



# Inside Mr. Enderby

*Anthony Burgess*

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## Inside Mr. Enderby Details

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# From Reader Review Inside Mr. Enderby for online ebook

## Lukasz Pruski says

Anthony Burgess is mainly known as the author of *A Clockwork Orange*, which I reviewed here on *Goodreads*, and which owes a large part of its popularity to the outstanding film adaptation by Stanley Kubrick. While *Inside Mr. Enderby* (1963) may not convey equally powerful artistic vision, it is still a remarkable novel and, to me, it deserves almost as high a rating.

A truly magnificent chapter opens the novel. Children from the future, on their Educational Time Trip, visit a great poet of the past, a Mr. Enderby, who is sleeping in his rented flat. They explore his body and also his bedroom, kitchen, and - most importantly - his bathroom: this the only place where Mr. Enderby is able to create poetry. The Muse visits him only when he sits on his "poetic seat."

After this remarkable introduction we follow events in Mr. Enderby's life in a relatively linear fashion, beginning with him receiving a notice of winning a small poetry prize. The award ceremony is an unforgettable scene, with its speeches and poetry readings punctuated by Mr. Enderby's emissions of wind. He meets a journalist from a women's magazine; she will play a significant role in his later life. We follow comical adventures related to Mr. Enderby's inebriation in London, a wonderfully demented story that concludes Part 1 on the novel. Two other parts take place mainly in other locations: in Italy and in the north of England. The ending is in a way similar to that of *Clockwork Orange*, as improbable as it may seem.

While this is a very funny novel - I was laughing out loud many, many times - it is also extremely dark. It offers a pessimistic view of contemporary culture (contemporary in 1963, but then we only went downhill thanks to TV and Internet), yet the main message seems to be the damage that broken childhoods inflict on people. Mr. Enderby had been traumatized by his stepmother, from whose intimidating specter he has been trying to escape all his life.

It is Mr. Burgess' prose, though, that I find the main value of the novel. From its breathtaking beginning through many unforgettable passages - for instance, Mr. Enderby's horrific experiences in Castel Gandolfo - I have been savoring the author's writing. The text is richly sprinkled with fragments of poetry, mostly of Mr. Enderby's authorship. Many passages are truly hilarious like the one where the poet is trying to ascertain whether he is in command of his male qualities:

"He stealthily felt his way down to find out what was his body's view of this constataion, but all was quiet there, as though he were calmly reading Jane Austen."

On the other hand, I am not a particular fan of Mr. Enderby's (or perhaps the author's) severe obsession with the non-decorative aspects of human physiology: burps, farts, dandruff, urine, belching, boil-scars, vomit, ear wax, teeth-picking and the like, which permeate the novel. Yet Mr. Burgess' brilliance in handling the language, the syntax, the sound, and the vocabulary are so masterful that they can carry whatever content is thrown there, even the ugly detritus of our body works.

Three and three quarter stars.

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## **Anne Johnson says**

Perhaps my favorite book by my favorite author, *Inside Mr. Enderby* is the epitome of literary humor by and for writers. There is a dark twistedness in the world built for Enderby, yet a sweet oafishness and moving pride in his character. Burgess might be offended by that comment, but I hold it to be true. And most glorious of all is that Burgess language, which stretches into the farthest corners of English on its quest for the perfect expression and perfect wit.

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## **Alien says**

Not my thing

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## **Ryan Murdock says**

It's the only book I know of that opens with a fart.

In fact, much of the novel is one long, stiffly punctuated posterior riposte from Mr. Enderby. A lavatorial writer inspired by the cool clasp of porcelain and a well-polished wooden seat, the hot breath of the muse sings out of him in sulphurous jets that delight the ear, even as they scald the nostrils and encrust the soft palate. May his poetry ferment on library shelves long after the rhymes have lost their pungency.

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## **Ulya says**

2.5

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## **Justin Aylward says**

I had only made one venture into the work of English expatriate Anthony Burgess and that was when I read his famous dystopian, black comedy novel *A Clockwork Orange*. I read that novel when I was only 18 and enjoyed it tremendously despite having seen Kubrick's film adaptation a few times before.

A pressing curiosity existed in me for some time afterwards and I thought I should read more of his work considering how large his oeuvre is and the high-rank of his canon. *Inside Mr. Enderby* seemed to be a good place to restart my understanding of Burgess' work. I bought this novel online (I rarely buy books nowadays) and was excited when it arrived. The cartoonish cover was also an interesting touch and one for those who really do judge books by the cover.

The novel tells the story of the sometimes introspective poet of the elemental Enderby and oftentimes serial farter. He composes his highly esteemed work while sitting on his toilet with the bathtub for company where he keeps his manuscripts and mice. The early parts of story take on a clever acceleration and we quickly grasp the nature of Enderby's personality through his slapdash inspiration which Burgess composes on the

page and also when Enderby displays his total lack of hygiene. Some passages detailing his sloven appearance and unsightly bodily sores are decorative and simultaneously disgusting, showcasing Burgess' inclination to beautiful destruction.

