, you can't be a genius and sexually impotent" (Cullinan, 2008) that is Anthony Burgess sees a certain similarity between the creative impulse and the sexual attraction, since both of them are creative. Therefore, Shakespeare is depicted as a voluptuary whose heterosexual and homosexual relations along with his venereal disease (Shakespeare was infected with syphilis in *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love Life*) are signs of his hyper-sexuality, and it is a fruitful creative process. In the biographical novel (Cullinan, 2008), Anthony Burgess explains this subject saying that "even the surname (*of the playwright*) was just suitable for this: it means aggression, vital force...", while the name, *Will*, has an additional shade of meaning of desire" (Husnutdinov et al., 2017).

On the contrary, Enderby's impotence can be explained by Anthony Burgess's most negative attitude towards the contemporary reality. From Burgess's point of view, the twentieth century is an age of permissiveness and relaxation characterized by a passion for the consumption, not the creation. In line with this perception of the surrounding reality, the external world is portrayed absurd and ridiculous in Burgess's novels, and plagiarism and travesty are the main themes in works about artists.

In the tetralogy, Enderby's image is opposed to the minor characters who are seem to be his antagonists: a poet, Rawcliffe, known for a work in all anthologies; a pop singer and the idol of the young Yod Crewsy, performing songs with lyrics from stolen Enderby poems; a publisher, Sir George Goodbye, who dreamed of the glory of poet and forced one of his subordinate firms to publish his poems. These characters become characteristics of the modern era developing in the novel, the theme of transformation. Rawcliffe distorts the poem by Enderby, "The Pet Beast", which was naively told at their last meeting, and appropriates its authorship. However, the novel protagonist has to wear a mask for the survival in the external world: not having his own best suit, which is necessary for the solemn presentation of a literary award from the aforementioned publisher, he borrows an outfit from his friend cook, and then the poet is attributed to friend's love adventures. In the second novel, Enderby is forced to live in Tangier because of escaping from his homeland due to ridiculous complicity in the "murder" of Yod Crewsy, as the poet continues to run Rawcliffe's bar after his death and wears his former rival's robe.

#### 4. Discussion

Enderby novels also present another characteristic of artist that is isolation. In addition to problems with the digestion, Enderby has difficulty in communicating with the external world: he interacts neither with women nor with his neighbors as he leaves his house only for essential domestic needs. Every try to escape from his shell ends in an absurd comic situation (the scene where the innocuous poet calms down his enemy, neighbor Jack, by putting his polished toilet seat on him) which later may be followed by major consequences such as Enderby's marriage.

A female image appears despite the impotence of the main character in Enderby novels. She is Vesta Bainbridge whom Enderby mistakes for his Muse, but in fact she becomes the embodiment of evils in the modern society as she marries Enderby with the hope of former glory, which was left after the death of her first husband, a famous motorcycle racer. She is also obsessed with turning the eccentric poet into the average citizen. At Vesta's firm request, Enderby now follows a diet, wears fancy costumes, contact lenses with all standards of the modern time and society, but losing himself: the poetic inspiration leaves Enderby and he stops writing.

During another dispute with his wife, Enderby comes up with the idea of the artist's detachment from the outside world as an essential condition for the creator's work, and then he concludes that artists have better live if they are alone: "There's no obligation to accept the society, women, religion or anything else. For poetry, that's a job for anarchy. Poetry is made by rebels and exiles and outsiders, it's created by people, not by bravo of sheep baaing to

the Pope. Poets don't need religion and the bloody little cocktail-party gossip. They make language and myths. Poets don't need anybody except for themselves".

In fact, Enderby openly denies any form of organized and structured communities, whether they are literally cocktail parties (the hero eventually refuses Sir George Goodbay's literary award), religious ceremonies (Enderby is a renegade Catholic) or government institutions (see the above citation about poets as anarchists). He strongly disagrees with Vesta's words, under which the artist needs a place in the world and his work should be in line with the passage of life. From Enderby's point of view, the poet and works exist outside of time and space because the poet serves art, and thus the eternal beauty (De Vitis, 1972), (González and Antúnez, 2016), (Hartill, 2008).

The artist has a special place in Anthony Burgess's creativity concept to be in the closest place to Beauty by definition. The writer believes that a clear division into opposites may be improved by the help of ritual. In a monograph on Burgess's literary works, Samuel Coale focuses on the writer's childhood love for Catholic rites and mass, and explains it by his inner craving for structures and forms. Burgess considers the language (a system of signs presentation) as a tradition and ritual, and thus it is able to resolve contradictions: "You can design rituals out of language; and opposites are also reconciled in rituals" (Villalobos, 2018). Accordingly, the writer, whose work is directly associated with the language, is endowed. According to Anthony Burgess, a special gift of reconciling contradictions comprises the artist's creation of the whole (unified) work of art<sup>1</sup>. This talent enables a creator to reveal the meaning of life for humans through the initiation to the eternity. According to Enderby novels, (Stinson, 1991), (Khabibullina, 2004), (Shamsutdinova, 2016) this skill distinguishes a creative person from the other people, often turning him into a social outcast and a kind of a monk-hermit: in the first novel of tetralogy after a suicide attempt, Enderby undergoes rehabilitation with Dr Wapenshaw's program of personal reorientation in which the poet turns into a bartender named Piggy Hogg; and then in the second novel, Hoggerby is in despair roams the world in search of himself and his lyrical gift; and finally, Enderby becomes a poet again (LeClair, 1970), (Greenslade and Greenslade, 1994).

## 5. Conclusion

The artist's general sense of alienation and also the dedication to art indicate Enderby's strangeness and inconsistency with accepted public norms. Certainly, the closed space of bathroom, where Enderby works, is a little reserved place for the creator in the society. Denying man-made forms of religion, is expressed, for example, in the Pope's cult (the scene of Enderby and Vesta Bainbridge's Roman journey), and the poet worships his own God of Art. Therefore, we can conclude that the artist is both an artisan, who skillfully works and an art servant filled with self-oblivion, from Anthony Burgess's point of view. However, the creator should be inspired by love for a human being or/and the creative process itself in both cases (Burgess and Bunting, 1973).

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<sup>1</sup> This theme is studied more thoroughly in the article "Aesthetics as an Aspect of Good in Enderby Novels by Anthony Burgess González and Antúnez (2016). *Bioética Como Marco De La Responsabilidad Social En Hospitales Públicos*. *Opción*, 32(12).

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