



Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake

Carol Loeb Shloss

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“Whatever spark or gift I possess has been transmitted to Lucia and it has kindled a fire in her brain.” James Joyce, 1934

Most accounts of James Joyce’s family portray Lucia Joyce as the mad daughter of a man of genius, a difficult burden. But in this important new book, Carol Loeb Shloss reveals a different, more dramatic truth: her father loved Lucia, and they shared a deep creative bond.

Lucia was born in a pauper’s hospital and educated haphazardly across Europe as her penniless father pursued his art. She wanted to strike out on her own and in her twenties emerged, to Joyce’s amazement, as a harbinger of expressive modern dance in Paris. He described her then as a wild, beautiful, “fantastic being” whose mind was “as clear and as unsparing as the lightning.” The family’s only reader of Joyce, she was a child of the imaginative realms her father created, and even after emotional turmoil wrought havoc with her and she was hospitalized in the 1930s, he saw in her a life lived in tandem with his own.

Though most of the documents about Lucia have been destroyed, Shloss painstakingly reconstructs the poignant complexities of her life—and with them a vital episode in the early history of psychiatry, for in Joyce’s efforts to help her he sought the help of Europe’s most advanced doctors, including Jung. In Lucia’s world Shloss has also uncovered important material that deepens our understanding of *Finnegans Wake*, the book that redefined modern literature.

Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake Details

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From Reader Review Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake for online ebook

Diann Blakely says

ULYSSES, Joyce once boasted, is so replete with puzzles and enigmas that "it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality." Surely the most heartbreaking—and the most unintentional—enigma Joyce left behind was his own notoriously troubled daughter, Lucia, the subject of Schloss's biography. Was Lucia schizophrenic, Schloss asks, or was her behavior the result of living by—and living out—the fractured puzzle of language that Joyce used to represent the border between conscious and subconscious states of being, the famous "stream of consciousness" that hums through our heads, mostly unheard, during our waking hours? Schloss, like Joyce, rejects the diagnosis of schizophrenia most doctors applied to Lucia; at worst, Schloss agrees with Jung, the young woman's most famous medical advisor, that if language was a river, her father swam or allowed himself to fall through the water, while Lucia eventually drowned.

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Mandee Forehand says

I was astounded, intrigued, and saddened by the accounts of mistreatment she received, not only by her doctors but by her own family. I have questions that may never be answered, assumptions that may never be

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Elizabeth Madden says

Informative on the subject of Lucia's life and the mutual influences (Joyce & Lucia). Given so little written "evidence" about Lucia's thoughts/ experiences exists, as her letters and other writings have been destroyed/suppressed, I think Ms Loeb-Shloss does a very creditable job. As a Joycean, I certainly feel a lot better informed about Lucia than I was prior to reading this. Nora/Brenda Maddox "fans" have attacked the book,making strong complints about "Anti-Nora" bias/"unfair" attribution of responsibility for L's problems onto her mother, but I would tend to disagree. I'd love to read more about this interesting individual & her family.

Jude Woodcock says

I was interested in this book because of Lucia s dance. I am not a James joyce expert. Far from it. Although as a professional dancer, I was part of the choreography and performance of F. Wake. I feel the book is overly burdened with too many minor people that came in contact with the Joyce world. For me it made for labor intensive reading trying to keep all these people in check. I certainly don't feel Lucia was crazy. I feel she was a woman way before her time. And dance world lost an extremely creative and adventurous woman, when she quit her passion. Anyone who feels the need to move, would go nuts being in a straitjacket or restricted to a bed and told to rest? That is why Lucia (showed) improvement when she participated in sports. Movement is what made her feel alive. Unfortunately at a time when women had so little freedom even Lucia. Although her upbringing would say differently. She could have had the legacy of a Martha Graham if she had just a bit of encouragement. And if I were ever restricted for moving whether it be dance or sports, I would go ducking nuts too.

Leslie says

A long, interesting look into the Joyce family and the time and places they lived. This book is well researched and detailed and the author tells the reader when there is no or scanty information, as many documents were destroyed.

Was Lucia mad? I don't think she would be locked up today. It did sound like she was pretty neurotic and also very repressed by the society and her family's expectations.

