

Note from the Editor: Prof M L O'Rourke has kindly submitted a major piece of work he has completed on the author John McGahern. Together we have broken down his work into three parts which will appear in three parts over the next three years in this journal.

BIOGRAPHICAL & EDUCATIONAL REFLECTIONS IN THE LIFE OF JOHN MCGAHERN

Part One: Education & Learning – The Art of Teaching

Professor Michael L O'Rourke

Introduction

I came to know the late John McGahern over a long number of years as a fellow Leitrim man and near neighbour to where John lived at Laura Lake, Fenagh, Co Leitrim. He was always willing to accept invitations from secondary schools in the locality of Leitrim and Longford to give readings and to discuss aspects of the English Leaving Certificate Course with eager students. He also attended two major conferences on education with which I was closely involved. The first of these events was the AGM of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, Longford Arms Hotel, March 1991, and John was the keynote speaker. He delivered a most interesting paper on *Personal Reflections of Teaching and Education*. The second conference and reunion of former postgraduate M Ed teachers took place in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, October 1992. John attended as the keynote speaker and delivered a lecture on *The Church and its Spire*. He also contributed a most interesting article for our conference booklet entitled: *My Memories of Trinity College as Writer Fellow (M ED Quartercentenary Conference, Trinity College Dublin: October 24th, 1992, p67)*. Needless to say, these were enthralling occasions with packed audiences — John could enrapture an audience with his wonderful wit, humour, charm and sharp intellect. It was on this latter occasion that Dr Daniel Murphy and I had the good fortune to spend an evening with John to discuss education at length. John had conducted a similar interview for The School of Education in 1987 and this interview was published by The Department of Higher Education and Educational Research, Trinity College Dublin, and was entitled: *Education and the Arts, The Educational Autobiographies of Contemporary Irish Poets, Novelists, Musicians, Painters and Sculptors*. The following is thus an encapsulation of the wisdom and educational thought of



John McGahern during the course of all of these significant and remarkable occasions and is thus entitled: *Biographical and Educational Reflections in the Life of John McGahern*. This work will be published as three essays over three years in the *Leitrim Guardian* journal.

In Leitrim, we are particularly proud of this internationally acclaimed writer who was described by *The Guardian* of London as Ireland's greatest living novelist and was about as close as we get to Proust. John lived quietly with his wife Madeline on his farm overlooking Laura Lake (Lake Rowan), near Fenagh, Co Leitrim, sure in the belief that "the best of life is life lived quietly, where nothing happens but our calm journey through the day, where change is imperceptible and the precious life is everything" (*Memoir, 2005, p.80*). He was a farmer as well as a writer and John tended lovingly to his small farm by the waters and beauty of Laura Lake. He visited Mohill and Enniskillen Marts on a regular basis and on these occasions, like Flaubert, he had the gift of absence in some quiet nook observing the syntax of his characters. He once completed a questionnaire for *The Farmers' Journal* and his score was categorized as "inefficient". In a pub conversation with the writer once, he

"The writer is like God in nature, present everywhere but nowhere visible" FLAUBERT

■ The IGC Conference, March 1991, John McGahern Guestspeaker, Dr Daniel Murphy and Dr Michael L O'Rourke, Trinity College Dublin.

passed off his designation with a laugh: "I was relieved to find that there was one even worse category, 'seriously inefficient!'" Of course, the local neighbours were interested in finding out whether writing was much of a money-making racket. John assured them that it was not! But as one particular farmer remarked one afternoon during the course of the wet, wet summer of 1985: "Christ, McGahern it is great dry work!" There are many beautiful passages about farming in John's writings and the following is for me one of singular significance:

The next morning a white mist obscured even the big trees along the shore. Gossamer hung over the pear and plum and apple trees in the orchard and a pale spiderwebbing lay across the grass in the fields. A robin was trapped in the glasshouse and set free before it became prey for the black cat. The heavy mower was uncoupled from the tractor and replaced by the tedder. The very quiet and coolness of the morning was delicious with every hour promising

later heat. When the sun had burned away the mist and dried the dew on the swards, the tedding began. The tedder was new and working perfectly, turning the flat neat swards into a green stream of grass and when it was done the spread grass lay like a raised green floor to the sun. Then the tractor and tedder went slowly round the lake to Jamesie...On the television forecast of the night before, the map of Ireland was shown covered with small suns, like laughing apples. Soon after midday all the small meadows were teded. By evening the mown grass rustled like hay to the touch. The next morning they were swept into rows. The swept ground between the rows had already turned golden...The bales were too heavy for the child but the two women and Jamesie were able to stack them as quickly as the baler spat them out. Two bales were placed sideways, sufficiently close to be crossed by two other bales but far enough apart to allow air to circulate. The stack was completed by a single bale on top, the uncut side turned upwards to cast the rain. When they were all stacked, they stood like abstract sculptures in swept empty space (McGahern, 2002, p112-113).

