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Anthony Burgess

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--*From the Foreword by Anthony Burgess.*

Re Joyce Details

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Anthony says

Burgess states in the Foreword of *Here Comes Everybody*, "After nearly fifty years of reading Joyce, it seems only right that I should pass on what I have learned of his methods to those who come fresh to his riches". And indeed his does this beautifully. Burgess covers the entire scope of Joyce's work, arranging the book into three chronological parts, Part 1 covering everything up to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Parts 2 and 3 expounding *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* respectively.

This book may be read as an introduction to Joyce, as an accompaniment while reading Joyce, or as a synopsis having read Joyce. My familiarity with Joyce's works could apply it to any one of those three categories. In the case of *Finnegans Wake*, however, I'm most certainly talking about the first. Burgess devotes a third of the book to elucidating this monster and quotes enough passages to illustrate the difficulty of the text, but in the process gives me a curiosity that will some day result in further study.

My final thought; it seems a Shem to me that later editions of this book were renamed to *Re Joyce*, I preferred Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker.

Bob R Bogle says

In RE JOYCE well-known James Joyce enthusiast Anthony Burgess (in his youth when ULYSSES was still banned he cut the book into pieces which he taped to his body under his clothing to smuggle it into England) enthuses at length about his literary hero. Nothing wrong with that. Burgess has acted upon an impulse shared with many a Joyce enthusiast. My first question about RE JOYCE is: Who is Burgess' intended audience? The answer is Burgess himself and, to a slightly lesser degree, others who are already likewise committed enthusiasts. "My book," Burgess tells us, "does not pretend to scholarship, only to a desire to help the average reader who wants to know Joyce's work but has been scared off by the professors." I grant Burgess does not emphasize the literarity of Joyce's works, but frankly I've never encountered an "average reader" of ULYSSES or FINNEGANS WAKE, and I doubt that many Joyce enthusiasts anywhere would ever be deterred by even the most formidable pack of hydrophobic academicians; in truth, most either are or have been academicians themselves or at least are more than comfortable in the presence of same, even if only encountered in the printed pages continuously churned out by the Joyce criticism machine.

Excepting the opening and closing chapters, Burgess in RE JOYCE engages in charming confabulation about nearly all of Joyce's oeuvre, providing, from a devotee's perspective, an interpretive retelling of what happens in Joyce's fiction from DUBLINERS onward. A fresh-minted undergrad working on a class paper on DUBLINERS or A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN might crack open RE JOYCE in search of guidance to this famous Modern writer of naturalism. But as Joyceans are made by reading ULYSSES (only a small fraction of them going on to the WAKE), Burgess' readers will already be rather well-informed about much of the content of his book, this can't really be a guide for the general public. Fortunately, Burgess gives us much to think about.

Reflecting upon Joyce's painstaking meticulousness when sculpting in the Word, let's consider some of what Burgess has to say. Beginning with his conceptualization of epiphanies, Joyce forever labored to "manipulate the commonplaces of language into a new medium that should shock the reader into a new awareness" and

so expose the numinous in its quotidian setting. The evolution of Joyce's textual voice on the way to ULYSSES, and the masterful level of artistic control required in its achievement, demonstrates that his kneading of style is not an affectation but a means to a desired artistic end. Citing a famous example, Burgess points out that, increasingly self-identifying in the last chapters of PORTRAIT with the fabulous artificer, Stephen Dedalus nevertheless skates out of that novel as more of a retrogressive Icarus in search of a father, conflating the mortal father-son relationship with the one of more pressing concern to the Church and pointing the way to Joyce's follow-up novel. Joyce assigned relevant bodily organs to most of the episodes of ULYSSES not to pile up allusive layers but to bring forth the equivalent of an ad hoc human body in his creative work, making him a Dr Frankenstein with a difference.

