



Title: Broken Irish

Author: Edward J. Delaney

Description:

Set in the late 1990s in Boston, a time when even the local Catholic church is party to a scandal that threatens to unravel, Edward J. Delaney's intricately structured *Broken Irish* moves with the pace of a thriller but delves more deeply into the lives of its characters. This engrossing novel about corruption and redemption gives sympathetic voice to the voiceless and offers an unflinching look at the workings of a community in the throes of change.

Reviews

Kirkus (starred review):

Delaney plots his narrative through parallel story lines, all of which elegantly converge at the end of the novel. Jimmy Gilbride has been an alcoholic for about 20 of his 32 years, and after untold binges -- and a recent auto accident -- he gets a job helping to ghostwrite the memoirs of Terrance Walsh Rafferty, an entrepreneur from Southie who made good and is now worth millions. Ironically, Jimmy has given up drinking (for the most part) so he can do this job, but it's just the moment when all those years of abuse are beginning to disclose problems with his liver. We also learn of the unhappy life of Colleen Coogan and her estranged 13-year-old son Christopher, who drops out of school and wanders around town, most days ending up in the library where he can indulge his passion in reading about medieval legends. In the evenings Christopher shadows Jeanmarie, a 16-year-old who's also left school to live with her egregious boyfriend Bobby, a loser who smuggles beer home to their squalid apartment from his job at the Liquor Mart. She has dreams of making it big as a model, dreams fed by slimy Marty, who takes pornographic pictures and encourages her to think he's going to make her a star. Finally, we learn of Father John, a soon-to-retire whiskey priest of dubious morality whom Colleen hopes will serve as a spiritual adviser to help her with Christopher. It turns out Father John has his own family secrets to bear.

Delaney keeps all of the incipient tragedy beautifully and heartbreakingly balanced through artful plotting and an unadorned but graceful prose style.

Publishers Weekly (starred review):

Delaney sets his new novel (after *Warp & Weft*) in South Boston, Mass., where a wonderfully realized cast of downtrodden characters struggle to overcome tough predicaments in the final years of the 20th century. In short, clipped chapters (nearly 100), Delaney gracefully guides his rich tapestry, his characters' serpentine circumstances converging toward conclusions that offer little catharsis. There's nary a blue sky in sight in Delaney's world, but readers will be captivated. The author continues to demonstrate great dexterity and storytelling acumen in his lyrical page-turner.

Booklist (starred review):

In an artfully constructed story Delaney tackles corporate corruption, the sex-abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, gun violence, and, especially, alcoholism (in searing passages on the ravages of drink that recall Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*).

Boston Globe:

Delaney focuses on relatable, human drama that makes the novel and its characters truly indelible. He cares about details and understands their importance to the larger themes of loss, desperation, and betrayed loyalties. His characters are not merely vehicles for ideas, but rather fully realized, familiar people, whose failures are heartbreakingly authentic.

Robert Olen Butler:

Epic in scope but relentlessly compelling in its storytelling -- not a common combination -- *Broken Irish* is a splendidly readable and richly textured novel. Edward J. Delaney is an enormously gifted writer whose ongoing work I will closely follow.

Margot Livesey:

In Edward J. Delaney's South Boston little is lost, nothing forgotten. Old sins, old wounds haunt his characters, young and old, and reverberate throughout his wonderfully complicated plot. *Broken Irish* is an enthralling, satisfying novel.

Adam Braver:

An entire community is on the brink. Hope is the only hope. And faith cannot scrub the grime off its hands. With *Broken Irish*, Edward J. Delaney delivers a gripping epic.