

# PARIS LEARY:

## *Homage to Louis MacNeice*

*For all the religions are alien  
That allege that life is a fiction,  
And when we agree in the denial  
The cock crows in the morning.*

MacNeice

CHILDREN of the 'thirties, never soldiers,  
veterans only of the cold and of casual  
police actions in indifferent jungles,  
we are too young to seize the Republic  
with scars and careers of years in wisdom;  
yet too old for insouciant laughter.

MacNeice is dead, whom I truly mourn  
with no affectation nor exploit  
(like the instant eulogist grown fat on griefs)  
as excuse for a poem praising me.  
This is the time of the death of poets,  
Frost and Cummings, Plath and Roethke — now  
MacNeice, whom the books have always called  
a 'younger poet.' And such he always will be.  
But his friend is an elderly American  
and all the young who walked, our infant decade,  
down Magpie Lane or dawdled in the Broad  
writing social verse or vowing 'not  
to fight for King and Country,' all are silent,  
silent — old or dead: dead in the dust  
of Spitfires, dead of cancer, dead of tumours  
or rumours of heart; or live on, tired  
Senior Common Room Commie bards.  
We honour them in their irrelevance.

Children of the 'thirties, barricaded  
in the Groves of Acadame, the free camp  
of free love, alcohol, and books,  
we marry and divorce, are queer or normal,  
in a fuzzy unexceptionable manner,  
harming no one, being rather decent,  
all in all, to one another, shielding  
ourselves from the tumult Daddy built  
but which we have not quite inherited,  
with the shock-proof prose of Henry James  
or the latest piece of West Coast *bizarrerie*.  
MacNeice is dead, and he is truly mourned,  
the bravest and gentlest in his poetry  
of all one's half-forgotten boyhood crushes.

Up on Mohonk Mountain there is light  
in the black tower I see every evening  
erect against a peach-and-opal sky.  
I have not tried to find out what it is,  
for fear it might be for gas or water  
and so cheat me of my secret hold  
on a half-embarrassed high romantic spirit.  
I rather see an antique recluse,  
the widow, say, of a former Ambassador  
to Afghanistan, surrounded by tusks  
and tails from countries no longer on the map,  
a passionate lover of cats, possessing  
twenty-two Angoras, moving like  
the Duchess of Gormenghast in a sea  
of fur and hisses; looking down the night  
through great black windows, seeing nothing  
but the dark unmoving on the mountain;  
hating the butler who has grown her twin;  
looks out over and beyond New Paltz,  
seeing nothing but the dark of the valley;  
remonstrating with her husband's ghost,  
counting the hours until Sleep, that swart  
native girl, smelling of Vicks and sweat,  
widows her again in weeds and dreams;  
who has no radio, has never seen  
television; to whom Dallas is  
a city vaguely west of Buffalo . . .

How many of us children of the 'thirties  
beguile ourselves with such fancies or deaden  
fear and wonder with the Cultural  
Activity every easy evening:  
the allowed Russian dancers or pianist;  
the inescapable production of  
*Our Town*; the new Italian film;  
the drive to Vassar to a lady poet? —  
all the time growing slightly older,  
long on promise, short on promises,  
with a well-charted future nobody,  
not even the young, believe in and a past  
the whole world would like to forget? —  
but not quite self-pitying,  
but cheerful, reasonably faithful husbands,  
affectionate young fathers, resourceful teachers  
respectably unchurched. Yet does our dullness  
mask something betrayed and violent,  
as a Spanish saint's white gossamer  
of sanctity reveals the incandescent  
sensuality it would cover?

Lord, Lord, this winter night make fire  
on the mountain and let one come out  
of smoke and flame with tablets to accuse  
and free, to renew — and to lead out,  
before we are absorbed and die far  
from any promise, us who serve in bondage  
in the Egypt of our fathers' hopelessness.

MacNeice is dead, and one learns only slowly  
that death is hideous and always Christ's.  
It is winter-time. Time makes the world,  
and the world makes time cry, 'Abba, Father.'

# Church and "Golpe" in Brazil

G. Daniel Griffin