I'm grateful a few important points are raised in RE JOYCE that are seldom mentioned or recognized by self-signifying Joyceans. For one thing, although the Circe episode of ULYSSES is almost universally spoken of in terms of hallucinations, Burgess rightly observes that the visions "are coming from without, are summoned by the author's own magic . . . this huge dramatic exercise is not dramatic at all." Whose hallucinations? Bloom's? Stephen's? Joyce's. Concerning style, some who do not favor Joyce object to his use of symbolism, finding it far too pervasive and pretentious. Burgess allows that ". . . those critics who hate verbal ambiguities tend to love sharp visual images, and Joyce . . . has been repeatedly attacked for the low visibility of his writing." Inevitably this begs the question of whether Joyce's wrote more to appeal to the ear than to the eye as a consequence of his life-long poor vision. But even more than the ear, Joyce's writing appeals to the cerebral cortex, and his prose can seem particularly cold compared to that of other writers. If it is so, as Burgess says, that "the fundamental purpose of any work of art is to impose order on the chaos of life" (a more sustainable postulate, I think, than AE's vortical claim that "the supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring"), then Joyce's extensive use of weight-bearing symbols (or at least an intricately interlaced motif network) under his strata of naturalism is there for the glorification of his art: a view which we who are not naysayers and ruffians reflexively attacking verbal ambiguities embrace. A broader we, descendants of serial pop-culture generations no longer apprehending a distinction between art and entertainment, its vision atrophied to such a degree that it can only ask of an artistic or recreational exhibition: What is this about? and not How does this reflect the human condition?, may accordingly leave vulgar, one-star reviews of Joyce at Amazon, frustrated by his copious verbal ambiguities instead of marveling over the limitless possibilities they open up for us. Of these ambiguities, of Joyce's insistence on loading words with multiple, often contradictory referents, Burgess reminds us that they are "all artistically legitimate . . . they all seem to aim at a mode of communication rather than a wanton muffling or quelling of sense." The mundane insistence on one word/one meaning locks us into a much smaller world than the one Joyce inhabited . . . and a world, one might add, easily exploited by sordid politicians and those with degrees in marketing.

What of FINNEGANS WAKE? Some, Burgess points out, "were inclined to desert him as a man who was going further than was either sane or decent." Indeed, it's often a challenge for even ULYSSES devotees to find the courage to take on the WAKE. Is the book explicable? Is it sane? The gulf separating Joyce's last two books is so grand that we have to make a leap of faith; that is to say, we have to ask ourselves whether Joyce has earned our trust in him to not waste our time as readers, to believe that the WAKE must indeed be sane and sensible despite the evidence that is manifestly to the contrary. No one, Burgess wisely points out, "writes a book of six hundred and twenty-eight pages (especially a man with Joyce's lack of sight, wealth and encouragement) for the sake of pure play and sheer irreverence." Hints of what's to come may be found retrospectively. In the conflict between angels and devils (Michael Furey and Gabriel Conroy) lurking beneath "The Dead" we detect the eternal brother battle between Shem and Shaun in the WAKE, and even "Grace" begins with a fall not wholly unlike that experienced repeatedly by HCE. Likewise, a clever Burgess detects manifestations of Shem, Shaun and Issy in the characters of Richard Rowan, Robert Hand and Bertha in EXILES. As Leopold Bloom finally succumbs to sleep with dissolving thoughts of Tinbad the Tailor and

Sinbad the Sailor, we find in the *WAKE* the sailor who seeks a new suit of clothes from the tailor and ends up marrying his daughter. A great deal more of *ULYSSES* may be found in the *WAKE* as well, of course, because Joyce was always a writer who plowed under his previous works and experiences to fertilize his next crop of written words. Joyce "set himself the task of creating exact and inevitable language for the conceivable as well as the actual, and . . . *FINNEGANS WAKE* is an exercise in rendering the almost inconceivable."

Burgess' framing chapters are the best in the book. In the opening chapters before we get to *DUBLINERS* he informs us the popular novel didn't yet exist when Joyce was writing *ULYSSES* and puts Joyce in his proper time and proper perspective. We get a handy list of holidays Joyceans might celebrate. And Joyce's democratic subject matter is bound in a nutshell: "Ordinary people, living in an ordinary city, are invested in the riches of the ages, and these riches are enshrined in language, which is available to everybody." Such insights, and their expression, make Burgess a worthy read. And in the book's closing he says of Joyce: "when we have read him and absorbed even an iota of his substance, neither literature nor life can ever be quite the same again."

