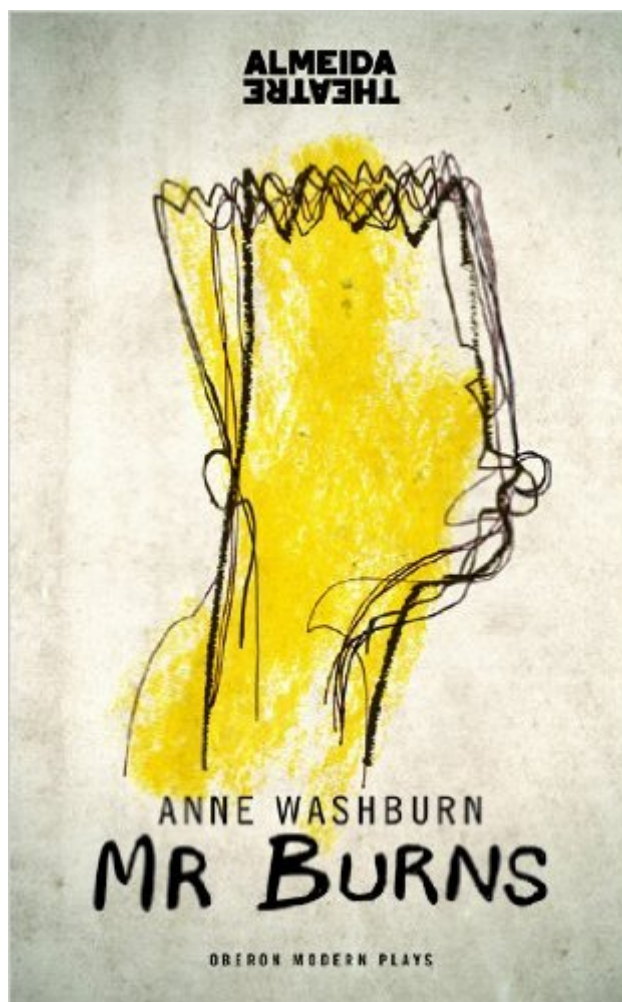


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Mr. Burns: A Post-electric Play



Synopsis

It's the end of everything in contemporary America. A future without power. But what will survive? Mr Burns asks how the stories we tell make us the people we are, explodes the boundaries between pop and high culture and, when society has crumbled, imagines the future for America's most famous family. Following the phenomenal success of 1984, Almeida Associate Director Robert Icke directs Mr Burns in its European Premiere.

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Oberon Books Ltd (June 5, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1783191406

ISBN-13: 978-1783191406

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #73,763 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

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Customer Reviews

Mr. Burns is a play about the way we create and navigate collective cultural memory - in this case, in a post-apocalyptic, post-electric, something-very-bad-has-happened world. In act one, people gather around a campfire in the aftermath of some unnamed massive traumatic event and try to find a way to connect as the nuclear power plants explode. The connection turns out to be the shared recollection of an episode of The Simpson's (Cape Feare), itself based on a movie that was a re-make of an earlier movie that was in turn based on a book. The second act takes place seven years later as people are attempting to both hold on to the past and build a society that will move into the future. A business of sorts has developed around the practice of buying and selling lines from old television shows, commercials, movies, music, etc., that are then used in theatrical sketches and productions. The third act takes place 75 years later, and consists of a kind of operatic spectacular presentation of the Cape Feare episode of The Simpsons. The story, though, has been filtered through 75 years of re-telling in the post-electric world. The pop-culture iconography of The

Simpsons is now "high culture," with Bart playing the role of hero in Homer (Simpson)'s Odyssey. Anne Washburn's play is a brilliant and haunting exploration of what it means to create and share and re-create art, memory, and culture (and its relation to shared trauma). Reading the script can be challenging since the music and songs in the production are only included here as text (lyrics or description). It is not a straightforward narrative structure. This, however, only adds to the play's power. This play will make you uncomfortable. It will make you itch. It will make you sing Gilbert and Sullivan along with Queen. What could be better than that?

How do we keep going on in the face of obvious disaster? We tell stories to each other around a flickering light. Thank you, Anne, for creating this exhortation to go on and reminder of why we need storytellers.

Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* is part human drama, part post-apocalyptic pageant. Washburn implies more than she says about her world, and in so doing gives us a script that will stay with you. While some aspects of this post-electric apocalypse don't make a lot of sense, the sense that Washburn makes of it is well worth the read.

This piece is definitely nothing like a majority of shows I've read. It's a totally new way of looking at post-apocalyptic life. We've all seen the zombie movies and shows. This gives a glimpse of how other people may react. People that still want to hold onto something from their past. Maybe for entertainment, maybe for nostalgia, maybe just to waste their infinite down time. You don't have to be a Simpsons pro to appreciate this show. You don't even have to love theatre to appreciate this show. You just have to have a sense of wonder. What if...

The play may take a while to sink in for some; I woke up thinking about the play's progression, how it speaks to our obsession with image and entertainment. This play may be hard to "read" in that certain elements would be more clear on the stage. However, for those of us who don't live near the Off-Broadway lights, this is as close as we'll get. This play is a revelation, not of character, but of ideas. It wouldn't hurt to know something about morality plays, but I doubt that an absence of that knowledge would inhibit an understanding of the third act. Very beautiful.

This play was almost impossible to read. So disjointed. Constant theme is the Simpsons TV show as a remnant of past times when there still was television. And electricity. My husband and I both

read the script - forcing ourselves to get through to the end - and decided to give our tickets for the local performance back to the back office. Reviews (which I did not read) are reported to have expressed about the same opinion.

I read this and finished it and now I wonder why I read this and finished it. I wonder why Ms Washburn wrote it and didn't finish it. If your audience is willing to make an effort you should be willing too, especially if you're going to charge money. Mr Burns is an ash heap of random rubbish masquerading as innovative theater. Save your money. More importantly, save your time.

More than anything, this play is a "concept" piece. It shows the transition and subversion of The Simpsons over the course of 75 years in a post apocalyptic America. While thought provoking and well-written, it's definitely not a play for everyone. There's no real 'story' here, and so if the central concept doesn't grab you, you're going to find the piece a little flat.

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