

The Reconstructionist

Review by **SARAH GOODRUM**

Coolly and compellingly narrated by a man, this is a novel of psychological insight and power, about the reckless quality of exclusive love, about the damage families do - and try, sometimes dangerously, to undo.



By Josephine Hart
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If you want to be lost in the atmospherics and intrigues of Victorian literature, to be spellbound by the secrets that lurk in the lives of the aristocracy, look to Wilkie Collins or the Brontës. If you want to see the tried and true elements of such novels stretched as canvas on the frame of the modern British world, look to Josephine Hart. In *The Reconstructionist*, the author of the acclaimed *Damage* gives us her view on the power secrets have to undo us.

Jack Harrington, a psychiatrist specialising in victims of trauma, is himself traumatised. As young children, he and his younger sister, Kate, lost their mother and were taken from their home in Ireland after a horrific and mysterious event left them estranged from all save their grandfather's brother, who raised them in London. Jack also bears a burden even greater than memory -- one which is kept deliciously just out of the reader's reach until its discovery wields shocking dramatic power.

When the family home in Ireland comes up for sale, the truth about what destroyed Jack and Kate's idyllic youth screams to be confronted. To free Kate from a shadowy past and to give himself the closure he needs to live a full life, Jack will have to dismantle the carefully wrought reconstruction of the events he has been wearing like a shield for more than 20 years.

Jack's psychiatry practice is a rich backdrop for the novel, with ample opportunities for exploration of the human response to trauma. Without it, Jack's coldly methodical approach to horror and emotional injury might have made it difficult for the reader to find an emotional point of entry. A certain poreless surface to Jack's resolve first makes him seem aloof and unkind, and, as we begin to know him, becomes chilling.

Josephine Hart's style is nearly cinematic in its immediacy. Her ending has a subtlety, a quiet approach to a blaring discovery, that makes putting the book down unthinkable. Overall, *The Reconstructionist* is a razor-sharp read.

Source: *BookPage.com* and *WHSmith*