

# TIMES ONLINE

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## Anthony Burgess

### The 50 greatest postwar writers: 17

D. B. C. Pierre

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Every age has heralds in the arts; often decried voices who intuit seeds of change and paint visions of their outcomes down history's road. For me Anthony Burgess's voice was the strongest early warning of the time we now inhabit.

His works from the earliest 1960s, particularly *The Wanting Seed* and *A Clockwork Orange*, foresaw an English future that has come to pass in great detail, and understood the brawl between libertarianism and totalitarianism, the youthful anarchy and increasing governmental control that is its fuel.



(©Martine Franck / Magnum Photos)

Most crucial to me — and this renders his visions even more credible — is that Burgess did not write from a purely domestic point of view; as an internationalist and long-term foreign resident, he knew his culture in broad perspective, drawing flavours from other places to paint the future (note the influence of his experience with youth gangs in Leningrad upon the street talk in *A Clockwork Orange*). Burgess's novels gain relevance and power with the passing of time, even glimpsing outside their own century; and that must be great and true art.

One to read: *The Wanting Seed* (1956)

**D. B. C. Pierre** is prize-winning novelist. Born in Australia and brought up in Mexico, he won the 2003 Man Booker Prize for his first novel, *Vernon God Little* — a black comedy about a Texan teenager on the run. His second book, *Ludmila's Broken English*, was published in 2006. His real name is Peter Warren Finlay and the initials in his pen-name stand for "Dirty But Clean".

#### More about Anthony Burgess

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