

Nominating derek mahon for an award

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



68 Hillside View, Naas. Co. Kildare 27th February 2012 Chairperson Aos
Dáina Merrion Square, Dublin 2. Dear Dr. Stevens, As a devoted lover of
poetry, every year I look forward to seeing the nominee list for “Best Irish
Poet” This prestigious award has never undermined my expectations and
each year I agree completely with your choice, However this time I would like
to recommend Irish poet Derek Mahon for the award. Mahon is a creative
and innovative poet who is true to his Irish heritage yet has the skill to
broaden his poetry from our shores to a worldwide experience that everyone
can related to. His poetry contain such hidden depth which need be
acknowledged and appreciated and what better way to praise him but
awarding him with not only a prise but your recognition and expertise. Derek
Mahon has a distinctive style to his poetry. He conveys many impressive
techniques and one of these is his ability to give a voice to the voiceless
using poetry. Mahon does this in such a deep way using metaphorical
imagery, similes and personification that the reader ends up entranced and
bewildered as to how both the initial scene and the actual meaning are
remotely connected. Mahon does this in many poems including “As It Should
Be”, “After The Titanic” and “Antarctica” however it is most effective in his
most famous poem, “A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford”. This striking poem
discusses ‘ mushrooms’ he stumbled upon in a “a disused shed” whilst
roaming around a “Burnt out hotel” in “Co. Wexford” , Using his exemplary
literary skill Mahon succeeds to convey the voice of “Peruvian miners”,
Those in the concentration camp of “Treblinka” and the abused “lost people
of Pompeii”. He eliminates the naivety that many would associate with this
humble ‘ shed’ of fungi and replaces it with a deeper understanding and

awareness of what obviously happens every day around us, Just like “Mushrooms” growing in a field nearby. Another admirable aspect of Mahon seen throughout his poems is his honesty. He is an Irish man, the Irish have a global reputation for their brutal honesty and Derek Mahon is no different. His honesty is to be seen in almost every poem I studied. Reality is always there. One poem which stood out to me like ‘A star within a star’ was “Ecclesiastes” Mahon, Throughout this satirical poem speaks about his life in the north with a profound sense of honesty. He conveys to us how society was then, not how it could have been or should have been but how it was. He tells how they discriminated against women and children when trying to promote the church and encourage young men to join “Shelter your cold heart from the heat of the world, from woman- inquisition from the bright eyes of children” His sarcastic tone when describing what he could do as a priest shows the honesty and understanding of the confined life he would lead should he chose that way of life. “Yes you could, wear black, drink water, nourish a fierce zeal with locusts and wild honey” He exceeds as expectations when keeps his integrity and chooses to defy all expected by staying true to what he himself desired and choosing a different path than the one predicted for him which we now know was that of a successful poet. Derek Mahon uses his personal experiences to write his poems. In doing this many areas of his life are covered, From his early childhood memories being discussed in ‘A Day Trip To Donegal’ to describing his life growing up in Northern Ireland in “Ecclesiastes” and reliving historical events that he appreciates in both ‘Antarctica’ and ‘After The Titanic’ but the poem I found most intriguing of those based on a life experience is ‘Grandfather’ In this

reflective poem Mahon tells us how his ' Grandfather' Changed once he fell ill. He describes how this once ' Humorous' man became ' Shrewd' and ' Bolted' him out of his life. The poet, who was also a child at this time experiences jealousy towards his beloved ' Grandfather' as he reverts back to ways similar to that of his ' childhood'. Derek Mahon conveys the jealousy he experienced when he uses mature expressions he would have interpreted from his parents when he was young to describe the ' Grandfathers' behaviour at this ' time' "Discreetly up to no good" "As cute as they come" "Banging around the house like a four-year-old" His experience of living with this once ' great' man inspired this poem and he would not have achieved the depth and understanding of how someone can change when struck with an unfortunate illness if he had not experienced it first-hand. In his poetry, Derek Mahon relives not only that of Irish history but international events that have impacted on him in some way. In the poem ' Antarctica' he discusses in an admirable tone, how Captain Oates willingly sacrificed his own life to save the others whilst on a voyage to reach the South Pole. A historical event many would admire and deem heroic and Mahon appears no different. In his poem "A Disused Shed In Co. Wexford" he discusses the "Peruvian mines" which are now "Worked out and abandoned", He speaks about Colonial British history when speaking about "Indian compounds" he also discusses "Magi moonmen" and "Lost people of Treblinka", He recalls "Pompeii" where Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79. Mahon also explores the moods and feelings of the people during these times "come so fair in darkness and in pain" However never the less, He has prosperity for the future, He believes these events were all "a thing of the past" and he looks

forward to “a future forbidden to no-one” Derek Mahon uses many literary techniques within his writing. His distinctive unique style is very affective and he achieves this using many techniques including Assonance; “From the world wounded but humorous” Alliteration, “God, you could grow to love it, God-fearing, God-chosen purist little puritan” Similes, “ Or banging round the house like a four-year-old” Symbols, “Bury that red bandana” Personification “ ‘ Herring and mackerel, flopping about the deck In attitudes of agony and heartbreak” Metaphor “The earthly pantomime” He also uses interesting tones such as the forgiving tone in “Antarctica” and the self-pity tone to “After The Titanic” Using complex imagery Mahon portrays all aspects of life in his poems, Many of the images he uses recur throughout his poetry collection, For example that of the rain, Rain is mentioned in four different poems “Day Trip To Donegal” , “ Ecclesiastes”, “A Disused Shed In Co. Wexford” and “Kinsale” The rain is used in a different way in each poem. Mahon also reuses the image of the sea in his poems, The sea is the central idea in both “A Day Trip To Donegal” and “After The Titanic” He also uses it in other poems which I didn’t study in detail for my leaving cert including “Rathlin” and “Portrush” His skill to create an image using words adds such a depth to his poetry. As the expression states “ A picture is worth a thousand words” So by achieving several astonishing images in his poems Mahon accomplishes telling several stories in once fine piece of literature . Its clear that there are many reasons to nominate Derek Mahon for this renowned award, He has taken his poetry beyond his desk and pen but to all aspects of life. He expresses true dedication and devotion throughout his poetry, We get a complex insight to not only him but to the influential

characters in his life and to the ever changing thing that is society. Mahon writes brave poetry and like any brave person. He deserves to be acknowledged and rewarded for it.