



Martin McDonagh
The Pillowman

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A writer in a totalitarian state is interrogated about the gruesome content of his short stories and their similarities to a number of child-murders that are happening in his town.

'Sometimes you don't even know what you've been craving until the real thing comes along.' *New York Times*

'McDonagh is more than just a very clever theatrical stylist. His tricks and turns have a purpose. They are bridges over a deep pit of sympathy and sorrow, illuminated by a tragic vision of stunted and frustrated lives.' Fintan O'Toole, *Irish Times*

Martin McDonagh's searingly brilliant new play premi?res at the National Theatre, London in November 2003.

The Pillowman Details

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Author : Martin McDonagh

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From Reader Review The Pillowman for online ebook

Pooriya says

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Pavle says

Jedino pitanje je da li Mekdana (ko nije, odmah na In Bruges) ima dušu ili ima *preveliku* dušu. Pri?a u pri?u u pri?i, i u njoj, pri?a. Sve u svemu, ovo je bilo divno na jedan pozitivno mazohisti?ki na?in. ?esto razmišljam o tome kako uopšte nešto tako brutalno može da istovremeno bude jako humano, i i dalje mi je delimi?no nejasno kako (i zašto) bilo ko može da uzme ovako nešto u ruke i još uz to uživa u ?itanju/gledanju, iako to i sam intenzivno radim (recimo nedavno film *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*). Šta je to što se izvu?e? Što ostane? Ogledalo mi zvu?i kao preterano banalan odgovor. Možda je nešto neshvatljivo, a opet ljudsko. Pojma nemam. Ali mislim da Mekdana zna.

U, ima još jedno pitanje - da li je Mekdana genije ili je jebeni genije?

Mohammad Hanifeh says

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Shayan Foroozesh says

One of the best plays I've ever read, especially for its genuine idea of putting shorty short stories in the play. And what terrific stories! The problem is that when I love a piece of literature I get tongue-tied and words fail me. Ugh. I'm going to reread this play some time soon and I'll be back with a thorough review.

Amir says

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George K. says

Βαθμολογία: 9/10

Ο Μ?ρτιν ΜακΝτ?να ?χει σκηνοθετ?σει τις ταιν?ες "In Bruges" (εξαιρετικ? αλλ? πολ? ιδια?τερη), "Seven Psychopaths" (πολ? καλ? αλλ? αρκετ? θε?μουρλη) και "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" (σκοπε?ω να τη δω μ?σα στη βδομ?δα. ?χω ακο?σει τα καλ?τερα και πραγματικ? ανυπομον?!), οι οπο?ες βασ?ζονται σε δικ? του σεν?ρια. Αλλ? εκτ?ς απ?

σκηνοθ?της/σεναριογρ?φος ταινι?ν, ε?ναι και θεατρικ?ς συγγραφ?ας. ?χει γρ?ψει κ?μποσα ?ργα και βλ?πω ?τι ?λα τους ξεχωρ?ζουν χ?ρη στις κ?θε ε?δους ιδιορρυθμ?ες και ιδιαιτερ?τητ?ς τους.

?να τ?τοιο θεατρικ? ?ργο, δηλαδ? ιδι?ρρυθμο και εξαιρετικ? ιδια?τερο, ε?ναι και το "Ο Μαξιλαρ?νιος". Το μ?νο που χρει?ζεται να ξ?ρετε πριν το διαβ?σετε, ε?ναι ?τι η ?λη ιστορ?α διαδραματ?ζεται σε κ?ποιο φανταστικ? απολυταρχικ? καθεστ?ς, σ?να ανακριτικ? δωμ?τιο, ?που ο Κατο?ριαν, ?νας συγγραφ?ας μικρ?ν ιστορ?ν με θ?μα τη β?α σε παιδι?, ανακρ?νεται απ? δυο αστυνομικο?ς, γιατ? μερικ?ς ιστορ?ες του ?μοιαζαν με κ?ποιους πρ?σφατους φ?νους παιδι?ν στην π?λη. Και σαν να μην ?φτανε αυτ?, ο αδερφ?ς του, ον?ματι Μ?σαλ, ομολογε? τους συγκεκριμ?νους φ?νους...

