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Thanks to organisers and co-panellists. Very glad to be at such a distinguished conference, and hope that we may begin a dialogue about the relationship between the work of one writer who everyone here will agree is touched with greatness, and one for whom the case still has to be made. We may make a small contribution to that process today, and hope that we might advance the scholarly investigation of the relationship between Burgess and Joyce.

This paper arises out of a desire to draw some comparisons and correspondences between the ways that Joyce and Burgess responded to popular culture in their works, and to suggest how important the growth of mass entertainment was in shaping their representation of the modern world. In doing so, I am conscious that I shall perhaps be talking more about Burgess than about Joyce, but I hope that Joyceans will find the connection between the writers illuminating. The critical literature on Joyce, as we all know, is massive, and there is plenty on his use of popular culture – so I will be referring to some, I hope instructive parallels, but looking mainly at how Burgess encounters the phenomenon. As my colleagues have suggested, Burgess was more than an admirer of Joyce – a small part of that massive critical bibliography comprises Burgess's two books on Joyce – *Here Comes Everybody*, to my view probably the best general introduction to Joyce, and *Joysprick*, his examination of Joyce's language – not to mention the labour of love that resulted in *A Shorter Finnegans Wake*.

Burgess was born in 1917, and in his autobiography recalls at several points how he encountered Joyce as a young man – a clandestine copy of *Ulysses*, offered to him by a teacher as his Roman Catholic High School, run by the Xaverian Brothers in Manchester. Burgess was captivated by the linguistic and conceptual daring of the novel, and from that moment revered Joyce, and certainly, in his prodigious novel writing career, frequently imitated him.

Some biographical detail to set the scene is necessary, I feel. Burgess's mother was a music-hall artiste (although, like much of Burgess's biography, that detail is difficult to verify) – she was –apparently – called Beautiful Belle Burgess, and was a singer and dancer – a soubrette, in the terminology of the day. His father was, amongst other things, an amateur pianist, who provided an improvised soundtrack to the silent films shown in Burgess's neighbourhood in Manchester. The mother, and her daughter died of the Spanish influenza that swept across Europe at the end of the First World War, and so Burgess was brought up by his father and a hated stepmother in various districts of working-class Manchester, in an environment that would not be dissimilar to some of the locations depicted in *Dubliners*. (As an aside, it's worth mentioning perhaps that the large amount of published work on Joyce by Burgess has recently been supplemented the discovery of previously unpublished lengthy essay on *Dubliners*). It would be stretching things to suggest that Manchester plays the same part in Burgess's oeuvre as Dublin does in Joyce's – no one approaches the intensity of Joyce's association with a single place – but it is noticeable that Burgess, who, like Joyce, spent a good deal of his adult life in exile abroad, returns

frequently to his home city in his work. That milieu forms the backdrop to Burgess's novel *The Pianoplayers*. Briefly, in that novel, a girl whose father is a piano player in pubs and cinemas (like Burgess's father) grows up in the immediate post-world war one world of working class Manchester, and uses her skills on the piano and her wit and beauty to build a career that takes her ultimately to a luxurious and genteel retirement in Provence. The parallels with Burgess's life are obvious, but what is most striking about the novel is the evocation of the popular cultural scene of northern England in the 1920s, as the silent movies gave way to the talkies, and the career of Billy, the narrator's father, takes a downward spiral.

The role of popular culture in the novel is striking: when Billy gets a job with a concert party, the young protagonist moves from the murky streets of Manchester to the northern beach resort of Blackpool, a place designed to give vulgar pleasure to the working class families who flocked there in their thousands during its heyday in the years either side of the second world war. The first person narrative, in faux-naïve style, (Ellen is fourteen at the time) gives the flavour of the place:

... the having just idea of something.

Blackpool was all right in those days, very bracing and plenty to do. There was the Blackpool Tower and still is, a copy of the Eiffel Tower in Paris that most of us kids knew from the drawing on the Eiffel Tower Lemonade Crystals, and there was the Tower Zoo and Cinema and Ballroom, lots of other cinemas besides, lots of sideshows, like the Fat Lady and the Man with Two Heads, and of course the Amusement Park with the Noah's Ark and the Big Dipper. There were the three piers also, all with slot machines and concerts at the end, and the place was crammed with caffies and boozers. It was a great resort for people coming from Bradford and Chorley and Bury on the Wakes week, when the whole town would close down and everybody go on their holidays together, not much of a change I'd say. The beach was a good one, with the sea not too far out as it is at Southport, but it was full of kids screaming because they'd got stung by jellyfish, the sea being full of jellyfish.

