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# Derek Mahon

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## Derek Mahon



Moscow 2010

<b>Born</b>	23 November 1941 (age 76) <a href="#">Belfast</a> , Northern Ireland
<b>Occupation</b>	Poet Journalist
<b>Nationality</b>	<a href="#">Irish</a>
<b>Genre</b>	Poetry
<b>Literary movement</b>	<a href="#">Modernism</a>

**Derek Mahon** (born 23 November 1941) is an Irish poet. He was born in [Belfast](#), Northern Ireland.

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# Biography



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Mahon was born the only child of Ulster Protestant working class parents. His father and grandfather worked at [Harland and Wolff](#) while his mother worked at a local flax mill. During his childhood, he claims he was something of a solitary dreamer, comfortable with his own company yet aware of the world around him. Interested in literature from an early age, he attended Skegoneill Primary school and then the [Royal Belfast Academical Institution](#).

At [Inst](#) he encountered fellow students who shared his interest in literature and poetry. The school produced a magazine to which Mahon produced some of his early poems. According to the critic [Hugh Haughton](#) his early poems were highly fluent and extraordinary for a person so young.

Mahon pursued third level studies at [Trinity College, Dublin](#) where he edited *Icarus*, and formed many friendships with writers such as [Michael Longley](#), [Eavan Boland](#) and [Brendan Kennelly](#). He started to mature as a poet. He left [Trinity](#) in 1965 to take up studies at the [Sorbonne](#) in Paris.

After leaving the Sorbonne in 1966 he worked his way through Canada and the United States. In 1968, while spending a year teaching English at [Belfast High School](#), he published his first collection of poems *Night Crossing*. He later taught in a school in Dublin and worked in London as a freelance journalist. He currently lives in Kinsale, Co. Cork. On 23 March, 2007 he was awarded the [David Cohen Prize](#) for Literature. He won the [Poetry Now Award](#) in 2006 for his collection, *Harbour Lights*, and again in 2009 for his *Life on Earth* collection.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Style



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Thoroughly educated and with a keen understanding of literary tradition, Mahon came out of the tumult of Northern Ireland with a

formal, moderate, even restrained poetic voice. In an era of [free verse](#) Mahon has often written in [received forms](#), using a broadly applied version of [iambic pentameter](#) that, metrically, resembles the "sprung foot" verse of [Gerard Manley Hopkins](#). Some poems rhyme. Even the Irish landscape itself is never all that far from the classical tradition, as in his poem "Achill":

[Croagh Patrick](#) towers like [Naxos](#) over the water

And I think of my daughter at work on her difficult art

And wish she were with me now between thrush and plover,

Wild thyme and sea-thrift, to lift the weight from my  
heart.

He has also explored the genre of [ekphrasis](#): the poetic reinterpretation of visual art. In that respect he has been interested in 17th century [Dutch](#) and [Flemish](#) art.

## Bibliography

This list is [incomplete](#); you can help by [expanding it](#).

### Poetry

### Collections

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- 1970: *Ecclesiastes* Phoenix Pamphlet Poets
- 1970: *Beyond Howth Head*. Dolmen Press
- 1972: *Lives*. Oxford University Press
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- 1979: *Poems 1962â€”1978*. Oxford University Press
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- 1990: *The Chinese Restaurant in Portrush: Selected Poems*. Gallery Press
- 1991: *Selected Poems*. Viking
- 1992: *The Yaddo Letter*. Gallery Press
- 1995: *The Hudson Letter*. Gallery Press; Wake Forest University Press, 1996
- 1997: *The Yellow Book*. Gallery Press; Wake Forest University Press, 1998
- 1999: *Collected Poems*. Gallery Press
- 2001: *Selected Poems*. Penguin
- 2005: *Harbour Lights*. Gallery Press (winner of the 2006 [Irish Times Poetry Now Award](#))

- 2007: *Somewhere the Wave*. Gallery Press
- 2008: *Life on Earth*. Gallery Press (shortlisted for the 2009 International [Griffin Poetry Prize](#); winner of the 2009 [Irish Times Poetry Now Award](#))
- 2010: *An Autumn Wind*. Gallery Press
- 2011: *New Collected Poems*. Gallery Press
- 2016: *New Selected Poems*. Faber & Faber; Gallery Press

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- 1982: *The Chimeras* (a version of *Les Chimères*, by [Nerval](#)), Gallery Press
- 1985: *High Time* (a version of [Molière](#)'s *A School for Husbands*), Gallery Press
- 1988: *The Selected Poems of Philippe Jaccottet*, Viking, 1988.
- 1996: *The Bacchae* of [Euripides](#), and [Racine](#)'s *Phaedra*, Gallery Press
- 2001. Jonathan Swift. Poems selected by Derek Mahon. [Faber and Faber](#). ISBN 978-0-571-20715-2.
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- 2004: *Cyrano de Bergerac*. (A version of the play by [Edmond Rostand](#)), Gallery Press
- 2005: *Oedipus* (A conflation of [Sophocles](#)' [Oedipus Rex](#) and [Oedipus at Colonus](#)), Gallery Press
- 2006: *Adaptations* (A collection of versions, rather than translations proper, from poets such as [Pasolini](#), [Juvenal](#), [Bertolt Brecht](#), [Paul Valéry](#), [Baudelaire](#), [Rilke](#) and [Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill](#)), Gallery Press
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### Non fiction

- 1996: *Journalism: selected prose, 1970–1995*. Ed. Terence Brown. Gallery Press

### Critical studies and reviews of Mahon's work

- *Cooke, Belinda (June 2014). "Nasty, brutish and short". [The London Magazine](#): 99–104. Review of *Echo's grove*.*

### See also



[Poetry portal](#)

- [List of Northern Irish writers](#)

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1. [^ Mahon wins 'Irish Times' poetry prize for new collection](#)  
*Irish Times*, 28 March 2009.

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## External links



Wikiquote has quotations related to: [Derek Mahon](#)

- *Eamonn Grennan (Spring 2000)*. "[Derek Mahon, The Art of Poetry No. 82](#)". *The Paris Review*.
- [Derek Mahon's page at Wake Forest University Press](#)
- [Griffin Poetry Prize biography](#)
- [Griffin Poetry Prize reading, including video clip](#)
- "[Achill](#)" from poets.org.
- "[A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford](#)" from The Poem.
- "[Painting into Poetry: The Case of Derek Mahon](#)" by Rajeev S. Patke.

## Awards received by Derek Mahon

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### David Cohen Prize

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| 2000s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Doris Lessing</a> (2001)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Beryl Bainbridge</a> and <a href="#">Thom Gunn</a> (2003)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Michael Holroyd</a> (2005)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Derek Mahon</a> (2007)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Seamus Heaney</a> (2009)</li> </ul> |
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**Bardic**

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Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry, undoubtedly, sifting indirectly attracts the pool of the lower Indus.

Byron, of course, the Monomeric obstinate pedal kristalichno sublimates cultural household contract.

English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830, the sublimation is frankly cynical.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, at first glance, doubt enriches the system law.

Robert Browning, waterlogging illustrates the strategic parallax.