John McGahern was decent, kind, genial and a very approachable man of letters. Like Tolstoy, he valued greatly the profound influence of the good teacher and the significant value of a good education. Tolstoy explained why he saw teaching as a more wholesome activity than writing, a remarkable admission from someone already well established as a novelist, and shortly to gain worldwide renown as the author of *War and Peace*. "You would love and understand this work of mine as a teacher, it cannot be described, but come when you have finished your travels, to Yasnaya Polyana, and then tell me truly if you do not envy me when you see what I have done and the calm with which I go about doing it" (Daniel Murphy, *Tolstoy & Education*, 1992, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, p.61). Similarly, John McGahern believed that a trusting authentic relationship between teacher and pupil was the essential factor in the whole process of education and was the foundation principle of successful teaching and learning. The following is an illuminating overview of that important role and the

significance of the imagination in contemporary education. The reader will note the formative influences, which have moulded the educational thought of one of Ireland's greatest writers. Like Tolstoy, McGahern saw the role of the educator as simultaneously embracing interpersonal authenticity and pedagogic efficacy.

Early Influences on the Young McGahern

Among Irish writers John McGahern is perhaps one of the few who was a schoolteacher by profession. He taught in Belgrove Primary School in Clontarf, Dublin for seven years and lectured in universities in Ireland, Britain, France, Italy and the United States. His mother was also a primary teacher; his father a Garda sergeant. McGahern's early education was unusual in that he attended so many different primary schools — some nine or ten in all. His mother was on the "panel"; this meant that whenever a school was short of a teacher she was called upon to fill the need. She took her son with her on these assignments. Consequently, young John was never in any one school long enough to settle down and make friends. He reminds us thus in our interviews:

I used to go with my mother to school. She was on a thing called the "panel". So my education was pretty poor in that it was so disturbed. I think I was at nine or ten National Schools. When she died, my father was always fighting with the schoolteachers, so actually the changing continued. I had no steady education until I got to secondary school. My relationship with my father was distant (McGahern, 1987).

The peculiar requirements of Susan McGahern's teaching duties placed other strains on the household. It meant that, in effect, the parents had to live apart from one another, except during the school holidays. He states: "It was an odd house because my mother and father didn't live together. She was teaching at school and he was in the barracks twenty or thirty miles away. He would come once a month and she spent holidays there" (McGahern, 1987). Neither of McGahern's parents were readers. There was a small collection of The Talbot Press books in the house, mostly of the popular, mildly patriotic sort: John had this to say:

There were some books from the Talbot Press, like, *The Swordsman of the Brigade*. There was a good book of Daniel Corkery's called *The Threshold of Quiet* and a lot of patriotic stuff - Mitchel's Jail Journal, *Meagher of the Sword*. There weren't many of them; you would get them all into a fair-sized box. There might have been twenty books, but that would be it (McGahern, 1987).

But at about the time he began his secondary education, the young teenager had a stroke of luck. There was a Big House nearby which had an excellent library. He was given the freedom of the books there and it was in this way that he acquired his literary education. He states:

There was a Protestant house quite close by that had an enormous library and I had the run of that from when I was about eleven until I was eighteen. I often used to borrow five or six books in a week. There seemed to be a lot of books about the Rocky Mountains; there were many of Zane Grey and Jeffrey Farnol; there was Scott. I would have read all Scott at that time, and Charles Dickens too. One didn't differentiate. I would have read everything I could get my hands on. It was an enormous library. There were good books but there was also nineteenth century rubbish, and I didn't differentiate between them. I would just get lost in a book (McGahern, 1987).

This is a good description of the total immersion in literature: the indiscriminate reading of books of all kinds and quality. One wonders what would have been the consequence for the young McGahern if this treasure-house had not been available to him. The people who owned the Big House were of that class of decaying gentry familiar in Irish literature, particularly in the writings of Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane. McGahern sketches a vivid portrait of them:

Their name was Moroney. They were Protestants from way back and they were very eccentric. The old fellow was a bee-keeper and he used to give me books when I was five or six. He had a big beard and

he used to eat a lot of jam. I remember a bee in the beard after the raspberry jam. He'd pull out the raspberry jam and the bee and fire it out, continuing all the while to talk. They had a marvellous farm — three or four hundred acres of the best land. They were very charming... I saw that a young Catholic North of Ireland writer said recently that if he saw another reference to an Irish writer getting his reading material in a Protestant house, he'd puke. Should I say that I got them from a Jewish house? (McGahern, 1987).