He is quite right.

Holger Haase says

First book I have ever read by Anthony Burgess and that mainly because it was recommended to me as a good overview over James Joyce's oeuvre.

This is the American version of the book and the one that is currently available. It was previously published as **Here Comes Everybody** though that version is now out of print.

The American title seems to have inspired Frank Delaney when naming his excellent weekly podcast on **Ulysses REJOYCE**. The original title is taken from **Finnegans Wake** and an indication of the vast scope of material that Joyce included in his books.

Re-Joyce runs through all of Joyce's published works and analyses the themes in it. Needless to say that the main focus in its second half are on his two allegedly unreadable novels.

Having finished **Ulysses** successfully a few years ago (and now re-reading it again slowly with the help of Delaney's podcast), I do still struggle majorly with **Finnegans Wake** but his chapters on it will now ensure that I'll understand at least 5% of it. Quite a step up from the 1% I had previously aimed for though at the current speed it will still be 2020 before I have it finished.

I had to laugh out loud when I read that Burgess believes that even after reading that book 20 times one will still not be able to fully grasp all its complexities. 20 times?!? Seriously, is there anyone in the world right now who can lay claim to even come close to that number?

Anyway, well worth a read for anyone interested in tackling Joyce.

Bryan says

This is the third book on Joyce that I've read in the last few weeks--Stuart Gilbert's James Joyce's *Ulysses*: A Study, Richard Kain's *Fabulous Voyager*, and now Burgess' take on Joyce's overall work. I read through these as I read through *Ulysses* itself, and I left Burgess for last because I mistakenly thought it discussed the entirety of Joyce's output throughout. Instead, I found out that, if one wished to, readers of *Ulysses* could read 2/3's of *Re Joyce* and find a useful synopsis of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* itself.

I'm tempted to say that Burgess' book was the best of the three 'guides' that I read--and I do think it probably is--but I did read the other two first, and it's hard to know how much groundwork they laid, which then may have made *Re Joyce* more effective. I don't buy all of Burgess' interpretations, but since he includes Joyce's earlier works (which really do seem to be as much a part of *Ulysses*--or it them--as they are individual stories), the overall effect was to pull it all together and give it a sense of coherency in a way I hadn't been able to do before, either because of the stretch of time between each book, or because I hadn't paid enough attention, or from sheer ignorance of the references.

I've seen this book described as sort of a love letter to Joyce, and I think that has some merit; Burgess is definitely sold on Joyce's ability. His enthusiasm is infectious--sometimes even making me want to go back and re-read portions of *Dubliners*, *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. Considering I thought the first was fantastic but really disliked both of the others, that's saying something.

The last third of the book covers *Finnegans Wake*, and I only skimmed through this section. I felt all of the irritation, annoyance and frustration I had while reading *Ulysses* come back with full force just reading Burgess' thoughts and quotes from *Wake*. In fact, with all the study I've done on *Ulysses* in the past few weeks, that book seems almost pedestrian when compared with *Finnegans Wake*. Maybe someday I'll be open to it, but not now. The way I see it, to want to study either of Joyce's last two books, you have to believe that the effort will pay off with something of value. You have to care about what the point is, in order to spend all that time tracking down the references. Burgess certainly does, and his cheerleading was effective enough to at least make me consider putting in a little more effort, in taking a second look at some things I'd pretty well decided I was done with. And that, I would say, was probably Burgess' entire reason for writing the book.

Terri says

I tried to get into this book. Went over 100 pages. This is just way too analytical for my tastes. I want to enjoy books, and though Burgess clearly loves Joyce and he writes well, this is way worse than any high school English class analyzing a book. For those who like that level of intense scrutiny they will likely love this book. But not me.

Brigham says

Interesting walk through of all of Joyce's works by the man famous for writing a *Clockwork Orange*. Something like really brainy Cliff Notes that span an entire career. Not sure what kind of reader would best be served by this book, but for me, a guy who is always considering revisiting *Ulysses* and *Finnigan's Wake*,

it helped stimulate the Joyce part of my brain and give me a little more ammo for when I do get around to reading those books again.

