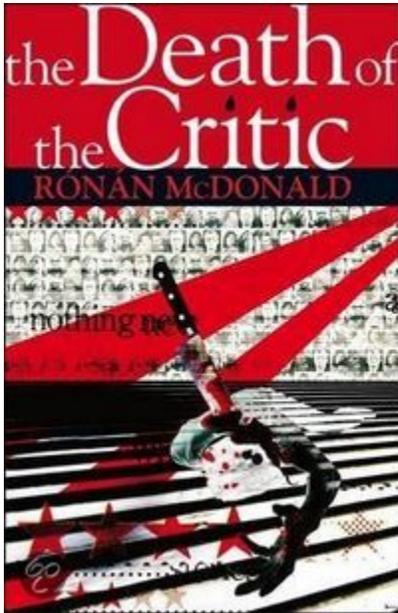


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The critic has long been a reviled figure, at best the mere handmaiden of the 'creative' arts, at worst a parasite upon them. For playwright Brendan Behan, critics are like eunuchs in a harem. They know how it is done. They have seen it done every day. But they are unable to do it themselves. In an age of book clubs, celebrity endorsements and Internet bloggers, what role is there now for the professional critic as an arbiter of artistic value? Are literature and the arts only a question of personal taste? Is one opinion 'as good as another'? Ronan McDonald's *The Death of the Critic* seeks to defend the role of the public critic. McDonald argues against recent claims that all artistic value is simply relative and subjective. This forceful, accessible and eloquent book considers why high-profile, public critics, such as William Empson, F.R. Leavis or Lionel Trilling, become much rarer in the later twentieth century. A key reason for the 'death of the critic', he believes, is the turn away from value judgements and the very notion of artistic quality amongst academics and scholars. Alert to the cultural and academic climate of both the UK and the USA, this controversial and timely intervention will engage scholars, students, critics and anyone concerned with the role of literary and artistic culture in the public sphere.

