

Each stanza is a dramatic representation of temptations appropriate to particular stages of life — games, bonhomie, woman, and alcohol — until in the last stanza ‘Everyman’ (for this is what the simple ‘he’ suggests) is left with nothing but death. The poem is extraordinarily effective, with its dark, sombre tone and trenchant honesty. A traditional allegory in technique, it proves the genre to be a living form in modern verse. MacNeice, when he died, was perfecting this kind of poem, and from a passage in *Varieties of Parable* we know that this was the realm he wished to continue to explore:

What I myself would now like to write, if I could, would be double-level poetry, of the type of Wordsworth’s ‘Resolution and Independence’; and, secondly, more overt parable poems in a line of descent both from folk ballads such as ‘True Thomas’ and some of George Herbert’s allegories in miniature such as ‘Redemption’.<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, we were robbed of these further experiments in the writing of allegory and near allegory, by MacNeice’s sudden death.

<sup>1</sup> MacNeice, *Varieties of Parable*, p. 8.

## *Deya Summer*

these sunlit mountains with their barren rocks.  
now steady me and give me peace

but in the winter I will dream  
of frenzied women dancing  
naked in the moonlight  
around the jagged mountain tops

BRUCE KING