Ben says

I've yet to read *A Clockwork Orange* but from what I know of it and of Anthony Burgess's style and use of language, James Joyce was a major influence, and it only seems natural that he should write an exploration of Joyce's art. The work opens with a bit of biography, all very fascinating, laying down the case that so much of Joyce (perhaps more than is so with other authors) is autobiographical, from his religious upbringing to his relationships (primarily with his father, brother and, of course, Nora), his exile/outsider status, his connection with Dublin, his struggling eyesight, and, naturally, his birth as an artist. Once the autobiographical foundation has been laid, the rest of the first section deals with Joyce's early works -- namely *Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist*, as well as (to a lesser degree) *Stephen Hero*, *Exiles* and Joyce's verse. The second section is devoted to *Ulysses* and the third (and final) section to *Finnegans Wake* (autocorrect didn't try to add an apostrophe this time). This was a book packed full of rich language that I eagerly looked forward to picking up every night, and upon reaching the last page I would have experienced great disappointment at having reached the end of this journey if I didn't know already that this is a work that I would surely revisit. Undoubtedly, I will probably come back to it again and again as I get lost in the great language dream that is *Finnegans Wake*, which (if my book group maintains its current pace) should take several years to read.

Burgess gives us a picture of Joyce as not only artist, but a man aspiring to the heights of God, a creator of a world and a language filled with beauty and mystery, likening *Finn Wake* especially to the creation of the world/the word, of nature, awe-inspiring and incomprehensible in its entirety. We might pick up a little here and there, but (almost) every word is packed with so much possibility that in any attempt to navigate our way through the great labyrinth of Joyce we will ultimately miss quite a bit and on a rereading we might find something new every time and also lose sight of something that caught our attention on an earlier read.

Joyce's world, like the natural world, could be studied on end (he wanted his readers to become his devotees) and we would never be able to pick up everything, but only understand (if lucky) a small slice of it (and here I am referring to all of his works to some degree, but mainly *Ulysses* and more so *Finn Wake*). I wonder if Joyce would have understood it all after the creation (remembering that when reading *Gravity's Rainbow*, a work strongly influenced by Joyce, I had encountered a line from Thomas Pynchon somewhere suggesting that he couldn't remember what he meant in many parts of the book).

Of Joyce's final work Burgess writes:

Difficult? Oh yes, difficult. But a certain difficulty is the small price we must pay for excitement, richness, originality. And we must learn to smile rather than frown: this is the world of 'Jabberwocky'. But the dream is not Alice's. We are dreaming a mature dream, remembering the past of mankind and the primal guilt that history hides but reveals. Yet the dream is a joke, as life itself may be.

Burgess provides interesting analyses throughout for Joyce's major works, shining a light on Joyce's influences -- including, but not limited to, Lewis Carroll, Blake, Freud, Milton and Vico -- and personal life throughout. And while I am having lots of fun so far at Finnegan's Wake (to quote from the Irish folk song), Burgess has helped deepen my understanding (limited though it is) and appreciation for Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

I found much to like in *Portrait of the Artist* and *Dubliners* when I first encountered them, but I don't think I was ready for *Ulysses* when I first took it up. I had not at the time read *The Odyssey*, which was a mistake (I've since read two translations of that work) and was not quite prepared for any of Joyce's puzzles. And *Ulysses* left me feeling in awe, no doubt, but also frustrated (as I guess could just as well be said of life). But it undoubtedly made an impression upon me.

Joyce has, over the years, earned a respectable seat at the table of Western literary greats, but he still remains a polarizing figure because, in part, of his erudition (I can only imagine what Tolstoy, who hated Shakespeare, and didn't consider him a real artist, would have said about James Joyce), and also because of his madness (Carl Jung diagnosed Joyce as schizophrenic after having read *Ulysses*), so much so that Burgess finds it necessary to tack an entire chapter in at the end of this book to defend Joyce against his critics.

