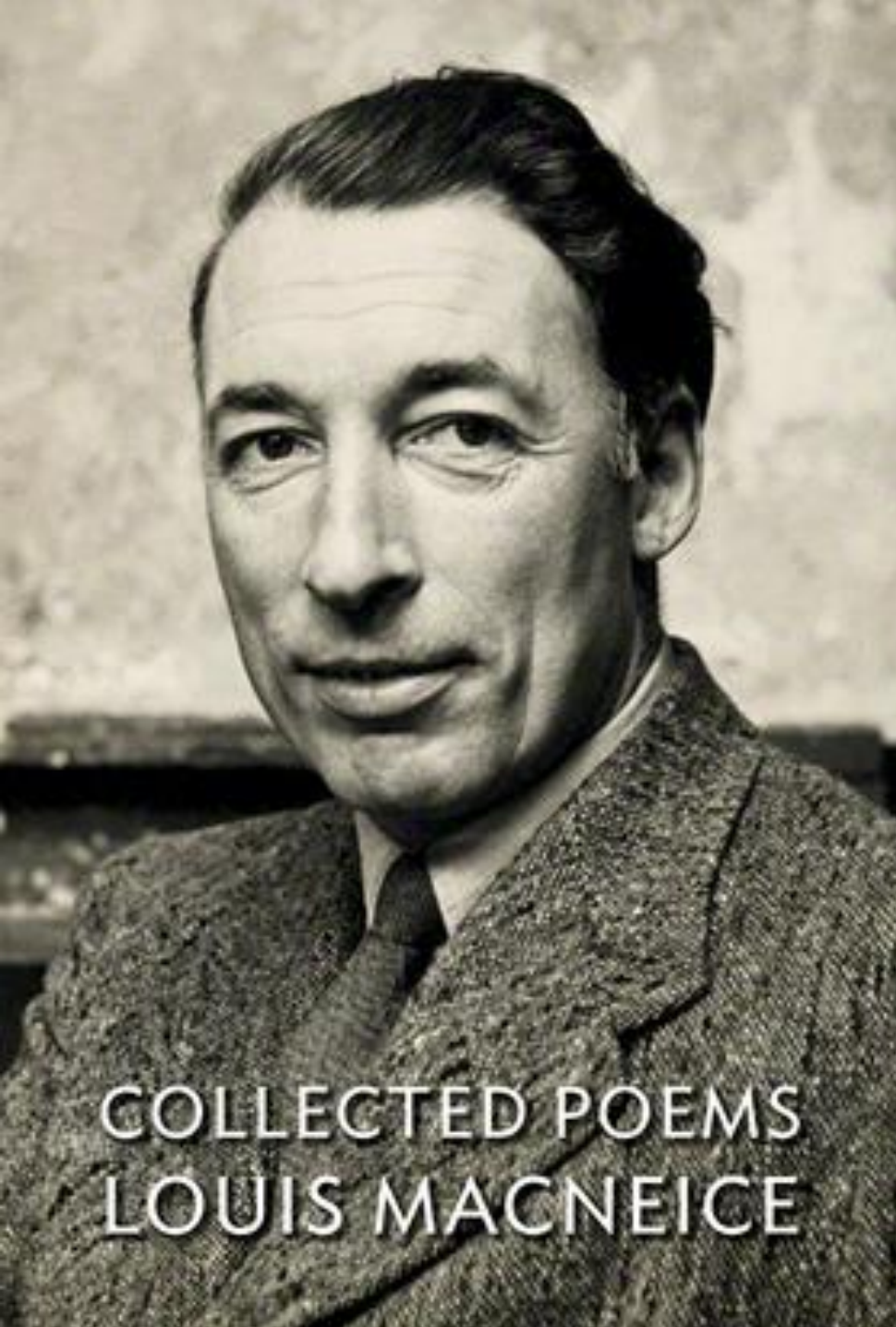


To the Public

– Louis MacNeice

Poem 1

Pg. 3

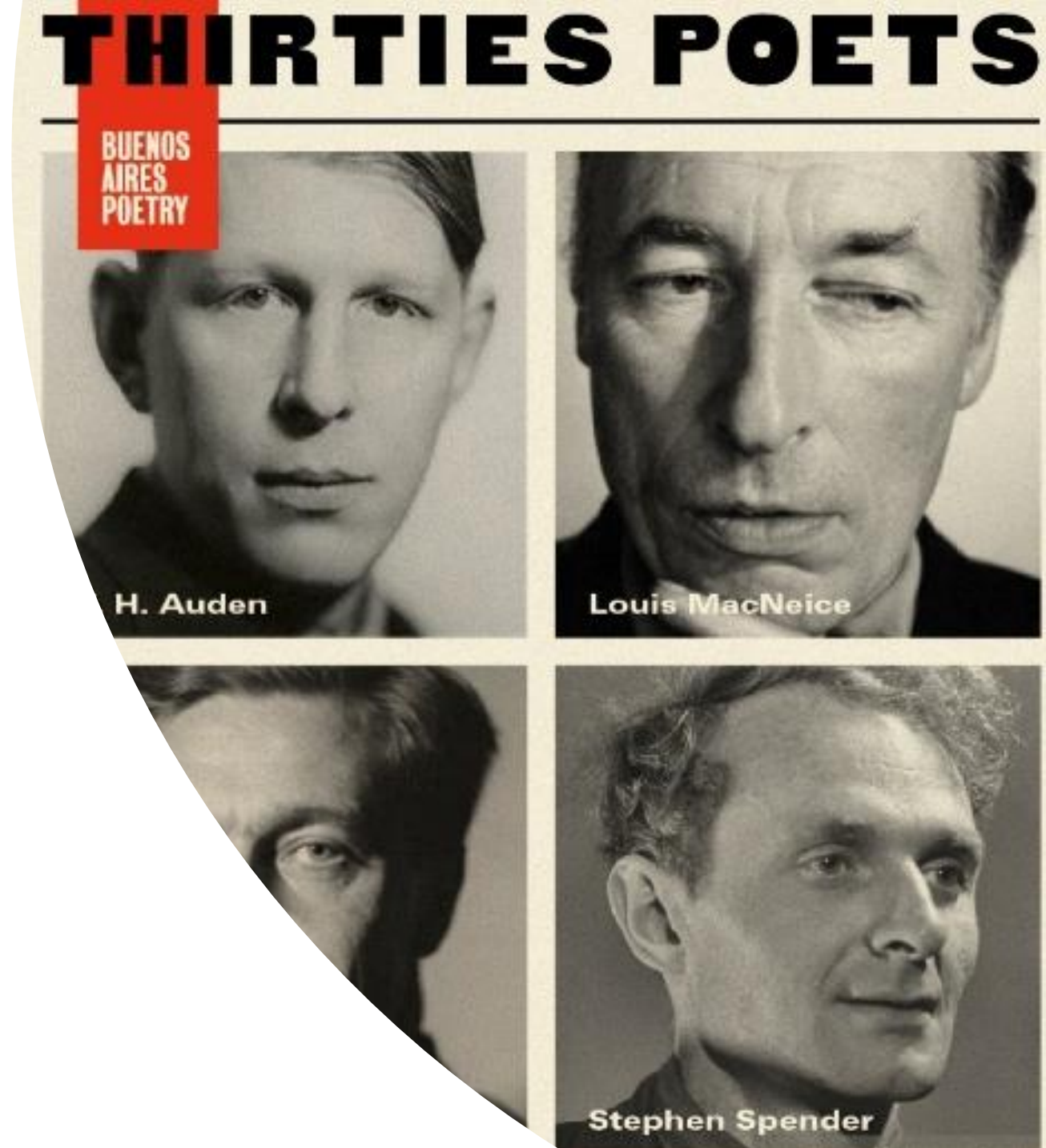


About the poet

- Louis MacNeice, (Sept. 12, 1907 - Sept. 3, 1963), British poet and playwright, a member of a group whose low-keyed, unpoetic, socially committed, and topical verse was the “new poetry” of the 1930s.
- After studying at the University of Oxford, MacNeice became a lecturer in classics and later in Greek. In 1941 he began to write and produce radio plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation.
- An intellectual honesty, Celtic exuberance, and sardonic humour characterized his poetry, which combined a charming natural lyricism with the mundane patterns of colloquial speech. His most characteristic mood was that of the slightly detached, wryly observant, ironic and witty commentator. He was also a skilled translator.
- MacNeice was made C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) in 1957. He died on September 3, 1964, from viral pneumonia.

The Thirties Poets

- Children of WWI obsessed by war and by communalism, by the class-struggle and a passionate belief in poets as people whose actions are as publicly important as their poems.



To the Public

Why hold that poets are so sensitive?

A thickskinned grasping lot who filch and eavesdrop,
Who enjoy ourselves at other men's expense.

