



James Joyce: A New Biography

Gordon Bowker

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A revealing new biography—the first in more than fifty years—of one of the twentieth-century's towering literary figures

James Joyce is one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, his novels and stories foundational in the history of literary modernism. Yet Joyce's genius was by no means immediately recognized, nor was his success easily won. At twenty-two he chose a life of exile; he battled poverty and financial dependency for much of his adult life; his out-of-wedlock relationship with Nora Barnacle was scandalous for the time; and the attitudes he held towards the Irish and Ireland, England, sexuality, politics, Catholicism, popular culture—to name a few—were complex, contradictory, and controversial.

Gordon Bowker draws on material recently come to light and reconsiders the two signal works produced about Joyce's life—Herbert Gorman's authorized biography of 1939 and Richard Ellman's magisterial tome of 1959—and, most importantly by binding together more intimately than has ever before been attempted the life and work of this singular artist, Gordon Bowker here gives us a masterful, fresh, eminently readable contribution to our understanding, both of Joyce's personality and of the monumental opus he created. Bowker goes further than his predecessors in exploring Joyce's inner depths—his ambivalent relationships to England, to his native Ireland, and to Judaism—uncovering revealing evidence. He draws convincing correspondences between the iconic fictional characters Joyce created and their real-life models and inspirations. And he paints a nuanced portrait of a man of enormous complexity, the clearest picture yet of an extraordinary writer who continues to influence and fascinate over a century after his birth. Widely acclaimed on publication in Britain last year, perhaps the highest compliment paid was by Chris Proctor, of London's *Tribune*: "Bowker's success is to lead you back to the texts, perhaps understanding them better for this rich account of the maddening insane genius who wrote them."

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