Burgess did give me a deeper understanding and appreciation of not only *Finnegans Wake*, but all of Joyce's work. And I think that, love him or hate him (or love him *and* hate him) there is so much truth to T.S. Eliot's remarks about *Ulysses*, which really extend to all of Joyce's major works: "I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age had found; it is a book to which we are all indebted, and from which none of us can escape." Burgess gives us clues here to the puzzles of Joyce, if we haven't figured them out on our own. But we shouldn't be too sure of ever finding a way out of the labyrinth.

John says

This is a daft book I read on Bloomsday. Couples with Campbell's commentary, you'd think Joyce's works were more important than the Bible (they're certainly better written at least).

Matt says

Wonderful so far, and I'm almost at the end.

"If critics will accept the logic of *Finnegans Wake*, hidden beneath what seem to be mad words and intolerable length, they will still shy at the lack of what they call action. This, they say, is presented to us as a novel, and in a novel things are supposed to happen. Very little muscle is exerted in either *Finnegans Wake* or *Ulysses*, but we have to avoid lamenting the fact that Joyce was never strong on action of the Sir Walter Scott kind, that, though he was drawn to epic, he early rejected the bloody substance of epic.

We have seen in his work how even the least gesture of violence will provoke earthquakes or Armageddon, even shiver the universe to atoms- events too apocalyptic to be more than static, comic rites, final mockeries of action as the best-sellers know action. he did not reject such action as a vulgarity, only as a property that might damage language by inflating it. The representation of passion or violence had best be limited to thought or speech, since the thrust of fist or phallus, being a physical cliche, seems to call for a verbal cliche in the recounting. The cliches of Dublin pub-talk or an advertising canvasser's interior

monologue are mere naturalism; the frame of symbol and poetry is a new creation out of words and the rhythms of words, static rather than kinetic. The novel should aspire to Shakespeare's language, not Shakespeare's stage-directions.

But, of course, Joyce was a family man, and the small events of the family day had far more meaning than the big passionate public events of the books on the sitting-room shelves. In both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* he attempts to cut history down to size, measure it against his son's cold or his daughter's toothache, his wife's plea for more housekeeping money and the broken dental plate he cannot afford to have repaired.

He committed himself to glorifying the common man and his family, anointing them with a richer language than the romantics, whose eyes were full of the universe, ever gave themselves time myopically to amass. Examine that stain on the table-cloth, the crescent of dirt in your thumb-nail, the delicacy of that frail cone of ash on the end of your cheap cigar, the pattern on the stringy carpet, and see what words will most exactly and lovingly render them. The words that glorify the commonplace will tame the bluster of history. The moon is in a cup of cocoa and Viconian cycle turns with the sleeper on the bed with the jangling springs. At the same time, take words as well as give them, so that eternal myths are expressed in exactly caught baby-talk, the slobbering of the crone in the jug-and-bottle, or a poor silly song on the radio. This is Joyce's art.

It is, finally, an art of scrupulous rendering. I do not mean by this that Joyce's great achievement was solely to find the right word and the right rhythm for the thing that was already there, waiting in the DBC tea-shop where Parnell's brother 'translates a white bishop' or on the banks of Shakespeare's Thames where the pen is 'chivying her game of cygnets.' I mean rather that he set himself the task of creating exact and inevitable language for the conceivable as well as the actual, and that *Finnegans Wake* is an exercise in rendering the almost inconceivable. From this point of view alone it cannot be ignored, though imaginative writers continue to ignore it, being perhaps frightened of admitting that they, like young Stephen Dedalus, 'have much, much to learn.'

Joyce continues to set the highest standards of any author except Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and Hopkins to those who aspire to writing well. His mountain looms at the end of the street where so many of us work with the blinds down, fearful of looking out. So long as we ignore his challenge we can go on being content with what the world calls good writing- mock Augustanism, good manners an weak tea, the heightened journalistic, the no-nonsense penny-plain, the asthmatic spasms of the open-air invalid, the phallic jerks of the really impotent.

But when we have read him and absorbed even an iota of his substance, neither literature nor life can ever be quite the same again. We shall be finding an embarrassing joy in the commonplace, seeing the most defiled city as a figure of heaven, and assuming, against all the odds, a hardly supportable optimism."

Amen. You may now put down your hymnals.

