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McCarthy's Bar, by Pete McCarthy, St. Martin's Press, 2000

Richard McGowan
Butler University, rmcgowan@butler.edu

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The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings



McCarthy's Bar

by Pete McCarthy, St. Martin's Press, 2000

Reviewed by Richard J. McGowan

Planning a trip to Ireland? Don't read this book until you return. Been to Ireland? Read McCarthy's Bar now. Its trenchant and hilarious observations will be accessible and will have you back to the Emerald Isle, laughing, chatting, and sharing a pint (or several)!

Born in England to an Irish mother, Pete McCarthy set out to explore the land of his maternal lineage. Therefore, McCarthy's Bar is part travelogue, part self-exploration; it is aptly subtitled 'A Journey of Discovery in Ireland.'

McCarthy's life in England as travel writer, host of "Travelog" (a TV show), and comic enabled exploration of the historical and contemporary Irish character and his own-and his own is very funny.

Here is a description of wild Irish countryside turned to tourism tawdry: "Ounahincha is in a beautiful setting, with an expansive beach, dramatic rocks in water, and splendid sloping lush landscape." But it's become laden with tourist schlock. "I find myself feeling sorry for people who voluntarily spend their free time here. Like me, now." McCarthy's deadpan, incisive observation combined with a comedian's timing produce laugh-out-loud reading.

Seeking Michael Collins' birthplace, McCarthy encounters Jack Ryan, an IRA contemporary of Collins as well as Noel Redding, "the fella out of the Jimi Hendrix Experience." These sorts of experiences and the author's use of historians as well as other travelers, e.g., Thackery, interweave Irish history with contemporary culture.

McCarthy's Bar, rollicking writing and all, is at once educational and an immensely enjoyable, journey!

- Richard McGowan is Instructor of Business Ethics at Butler University.