This peripatetic mode of his schooling does not seem to have had any adverse effects on McGahern's academic work. He won a scholarship to the Presentation Brothers' Secondary School in Carrick-on-Shannon and he recalls one great advantage that he enjoyed over the other students: "I was very good at mathematics as well as English. I think I was able to get a hundred percent in mathematics" (McGahern, 1987). He was unusual in being gifted with high ability in both subjects.

Inspirational Teachers and a Good Secondary Education: First Experiences of Writing

John McGahern was ten years old when his mother died. He had followed her, like a foal at foot, from school to school. To have lost her at such a crucial point in his own development, just as he was moving from childhood to adolescence, must have been a traumatic experience for him. It meant that he was without much support or guidance during his secondary schooling. He did not receive much encouragement from his father. On the contrary, the father resented the time his son spent at school — time that he felt should have been devoted to farming, which supplemented the family income. John reminds us thus:

In fact the Presentation Brothers in Carrick-on-Shannon had to get after him because he used keep me at home for the digging of the potatoes and the turf. The Brothers had said that there wouldn't be any difficulty in getting a scholarship (I did get a university scholarship), but that I couldn't afford to lose two months out of every

school year. My father was quite annoyed at that. Only in my Leaving Certificate year did I actually get to school for the whole year. There was no alternative so one just accepted it, though, looking back on it, it wasn't normal...I just preferred going to school to footing turf (McGahern, 1987).

John speaks highly of the Presentation Brothers' school in Carrick. He was happy there and recalls how his academic ability enhanced his self-image: "I was good at school and the very fact that one is good — at worst it appeals to one's vanity. The teachers were very good too. There was Brother Placid — he was an absolutely brilliant teacher and got to know each one of his pupils on a personal level" (McGahern, 1987). McGahern also recalls with affection, an English teacher who was something of a character, an exemplary teacher who imbued his pupils with hope and optimism. He empowered his pupils with possibility in the hope that they could create a better future for themselves. John's respect for Frank Mannion is heartfelt:

There was a man called Mannion. I liked him very much. He taught English and he used to give me whatever few books he had and I'd read them. When he got paid, he would go on the town at lunchtime. He was a charming man — I met him afterwards. I think I had him from about the Inter onwards; he wasn't there when I began. He taught English and Geography. He had no interest in geography and neither had I, but I think he had a great feeling for language and he loved his subject. He took a special interest in us all and he gave extra help to the weaker pupil. He was always encouraging. He was special in terms of what the good teacher should be about, listening and coaxing out the ego into the light of day. He showed great eloquence and enthusiasm" (*Education and the Arts*, p131).

McGahern's first experience of writing was the weekly essay set by Mannion. He enjoyed doing these. John remembers:

He gave us an essay to write every week. I suppose that was my first publication.

It was part of the work that I probably enjoyed most. Mannion would read out good sentences and sometimes he might read out a whole essay. He would also read out bad sentences (McGahern, 1987).

Academic success was the only possible route out of rural Ireland. In his novel, *The Dark*, McGahern evokes the sense of desperation that attended students in their Leaving Certificate year:

The house exam was held at Christmas, trial run before the summer. It'd decide who'd continue in the honours course, who would leave off to concentrate on passing, and passing was no good to you. You had to get high in the honours to stand a chance in the cutthroat competition for the Scholarships or ESB or Training College or anything. Passing was only good if you had your own money to go to the university and few at school had that. Most came from small farms in the country on their bicycles, stacked downstairs where they ate their lunches out of paper bags and horse played on wet days. They knew too it was get high honours or go to England. The air was tense with this fear through the exam, the folding doors that separated the classrooms drawn back to make an examination hall (*The Dark*, 1965, p118).

With this kind of pressure bearing upon him, the young adolescent had to work in a home environment that, far from being supportive, was positively hostile towards his studies. He was torn between his father's demands that he would attend to the farming and his own hatred of that work and all it stood for. The young writer did however win a scholarship and the results arrived in the first week of August. In *The Dark* we are treated to the hilarious behaviour of Mahoney when he announces that "this is no day for work. A day like this won't arrive many times in our lives" (1965, p153).

