

Louis macneice's 'carrickfergus' and moniza alvi's 'presents from my aunts in pak...

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



You should consider:

- * How each poet attempts to show confusion about their identity.
- * Each poets use of language and imagery.
- * Significance of structure and verse form in each poem.
- * Cultural significance of each poem.

A person's identity tells us who they are, what they do and where they come from. Although, sometimes people can become confused of their identity, often if they are brought up in a country which is foreign to them. Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast and brought up in Carrick, although he didn't spend the majority of his life here. His father was a minister, and he wouldn't let Louis play with Catholic children because they were 'Irish Poor'. Northern Ireland has a split identity of English people, usually Protestant, and Irish people who are Catholic. Most writers from Northern Ireland write about this point of having a split identity. Louis MacNeice's poem shows that religion, soldiers, factories and the church all had an influence on him. Moniza Alvi was born in Pakistan, but moved to England with her parents as a baby.

She grew up in England, but still followed traditional Pakistani customs, so she was 'half-English'. She felt completely 'alien' or out of place when she wore the vibrant Pakistani clothing, and she wished she could wear normal denim and corduroy like her friends. Confusion of identity is shown in both poems, perhaps more clearly in 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' as the verses are more loosely structured and includes enjambement to show

confusion. In Louis MacNeice's 'Carrickfergus', the poem is more traditional. It is more structured with longer lines; a classic Northern Ireland poem of his time. Therefore, it is harder to note confusion in this poem as it doesn't flow as easily as 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan'. 'Carrickfergus' has a very fixed and rigid verse form, which shows how Louis MacNeice felt about his upbringing; firstly the strictness of his father not letting him play with Catholics and secondly the boarding school in which he was brought up in Dorset. It is a traditional poem, because he felt like he had to conform to a tradition.

'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' flows more freely, showing that Moniza Alvi's identity is more fluid and she can change between two identities quite easily, although she doesn't feel comfortable in either. The poem starts off describing the traditional Pakistani clothes, but becomes more personal towards the end when she is 'staring through the fretwork at the Shalimar Gardens'. It is only evident in the last few lines that Moniza feels like an outsider in her country. She compares herself to 'beggars' and 'sweeper girls' who would be considered as social outcasts. In both poems, imagery is used quite differently. In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan', Moniza Alvi describes the clothing beautifully, saying that a salwar kameez is 'peacock-blue' which shows that it stands out and makes a statement, like a peacock.

She also says that the presents were 'radiant' in her wardrobe, as if they were glowing, too beautiful and delicate to touch. Louis MacNeice, however, describes Belfast as an awful place to live. He describes the 'bottleneck

harbour' that ' collects the mud which jams'. Things cannot get out of a bottleneck properly, and things get stuck in mud. This is why MacNeice uses this phrase, to show people that he feels he is ' stuck' in Belfast. Although Louis MacNeice describes Carrickfergus as a horrible place that he wants to get away from, when he moves to Dorset he realises how much he misses it. He is very negative about his school and misses the ' mill girls, the smell of porter, the salt mines and the soldiers with their guns'. Moniza Alvi is not quite able to miss Pakistan, because she was so young when she left. She has to imagine her birthplace from ' fiftie's photographs' and try to create stories in her head which she has been told. She longs to be part of one identity, instead of swapping between both.