



## James Joyce: Portrait of a Dubliner: A Graphic Biography

**Alfonso Zapico**

Arcade Publishing (May 3, 2016)

Hardcover \$22.99 (240pp)

978-1-62872-655-8

James Joyce's life, like much of his work, can be something of a mystery, a puzzle to untangle. Alfonso Zapico gives a thorough and masterful pictorial retelling of Joyce's life in *James Joyce: Portrait of a Dubliner: A Graphic Biography*, a graphic novel that goes far toward illuminating the enigmatic author.

With his excellent illustrations, Zapico not only makes the many characters in Joyce's life story distinct, but also provides rich background details of the cities that were so important to Joyce's development: Dublin, Trieste, Paris. The book illuminates Joyce's character and the formative events of his life, from his early parasitic stage, constantly borrowing from friends and family and imposing on their generosity, to his development as an established writer and family man. Joyce often turned on those who supported him, sometimes reconciling, sometimes not. Zapico reveals Joyce's character fairly; a hagiography this is not.

Zapico's text is well-written and substantial, complementing the book's images perfectly. One notable shortcoming is that the small font size used for captions, though quite readable otherwise, makes commas and periods nearly indistinguishable except in context.

The only thing conspicuously lacking from Zapico's graphic novel is Joyce's text itself, and without examples, it might be difficult for some to understand his unique genius, and why Joyce was supported by mysterious benefactors and more established writers in the literary world. For those already familiar with Joyce's writings, however, or those interested in the origins of those works, *James Joyce: Portrait of a Dubliner* is a brilliant companion.

PETER DABBENE (Summer 2016)

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