

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



MICHAEL McLAVERTY (1904-1992) - Writer

Born in Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan, McLaverty was five when his parents moved to Clowney Street, off the Falls Road in Belfast. He was educated in St. Malachy's College and Queen's University, Belfast, graduating in 1927 and gaining an MSc in 1933. He spent a year at St. Mary's, Strawberry Hill, London and gained a Higher Diploma in Education, during which time his friendship with arts students stimulated his interest in literature. In 1929 he began his teaching career, teaching maths and physics, in St John's PES in West Belfast. He remaining there until 1957 when he was appointed principal of a new school, St Thomas' Secondary, on the Whiterock Road, retiring in 1964.

One of Ireland's finest writers, McLaverty's stories draw on the people and places where he lived, visited and worked, and they feature in his writing - Carrickmacross, Rathlin Island, Toomebridge, Belfast, the Lecale area of County Down. His short stories, regarded by many as his best work, are lyrical evocations of human emotions and moral choices and their attention to detail of place and mood paint a vivid portrait of the lives and ethical dilemmas of ordinary people. His writing was increasingly influenced by his strong moral sense and his finely drawn characters display the conflicting themes of the human condition, reflecting their uniquely Irish Catholic perspectives, played out often to their logical, and sometimes stark, conclusion. In his introduction to *Collected Short Stories* Seamus Heaney, who had been a student teacher in St. Thomas's in McLaverty's last years there, wrote that his work showed 'a comprehension of the central place of suffering and sacrifice in the life of the spirit'.

Short Stories: *The White Mare and Other Stories* (1943); *The Game Cock and Other Stories* (1947); *The Road to the Shore* (1976); *Collected Short Stories* (1978).

Novels: *Call My Brother Back* (1939); *Lost Fields* (1949); *In This Thy Day* (1945); *The Three Brothers* (1948); *Truth in The Night* (1952); *School For Hope* (1954); *The Choice* (1958); *The Brightening Day* (1965)

See also: *In Quiet Places - The Uncollected Stories, Letters and Critical Prose of Micheal McLaverty* Sophia Hillen King 1989, and *The Silken Twine - A Study of the Works of Michael McLaverty* Sophia Hillen King 1992

Patrick Devlin