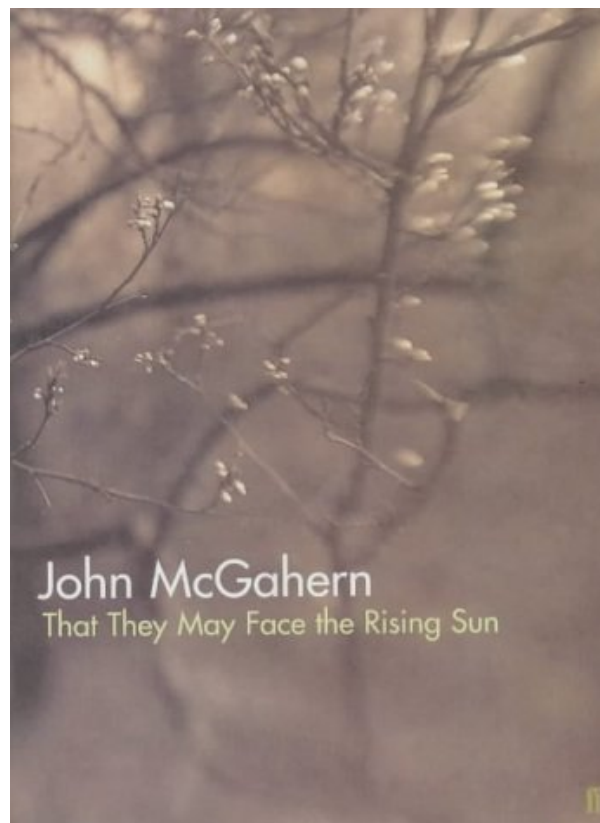
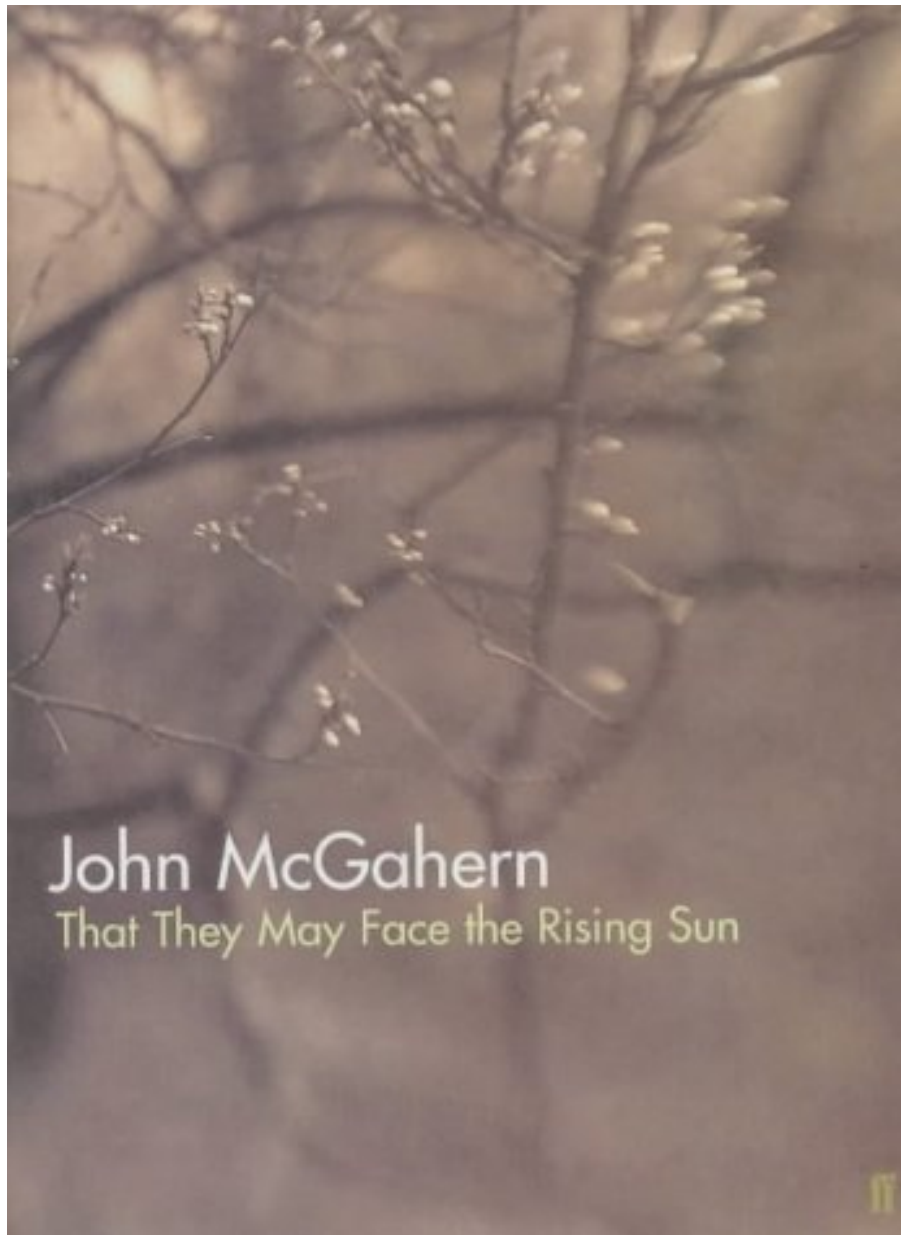


