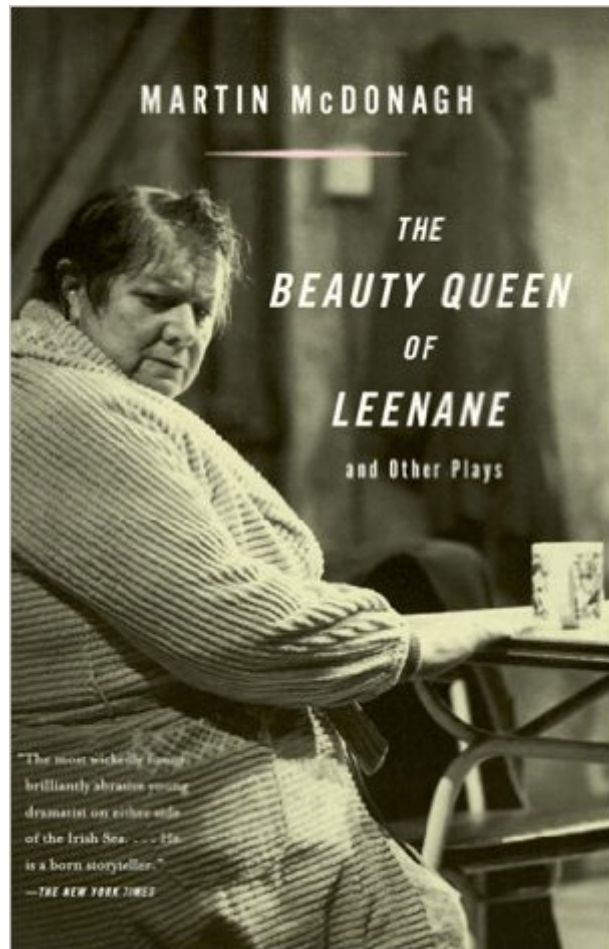


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The Beauty Queen Of Leenane And Other Plays



Synopsis

These three plays are set in a town in Galway so blighted by rancor, ignorance, and spite that, as the local priest complains, God Himself seems to have no jurisdiction there. The Beauty Queen of Leenane portrays ancient, manipulative Mag and her virginal daughter, Maureen, whose mutual loathing may be more durable than any love. In A Skull in Connemara, Mick Dowd is hired to dig up the bones in the town churchyard, some of which belong to his late and oddly unlamented wife. And the brothers of The Lonesome West have no sooner buried their father than they are resuming the vicious and utterly trivial quarrel that has been the chief activity of their lives." [McDonagh is] the most wickedly funny, brilliantly abrasive young dramatist on either side of the Irish Sea.... He is a born storyteller."--New York Times

Book Information

Paperback: 259 pages

Publisher: Vintage; 1 edition (September 8, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375704876

ISBN-13: 978-0375704871

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #107,784 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Aviation > Repair & Maintenance](#) #67 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Aviation > Piloting & Flight Instruction](#) #166 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Dramas & Plays](#)

Customer Reviews

The best way to sum up Martin McDonagh? Quentin Tarantino meets Edward Albee. All three of these plays, also known as the Leenane trilogy, have several things in common: (1) violence (2) black humor (3) grotesque characters and (4) did I mention violence. Like Tarantino, McDonagh's use of violence is mostly humorous. When Maureen smashes her old mother's head with a fire poker, we laugh. We laugh because the poker has been conversed about at great length, about how it would make a supreme weapon. It displays the Chekov adage perfectly - if you show a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it better go off in the third. We also laugh because Maureen and her mother are so nasty, so disgusting and despicable that one of them deserves a sweet release.

But not all the characters die - some are beaten with shovels, others crashed into walls, others have their heads shot off: and somehow they return, bloodied, confused, but alive, as stupid and indestructible as ever. And at times the violence is not funny, but chillingly cold - like when Maureen burns her mother's hand in boiling oil. We are caught in between, as our laughs melt into gasps. Juxtaposed to all this violence is an attention to the prosaic. In an instant the characters can go from arguing about the merits of different brands of potato crisps to pointing a gun at one another's head. Very Tarantinoesque. Think of Vince and Jules tucking their guns into their shorts as they leave the diner in their "dork" t-shirts at the end of Pulp Fiction. One of McDonagh's characters blows off his father's head because he makes fun of his haircut. Sure, all this is funny, but I think McDonagh is also trying to show the petty, ignorant absurdity that is the human condition.

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