Days of pestering the postman out on the road ended...The blue crest of the school crowned the notepaper, Presentation of the Child in the Temple. He started to tremble laughing, tears in the eyes, and then he

rested against the gate, it couldn't be true. He read it again...BeJesus, you did it, you did it, strike me pink. Congratulations, it's not every day we have a genius among us... That's one thing can't be bought is brains. And they don't come off the wind either... The day would not end properly without the Royal Hotel, its promise of celebration in style...Mahoney ran the comb through his hair, smoothed his lapels, before he pushed through the swing-doors. He demanded the whereabouts of the dining-room from the girl at the cash-desk, trying to cover his unease by aggressiveness... The chicken is extremely good, sir. Or the duck?" her face remained impassive. He saw on the menu that the duck was more expensive. "Duck. Duck for two," he said...We got to the Royal Hotel at last, after all the years. It's a fine meal and a happy day. We've come into our own at last. We're celebrating in style and something to celebrate at last (McGahern, 1965, p151-158).

It is easy to understand that the death of his mother left a great void in the teenager's life depriving the family system of a softening, civilizing, feminine influence. Thus, when young John went through the problems of adolescence so powerfully portrayed in *The Dark*, it was in the context of a male-dominated household, where the ethic of physical work was the dominant force and a brute display of manners was all enveloping. The emotional austerity and the physical harshness of these boyhood years had left the young writer with a strong feeling for those elements in life that help to smooth out and refine human behaviour. This is reflected in his preoccupation with the notion of manners; he is much exercised by the idea that in life, as in literature, it is necessary that people should operate within the constraints of certain generally accepted conventions (McGahern, 1987); he sees the discipline of formal courtesy as having its counterpart in the discipline of formal grammar. John reminds us in our interview:

We don't speak English properly here, and there is no sure sense of manners. There

are some very beautiful manners but there is no security of manners like the French and the English have. There are no traditional forms. I think that grammar is closely connected with manners. There are basic structures that one leans on, whether in speech or in meeting people. One could say that there are manners of the intellect as well as social manners, and that not to have read certain books is almost as ill-mannered as not being able to greet somebody coming into a room! (McGahern, 1987).

An Enthusiast for Learning by Heart: Reflections on the Teaching of Irish

John McGahern was an enthusiast for learning by heart. He had always been grateful that he learned so much poetry and Shakespeare by heart when he was at school. He recalls that when he was teaching in London, he spent a year in a primary school in the East End, teaching disadvantaged children (McGahern, 1987). The Headmistress of the school took exception to his method of teaching. John reminds us thus in our interview:

I got into trouble with a headmistress when I was teaching in England. She didn't believe that anything should be learned by heart. I have the opposite point of view. I think that unless there is a store there of verses in particular, you can't learn anything for yourself. I found that when I was teaching very poor children, if you picked a poem and wrote it up on the blackboard and left it there all week, teaching it very much like a jazz tune, they enjoyed it. And over the year, these low IQ children — nobody over 110 — would have quite a body of work that they would have memorized. And they really enjoyed it. I'd point out the rhythm and that memorizing the poem was very much like dancing. It wouldn't have to be anything very demanding but it would need to be something one liked oneself. By Friday they would have it off by heart. There is a line in education that says nothing should be learned by rote and after all, what is good writing but memorable speech? (*Education and the Arts*, p134-135).

This teaching method, McGahern found, had beneficial effects on the children's work generally: "I found that it improved their actual work. There were sentences and vivid speech that became part of their vocabulary, just like their tea and toast" (McGahern, 1987). In choosing the poems to be learned by heart, the young teacher looked for simplicity and lyric quality:

Some of Shakespeare's, like "Under the greenwood tree"; some of Hardy's. Something that you liked that was also simple. Aerial's songs from *The Tempest*; some of the early Yeats: "Though you were in your shining days". You can ask them, what does he mean by shining days? and "new friends busy with your praise"? Those sorts of words are interesting for children. What does "busy" mean there? I found it a very good way of teaching English (*Education and the Arts*, p135).

These comments are interesting in the light of contemporary practice in the primary school with an emphasis on modern contemporary themes. The poetry section in the text book is usually at the back of the book as one primary teacher remarked to me recently! "The fashion in teaching has moved away from the idea that it is good to learn poetry by heart" (McGahern, 1987); also, the kind of poetry that is being taught at primary level is of a different quality from that which McGahern used in his East End school. "There is a tendency to assume that children need "simple" poems which they can understand easily. It may indeed be that the capacity of children to appreciate poetry of greater depth and substance is being underestimated. Poetry can be appreciated on many different levels (McGahern, 1987).

