

## Book Case

Dr Tony O'Neill considers six of his favourite poets.

### LOUIS MACNIECE, AUTUMN JOURNAL

(Faber and Faber, 1939)



“In a journal or a personal letter a man writes what he feels at the moment.” This is how MacNiece refers to his approach to this lyrical journal written at one of the most pivotal times in European history. The book is full of personal reflections on the mundane issues of teaching classics in to undergraduates in Birmingham as well as the unfolding events across Europe. It has a strong sense of place, England between the wars. It also reveals a lot about MacNiece personally and his perspectives remain remarkably modern and pertinent.

### PATRICK KAVANAGH, SELECTED POEMS.

(Penguin Classics, 2000)

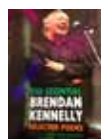


Kavanagh is the great rural poet of Ireland and he writes about people and lifestyles that are easily recognisable to anyone who grew up in the Irish countryside in the last century. He is also spiritual without being evangelical and there is a refreshing

sense of an innocence. His long poem, the Great Hunger, is one of landmarks of Irish literature. He was subsequently the scourge of the literary elite of Dublin and some of his best later poems are about his frustration with his lack of recognition and romantic failures.

### THE ESSENTIAL BRENDAN KENNELLY: SELECTED POEMS

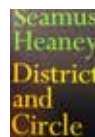
(Bloodaxe, 2012)



This is a collection of poetry from a man despite being a Professor of English at Trinity is often described as anti-intellectual. His poems are very direct and visceral and lack poetic artifice. He writes in blank verse and the poems can seem deceptively simple. His poetry is a also strange mixture of the modern and the sentimental. Like Kavanagh, his story is of a journey from rural Ireland to urban Dublin

### SEAMUS HEANEY, DISTRICT AND CIRCLE

(Faber and Faber 2006)



Seamus Heaney was one of the 20th century's most successful poets. This was the twelfth collection of Heaney poems. It reflected his preoccupations at a later stage in his life with many of the poems featuring personal loss. He threaded the line between accessibility and literary complexity, as

always, with skill. He was terrific at evoking the sense of place, this includes London at the time of his honeymoon. I can't get on the underground in London without this book coming into my mind.

### PAUL MULDOON, COLLECTED POEMS 1968-1998.

(Faber and Faber, 2001)



Paul Muldoon is more urbane than rural. His poems are at first glance a little more angular and perhaps at times a bit self consciously clever. A more postmodern poet, he used language to heighten dramatic impact. An example is the poem ‘They that wash on Thursday’ where the word hand is used repeatedly with powerful effect. This is my favourite book.

### LEONTIA FLYNN, PROFIT AND LOSS.

(Cape Poetry, 2011)



An accessible group of poems about how the places we live, particularly student flats and apartments, reflect the narrative of our lives. There is also a sense of reassessment that the title implies. The poems also illustrate how the mundane objects we collect can have powerful emotional charge and become intensely personal despite their banality.