



The Figure in the Cave: and Other Essays

John Montague

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That Montague is a significant poet does not need proving. These essays show that he is almost equally formidable as an autobiographer and critic.' - Robert Greacen, Irish Independent

The Figure in the Cave selects the prose of one of Ireland's foremost contemporary poets - part autobiography, part criticism, part self-commentary - a gathering, from the mid-century to the present day, that marks a lifetime's critical engagement with literature in both Europe and America. In the title essay Montague looks over his career as a writer; in others he describes a coming-of-age in Ulster, explores his own poetics, and appraises Goldsmith, Carleton, George Moore, Joyce and Beckett, MacNeice, Clarke, Kavanagh, Hewitt and MacDiarmid. Pieces on American literature include a vignette of Saul Bellow, a review of Lowell and an intimate sketch of Berryman. To conclude, the author examines the impact of international modern poetry on Irish writing. Humorous, forceful, impressionistic, enriched with personal and political observation, this dialogue between early and later selves traces the development of the boy from Garvaghey to the figure in the cave, and reveals the workings of a fine poet's mind.

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