

The Poet with(in) the Labyrinth: Paul Muldoon's *Why Brownlee Left*¹

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Abstract: The paper explores Paul Muldoon's early volume *Why Brownlee Left* against the background of detective fiction. While there is no denying that the longest poem in the book, 'Immram', performs a rather apt parody of Raymond Chandler's style, neither the poem nor the entire volume are designed to deride the detective story paradigm but rather they explore its potential for evoking the multifaceted and elusive condition of modernity and of the self. Therefore in this paper, the poems collected in *Why Brownlee Left* are demonstrated to deploy labyrinthine structures of signification over which the speaker seeks to cease control as he also succumbs under their irresistible proliferation.

Keywords: Paul Muldoon, contemporary Irish Poetry, detective fiction