Furthermore, John had strong views on the place of the Irish language in the Irish school system, derived largely from his own experience as a teacher. In his own primary schooling, Irish was a subject that really suffered from his constant changing of schools. In our interview Dr Murphy and I are reminded:

I think the subject that suffered most from this kicking around in my primary schooling

was Irish. I was never very good at it. I'm glad I know it now, but used to resent it, especially when I was teaching. I often had poor children who would be much better off if they could learn to go to the shop or write a letter to their love, or something like that. I totted it up once and learned that more than half the day went into teaching Irish. If you took Religion and Irish, it was nearly two-thirds of the week's hours, so one-third was left for Geography, English, History, Mathematics. It didn't make much educational sense. Some of them learned a few words and sentences in Irish and had them forgotten two months later (McGahern, 1987).

In *Memoir*, the author further reiterates his views and considers that "learning Irish was seen as a means of keeping much foreign corrupting influence out, but the catechism was taught in English" (*Memoir*, 2005, p210). He would make Irish an optional subject in schools on the same level as French, German or Italian. In our interview, he states: "I think it is one of the reasons why, in a large way, Irish people are so badly educated. I still have difficulty with punctuation and grammar; obviously, the teachers did not know grammar. Looking back on it, I used grammar instinctively, through reading. It was the same with punctuation" (McGahern, 1987). He observes that a lot of the teachers didn't know Irish and he believes that it is necessary that the teacher should be so completely at home in Irish in order to teach the language properly, as to be in effect, bilingual. "If the teacher is secure in his own knowledge of the language, he will probably enjoy teaching it and will convey that confident enthusiasm and pleasure to the children" (McGahern, 1987).

A Philosophy of Education that is Relational and Pastoral: In the Footsteps of Maritain, Buber and Freire

I had children in London that I did teach to read. I found that they had to be built up as people first. I found that to give them a sense of respect for themselves and their surroundings was much more important in getting them to learn to read than the technique of reading. I did get some

remarkable work from them. These children were very disadvantaged. They had been uprooted from around Tower Bridge in London out into the Green Belt, and they were totally lost. I simply said to them "Do you have a dog at home? Is there a lawn in front of your house? Is there any trouble about the dog?" Many of the parents of these children were criminals who ran the street markets. The kids were about eleven or twelve years old. I had a small number, only eighteen - that's absolutely essential. I enjoyed it. The parents were pleased. Through education some of the children began to sleep well for the first time...I found that they didn't value their surroundings or their lives and that it was through endless questioning and chatting that you let them know that you found their lives interesting (*Education and the Arts*, p135-136).

This is a good practical illustration of the validity of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs which asserts that higher needs, such as the desire for knowledge, must wait upon the more fundamental needs of physical and psychological security. With these deprived children, John McGahern as teacher, found that he had to address their more basic needs before they would have been receptive to his teaching. If he had not first taken the trouble to build up their self-esteem and self-concept, and to give them an emotionally secure foundation in the classroom, he would have been unable to teach them the skills of literacy (*Education and the Arts*, p136). He had a free hand in deciding what to teach and how to teach these children. He used their own environment, their own interests and their own strengths as a basis to build on. Indeed, it could be stated that this approach is an example of a good teaching methodology for children with special needs.

We did sums, but only in so far as it related to English and the street markets—the daffs and the apples and oranges and what their parents were selling; we used to set up a street market. They were very good at shouting. One would write down what they shouted, which was very interesting—the street cries. It was a kind of

literature that was available to them, but they didn't recognize it as such. It could be used. There was no way that these people could read anything because they weren't literate, but twelve of them were beginning to read. I used to bring in the newspapers, mostly because of the soccer and that interested them. You would get a headline—"Spurs Score Three". There was no point in giving them Dickens or anything like that (*Education and the Arts*, p136).

These teaching experiences are wonderful examples of a philosophy of education that is pastoral and relational. Personal care is the benchmark, I suggest, of the caring aims of the good school. Educators are faced with a challenge today in the classroom and the provision of effective pastoral care is an integral part of that challenge. There is a growing need for schools to take a fresh and creative look at the purpose, benefits, and process of pastoral, relational care as an intrinsic part of the school curriculum. A pastoral framework of education facilitates growth, fulfilment and integration of the individual both as a person and as a member of society. The school or college is the microcosm of the wider world for students and a pastoral framework of education equips them with the skills to deal with this challenging external environment. This I-Thou dialogic encounter between pupil and teacher engenders an optimistic and affirmative understanding of children. McGahern's understanding of his teaching role leads to a relationship, which is based on trust, dialogue and mutual respect. It is a view of a more pupil-centred education as extolled by such luminaries as Maritain, Freire and Buber. Thus for John McGahern the teacher, the relationship in education is one of pure dialogue and the key ingredients in that relationship embody empathy, trust, acceptance, confirmation, respect and a caring concern for the well being of each pupil.