Η παραπ?νω περ?ληψη δεν δε?χνει με τ?ποτα το ?γριο και κυνικ? ?ψος του θεατρικ? ?ργου, την κατ?μαυρη α?σθηση του χιο?μορ? τις δι?φορες θε?μουρλες καταστ?σεις που διαδραματ?ζονται. Και, εντ?ξει, ?σως σαν βιβλ?ο να διαβ?ζεται σχετικ? ε?κολα και ωρα?α, ?μως σαν θεατρικ? παρ?σταση αμφιβ?λλω αν θα ε?ναι για ?λα τα γο?στα, ?σο καλ? και προσεγμ?νη και αν ε?ναι. Υπ?ρχουν δι?φορες σκην?ς β?ας και κ?μποσο βρισ?δι, εν? οι χαρακτ?ρες μ?νο συμπαθητικο? δεν ε?ναι. ?μως, γαμ?το, το σεν?ριο τα σπ?ει, οπ?τε μια θεατρικ? παρ?σταση στα χ?ρια εν?ς καλο? σκηνοθ?τη (και, φυσικ?, με αξ?ι?λογο σ?νολο ηθοποι?ν), θα τα ?σπαγε ακ?μα περισσ?τερο.

Υ.Γ. Εννοε?ται ?τι θα διαβ?σω και ?λλα θεατρικ? ργα του ΜακΝτ?να...

FeReSHte says

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Sara Alaee says

It was AMAZING!

Reza Mardani says

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Miriam says

That's a good story. That's something-esque. What kind of "esque" is it? I can't remember. I don't really go in for that "esque" sort of stuff anyway, but there's nothing wrong with that story. Is there?

I suspect that McDonagh would like you to think he is being Kafka-esque, but this is actually more King-esque. S. King with a thin veneer of literary affectation. Plus a dash of Catch-22.

That sounds harsh, but I actually found it moderately interesting to read, and well done for what it was. If you don't mind all the child torture and police brutality.

Liz Janet says

"It isn't about being or not being dead, it's about what you leave behind."

This is not just a story of a writer in a totalitarian police state whose gruesome stories are happening. Nor is it about different forms of interrogation nor censorship. Nor is it solely on the responsibility of the author

after his stories are being acted out in gruesome ways. This is a story of a writer becoming obsessed, while going interrogation, with having his stories survive his punishment.

The best part of the play, to me at least, was the short stories by the writer told throughout the play. My favourite was "The Three Gibbet Crossroads," since I am still unable to see what could be worse than rape and murder within the context. Another brilliant one was "The Tale of the Town on the River," this is how re-tellings should be done all the time. "The Pillowman" makes me depressed, but I love it too much. And lastly "The Writer and the Writer's Brother," if this were a true story I would have cried even more than I did while reading it.

A Storytelling Instinct Revels in Horror's Fun

I wish I had read this play sooner, because it is brilliant, and now I wished I had seen the dramatization with David Tennant and Jim Broadbent. I will read this many times over, I guarantee it.

PLEASE READ IT! IT IS BRILLIANT AND GREAT AND JUST AWESOME!

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Pillowman: A Play, Martin McDonagh

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unnarrator says

Maybe I'll sleep again *someday*...but seriously. Really, really, piercingly smart. funny, ghastly, and lovely. And ghastly. Did I mention ghastly? Ghastly in that Guy-de-Maupassant-rapes-Kafka kind of way.

(KATURIAN: 'That's a good story. That's something-esque. What kind of "esque" is it? I can't remember. I don't really go in for that "esque" sort of stuff anyway, but there's nothing wrong with that story. Is there?')

Should be four-and-a-half stars, really...and would have been five but for this kind of Borgesian ripoff twist-finale which WORKS on the page (and has to be there, the whole play would collapse without it, it's a load-bearing ending), but I'm not sure how I would feel about its being *staged*. Isn't there a reason Borges only wrote short stories?

Anyway, good for you Martin McDonagh. I bet your mother thinks you're a *right* freakshow, now; but the rest of us applaud you for not pulling your theater-of-cruelty punches, not one bit.

Hossein Sharifi says

Highly recommended

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SPOILER ALERT !

.....

Genre:

Grotesque or Dark Comedy ?!

What is the Grotesque?

- The Grotesque fits in between the real and the fantastic (non-real).
- The Grotesque simultaneously fits somewhere between being funny and being frightening. (This is a bit more difficult to gauge, as what is funny to one person is frightening to another, so maintaining a bit of an open mind is helpful)

Furthermore, the Grotesque often contains a sort of fusion of human with animal, vegetable, machine, or some other combination. So, it could be a combination of a man and a dog, or a cat with a carrot, or a bird and a toad.

The simplest example of this that I can provide for you in literature is from the story The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka, which essentially tells the story of a man who wakes up one day to discover that he has been somehow transformed into a person-sized insect.

