

debut, the significance and relevance of which will extend far beyond the county framework.

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‘SOLITARY AND WILD’: FREDERICK MACNEICE AND THE SALVATION OF IRELAND. By David Fitzpatrick. Pp vii, 427, illus. Dublin: The Lilliput Press. 2012. €40.

John Frederick MacNeice (1866–1942) is perhaps best remembered as the father of the poet, Louis. Yet in parts of the north, where he made his home for much of his life and where he made his name, MacNeice père always enjoyed a reputation of some remarkable significance.

It is a reputation David Fitzpatrick addresses in *‘Solitary and wild’*, situating MacNeice’s life in the context of his upbringing and his commitment to the low-church evangelical wing of the Church of Ireland. MacNeice was the son of Irish Church Mission (I.C.M.) parents and that experience shaped his own attitudes and allowed others, Louis included, to craft a back story for the man who was rector of Carrickfergus for many of the tumultuous years around the home rule and partition debates, and then Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore in the early years of Northern Ireland. That back story, Fitzpatrick demonstrates, ignored much of MacNeice’s experiences as a young man in Dublin, at Trinity College Dublin, and his early work in working-class Protestant areas of Belfast.

It was Covenant Day, 28 September 1912, that helped make MacNeice’s reputation when he concluded his sermon with the observation that he could not and would not sign a document that was political rather than religious. Yet this was not a stance without context, and it is the contexts that have often been lost in the retelling. *‘Solitary and wild’* focuses on two of those contexts, MacNeice’s continuing commitment to one aspect of the I.C.M. philosophy in particular – temperance and related civic virtues – and the role of the Orange Order in MacNeice’s career until relatively late.

The two contexts intertwined. The would-be congregants MacNeice sought to reach were as likely as not connected to the Orange Order. And herein lies perhaps the greatest weakness of Fitzpatrick’s book: this is not a book about the Orange Order, yet it requires more awareness on the part of its reader about the Order’s social complexities than is likely usually to be the case.

MacNeice identified the Orange Order as a fraternal body often untroubled by any particular political agenda beyond the general maintenance of the religious status quo, a status quo which in towns such as Carrickfergus and the Protestant neighbourhoods of Belfast was only occasionally perceived to be under threat. Fitzpatrick identifies the lodges with which MacNeice was most closely associated, and they were all temperance lodges. MacNeice’s interest was consistently in the social fabric his affiliation could foster. His connections were dedicated to advancing his concept of how a Christian society should function, about which he would become increasingly plainspoken after the middle of the 1920s, taking a stance in line with such luminaries as William Temple, Archbishop of York. In Ireland, he would seem to have shared many attitudes with John Bernard, Archbishop of Dublin, who had been one of his lecturers at Trinity College Dublin. Bernard is an instructive comparison, for, like MacNeice, his unionism was both genuinely an expression of his sympathies and also a means to preserving an all-Ireland political entity within which the Church of Ireland could exercise a national testimony.

MacNeice adapted to the failure of politics after 1916 to provide any framework for a peaceful all-Ireland solution by adopting an increasingly quietist outlook while ever more

assertively addressing the social conditions of the majority of his congregants. In this respect, he came closer as his life went on to sharing a position with Sterling Berry, Bishop of Killaloe and Clonfert.

Fitzpatrick's study is exhaustive, sympathetic without ever losing objectivity, persuasive in its central thesis, and almost touching in the grace and honesty with which it addresses the illness of MacNeice's first wife, his arrangements for her care in Dublin and his consequent loneliness in Carrickfergus, and his relationship with his second wife.

'*Solitary and wild*' suffers a little from not offering a deeper understanding of MacNeice's theology, both because most of his private papers were lost and also because it falls outside the remit of the book. Fitzpatrick clearly demolishes the canard that MacNeice was a home ruler, even as he demonstrates that he was a relatively apolitical unionist, a man who worked with Orange lodges when that helped his Christian purpose, just as he once served as vice-president of the Carrickfergus Rugby Union club while apparently remaining blissfully ignorant of the rules of the game.

In the end, the most important concept as it applies to MacNeice is perhaps the one least addressed outside of the title, the problem that increasingly vexed that man born on Omev who ended his life as a committed advocate of what would become the World Council of Churches, the nature of the 'salvation' of Ireland. That is a study that, if ever written, will owe an enormous debt to this fine work.

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ALICE MILLIGAN AND THE IRISH CULTURAL REVIVAL. By Catherine Morris. Pp 342. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2012. €49.50.

When noticed by historians, Alice Milligan (1866–1953) has generally been coupled with her close collaborator Anna Johnston and identified as the editor and leading contributor to the *Northern Patriot* (1895) and *Shan Van Vocht* (1896–8). Toting an affective mix of balladry, poetry, stories, history and political polemic, these boldly-set marginal Belfast monthlies helped articulate the republican dimension to the centenary celebrations of the 1798 United Irish rebellion. By situating her *fin de siècle* activism in the context of her long life, Catherine Morris highlights how Milligan's contribution to the history of Irish republicanism was considerably greater than this narrow window onto her activities suggests. Moreover, as an Irish Protestant Ulsterwoman, her pathway from the Belfast Naturalist Field Club in the 1880s, through the Gaelic League and Irish Woman's Association at the turn of the century, and then into work for, first, the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependants' Fund, and then the Ulster Anti-Partition Council in the 1930s certainly marks an interesting biographical trajectory.

Still, Morris's thematic treatment of Milligan's activities upholds the assumption that the decade or so around 1900 constituted the most significant period of her life. If Milligan's conversion to nationalism remains elusive – Morris suggests that her 'self-becoming' was evident in early prose showing 'her own political unconscious ... already in rebellion' (p. 106) – it is clear that the Parnell split affected her deeply; it is also made clear through her public and private writings from the late 1880s through to the mid-1890s that she had developed an acute sense that Ireland 'was a place in which nobody is quite at home' (p. 138). Flowing from her distinctly Ulster perspective on this problem was Milligan's belief that if the heroic history of the United Irishmen and the early ecumenism of the Gaelic League were made to cohere into a single ideological form, Ireland's fractured society would have the necessary foundations on which to build a new unity. Many revivalists shared this hope, but Morris leaves the reader in little doubt that few sustained so energetic or creative a response.