Conclusion

Many of John McGahern's reflections on education arise out of his practical experiences of teaching at first and third levels in Ireland, England and the United States; these insights are all the more valuable as a consequence. It

is clear that the experiences of his youth and adolescent years have made him value those things that bring the individual to a higher level of intellectual and aesthetic existence, whether it be through the courtesy of formal manners or the grace of a cultivated taste. He has seen what life is like for people who live in the unconscious; he has struggled out of that Jungian milieu and made his own painful journey to consciousness. Like C G Jung, he would seem to suggest that, with all the suffering it might entail, the journey into self-knowledge is essential for true growth in the individual. Individuation is a search that never ends. This process is, in effect, the spontaneous realisation of the whole person. As Jung might say when the process of individuation takes place the combination of the conscious and unconscious leads to the assimilation of the ego into a wider personality, described as the self. It would be hard to visualize less auspicious conditions for the fostering of creative talent than those in which John McGahern grew up.

The young writer was lucky, however, in having some wonderful teachers who showed enthusiasm, love and mastery of their teaching subjects. These inspirational mentors kindled the contagious fire of love of literature. The great pleasure of his schooldays was the weekly English essay and he was good also at mathematics. In terms of other significant influences on the young writer, life outside the school was important in terms of his social and intellectual development. Living in a rural and culturally deprived ambience, John was lucky to have the local Big House with its large and extensive library. He was able to acquire a good basic literary education there, but there was a bonus: in meeting people from the Protestant ascendancy, McGahern was made aware of other more civilized modes of living. The occupants of the Big House were avid readers, with wide-ranging interests such as astronomy and beekeeping. The beauty, the grandeur of Anglo-Irish Ireland, the eccentricities of this class of people, are captured lovingly in *The Conversion of William Kirkwood in High Ground* (1985). This was a contrasting world for the boy whose life revolved around turf-cutting and potato digging!



Bibliography and Further Recommended

Reading

John McGahern's novels include:

The Barracks (1963) London: Faber & Faber.
The Dark (1965) London: Faber & Faber.
The Leavetaking (1974) London: Faber & Faber.
The Pornographer (1979) London: Faber & Faber.
Amongst Women (1990) London: Faber & Faber.
That They May Face the Rising Sun (2002) London: Faber & Faber.
Memoir (2005) London: Faber & Faber.
Love of the World Essays (2009) London: Faber & Faber.

His short story collections were:

Nightlines (1970) London: Faber and Faber.
Getting Through (1978) London: Faber and Faber.
High Ground (1985) London: Faber and Faber.
The Collected Stories (1992) London: Faber and Faber.

His plays for radio and television were:

Sinclair (1971); *The Barracks* (1972); *The Power of Darkness* (1992); *Swallows* (1975); *The Rockingham Shoot* (1987).

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A brilliant series of the John McGahern Yearbook published by NUI Galway, compiled and edited by Dr. John Kenny, is a treasure house of McGahern holdings and coincides with The International Summer School in Leitrim each year from 2008-2014.

■ Laura Lake, Fenagh, Co Leitrim: An Idyllic Pastoral Setting for the Writer

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John McGahern in Conversation with Dr Michael O'Rourke and Dr Daniel Murphy, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, 18th November 1986.
John McGahern in Conversation with Dr Michael O'Rourke and Dr Daniel Murphy. School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, October 14th 1992.

Professor Michael L. O'Rourke is a lecturer on the Doctoral Degree in Counselling Psychology, the School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin and is an academic consultant and lecturer at The Military College, The Curragh. He is a Visiting Professor to the University of Indiana, South Bend, USA, and to The Jungian Institute, Zurich, Switzerland. His most recent published work includes: *Carl Gustav Jung: Visionary and Spiritual Healer*; *Grief, Bereavement and Loss*; *The Psychology and Aetiology of Suicide*; *Spirituality and Psychotherapy*; and *Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Counselling*. Dr O'Rourke is a native of Aughavas, Breffni House.