
La ruta Joyce

AUTHOR: Alfonso Zapico

READER: Laura McGloughlin

Alfonso Zapico's *The Joyce Route*, is an engaging and quirky work describing the author's journey following in the footsteps of James Joyce through Dublin, Paris, Trieste and Zurich while he researched his previous graphic novel about the Irishman, *Dubliners*. According to Zapico himself, it is a small journey through four cities of Joyce's Europe, where he lived and wrote, as well as a detour here and there; a jaunt which comes to be as much about self-discovery as it is about Joyce. In Dublin he explores the streets that made up Joyce's fictional world; in Trieste's James Joyce Museum he finds more Svevo than Joyce; in Paris he muses on Sylvia Beach and the publication of *Ulysses*; and in Zurich he finds the graves of Joyce, Nora and their son.

This graphic novel is a fun and interesting read. Zapico's writing style is idiosyncratic, taking in his own philosophical musings on creativity, literature and even globalisation. From time to time his writing becomes a homage to Joyce, most notably on the punctuation-less page which ends the book and is a clear reference to Molly Bloom's soliloquy on which *Ulysses* concludes. Zapico doesn't assume a prior knowledge of Joyce's work, but manages to avoid the book only being of interest to Joycean scholars.

This is a book that would work well in English. There is a growing market for standalone graphic novels including those translated from other languages, such as *Blue Pills* by the Swiss artist Frederik Peeters and the Franco-Iranian artist Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Even more recently (February 2012) a graphic novel about James Joyce and his daughter Lucia, *Dotter of her Father's Eyes* by Mary and Bryan Talbot, has been published; there is certainly a place for *The Joyce Route* within this genre.

This is an endearing, engaging graphic novel that not only affords the reader insights into Joyce the man and writer, but also into Zapico himself as artist, enthusiast and nomad.

This is a summary of the report by Laura McGloughlin

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