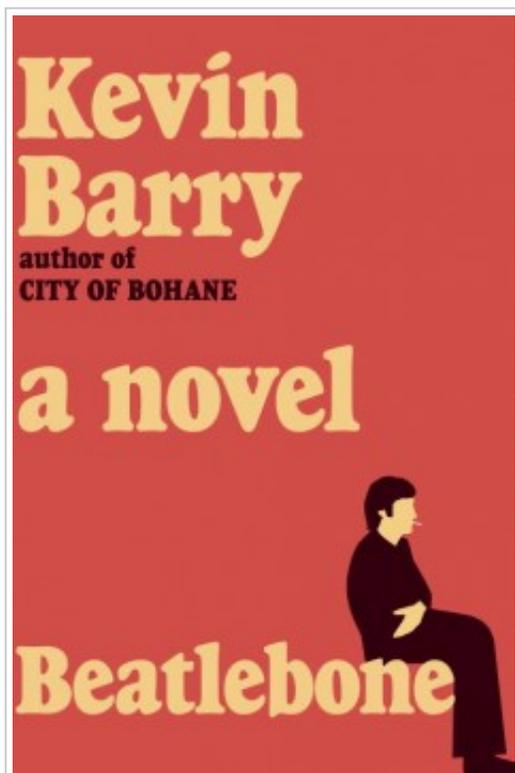


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Beatlebone

by Kevin Barry

Price: \$24.95(Hardcover)

Published: November 17, 2015

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: A searing, surreal novel that bleeds fantasy and reality—and Beatles fandom—from one of literature's most striking contemporary voices, author of the international sensation City of Bohane.

It is 1978, and John Lennon has escaped New York City to try to find the island off the west coast of Ireland he bought nine years prior. Leaving behind domesticity, his approaching forties, his inability to create, and his memories of his parents, he sets off to find calm in the comfortable silence of isolation. But when he puts himself in the hands of a shape-shifting driver full of Irish charm and dark whimsy, what ensues can only be termed a magical mystery tour.

Beatlebone is a tour de force of language and literary imagination that marries the most improbable element to the most striking effect.

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What We Say

I'm a serious fan of all things Beatles (who isn't?) and was wowed by two short story collections of Kevin Barry. So I was warily intrigued by the idea of Barry writing a novel about John Lennon off on a lark in 1978, trying to get to an island he purchased in Ireland for a little down time. Based on bits and pieces of reality, the novel starts off in marvelous, word-drunk, Joycean style. Lennon is on his own, trying to remain inconspicuous (ha!) and keeping his head down while making his solitary way towards a soul-recharging visit to the scrap of rock he bought and has never really been on. Barry won me over by capturing Lennon's dry wit -- when a wary hotel manager eyes him distrustfully saying it's a foxy time of day to be renting a room, Lennon responds deadpan, "And in denim." So yes, Barry captures the spirit of what we imagine Lennon to be. Here he's sidetracked and overwhelmed by the hilarious driver/jack of all trades Cornelius, who ferries Lennon about, gets the semi-teetotaler drunk in a pub (and singing!), feeds the now-macrobiotic man blood pudding, and talks and talks and talks in vivid, beautiful, endlessly funny style. Toss in a cult that specializes in its own Scream therapy (Lennon is nonplussed, having done it all before), a sniping press and you have the makings of a rambunctious tale. Instead, we are given a quieter, sadder work, less Spike Milligan and more Alan Bennett. Out of nowhere, Barry inserts himself in a passage describing his research for the book, a section that gingerly brings up the ghosts he encountered. (Barry apologizes for this, there's no way to bring up ghosts without seeming daft, but there you are.) And then back into the story proper. It didn't quite reach an epiphany for me, but I was delighted to feel like I'd sort of stumbled across an unguarded Lennon of sorts and thrilled by the rambling Cornelius, as Irish a character as you can get. And that's saying something. -- Michael Giltz

[Less](#)

What Others Say

Praise for Beatlebone:

Winner of the Goldsmiths Prize 2015

"Beatlebone is a novel that takes its reader to the edge—of the Western world, of sanity, of fame, of words. But it also takes us to the very edge of the novel form, where it meets its notorious doppelgänger, autobiography. Its compulsive narrative of one of the last century's great musicians and pop icons gradually, and without a hint of contrivance, becomes a startling and original meditation on the uncanny relationship of a writer to his character. Intricately weaving and blurring fiction and life, Beatlebone embodies beautifully this prize's spirit of creative risk. We're proud to crown it our winner."

—**Josh Cohen, Chair of Judges, Goldsmiths Prize 2015**

"There's music to Barry's prose: Smart rhythms dart through his sentences; taut bridges join his paragraphs; the tinge of hysteria serves to animate his characters and their surroundings. His dialogue is whimsical, sometimes hilarious, catching the idiom of the local life, and, in Beatlebone, nailing John Lennon, the wittiest and darkest Beatle, spot on."

—**Fred Kaplan,...**

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