



Help My Unbelief: James Joyce and Religion

By Geert Lernout

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From the very beginning James Joyce's readers have considered him as a Catholic or an anti-Catholic writer, and in recent years the tendency has been to recuperate him for an alternative and decidedly liberal form of Catholicism. However, a careful study of Joyce's published and unpublished writings reveals that throughout his career as a writer he rejected the church in which he had grown up. As a result, Geert Lernout argues that it is misleading to divorce his work from that particular context, which was so important to his decision to become a writer in the first place. Arguing that Joyce's unbelief is critical for a fuller understanding of his work, Lernout takes his title from Ulysses, "I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. That is, help me to believe or help me to unbelieve?", itself a quote from Mark 9: 24. This incisive study will be of interest to all readers of Joyce and to anyone interested in the relationship between religion and literature.

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Editorial Review

Review

Lernout meticulously pinpoints and researches minor references to religion in Joyce's oeuvre, providing an index of ideas that will undoubtedly be an excellent resource for scholars seeking an explanation for religious allusions which have hitherto been overlooked or unexplained, particularly in Joyce's early work... This is a vast, informative work that will be useful both to new readers and experienced Joyceans alike. (Sanford Lakoff)

Lernout's book is an indispensable starting point for an extended examination of religion in Joyce's works and his always intricate perspectives. (Sanford Lakoff)

About the Author

Geert Lernout is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, and Director of the James Joyce Centre. He has published *The French Joyce* (1990) and *Iets Anders: De Goldberg-Varieties van Bach* (2001).

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