(p. 74)

Burgess captures the sense of a place determined to have fun, and be seen to be having fun in a rather grimly relentless manner - and offering a vision not unlike that visualised by the boy in Joyce's story *Araby*, whose concept of the strangely exotic otherness conjured in the name of the travelling show that he is desperate to visit will be sadly unfulfilled. You will recall the boy is seduced by the idea of a bazaar, but the reality is far from the vision:

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which

the words Cafe Chantant were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

In both cases, the working class people are offered a tawdry and debased version of the kind of entertainment enjoyed by their social superiors. In Burgess's example, the brashness of the Blackpool façade is undercut by the deadpan knowingness of the fourteen year old observer. In Joyce, the epiphanic moment of realisation comes to the young boy when he understands the gulf between his expectations and the reality he confronts.

A good portion of *The Pianoplayers* describes the entertainment that the concert party produces, with snatches of songs and descriptions of dance routines woven into the narrative. Although the first person narration is more conventional than Joyce's stream-of-consciousness, the similarity in the method is striking. Burgess is at pains to evoke a world of weary professionals churning out hammy routines for the consumption of the masses. Here's Ellen's description of part of a typical programme:

Then it was time for the soprano solo, which was done by Robbie's fifteen-stone missis, whose real name was Margery but who called herself professionally Madame Estrella de la Roche. She did a number I always liked when it was done properly, meaning sort of relaxed, and it was *Dancing On The Ceiling*, by Rodgers and Hart, but she did it a bit too solemn like a sort of classical piece of grand opera. But the song was built up into what they call a production number, with Jimmy Latham doing his eccentric dance, drums and piano and even fiddle, with the Great Romano very disdainful, and the company doing a kind of harmony thing my dad had arranged for them, humming. Then the idea of dancing led to *Dancing With Tears In My Eyes* from Jack Rowbotham, then a number from Jimmy Latham about dance rhyming with France, which gave Maggie Paramour a chance to show off the legs in a can can, and then all the company did *Dance Dance Dance Little Lady* with Rutland Wiltshire in the lead, and that brought the curtain down and there was the interval.

(p.80)

This is some way from the Joycean exploration of popular entertainment in *Ulysses* but the breathless account of the energetic dancers and musicians of the concert party is as evocative of time and place as Joyce's rendition of the popular places of resort in Dublin. Both writers immerse their characters in the mass entertainment of the time, anchoring the characters in the milieu of popular culture.

Even so, Burgess and Joyce's approach to popular culture is ambivalent, both celebratory in places and condemnatory in others. It is clear, though, that both of them, Joyce in the late nineteenth, and Burgess in the early twentieth century, were aware of the growth of a mass culture, and reflected it frequently in their work.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce often refers to the most popular manifestation of popular culture in his day, the music hall. In the phantasmagoric world of the Circe episode, the music hall turns of the day are transformed into bizarrely dreamlike representations of Bloom's thoughts. The clash of popular and highbrow culture is demonstrated throughout the chapter. As Paullina Pollack argues, 'Circe' was written as a parallel (and contrast) to Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*: "underneath the surface narrative of Joyce's 'Circe', allusions to *Don Giovanni* run throughout the chapter, especially in Bloom's mind- 'a would be' Don Juan who actually plays the Commentator's role"(52). For example, at one point in the chapter Bloom is walking and the stage directions say, "Bloom is humming a tune from *Don Giovanni*." The deliberate juxtaposition of high and low cultural references emphasise the correspondences between mass and elite culture. The dreamlike nature of the sequence, and the fact that the action occurs in a brothel add further layers of complexity to the passage. The overall effect is frequently bizarre. Here, a grotesque eschatological vision of the End of the World in a travesty of national Scots costume is capped by a glancing reference to the popular Scottish music hall artiste Harry Lauder:

(A rocket rushes up the sky and bursts. A white star falls from it, proclaiming the consummation of all things and second coming of Elijah. Along an infinite invisible tight-rope taut from zenith to nadir the End of the World, a two headed octopus in gillies kilts, busby and tartan filibegs, whirls through the murk, head over heels, in the fob of the Three Lugs of Man.)

THE END OF THE WORLD (With a Scotch accent.) Wha'll dance the keel row, the keel row, the keel row?

Lauder, probably the highest paid performer in the world in 1904, based his act upon an exaggerated cartoonish version of Scottishness, replete with bagpipes, excessive tartan, and a plethora of sentimental songs, including the one quoted by Joyce.

Joyce's interweaving of musical performance references in *Ulysses* is pervasive. Obviously, the characters of Molly Bloom and Blazes Boylan are the central purveyors of this strand, but the presence of music hall, from the structural use of the air "My girl's a Yorkshire girl" in the Circe episode, to the glancing references in, for instance, *Wandering Rocks*, where we read: "A charming soubrette, great Marie Kendall, with dauby cheeks and lifted skirt smiled daubily from her poster upon William Humble, Earl of Dudley." – this presence, seems to be a touchstone for Joyce, rooting his great panoramic presentation of early twentieth century Dublin in the cultural experience of most of its inhabitants.

