

# 'cal' by bernard mac laverty

Literature



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" Cal" by Bernard Mac Laverty " Cal" is the jewel in the crown of novels about Ireland. Written in 1983, in the midst of the " Troubles" of Northern Ireland, by the Irishman, " Cal" succeeded in giving the deep understanding of what was happening within the country at that period. Bernard Mac Laverty showed Ireland through the insight world of a person named Cal who suffered psychological torment from political and religious division of Irish people. The state appears to us as a violent society, in which people are experiencing hate and anger towards each other. We can see not only mere facts of the history but feel how did they affect the Irish.

Cal McCluskey is a young, Catholic man living in Protestant housing estate in Northern Ireland with his father. The events took place in late 1970's, the time when Republican and Loyalist terrorists confronted. In fact Cal has no inclinations for terror, but he becomes a terrorist just because of being Catholic, not even orthodox. He felt himself obliged to participate in IRA and in killing a Protestant policeman, Robert, but he also felt " bad about what he was doing" and felt that " it was against his conscience". Cal's feeling of guilty is doubled by his romantic attraction to policeman's Catholic widow, Marcella. He wants to love her, but his conscience protests. He knew " that, because of what he had done, they could never come together." Cal is subconsciously hoping that the matter of Robert's death will arise and he can clear his conscience through confession: " He wanted to confess to her, to weep and be forgiven. He saw the scene in his mind of her holding him, comforting him; he saw the scene as he knew it would be in reality and it horrified him." But he isn't able to hurt Marcella in this way.

He feels guilty and wants to expiate his sins. His mind desires self-punishment and suffering. That's why Cal informs the authorities about the <https://assignbuster.com/cal-by-bernard-mac-laverty/>

bomb in the library and then returns to Marcella to await passively his own arrest on Christmas Eve. He desired to be caught by the police: " he stood in a dead man's Y-fronts listening to the charge, grateful that at last someone was going to beat him to within an inch of his life".

Bernard Mac Laverty depicted not only the victims of political and religious conflict but also the real perpetrators of IRA violence. They are Crilly and Skeffington. Beyond their political beliefs they are masking a chilling indifference to human pain and suffering. Skeffington and Crilly threaten Cal with death when he decides to quit the IRA. To them all what Protestants do is wrong, while they are always right. Crilly in particular feels no need to feel sorrow for his dirty deeds. They are in many ways the antagonists while Cal is in spite of his dark features the novel's protagonist.

The novel fully explains and is explained by the politics and ideology of its time. It gives an account of ideological and cultural factors, which have led to religious and political conflict. It is clear to us that Cal is just one of thousands who were involved into the political crimes against their will and suffer from a distinctly Irish Catholic kind of guilt. Austere, punitive aspects of Catholicism, of which Cal was continually reminded in church, school and home, took roots in his consciousness. The conflict between his moral and political duty is the source of Cal's troubles. It seemed to Cal " that he had a brand stamped in blood in the middle of his forehead which would take him the rest of his life to purge". This felling still possesses a lot of Irish people. " Cal" was the Mac Laverty's second novel. Without resorting to crude polemic or melodramatic sensationalism, Laverty managed to convey historical events through the sieve of Cal's personal emotions. Soon after the

book the world saw its video-version. And it's beyond doubts that in some degree writer's awards were due to this very novel.