Enderby sidesteps his cranky and dismissive landlord and simple-minded drinking acquaintances in his local pub while giving an all too ridiculous speech at a prize-giving. He is approached by the editor of a crummy women's magazine, a high-class sybarite named Vesta Bainbridge who offers Enderby a segment in the magazines for his poetry, so long as it is dumbed down and appeals to the middle-aged feminine type. Enderby reluctantly agrees and studies the magazines, trying to gauge his audience. In a few hilarious passages he attempts to cook a meal from one of the cheap recipes and fails drastically. Eventually after some wrangling Enderby winds up in Rome with Vesta who he has married and this is where the novel meanders and becomes tedious. A few trips into the city uncover the class differences between Vesta and Enderby, differences which were evident from the beginning and the humor seems predictable and unimaginative.

I won't spoil the last few chapters but eventually I was just looking towards the end and waiting for a conclusion which when it came was rather depressing and somber considering the earlier comic elation and narrative verve which Burgess engaged. All together I was disappointed with this effort but not so discouraged as to refute Burgess' merit as a serious writer of the last century.

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### **Marguerite Kaye says**

I read the complete Enderby about 15 years ago, so this was a reread, and it didn't disappoint. Funny the perspective age gives you though, Enderby is 45 in this book and I remember thinking he was old - now I'm thinking how young he was!

Burgess doesn't make his prose an easy read. His vocabulary is extensive, his poetry takes some unpicking, and he loves to play on words and make obscure literary references. I found this a bit difficult to get into as a result, but it was so worthwhile. Some scenes are hilarious - the evangelical communist who makes Enderby get down on his knees to pray had me laughing out loud - and some are really quite bathetic. Enderby is very turns epulsive, endearing, infuriating, amusing and pathetic, but what he is at all times is an enthralling literary creation.

I have the other two still in the original book and I plan to read them, but I'm pacing myself. Really excellent re-read, and I reckon better the second time around.

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### **John Vogel says**

This is the first of the Enderby Trilogy and introduces us to the main character, 45-year-old poet Mr. Enderby.

I'm now onto book number two, Enderby Outside, where Enderby (now called Hogg as part of his rehabilitation from this book) loses his Muse only to regain her.

I see some ongoing themes throughout this series and A Clockwork Orange that make me want to read about

Anthony Burgess as a person. Both Enderby and Alex go through a period of being delinquent (for Enderby by being a slovenly poet, and for Alex by performing a little of the old ultraviolence), then institutionalized and "rehabilitated" (by societies standards), suicidal and then rehabilitated into his old self. The order is a little different in both stories, but the concept is really similar.

The funny thing about this story, though, is the fact that people are trying to cure him of his writing and not being a "productive" member of society. It's the same argument that probably every creative person goes through, trying to balance out work and art, money and free time, but it's told with such an absurd and playful language that I find it really entertaining to read. You can really get a sense that he's completely removed from pop culture, as well.

I don't know. I think everyone should read this series, but I know you probably won't. However, just so that someone can clip a nice word out of this for promotional reasons (for a book that's 40 years old and not getting reprinted any time soon), I'm going to throw this at you: Delightful!

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### **MJ Nicholls says**

Publishing the first edition under the pseudonym Joseph Kell allowed Burgess to review himself in *The Yorkshire Post*: "This is, in many ways, a dirty book. It is full of bowel-blasts and flatulent borborygms, emetic meals ('thin but over-savoury stews,' Enderby calls them) and halitosis. It may well make some people sick, and those of my readers with tender stomachs are advised to let it alone. It turns sex, religion, and the State into a series of laughing-stocks. The book itself a laughing-stock." This manoeuvre itself is worthy of four stars, however, Burgess's explosive comedic romp is bursting with monstrous wordplay and that simply spectacular bounce and rhythm that beshits the best of Burgessian prose. Enderby, a grotesque self-portrait, is an unlikeable egomaniacal hack with a deep distrust and fear of women. Anyone who has read Roger Lewis's book on Burgess can attest to how accurate a self-portrait is this Enderby fellow.

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### **Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says**

It is no secret here at goodreads that I am not very fond of sci-fi and dyspeptic novels. This one, however, may be one of the rare exceptions to the latter.

First of all, it has an admirable forthrightness. No long build-up of any imaginary world. Its very first paragraph, going straight into the heart of the matter, simply reads:

"P F F F R R R U M M M P."

followed by someone wishing the principal protagonist Mr. Enderby a happy new year (how apropos that I am reviewing this as 2012 is ending!).

