



Saints and Sinners: Stories

By Edna O'Brien

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With her inimitable gift for describing the workings of the heart and mind, Edna O'Brien introduces us to a vivid new cast of restless, searching people who—whether in the Irish countryside or London or New York—remind us of our own humanity.

In "Send My Roots Rain," Miss Gilhooley, a librarian, waits in the lobby of a posh Dublin hotel—expecting to meet a celebrated poet while reflecting on the great love who disappointed her. The Irish workers of "The Shovel Kings" have pipe dreams of becoming millionaires in London, but long for their quickly changing homeland-exiles in both places. "Green Georgette" is a searing anatomy of class, through the eyes of a little girl; "Old Wounds" illuminates the importance of family and memory in old age. In language that is always bold and vital, Edna O'Brien pays tribute to the universal forces that rule our lives.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

O'Brien (The Light of Evening) mixes her trademark lyricism with a brutal depiction of lives marred by violence, whether a pining lover whose life has been upended or a dreamer whose fate leads him to a cold death in the wild. "Sinners" depicts one night in the life of a fusty innkeeper whose prudish disgust at a trio of guests is slowly revealed to have roots in her own loneliness. In "Black Flower" a former prison art teacher drives to the countryside with a newly released veteran of Ireland's freedom fights—and a likely target for revenge. The narrator of "Plunder" is a young girl caught in a civil war who describes cowering in fear and her torments at the hands of the enemy. Another young girl narrates "Green Georgette" and endures the emotional hardship of class divisions, while in "Send My Roots Rain" a woman sits in a Dublin hotel lobby awaiting a reclusive poet and thinks back on love affairs and disappointments. And in "Manhattan Medley" a transplant to the big city begins an affair with a man and describes in rich prose how it has permeated her life. Throughout, tragedy mingles with beauty, yearning with survival, and destruction with moments of grace. (May)

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Review

PRAISE FOR SAINTS AND SINNERS:

"Edna O'Brien writes the most beautiful, aching stories of any writer, anywhere." ***Alice Munro***

"One great virtue of Edna O'Brien's writing is the sensation it gives of a world made new by language. . . . A lyric language which is all the more trustworthy because it issues from a sensibility that has known the costs as well as the rewards of being alive." ***Seamus Heaney, from "Citation, Lifetime Achievement Award"***

"O'Brien mixes her trademark lyricism with a brutal depiction of lives marred by violence...Throughout, tragedy mingles with beauty, yearning with survival, and destruction with moments of grace." ***Publishers Weekly***

"Fifty years after leaving County Clare for London, the doyenne of Irish fiction, Edna O'Brien, is still preoccupied with the land of her birth....[*Saints and Sinners*] is a shimmering book--lyric, but highly controlled." ***Rachel Cooke, The Observer (London)***

"Ever since the publication of *The Country Girls*, in 1960, O'Brien's work has been recognized as something new, turning themes of sexual repression into joyful experiment and the age-old sadness of exile into an opportunity to explore a brave new world....Subversion is what catapulted Edna O'Brien to literary stardom an incredible half century ago and, at the top of her game, she can still cut the ground from under your feet." ***Aisling Foster, The Times (London)***

"The world, if viewed in clichéd terms, is indeed populated by the two types of individuals cited in the title of this new collection of short stories by the doyenne of contemporary Irish literature, an acknowledged master of the form. But that is all that is clichéd about this splendid book....Eleven stories in total bring literary lovers' rapt attention to this author's clear, immaculate style and her brilliant selection of detail, nimble plot construction, and astute character delineation. Recommend O'Brien along with William Trevor and Alice Munro." ***Brad Hooper, Booklist***

"Half a century after her incendiary debut novel...Edna O'Brien still holds her place as a revealer of the nation's soul. She shows its 'maimed, stark and misshapen, but ferociously tenacious' character, in this latest elegant, uncluttered collection, to have a remarkable, tragic forbearance for suffering...In a lovely flourish, O'Brien scatters her stories with small, beautifully-tended and thrillingly described gardens, as lush as they are sweet-smelling. Some sit on the fringes of the story, others offer respite for characters who stumble across them in passing, but they emerge time and again like little plots of makeshift Edens for the fallen."**Arifa Akbar, Independent (London)**

"O'Brien's new collection of stories, *Saints and Sinners*, features plenty of sex, plenty of people who are all very much alive, living bravely in the face of death. Her protagonists are wonderfully flawed and vulnerable....complexity and ambivalence gives her work great depth and charge...So who are the eponymous saints? Who are the new Adam and Eve? O'Brien's compassionate, mesmerizing tales exhilaratingly refuse to spell that out."**Michele Roberts, Financial Times**

About the Author

Edna O'Brien, author of *The Country Girls Trilogy*, *The Light of Evening*, *Byron in Love*, and many other books is the recipient of the James Joyce Ulysses Medal and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, and is an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She lives in London.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Olga Noone:

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James Goodman:

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Whitney Martinez:

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