**THAT THEY MAY FACE THE RISING SUN
(GREAT IRISH WRITERS) BY JOHN
MCGAHERN**



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Review

'McGahern brings us that tonic gift of the best fiction, the sense of truth - the sense of a transparency that permits us to see imaginary lives more clearly than we see our own.' John Updike

About the Author

John McGahern is the author of five highly acclaimed novels and four collections of short stories, and has been the recipient of many awards and honours including the Society of Authors, the American-Irish Award, the Prix Etrangere Ecureuil and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. *Amongst Women*, winner of both the GPA and the Irish Times' Award, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and made into a four-part BBC television series.

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From the very opening pages, we see many memorable characters as they move about the Ruttledges, who have come from London home to Ireland in search of a different life. There is John Quinn, who will stop at nothing to ensure a flow of women; Johnny, who left for England twenty years before in pursuit of love; and Jimmy Joe McKiernan, head of the IRA, both auctioneer and undertaker. The gentle Jamesie and his wife Mary embody the spirit of the place. They have never left the lake but know everything that ever stirred or moved there. The drama of a year in the lives of these and many other characters unfolds through the action, the rituals of work, religious observances and play. With deceptive simplicity, by the novel's close we feel that we have been introduced to a complete representation of existence. An enclosed world has been transformed into an Everywhere.

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- Used Book in Good Condition

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Most helpful customer reviews

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

The brilliance is in the simplicity and accuracy

By A Customer

As someone who was growing up in rural Ireland in the same period the novel is set I keep getting this feeling that McGahern was there with me at the time. Each character contains traits and elements of people I

personally knew. Joe and Kate are left to remain in the background as though they are the stage on which the others play. If you really want to know what life is like, and was like 10-20 years ago in rural Ireland this is the book. As someone who normally does not like novels without a fast moving plot or excitement I was amazed at how I was so drawn into the simple little plots. If you want to understand how people in rural Ireland think... this is the one... What Tarry Flynn was to its era this is to ours.

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

Rural Idyll, beautifully paced book, curiously empty

By Hugh Claffey

First the book, then the author.

this book is a description of ordinary, Irish rural life, set in the 1980s. There is very little by way of plot, it reflects the effect of the changing seasons on rural life and is interspersed with random events that do not form 'plot points' but more resemble the happenings in real life. The beautiful descriptions of the changing face of the countryside, through the seasons, is the main draw of the book for me (but what is sedge?). The characters range from the strange yet endearing to the hostile and repulsive. I think that both the central characters - Joe and Kate, and some of the more peripheral characters lack depth and credibility. Joe and Kate, are the perfect couple, accepting, living the rural 'good life', having withdrawn from the sophisticated urban lifestyle.

The book itself has a curious emptiness, a passage describes Joe as believing his current contentment and absence of pain is what he will remember as happiness in the future, if and when, things take a turn for the worse. With the

core emptiness, comes a foreboding about the future. The character best drawn, in my view, in a simpleton - Bill Evans - who calls to Joe and Kate each day on his way to the well. Bill lives in the eternal present, neither reflective nor judgemental. I believe he is the metaphor for the book as a whole.

John MaGahern, is the last of the Greats. His early work, featuring clear eyed descriptions of the abuses which were a hidden part of Irish life, were banned in Ireland in the 1950s. Such was the power of the banning that MaGahern lost his teaching job and spent many years in hardship. His early work has been described (in retrospect) as the clarion call to honesty in the face of the unacceptable, which is the basic function of literature (think Solzhenitsyn).

Through the ordeal of his life - relative poverty, official rejection - he has maintained a lack of bitterness towards official Ireland (church and state) which can either be regarded as the product of brain-washing or magnanimity of a Mandela. This book has been described as his attempt to indicate how Irish society may work out a reconciliation between its tradition and its reality, i.e. the traumas of modernisation and the revelation of official corruption have dethroned officially-defined church and state, and yet nothing has replaced the need for community spirituality. It has been said that this book is MaGahern's proposal in this regard.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A window into a fast disappearing world

By Brid

This wonderful book is a delicate and honest snapshot of rural Irish community life on the brink of extinction. The young have moved on and the countryside is home to the ageing remnants of a people that survived hardship and poverty only to find that the modern world has no place for them. This is not a bitter book, but rather a requiem for a way of life that McGahern knew intimately. His prose style is understated and beautifully lyrical and its apparent lack of plot perfectly catches the circular nature of life. A haunting and beautiful read, I loved it.

See all 14 customer reviews...

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