



One Thousand Things Worth Knowing: Poems

Paul Muldoon

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Another wild, expansive collection from the eternally surprising Pulitzer Prize–winning poet

Smuggling diesel; *Ben-Hur* (the movie, yes, but also Lew Wallace's original book, and Seosamh Mac Grianna's Gaelic translation); a real trip to Havana; an imaginary trip to the Château d'If: Paul Muldoon's newest collection of poems, his twelfth, is exceptionally wide-ranging in its subject matter—as we've come to expect from this master of self-reinvention. He can be somber or quick-witted—often within the same poem: The mournful refrain of "Cuthbert and the Otters" is "I cannot thole the thought of Seamus Heaney dead," but that doesn't stop Muldoon from quipping that the ancient Danes "are already dyeing everything beige / In anticipation, perhaps, of the carpet and mustard factories."

If this masterful, multifarious collection does have a theme, it is watchfulness. "War is to wealth as performance is to appraisal," he warns in "Recalculating." And "Source is to leak as Ireland is to debt." Heedful, hard-won, head-turning, heartfelt, these poems attempt to bring scrutiny to bear on everything, including scrutiny itself. *One Thousand Things Worth Knowing* confirms Nick Laird's assessment, in *The New York Review of Books*, that Muldoon is "the most formally ambitious and technically innovative of modern poets," an experimenter and craftsman who "writes poems like no one else."

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