

Patrick Deeley, *Names for Love*. Dublin: The Dedalus Press, 1990. 68 pages. IR£7.50 (IR£4.95 paper).

John F. Deane, *The Stylized City: New and Selected Poems*. Dublin: The Dedalus Press, 1991. 120 pages. IR£8.95 (IR£5.95 paper).

Declan Kiberd and Gabriel Fitzmaurice (editors), *An Crann Faoi Bláth: The Flowering Tree; Contemporary Irish Poetry with Verse Translations*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991. 310 pages. IR£20.00 (IR£9.95 paper).

John F. Deane (editor), *Irish Poetry of Faith and Doubt: The Cold Heaven*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990. 192 pages. IR£8.95 paper.

Anyone who enjoyed Patrick Deeley's assured first collection, *Intimate Strangers*, will find here more of the same, continuing particularly some of the concerns in the first part of that book. The presiding tension in his poems arises from a contrast between the repetitious present of the workday and domesticity, and remembered moments of a childhood spent in the country where adults lived a life to which he has not succeeded. The image of the woodcutter, working in and into his material, occurs frequently, and the poems do at times have something of the rough static quality of woodcuts; they tend to evoke and present an instant without quite knowing what to do with it once evoked. He relies too much on the assumption that the poem will speak for itself, when in fact it needs some further coaching in its lines.

I'll be tempted
to enquire after the health
of ancients who gently haunted
my childhood. Whereupon
this sternum-ache, bereavement
in my breast, will stir again,
and I will hold my tongue.

("Going Back")

There is too much effort here to avoid the well-worn "heartache". Deeley can write effectively, but he needs to surprise a reader more. To be a poet of the obvious one has to write supremely well.

The Stylized City offers selections from four earlier collections by John F. Deane, with revisions, and twenty-nine new poems. The stylized city is the heavenly city of Revelation, and is the culminating image at the end of a section of poems on religious or heavenly themes, prompted by visits to the Siena of St Catherine and to the Moscow of the cosmonauts. The visionary city becomes stylized in art, seen in a rose window but also in the poem framed by John F.

Deane, homonym of John the Divine. This poem acts as a bridge to the final section of poems, set on Achill Island, which are for the most part poems of recovered or discovered peace.

The Flowering Tree is a good selection of twentieth-century poems in Irish with translations into English, given a generous introduction by Declan Kiberd. It includes writers from Ó Direáin to Ní Ghlinn and others. This anthology is presumably intended to be introductory and informative, but the notes on individual writers are less than helpful; some are downright silly. We are told that Art Ó Maolfabhail has published "two acclaimed collections of poetry" but are given the name of neither; that Michael Hartnett's first book in English "was acclaimed" but are not told the names of any of his Irish books; that Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill "has published two highly acclaimed collections" but again, no names; there is more acclamation than information. It was judged necessary that we should know that Máire Mhac an tSaoi worked on preparing an English-Irish Dictionary, and that Eoghan Ó Tuarisc "was the first of the Aosdána members to die" (!) but not that we should be given details of their publishing careers. We are repeatedly told that a contributor is a "poet", when as much might have been divined from her or his inclusion in the book.

The Irish poems "of Faith and Doubt" gathered in *The Cold Heaven* are drawn from the last 170 years or so, but the nineteenth century is thinly represented — too much faith and not enough doubt, in public utterance at least. It is, of course, religious faith and doubt that are in question, and the subject is interpreted with a latitudinarian scope, and there seems to be a lot of poems about priests and churches. Deane explains that it was not his intention to gather devotional pieces, but poems about the hesitations in belief as epitomised in the Yeats poem that gives the book its title. This is the sort of book that must have seemed like a good idea at the outset, but the result belies the promise. The subject matter is too partial to throw much light on an individual poet, and one does not get any sense of a larger tradition of spiritual verse.

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