Like Joyce, Burgess was a musician, writing symphonies and guitar quartets amongst other things. During his service in the second world war, he played in a jazz band that entertained the troops, and was able, like his father, to pick out a tune at a pub piano. Joyce's equivalent activity would be the parlour songs he sang in what was, by all accounts a pleasant tenor voice.

Joyce, of course, did not live long enough to see the emergence of what we now call pop music. Burgess did, and his reaction to it is instructive. His autobiography details his contempt for the pop music that was ushered in from America during the fifties – when he was an education



officer in Malaya. On his return at the end of the fifties he discovered that the consequence of the success of these American imports and their English counterparts was that pop music – as opposed to popular music – was becoming the dominant cultural force in the lives of young people. Burgess was, of course, middle-aged by this time, and although he had been able and willing to vamp along with his army colleagues in their concert party, performing Gershwin and Cole Porter standards, his age, and his removal to Malaya had cut him off from any sympathetic identification with the embryonic youth culture of the late fifties and early sixties.

In Burgess's Enderby novels, a recurrent motif is the grumpy protagonist poet's farcical encounters with popular culture, and it is hard not to see Enderby as a grotesquely caricatured self-portrait of the author. In *Inside Mr Enderby*, in a series of ludicrous events, he is eventually the witness to a performance by the improbably named Yod Crewsy and the Crucifixers – the name, blasphemous in concept, a nod to Joyce's linguistic transformations and sly subversions of religious references. Burgess / Enderby observes the performance:

Yod Crewsy held a flat guitar with flex spouting from it. In front of each of the others was a high-mounted sidedrum. They poised white sticks, grinning. Then they jumped into a hell of a noise belched out fourfold by speakers set at the ceiling's corners.

'You can do that, *ja*, and do this. *Ja*.

You can say that you won't go beyond a kiss. *Ja*.

But where's it goin to get ya, where's

It goin to get

Ya (*ja*), babaaah?"<sup>i</sup>

This is an exaggeration, to be sure, but probably not much of one, for those who remember the shock caused by the Rolling Stones and other beat groups of the sixties – and of course, the punk movement took that form of rebellion to another level – perhaps Burgess's vision was a prescient one, describing the world of Johnny Rotten fifteen years before its manifestation. Certainly, the character Howard Shirley in Burgess's curious early sixties novel *One Hand Clapping* probably expresses the author's contempt for the state of popular music of the time:

"If you just appeal to sex and easy sort of music and lyrics that'd make you want to puke and these kids clicking their fingers in a sort of stupid ecstasy, well then – What I mean is that you get so low it stands to reason you'll be appealing to the majority, the majority being stupid for the most part and just like animals."

Although Howard Shirley is a deeply strange character, who ends up being murdered by his wife (another faux-naïve first-person female narrator) it is safe to assume that Burgess would have expressed similar thoughts on the pop culture that was beginning to overtake the more genteel and traditional entertainment of previous decades. Joyce, who collaborated with Eisenstein on a treatment of *Ulysses* for film, could not have anticipated the ways in which cinema developed in the latter part of the twentieth century. Burgess, of course, became mired in

controversy when Stanley Kubrick's film of *A Clockwork Orange* was produced in 1972. That experience was put to good use in the third Enderby novel, *A Clockwork Testament* in which Enderby's film treatment of Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland* is traduced by the director, who produces a Ken Russell style version, complete with nymphomaniac nuns. Enderby, like Burgess, gets the flak for the film. In that novel, what Burgess saw as the debasement of popular culture in his lifetime comes to the fore.

What seems to be at the back of such sentiments, written by Burgess in early middle age, is a sort of nostalgia for the popular music of the early part of the century, of the type doubtless sung by both beautiful Belle Burgess and by Molly Bloom. And in Joyce, popular culture, whether it be the music hall, the early cinema, advertising, is a dynamic force, insinuating its way into the minds of his characters, and providing much of the detail that makes up his extraordinary portrait of Dublin in June, 1904.

Both writers, then, locate their characters in a world where popular culture is an important, if sometimes unrecognised force. For Joyce, the possibilities offered by the richness of popular cultural references enable him to furnish both the external and internal worlds of his characters with images and sentiments that create an immersive and believable world. For Burgess, admirer of Joyce though he was, popular culture remains at a distance. His use of it is more sparing than Joyce's, and more critical. It's clear from reading Burgess that we should admire Mozart more than Marie Lloyd. In Joyce, though, an ambivalence

remains, and it is one that rewards the reader keen to mine the rich seam of cultural references in his works.

I began by suggesting that we might begin to see how Burgess's admiration for Joyce manifested itself to some extent in his treatment of popular culture, and I have veered some way from that path. Joyce's world, so precisely delineated in the Dublin of the early 1900s is paradoxically our world too. I would like to suggest that Burgess may also have some of that universalising gift that his mentor possessed in abundance, and I would recommend that Joyceans give some serious attention to the work of one of his greatest admirers.

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<sup>i</sup> *Enderby*, p. 232