The author speculates quite a bit, it's sort of a psycho-biography, which I enjoyed very much. She doesn't present her opinions as facts, but she makes good sense.

I think Lucia would have had a very different fate had she lived now instead of the earlier part of the 20th century.

Clare says

I was very disappointed with this book: Lucia Joyce, James Joyce's famously disturbed only daughter led a fascinating life. Loeb Schloss, however, disturbs the story with irrelevant hypotheticals and speculation, imagines scenarios that didn't actually happen in attempts at thought experiments, and generally butchers a story interesting enough on its own.

It is a particular shame because this book has become the poster child for the battle against the James Joyce estate, who keeps a very tight lid on Joyce's material, limiting its use by academics- very frustrating for anyone trying to publish scholarly work.

Katie O says

I want to take it as the pure truth but I know much of the historical evidence has been destroyed. I still love reading about this brilliant and fascinating young woman. Working on a show about Finnegans Wake, ALP and Lucia right now!

Fran says

Unfortunately I do not have a strong background where James Joyce is concerned and this was a handicap since there were many words spent in this book on Finnegans Wake for which Lucia Joyce, his daughter, served both as muse and subject. While I appreciate the intensive research required for this book, it was tough going. I was interested in Lucia's life as a dancer, and it was painful to learn that this vital stream to her life was dead ended and that other opportunities for her creative expression were few when she was in her mid-twenties. This would be less likely to happen in our current world. Her behaviour was labelled as crazy and her father tried to provide her with the best psychiatric care available in Europe at the time, but unfortunately her experiences as a patient/inmate of institutions did not provide the kind of healing she needed (noting the male dominated medical profession that focused on the treatment of "insane," mostly women). Her father struggled to figure out what was best for her, especially after the invasion of France by the Nazis, as he knew about the cleansing of mental institutions being undertaken by the Nazis. There was a lot of interpretation in this book - of motives, behaviour that bogged it down for me. The book did open up the world of the Joyces, the social milieu that they were part of and that surrounded them, the psychiatric thinking of the day, the role of women and Joyce's brilliance and suffering. So, I am glad that I persisted.

Capili April says

Its subject alone makes it worth reading: the book tells the story of Lucia, Joyce's daughter, who was considered mentally ill and spent most of her life in institutions. But it relates a narrative that has been kept hidden or ignored by Joyce's biographers: Lucia was an artist in her own right, one whose life was sacrificed for the sake of her father's genius. This pokes holes in the simplistic view that she simply went mad. There are also very controversial suggestions--many of them hard to prove because letters to, by, and about Lucia had been destroyed. The most memorable points made by Carol Loeb Schloss, I believe, are that Lucia and Joyce engaged each other creatively and that the latter loved the former infinitely.

David says

A carefully researched and moving biography of Lucia Joyce the disturbed and disturbing daughter of James Joyce. She danced like a silver fish with Paris's lost generation but slowly lost her own way through love affairs and personal disappointment, almost drowning in the wake of her father, abandoned by the rest of her family and unable to fulfil the brilliant ambition of her youth.

aya says

The tenuous lines between in/sanity/genius, art/family/obligation. Lucia Joyce is fascinating not just in relation to her father and their relationship, but also as a dancer whose sanity was questioned and in the end, decided for her by her family. the book is too long for the amount of actual information that exists about lucia-it is written like a thesis with enormous amounts of secondary sources and extraneous information, but the core is incredibly interesting. although the author makes it a point to say that lucia is significant in her own right and that is how she will examine her, the book is ultimately focused on lucia as joyce's daughter and how their relationship formed and deformed her.

David Markwell says

A fascinating look at Lucia Joyce and her life. Daughter of James Joyce and an accomplished dancer she suffered from madness that would eventually take her life. Joyce felt that her madness was his gift without an outlet. My reading of Finnegans Wake was heavily influenced by this book (I am not sure Joyce would have it any other way). A great read.

Grace says

Lucia Joyce is one of the most fascinating people that ever existed. This book contains rare photographs and exciting insights into her mysterious, strange life.

Jennifer says

I was disappointed. This book is not quite academic enough to be a textbook, but at the same time not interesting enough to be an enjoyable read. Which is a shame since the subject matter is so fascinating.
