

McDonagh's cult film, *In Bruges*. Both the farcical crudity and the concept of "home" are key features throughout McDonagh's work, who by the age of thirty-six, had a string of hit plays and an Oscar to his name. Yet reviewers and academics have long criticized this lifetime Londoner, born of Irish parents, deeming his "Tarantino-comes-to-Connemara" approach as grotesque, racist and responsible for yet more Oirish clichés about "fecking" psychopaths. In *The Theatre and Films of Martin McDonagh*, the Irish critic Patrick Lonergan – as enthusiastic as a true film buff ought to be, yet as defensive as a proud father – seeks to soothe the hostilities, and to show that the sheer force of the reactions McDonagh's work has provoked only prove his momentous talent.

Analysis of each play is combined with contextual information surrounding their staging – how events like 9/11, or the legalization of divorce in Ireland, shaped audience expectations and thus reactions. McDonagh's public persona has also become a contextual factor, his sometimes reckless comments positioning him as the "bad boy of Irish theatre", with the question of his Irishness consistently causing consternation, too. But Lonergan argues that throughout the stage plays and into the films, McDonagh has used his acute sense of drama not to create but to challenge Irish stereotypes, combining devices from Beckett and Pinter with "in-yer-face" writing which – in the case of, say, *In Bruges* – leaves audiences thinking long after Colin Farrell's voiceover has faded. The only problem with Lonergan's study is the inclusion of three fairly weak academic essays, more interested in explicating their own fields (Postmodernism, Ecocriticism, Gender Studies) than in saying anything new about McDonagh. This lack of resounding opinion typifies the book as a whole. But by providing a wealth of information and resources, it encourages readers to go away and watch those "two manky hookers and a racist dwarf" again.

RUTH GILLIGAN

## Religion

Antony Lerman

### THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A ZIONIST

A personal and political journey

240pp. Pluto Press. £20.

978 0 7453 3276 5

In the small world of British Jewish communal politics, Antony Lerman is a highly controversial figure. As a writer and intellectual he has since the 1980s offered increasingly trenchant critiques of Anglo-Jewish support for Israel and the ways in which accusations of anti-Semitism are mobilized by communal leaders. He played a central role in the development of a more critical stance over Israel on the Jewish Left in the 2000s, with initiatives such as Independent Jewish Voices.

In *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist*, Lerman recounts how his experiences of Israel and Anglo-Jewry led him to evolve from an enthusiastic Zionist into a post – or anti – Zionist. He was heavily involved in the socialist Zionist youth group Habonim, becoming *mazkir* or leader for a while. Despite lengthy spells spent on kibbutz, in the army and studying in Jerusalem, he never

managed to settle permanently in Israel.

In Britain, Lerman eventually worked for the think tank the Institute for Jewish Affairs, later serving as director when it was relaunched as the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Lerman's views were increasingly out of step with communal orthodoxy as he became more aware of the plight of Palestinians, the brutality, as he saw it, of Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories, and what he saw as Diaspora Jewish leaders' legitimization of these evils, sometimes through exaggerated accusations of anti-Semitism in response to Israel's critics. By the time of his second stint as JPR director in 2005, opposition to him reached such a peak that he was effectively a pariah in mainstream Jewish circles.

Lerman recounts in some detail – probably too much detail for those not involved in Jewish communal politics – the ways he was treated. He draws on private correspondence to show who was supportive and who was not.

Lerman's views on Israel and anti-Semitism are nuanced and deserve a much better hearing in the Jewish community than they have received. The often poisonous politics of Anglo-Jewry eventually overwhelmed him, and the score-settling tone of some of *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist* shows that Lerman is still struggling to move on.

KEITH KAHN-HARRIS

## Latin American Fiction

Leopoldo Brizuela  
UNA MISMA NOCHE  
288pp. Alfaguara. €18.  
978 84 204 0240 6

In a wealthy suburb of the Argentine city of La Plata, Leonardo Bazán witnesses an armed robbery. Nothing about the incident quite makes sense. The robbers are too polite, almost charming. As he struggles to understand what he has seen, Bazán remembers bits of something he experienced with his own family as a teenager, growing up in the 1970s under the military junta. A similar raid took place on the same house. Its aim was political kidnap.

Set in Argentina in 2010, *Una misma noche* (That Same Night) is told in a fragmented first person, mixing memories, conversations and court statements. It examines aspects of the dictatorship often overlooked in fiction: The first is police corruption. Despite public awareness of the regime's outrages, and high-profile trials of members of the military, Argentina's police have largely avoided prosecution for their crimes. The same networks that carried out acts of repression survive today, now motivated by money rather than ideology. The second is anti-Semitism. This is what makes the memories so poignant for the narrator, as he is forced to reflect on his own family's prejudices. Finally, why did so many people, the narrator included, say nothing about what they knew was taking place?

Leopoldo Brizuela sets his work against the backdrop of what Argentina's media call "insecurity". Bazán's neighbours live in terror of armed robberies or extortion. Like David Peace's fiction, the novel operates in the territory where reality ends and fiction begins. Unlike the Yorkshireman, Brizuela draws a clear divide. On one side are historical names and events; on the other stands the