What is Black / dark comedy?

Black comedy, also known as black humor or dark comedy, is a sub-genre of comedy and satire where topics and events that are usually treated seriously are treated in a satirical manner while still being portrayed as the negative events that they are. Typical targets are death, (mass) murder, suicide, blackmail, (domestic) violence, disease, insanity, handicaps, environmental disasters, famine, fear, child pornography/abuse, drug abuse, rape, castration, war, terrorism, racism, sexism, homophobia, bestiality and line-cutting.

Black Comedy doesn't necessarily have to involve death — anything tragic can be fodder for Black Comedy. A Kafka Komedy is a subtrope of Black Comedy in which the object of humor is abject failure.

Which one do u think it is ? a black comedy or a grotesque ????

by the way.. is grotesque a genre or is it just a literary feature ?!

To anyone unfamiliar with the story, The Pillowman might seem a misleading title. The Pillowman is one of Katurian's greatest stories, and is quite possibly the reason his brother decided to play God and toy with children's lives. Sure, it's not the main idea in the show, but it does play a very important part. The story is about a man, a Pillowman, whose purpose in life is to go to people who are suffering, and who have lived

horrible lives, and comfort them. He then goes back in time and finds the people when they're still children, and he tells them that unless they end their lives now, they will lead terrible, and unhappy lives. His intentions are not malicious at all. In a way, he is saving these people. By convincing them to die while still so young, he is saving them from all those years of torment that he knows will drive them to suicide later on in life anyway.

Michal had lived an extremely traumatic life, having been tortured by his parents for seven years, and then watching them being murdered by his own brother. He suffered severe trauma and was left with a slight mental disability. Because of this, he is unable to properly process the stories that Katurian reads to him. When he hears *The Pillowman*, and hears about these children that are bound to lead horrible lives, he makes the assumption that ALL children are going to lead horrible lives and that he is doing them a favor by killing them before they really start to suffer.

The show takes place in a non-specific totalitarian state, which makes it impossible to determine geographical location, climate, or year. The characters are indoors, confined in a windowless cell which makes it impossible to tell even the time of day. Since we have no specific location, we have no way of knowing the economic, political, social, or religious environment. We get glimpses into Katurian's past, yet they never mention a year or location.

Theme:

The main theme at the center of the dark, Anglo-Irish play *The Pillowman* is the effects of parental abuse.

As the topic that drives the plot forward, main character Katurian K. Katurian has to face the memories of his disturbed and abused childhood at the hands of his parents. The effect of such abuse resulted in his works as a story teller of macabre children's stories. As a result, he now faces the abusive interrogation from the police of a totalitarian establishment regarding the sudden macabre murders of children from the area.

Aside from Katurian, his brother Michal is also a victim of abuse by his and Katurian's parents. Likewise, he also undergoes investigation and also shows signs of psychological distress. What is shocking, however is that Michal is indeed guilty of the children's murders, leaving Katurian with no other choice but to kill his brother in what looks like a much more merciful way to die.

Faced with the possibility of having his body of work destroyed if he does not confess, Katurian takes the risk and blames himself for the murders. This leads to the second theme of the play, which is the defense and preservation of art even under the pressure of a suppressive system. Katurian prefers to basically get himself murdered rather than give up his stories. McDonagh places special emphasis on the importance of this theme, bringing with it equal significance to the overall atmosphere and style of the play.

Martin McDonagh seems to have drawn from the great Russian tradition of making his main characters utterly unlikeable, and tragically, comedically realistic.

characters:

Katurian K. Katurian:

just a guy who writes horrific stories. Probably innocent of what the police are accusing him.

Katurian is a unique name but it closely resembles an Armenian last name, Khachaturian, which translates to "Cross-Bearer." Katurian himself is a cross bearer because, though he may not survive the play, he has to live with the fact that his stories inspired the demise of three innocent children. Katurian was dragged into this despite his innocence in the matter.

At the beginning of the play, Katurian doesn't know why he's in custody. He believes that he is simply in there to help the police with their investigation and that he is in no way guilty of anything. At the end, Katurian feels lost and defeated. His brother confessed to killing innocent children and said it was because Katurian told him to, he realizes that there's no escape for him. He knows that no matter what he does, he's going to die, and the police are going to destroy all of his work.