Rachel says

I will read and have read any biography I can find on James Joyce. He fascinates me, so when my library got a new (old) biography in, I was really excited. Once I got it, I realized the author wrote "A Clockwork Orange," one of my favorite books. It isn't as much a biography as just a fellow writer and fan talking about why James Joyce is such a fascinating and enigmatic figure. It didn't give as much insight into Joyce's life as I would have liked, but it was written so well.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

Burgess has set himself a task which is rather next to impossible in today's reading climate when readers might complain about needing to read a second book in order to understand a first book. "My book does not pretend to scholarship, only to a desire to help the average reader who wants to know Joyce's work but has been scared off by the professors." I suspect that the books themselves have already caused the scare. And is it not true that any *work* which is worth your time and effort and desire to understand requires some measure of pre-understanding? Some prior initial understanding of what it's about? Some establishment of what to expect even before turning to page one? I may have read it backward, but I suspect that what Burgess has done here is provide an excellent first glance into the question of Joyce's two big books. Should you possess even the slightest trepidation in the face of these two books, do yourself the favor of reading Burgess's love letter to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Should you have already read the one or the other or both, do yourself the favor of reading Burgess's love letter.

"The appearance of difficulty is part of Joyce's big joke." --Burgess

But I object to the characterization of Joyce's work as a "big joke."

And Burgess's contribution to the question regarding ;; "Finnegans Wake: What It's All About" ::
<http://www.metaportal.com.br/jjoyce/b...>

Mark says

This book, and Joseph Campbell's, are great books if you are intrigued and want to get into Joyce. Like Tolkien's trilogy, the farthair you go the moth there is to find, and in Joyce's case, the more inscrewtabable it often seems. But Anthony Burgess knows his shhit. If you want to get a real understanding of his most epic bukes (because Joyce is, of course, the most ineffably baffling writer in the English language!) then this is a grape thing to have at your nedside while you attempt *Ulysses* or *Finnegan* .

Dave says

For a while it actually makes you want to read any of the crap that James Joyce published. The feeling thankfully passes.

Brian says

Read to page 185 as I haven't yet read Finnegans Wake.

Great followup to Ulysses; a good combination of scholarly analysis and appreciation for Joyce's achievement. I waited until I finished the book to read any companion, and Burgess advocates the same.

Geoff says

“abnihilisation of the etym”,

roughly meaning, *the recreation of meaning out of nothing...*

~

Burgess's study of Joyce was not a hard sell for me. Joyce is not only my favorite writer, *Ulysses* not only my favorite book, but Joyce himself is a personal hero, not only for the works he produced but for the manner in which he lived his life, persisting in the face of every obstacle to pursue his art to its very ends, to the limits of what English literature might achieve, on his own terms. He accomplished this while facing down personal poverty, ill health, vilification, obscurity, a life of wandering and exile, while the calamities of the 20th century raged about him. (*Ulysses* was written during the first World War and the years immediately after, *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's “17 year palimpsest” was published on the eve of World War II, Joyce nearly gone blind.) All the while, though, Joyce, the finest artist of *haute* literature, who set the highest standards for his own work since men like Shakespeare and Milton, was the writer of the “common man” par excellence, (the heros of all of his books to the last are working men, men of the pubs and streets, their parents, wives and children, everyday Dubliners all), devoted husband and father, a remarkable tenor, great joker and lover of puns- the drinking, laughing, singing martyr to art. As a young man reading through his body of work and then Ellmann's biography, this was nothing less than pure inspiration to me. My experiences with Joyce and the literature surrounding him changed the way I thought about words, what books are and can be, what art is meant to do, what it is capable of, why one might devote their life to such a personal vision and ambition despite the antagonism of the world at large. Joyce taught me a valuable lesson in *perseverance* that I never quite got from parents and friends.

