



A Vision of Battlements

"I was empty of music but itching to create.
So I wrote this novel...to see if I could clear
my head of the dead weight of Gibraltor."

Anthony Burgess

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Anthony Burgess, Andrew Biswell (Editor)

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A Vision of Battlements is the first novel by the writer and composer Anthony Burgess, who was born in Manchester in 1917. Set in Gibraltar during the Second World War, the book follows the fortunes of Richard Ennis, an army sergeant and incipient composer who dreams of composing great music and building a new cultural world after the end of the war. Following the example of his literary hero, James Joyce, Burgess takes the structure of his book from Virgil's Aeneid. The result is, like Joyce's Ulysses, a comic rewriting of a classical epic, whose critique of the Army and the postwar settlement is sharp and assured.

The Irwell Edition is the first publication of Burgess's forgotten masterpiece since 1965. This new edition includes an introduction and notes by Andrew Biswell, author of a prize-winning biography of Anthony Burgess.

A Vision of Battlements Details

Date : Published July 1st 2017 by Manchester University Press (first published 1965)

ISBN : 9781526122032

Author : Anthony Burgess , Andrew Biswell (Editor)

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Download and Read Free Online A Vision of Battlements Anthony Burgess , Andrew Biswell (Editor)

From Reader Review A Vision of Battlements for online ebook

cool_veins says

This book had no dull moments, seemed to be effortlessly written, and was rly fucking funny. Didn't know what to expect, i picked it up for cheap on the sidewalk, delighted by the universe once again

Emmett says

Burgess wrote this novel - chronologically speaking, his first, but not first published - by way of exorcising his experiences in Gibraltar during WWII.

It is war fiction, but, to my surprise, not in the fashion of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. There is very little fighting, and what exists are squabbles between fellow soldiers. Not newspaper headlines but day-to-day events of eating and getting drunk, and attending vocational classes that aim to prepare them for daily life and a job back home. The main character attempts to write and perform music with varying success, but mostly lack of. He also harbours ambivalent feelings about his wife, pines for a young woman, and finds altogether not entirely satisfactory comfort in the company of another. I'm normally not enthused by such plots but it's the language that holds me. I don't find many of the characters particularly sympathetic (although I like Julian in the funny way he seems to breeze through life with mild disbelief), but language is the clay that shapes the work, and Burgess is an accomplished potter in this respect. There are lines so lyrical they sing. If all art aspires to the condition of music, he's one of the few who has secured that comparison in literature. He is the reason this novel gets 4 stars.

There are levels of literariness to be pursued, but not knowing that the story is loosely structured on the pattern of *The Aeneid* is no hindrance. I know very little about music and close to nothing about soldiering, but there are some jokes that made me laugh. It's hard to believe that this is a first novel when there's so much in it.

This edition is simply the best edition a reader can hope for. It has everything I can think of: helpful notes, an introduction, and a couple of reflective essays written by the author on the book. The latter was fun to read. When I first turned to the back and discovered the notes I thought to myself: this is a lazy person's edition. I hope it stays in print.

MJ Nicholls says

Before Anthony took up his pen to produce a bibliography that would make the estate of V.C. Andrews weep into their *Simpsons* neckties, he dithered with music and teaching and to amuse himself, wrote a novel. Completed in 1949, drawered until the mid-60s (presumably released for a quick kerching), this army comedy is a clear piece of apprentice work, but shows incredible maturity and skill for a first-timer. As my choreographer Randy Jarrell once told me, "Some mens can swing, but some mens just hang." When asked the meaning of this cryptic phrase, I later learned that he was arguing in favour of inborn talent over painstaking craft. Burgess could swing from the very first letter. To spruce up the release of this early work, the publisher added completely inappropriate illustrations while, despite being completely inappropriate,

actually add a little amusement to the proceedings, despite being completely inappropriate. The love plots are laughable but the comedy, well, that stuff is *laughable*. Burgess would later write *M/F*, which I am correctly informed is complete bollocks.

Paul says

The story of an immature soul wrestling with the desires of the flesh.

Not as enthralling as I'd hoped - I'm always down for a bit of fun at the expense of the British Army but Burgess' writing is more bitter and less inviting than say, Waugh's military memoir-novel *Sword of Honour*. Perhaps the story is uncomfortable because it is relatable. Burgess' protagonist Ennis is always falling into the same sins again and again. The way out of this misery is apparent but seemingly always a bridge too far.

Hotspur says

Not his best work, but it foreshadows the writer Burgess would become: the sardonic wit and humor, language, philosophical and literary allusions, even the overall nature of the main character, are the foundation of future Burgess classics. Quite enjoyable.

Mike Gioia says

This is Anthony Burgess' first novel, apparently he wrote it for fun over a vacation before having any serious intention of being a writer. The talented bastard . . .