Who, legislators or not, ourselves are lawless,

We do not need your indulgence, much less your pity; 5

With fewer qualms, we have rather more common sense

Than your Common Man, also of course more freedom,

With our burglars' and gunmen's fingers, our green fingers,

So, crude though we are, we get to times and places

And, saving your presence or absence, will continue 10

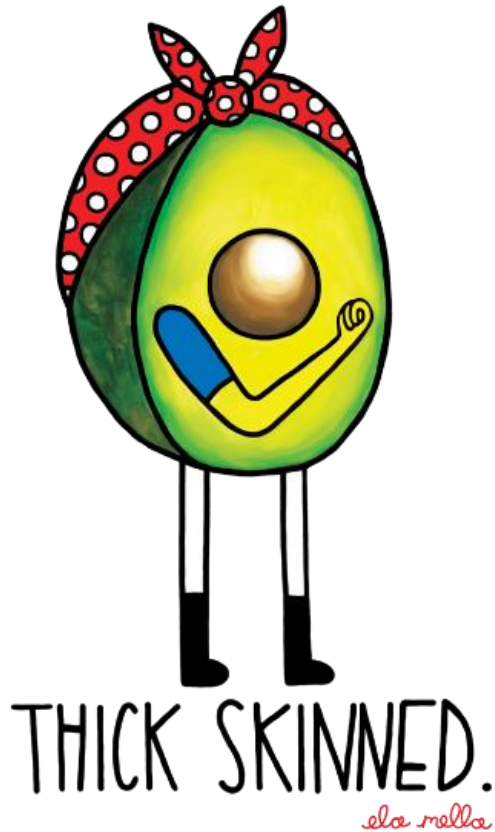
Throwing our dreams and guts in people's faces.

To the Public

- Title – addresses the public, everyday people, the Common Man
- Places the poet in opposition to the public

Why hold that poets are so sensitive?

A thickskinned grasping lot who filch and eavesdrop,



Lines 1-2

- **Rhetorical question** – why is it assumed that poets are weak and sentimental
- Hold – believe
- Thickskinned – contrast to sensitive; actually tough
- Filch – steal
- Eavesdrop – listen to conversations, spy



Who enjoy ourselves at other men's expense.
Who, legislators or not, ourselves are lawless,

Lines 3-4

- Legislators or not – to make and/or follow rules
- Lawless – break all the rules; not bound by the rules
- Contrast – poets challenge society and its rules/expectations
- Highlighted by use of pronouns – ourselves

We do not need your indulgence, much less your pity;

Line 5

- We – pronouns again; us (poets) against society
- Do not need – poets write and express themselves no matter what
- Your indulgence – society's attention and appreciation
- Pity – poets do not want to be felt sorry for



With fewer qualms, we have rather more common sense
Than your Common Man, also of course more freedom,

Lines 6-7

- Qualms – problems or issues
- Common sense – knowing difference between right/wrong
- Common Man – Capitalisation gives importance, but irony because means undistinguished, lacking class/rank or special attributes
- More freedom – not only are poets knowledgeable but they are free/creative



With our burglars' and gunmen's fingers, our green fingers,
So, crude though we are, we get to times and places

Lines 8-9

- Burglars/gunmen – lawless people, rule breakers
- Green fingers – growth, plant seeds of thought/questioning
- Crude – rough and unrefined
- Times and places – poets are not physically bound, they can escape



And, saving your presence or absence, will continue
Throwing our dreams and guts **in people's faces**.



Lines 10-11

- Presence or absence – common man's existence is irrelevant to a poet
- Dreams – hopeful and creative
- Guts – opinion and freedom to speak up
- **Throwing ... in people's faces** – so they cannot deny, they have to observe

Structure and Style

- Juxtaposition

- Poets vs Public
- Poets – lawless, free (ourselves, we, our)
- Public – Undistinguished, limited, bound (your, other men, people)
- A poet is special and unique – close enough to see and understand society, but also detached enough to criticize and be free from it
- Rhyme – two pairs of end rhyme
 - expense / sense – highlight freedom of poets
 - places / faces – poets are free and share their opinions freely too



SUBJECT	THEME
Poets are free to write about their thoughts and opinions, and they are not scared to show it.	Common Man is boring, but poets are rule-breakers who are fearless and creative.
TONE	INTENTION
Nonchalant, unimpressed with Common Man, fearless	Make public aware of a poet's role and how poetry can cause change because of its ability to break the rules (Thirties Poetry).