

## *Paul Durcan*

Damian Grant

Poetry (said Auden) makes nothing happen.  
Well, that's not quite true – though Auden died  
before happenings really started to happen.  
This Paul Durcan now. He has been happening  
all over the place for years; though how a man  
from Mayo found his way to Moscow (and  
everywhere afterwards) if not a mystery  
is something to be wondered at. Montaigne  
may have said it first: "there is nothing human  
escapes me". But Durcan sure can follow suit.  
Casting his net on always troubled waters,  
flying the Irish flag on an English vessel,  
he trawls for everything – whatever strange fish –  
drawing the line (or cutting it) at mermaids.

*So he sailed up the Liffey from Timbuktu  
To spin his yarn for me, and you.*

What Tiresias (also transgender) sees  
is what gives us – gave Eliot – *The Waste Land*.  
What Durcan sees is no less comprehensive,  
no less that ruin we are the fragments of.  
In all those portraits, self and other, coaxed  
from words squeezed out like pigment to create  
his inexhaustible palette of people,  
we most perceive their instability:  
the which said which? and who was who?  
that Sally made him question. Ekphrasis  
explodes here; the kaleidoscope shakes down  
a mirror world of moving images.  
What shakes us most is love: love driving headlong,  
or love uncoupled, a hunger endured for years.

*And he knew then that the dearest thing one owns  
Is the little bit of furze between two towns.*

*July 2020*