



Paul Muldoon Poems 1968 - 1998

By Paul Muldoon

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*Yet my eye is drawn once again,
Almost against its wishes,
To the figure in the shadows,
Willowy, and clean-shaven,
As if he simply wandered in
Between mending that fuse
And washing the breakfast dishes.*
--from "The Bearded Woman, by Ribera"

Sven Birkerts has said, "It is not usual for a poet of Muldoon's years to have an oeuvre disclosing significant shifts and evolutions. But Muldoon, more than most, is an artist in high flight from self-repetition and the deadening business of living up to created expectations." The body of work in *Poems 1968-1998*--a comprehensive gathering of Paul Muldoon's eight volumes---finds a great poet reinventing himself and recreating the business of poetry. The thirty-year effort of Muldoon's career thus far, is altogether like a fascinatingly mutable climate in which each freshening period brings---as his first collection was predictively titled---new weather.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The best, most-honored Irish poet of the generation after Heaney, "the man who could rhyme knife with fork" (as another poet quipped), Muldoon finds his collected work seeing print a few months before his 50th birthday not bad for a farmer's son from Armagh. Though it includes no new poems, this big brick of a volume does make available several long-out-of-print early books, and it serves better than Muldoon's older selecteds to reveal the full range of his prodigious talents. There is the Frostian, anecdotal Muldoon of early work like "The Big House": "I was only the girl under the stairs/ But I was the first to notice something was wrong." There is the evasive, tough-guy Muldoon who wrote narrative poems, like "The More a Man Has the More a Man Wants," about terror and gangsters in his native Ulster. There is the brilliantly canny and understatedly moving family elegist. There is the Muldoon whose oeuvre includes all shades of romantic and erotic emotion, from sexual disgust ("Aisling") to long-married tenderness ("Long Finish"). There is the writer of serious, terse, effective political verse, the author of 100 haiku about suburban New Jersey, and the Muldoon who recreated the sonnet in his own image. And, most famously, there is the postmodern comic, who claims to be "my own stunt double," and who explains in another recent poem: "A bird in the hand is better than no bread./ To have your cake is to pay Paul." Muldoon (who now teaches at Princeton and Oxford) may yet expand his range even further; for now, the Muldoons are all here, in force and in bulk. Most readers of poetry will need to deal with them. (Apr.) Forecast: The eight or so separate Muldoon volumes on the shelves had the effect of putting off first-time readers, and making a diverse body of work seem diffuse. This collection corrects both problems, and makes Muldoon's first half-century a one-shot buy for libraries and consumers alike. If reviewers take this chance to sum up the career, this book could put Muldoon in Heaney's neighborhood.

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From [Booklist](#)

Carlos Fuentes claims the English language's luck consists of someone Irish coming along every generation or so and reinventing it. Muldoon--reared in Northern Ireland, long resident at Princeton, recently professor of poetry at Oxford--is today's reinventor. His language is heightened, experimental, and also utterly mundane, even coarse. His subjects match the language, what with trips on mescaline chockablock with bucolic landscapes. The luck of this collection is that it is long and dense enough to show the poet wrestling not only with craft--his intricate and often hidden rhymes show, right from the start, his obsession with form--but also with the reason for poetry in a technological age. In an early poem Muldoon describes meeting with a younger poet "rambling on / About pigs and trees, stars and horses"--this is Muldoon's own younger self come calling, challenging him to move beyond the conventional poetic subjects. The trees and stars never utterly disappear, though, but arrive in movies and French philosophy, pub crawls and Romantic poets, Irish language and Belfast murders, in a great swirl of fresh and durable language, as if they were bedrock revealed by a cataclysm. *Patricia Monaghan*

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Review

"Among discriminating readers of new poetry, no one's stock is any higher than Paul Muldoon's...For sheer fun, verve, wickedness and grace, he has no rivals.' Michael Hofmann, *The Times* Drawing on Paul Muldoon's eight major collections, *Poems 1968-1998* allows readers old and new to take the full measure of the writer whose 'influence on the otherwise torpid aesthetics of post-war poetry alone makes him the most significant English-language poet born since the Second World War.' (Stephen Knight, *Times Literary Supplement*) 'Muldoon's technical resources - his formal imagination, range of allusion, lexical abundance

and rhyming panache - have only expanded with the years, and the wit that deploys them is sharper than ever.' Mick Imlah, Observer 'No other poet now writing charts so gracefully that narrow track between open and closed form, tradition and innovation.' Michael Donaghy, Sunday Times"

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