Michal:

We don't meet Michal until act 2, but at the beginning of act 2 he is being held in the jail cell next to the interrogation room where Katurian is being questioned. He knows that he killed those children, but doesn't realize that he should feel guilty about it. Years of torture left him slow in the head, so he doesn't understand the gravity of his actions, and feels no sympathy. His part ends with Katurian smothering him in his sleep, but by that time, he still doesn't exactly feel bad about what he's done. He explained to Katurian that he only killed the children to see how far-fetched his stories were, and never once apologized or expressed sympathy.

Detective Ariel :Claims to be "the bad cop" at the beginning, but transforms to the more "sympathetic" cop at the end. A totalitarian, dictorial cop and a counterpart to Tupolski. More a physical torturer than a verbal torturer.

Detective Tupolski: An investigator, less violent and aggressive, but very unfeeling. A counterpart to Detective Ariel, one of the totalitarian, dictorial cops who dominate Katurian and Michal. Tupolski is "the good cop" at the beginning, but by being a good cop he spares no feelings. More verbal torturer than a physical torturer.

Martin McDonagh makes frequent use of this classic binary in his play – in fact, the entire play seems to depend on the contradiction of good and bad.

One of the first (and most basic) examples of this binary comes in the representation of the good cop/bad cop stereotype. We are immediately introduced to this duo and we immediately understand their roles in the play. Although these characters are not as deeply developed as Katurian and Michal, Tupolski and Ariel (good and bad, respectively) are no doubt important to the overall story.

Michal is at first seen as a good and innocent character: he cooperates with the police and seems incapable of the atrocities to which he eventually confesses. However, Michal must ultimately be considered bad – as are most serial child-killers. Again, through character development, McDonagh blurs the lines between good and bad and deconstructs the binary present throughout the play.

2. Study Guide for The Pillowman via gradesaver.com
3. The-pillowman via Enotes.com

Mahdi Lotfabadi says

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Staring-Girl says

?χει ο καλλιτ?χνης ευθ?νη προς την κοινων?α;
(Μ?νο) ο π?νος και οι ?ρρωστες καταστ?σεις σε κ?νουν πιο δημιουργικ?;
Η τ?χνη αντιγρ?φει την ζω? ? το ?να δ?νει τροφ? στο ?λλο;
Ε?ναι λογικ? ο δημιουργ?ς να ?χει τα ?ργα του σαν παιδι? του;
Απο το ?να ως το δ?κα π?σο πιο σκατ? μπορε? να γ?νει η ζω? σου αν ζεις σ?να
απολυταρχικ? καθεστ?ς-ειδικ? αν ε?σαι συγγραφ?ας;
Γιατ? κλα?ει το μωρ? αφο? φορ?ει π?να;

Οι απαντ?σεις στο κοσμοπ?λιταν, σελ?δα 20.

Billy Crudup as Katurian Katurian, Jeff Goldblum as Tupolski, Zeljko Ivanek as Ariel.

Michael Stuhlbarg as Michal.

Bookdragon Sean says

Good theatre suspends you in reality. Good theatre captures a moment in time that could be now. And *The Pillowman* does this superbly. This is, indeed, a deeply disturbing play, chiefly because it could be real.

It all begins with some dark stories. A writer has written some brutal pieces about child murder and butchery. Someone has read his work and has decided to carry out the deeds within them. The writer, Katurian, has been brought in for questioning. The opening scene is reminiscent of Kafka's *The Trial*. The protagonist is being investigated and put on trial for events he has no understanding of. Kafkaesque is a word that is on the

tip of the performers tongue all through the scene, but it never is actually spoken despite the blatant allusions: it doesn't quite need to be said. This effect is later removed as the situation becomes clearer.

What replaces it is a relationship straight out of *Of Mice and Men*. Katurian has a younger brother, one who is strikingly similar to Lenny. His concept of right and wrong is vague, though pure of heart; he will do anything he is told to do. The two brothers have a darker past, an abusive childhood that has bound them together out of survival and mutual affection. The investigators of the crime are certain it was one, or perhaps both, of them that carried out the killings. The questions begin as does the torture, though central to Katurian's mind is what's going to happen to his writing if he is found guilty.

“It isn't about being or not being dead, it's about what you leave behind”

So the play questions the legacy of writing, and the responsibility of its content. Who is to blame in such a situation? Can the writer be held accountable for someone else's obsessions and misconceptions over his work? This play may all sound terribly bleak, but running through it is a string of irony and self-reflexive moments. The characters draw attention to their own stupidity and the limitedness from the position in which they operate; thus, tragedy is infused with dark comedy making the play a true enjoyment to watch.

If you get the chance, I highly recommend watching a version of this after reading it.

Faeze Taheri says

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Fatemeh Beygi says

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SARAH says

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