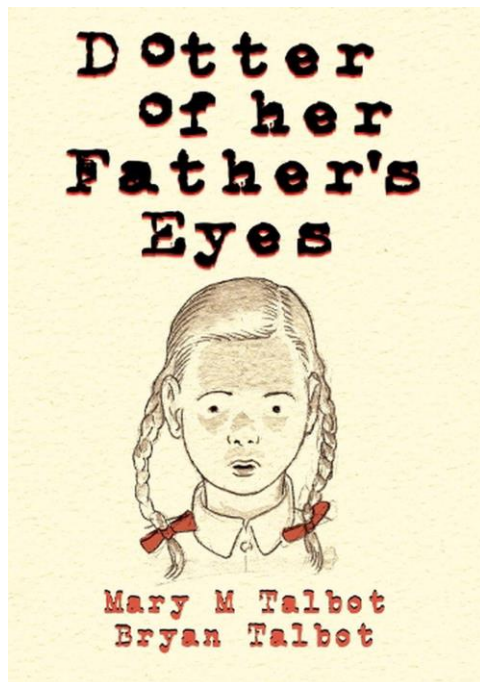


DOTTER OF HER FATHER'S EYES

Mary M. Talbot and Bryan Talbot



This was an interesting book and the group's first graphic novel. It was written as a biography of Lucia Joyce - James Joyce's daughter - alongside an autobiography of the author Mary M. Talbot in collaboration with her husband, Bryan Talbot, a well-known comics artist and illustrator. The book won the 2012 Costa biography award.

Mary's father, James Atherton, was Joyce's biographer and the book compares and contrasts the relationship each woman had with their father although Lucia's is set in the early 20th century (1907 to 1982) and Mary's in the 1950s onward. The story switches from Lucia's life to Mary's – clearly identifiable by the different colour scheme of the graphics for each one.

It is the story of how bad parenting can have a devastating effect on children – in particular those of daughters - and reflects the attitudes to women prevalent at the times. Both daughters had very difficult relationships with their fathers who both had violent tempers and thwarted their daughter's ambitions – successfully in the case of Lucia less so in Mary's.

Lucia's story is sad and ends in tragedy due to her parents' attitude to her wish to have a career as a dancer and Mary has her own issues with her parents but the changes happening in the 60s and 70s enabled her to eventually follow her dream of becoming an author. The two lives are cleverly juxtaposed throughout.

The most interesting part of the group's discussion was the fact that almost everyone read it twice although there was one member who was not keen on the graphic novel genre.

Some comments below:

"I skipped through the book initially as I didn't think it would have any substance but then I read it more thoroughly." The graphics added to the story in a way that words alone wouldn't have done. The pictures elicited their own emotion from me. I liked the way the author combined her life story with that of Lucia Joyce. The authors' story alone would not have had the poignancy that the 2 stories had running along together. This book isn't something I would have chosen to read myself but I enjoyed it and would consider a graphic novel again. "

"I really enjoyed Dotter of her Father's Eyes though, initially, I read it far too quickly and didn't really get it. On a second reading I slowed down and read the pictures as well as the words, remembering how I used to love comic strip stories as a child." As well as being a

powerful piece of writing and artwork, I also appreciated the book as an accessible entry into biography and it sent me off into Google searches to find out more about Lucia Joyce.”

“I read the book quickly thinking not much of it, then read it again more attentively and quite enjoyed it. Although the illustrations aren’t lovely, they are quite powerful and express feelings and opinions clearly, which for some readers might be more appealing, like comics used to be for me when I was younger.”

“The author conveyed a story of similarity between her own upbringing and that of James Joyce’s daughter, Lucia. It revealed I thought some jealousy of the mother towards her daughter’s strong will and freedoms and an almost obsessive father daughter relationship, swinging between love and admiration to downright fury, an interesting and original subject for a graphic novel. Luckily the author didn’t suffer the mental breakdown that Lucia did, perhaps due to some kind of progress and change in the last decade or so in dealing with mental health issues.”

“For me the “ Graphic Novel “ has been a new worthwhile experience .

I found myself reliving the excitement I had as a child reading comics - a pleasure denied (since the age of 9 being considered then a distraction from proper learning). The immediacy of the clever illustrations created an instant emotional engagement that only takes hold more slowly with the written word. Direct thoughts in bubbles leave no doubt as to whose thinking what!

An altogether unusual way of running two lines of a related story at the same time.

I found the writings of Joyce very difficult to understand way back but I have remained curious as to what he was all about. I remember the Tom Stoppard fantasy play *Travesties* with Joyce and Lenin debating the meaning of life whilst in Vienna and another visual image Lucia de Lammermoor, the Walter Scott novel and Donizetti opera of an emotional woman’s lament of life’s frustrations”

“I was very disappointed by this book. I remember studying “Portrait of the Artist as a Young man” at school as well as *Finnegan’s Wake* and *Ulysses* but I have no actual memory of what they were about – only that I found them difficult reading”

We can all relate to that last comment – Joyce’s novels were never easy!!

Christine Wright