Burgess's *Re Joyce*, then, is the perfect celebration, reflection and survey of the body of work, and a looking forward (through *Finnegans Wake*) for someone like me, who is familiar with the texts through *Ulysses* but wishes to make inroads into Joyce's masterpiece. It would also be ideal for a reader curious but apprehensive about the legendarily “difficult” author, because Burgess is far from overly academic here, it is a very personal study*, and throughout the book he continues to remind the reader that Joyce was, above all, the most human, even *humane*, of writers. Not only in his personal life, but in the works themselves- when the symbolism and high diction, the torrents of style and neologisms and layers of reference are stripped away, Joyce's works are at their hearts loving, gentle, touching. They exalt familial love, devotion to partner and parents and children, kindness, intelligence, elevating human beings and their creations into eternal forms, they deride violence, bigotry, hostility, and stupidity, and search out truth amid the chaos of the universe, they attempt to reform the connections that bind together all of our human experiences from the “shattered glass and toppled masonry” of history. But above all, and most importantly, all of Joyce's works, and most especially his two big books, are *comic* masterpieces, howlingly funny, satiric, playful. Joyce created the

most erudite works of the twentieth century, but he made them out of the stuff of old stories, legends, folk tales, as well bawdy jokes, bar humor, popular songs, children's rhymes. ("...the eternal vision is made out of muddy water, old saws, half-remembered music-hall songs, gossip, and the stain on a pair of underpants. The heart bows down.") The low into the high, the high out of the low. The mythic in the everyday, the universe as it sings through the familiar. How else to construe the cosmos that can only be construed at all through the character of human language?

So Burgess guides us through *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait Of The Artist...*, the poems and plays, and then spends about 100 pages each on *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, emphasizing their structure, their repetitions, the workings of their internal symbolism, their musicality (Joyce was the most musical of writers (a consequence of his failing eyesight?)), their progression from and relation to each other. The book closes with a defense of the *Wake* against its critics and the hostile reception it has historically met with. All the while he builds the case that what Joyce was approaching throughout his entire body of work, that which culminated and was perfected in *Finnegans Wake*, is a *static* art, art that does not lead from event to event (the traditional "narrative structure" of the novel) but an art that moves in circles and cycles, if it moves at all, on which layers of meaning are allowed to accrue, an art that is structured and acted upon from the outside, by the universe, by history, by myth, by a reader's personal experiences with the text, by the same forces that structure and influence our lives in the natural world, which are the same forces at work in the most distant regions of the space**. In this mode of art, first expounded upon as early as Stephen's aesthetic musings in *A Portrait Of The Artist...*, "the mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing", therefore it cannot be degraded and anchored between those two poles of popular literature, the pornographic and the didactic. To make eternal works of *comic* art (that is, art related to the workings of the *cosmos*), those artworks must be composed in imitation of the eternal- thus the importance of Vico's *Scienza Nuova* and its theory of cyclical history to Joyce's two big books; thus the returning motifs of transubstantiation and metempsychosis throughout the final works. Burgess argues most effectively that Joyce's goal, most especially achieved in the *Wake*, was to empty language of the encumbrances and limits of time and space, and let the radiance of words burn by their own internal energies. To let the *words* have their *voice*.

"Examine that stain on the table-cloth, the crescent of dirt in your thumb-nail, the delicacy of that frail cone of ash on your cheap cigar, the pattern on the stringy carpet, and see what words will most exactly and lovingly render them. The words that glorify the commonplace will tame the bluster of history. The moon is in a cup of cocoa and the Viconian cycle turns with the sleeper on the bed with the jangling of springs. At the same time, take words as well as give them, so that eternal myths are expressed in exactly caught baby-talk, the slobbering of the crone in the jug-and-bottle, or a poor silly song on the radio. This is Joyce's art."

*There is a touching anecdote about Burgess, a soldier in Northumberland in winter 1941, polishing the windows of the Sergeants' Mess with a week-old copy of the *Daily Mail*- he turned it over and beneath articles about the latest destruction of the latest Great War was Joyce's death announcement- "Good god, James Joyce is dead!" - His sergeants' reply- "Back to it!", so he returned to scrubbing the window, Joyce's obituary facing outward toward the snow "faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead."

**His analysis of the mathematical structure underlying *Finnegans Wake* is especially fascinating and enlightening- in this morphing, hallucinatory, deep dream-tongue-world the governance of mathematics yet reigns eternal- as it does in the outermost undiscovered reaches of the universe. Another instance of the macro within the micro, and vice versa...