That, by the way, is not the sound of fireworks or of music. But I consider it as THE universal language. Not music as many say. How can music be the universal language when, as experience shows, we do not like, or

even at least understand, each other's music (for one, I am sure I will never learn to like metallic rock or the monotonous ululations in African songs)? It is the fart, the wind from the anus, which may be considered a universal language. Whether you're African, American, European, Arabian, Asian or Australian a fart is a fart as Gertrude Stein might have said. Regardless of race, color or creed it is the same putrefaction inside, the same gaseous buildup, which eventually lead to this familiar methane explosion recognized by all since the beginning of time. The sound created differs only depending on the ass's situation when the momentous decision to fire is made. Or maybe the amount of exertion spent (violent or shy), or the type of inner turbulence the person is suffering from at that time. They all sound the same, however, regardless of how big or small the person is, his religious beliefs, male or female, white, brown or black, rich or poor, commoner or royalty. The reaction is also universal: hilarity or disgust, depending on the circumstances of its delivery.

Second, the underlying motif of this novel isn't a word, or a phrase, or a sentence. It is not even in the dictionary (whether under "p" or "b"). Yet, as I said earlier, it is universally understood. It does not need (as it does not have) any translation. What else, in all known languages, can boast of this astounding characteristic?

Lastly, the poetry in creates is pitch-perfect. It sings! Hear, hear the other joyous emanations from Mr. Enderby's sphincter--

1. "p e r r r r p" - on page 13;
2. "q u e r p k p r r m p" - on page 14;
3. "b o p p e r l o p" - on page 16;
4. "p o r r i p i p o o p" - also on page 16;
5. "b r r r r b f r r r" - on page 19;
6. "p r r r r f" - on page 19;
7. "b r r r r p" - also on page 19;
8. "p r r r r r r r p" (without an e) - on page 20;
9. "b r e r r r r p" (with an e) - on page 28;
10. "p e r r r p f" (with a f) - on page 49;
11. "g r e r r r b r o g h a r r r g a w w w p f f f f f h" (Mr. Enderby, after taking a bicarbonate solution) - at page 82;
12. "e r r r r r r r r p" (Mr. Enderby, just married, in a small lavatory feeling sick) - at page 105;
13. "b o r r r r p h h h" - at page 127;
14. "f f f f f r r r r r e r r r r r p s h h h h h" - at page 166; and

15. these hallucinations and a fearful apparition after Mr. Enderby--funny as a literary funnyman can be, tried to kill himself by ingesting a whole bottle of aspirin:

"A fanfare of loud farts, a cosmic swish of lavatory-flushings....There she was, welcoming him in, farting prrrrrp like ten thousand earthquakes, belching arrrrp and og like a million volcanoes, while the whole universe roared with approving laughter. She swung tits like sagging moons at him, drew from black teeth an endless snake of bacon-rind, pelted him with balls of ear-wax and snuffled green snot in his direction. The thrones roared and the powers were helpless. Enderby was suffocated by smell: sulphuretted hydrogen, unwashed armpits, halitosis, faeces, standing urine, putrefying meat--all thrust into his mouth and nostrils in squelchy balls. 'Help,' he tried to call. 'Help help help.' He fell, crawled, crying, 'Help, help.' The black, which was solid laughter and filth, closed on him. He gave one last scream before yielding to it." (page 179).

Even near death one shall hear the music of the spheres! Ah, flatulence, where is thy sting?

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**Bettie? says**

**Mr Enderby you are wonderfully revolting and I shall be actively seeking you out.**

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Acerbic 60s comedy about a mediocre poet who is thrust upon an unsuspecting world.

`Inside Mr Enderby` is a the first volume of the Enderby series, a quartet of comic novels by the British author Anthony Burgess.

The book was first published in 1963 in London by William Heinemann under the pseudonym Joseph Kell. The series began in 1963 with the publication of this book, and concluded in 1984 with `Enderby's Dark Lady`, or `No End to Enderby` ( after a ten year break following the publication of the third novel in the series, `The Clockwork Testament`, or `Enderby's End` ).

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**Leon says**

I listened to this whilst abusing my body back into shape on a treadmill over a couple of weeks this February. I should imagine most of the references in this book will pass readers of a certain age by and need to be heavily glossed. I, however, enjoyed every minute, especially the lapidary language and the whole sending up of minor poets; the coarse and profane mixed with the gloriously sybaritic mellifluous hyperbole of the whole thing. It had me laughing out loud in several places. It did strike me how similar the novel was, at the end, to A Clockwork Orange written a year earlier.

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**???? ???? says**

[illegible]

## John Yeoman says

This is a wonderful example of 'narrative voice', exhibited by a master of dialogue. The first chapter is redolent of word-play and clever metaphors. It has a rolling ludic cadence. This, we feel, is Burgess himself at his most playful. (Yes, its fascination with bodily orifices may offend some but they bring to mind Hieronymus Bosch. Or perhaps that time when we peered too closely in our own mirror...)

The next chapter is written in the pov of Enderby himself, a scrofulous poet. The diction is more crude, the cadences awkward. Enderby, we conclude from his mindset, is not much of a poet. The shift between voices is exquisitely done.

I confess I haven't (yet) read far beyond chapter 2. Burgess is like a rich fruit cake. He must be rationed to one thin slice per day :)

**Sve says**

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