



# The New Grotesque:: The Theatre of Martin McDonagh and Tracy Letts

By Greg Thorson

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The theatre of Martin McDonagh and Tracy Letts has thrilled and titillated audiences across the world. While some critics have dismissed their writing's popularity as solely reliant on its violent and shocking subject matter, this book proves that their plays are among the most important and influential of contemporary theatre. In particular this book examines the influence of the grotesque on their writing, providing a historical examination of the grotesque and identifies elements of the grotesque in McDonagh and Letts's plays. This book also examines how McDonagh and Letts have reconfigured the traditional grotesque into a new style, the 'new grotesque'. Ultimately, through their use of the grotesque, McDonagh and Letts have created plays that uniquely dramatize the turmoil and complexity of contemporary life. The plays examined include: McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Pillowman* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. The chapter on Tracy Letts is focused on *Killer Joe*, *Bug* and *August: Osage County*

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#### **About the Author**

Gregory Thorson is a PhD student at the University of Colorado. He has received a BA from the University of Oregon and a MA from the University of Colorado. Along with his scholarly work, Mr. Thorson is an accomplished theatre director.

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