



The Laughter of Mothers

Paul Durcan

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'Thank you, O golden mother, / For giving me a life,' says Paul Durcan in this brilliant new collection, a poignant tribute to 'the first woman I ever knew'. Sheila MacBride came from a political family – her uncle John MacBride was executed in 1916 for his part in the Easter Uprising – but when Sheila married into the 'black, red-roaring, fighting Durcans of Mayo' she was obliged to give up a promising legal career. These poems commemorate his mother as Paul Durcan remembers her playing golf, reading Tolstoy, and initiating him in the magic of the cinema. He recalls her compassion and loyalty when he was committed to a mental hospital in adolescence and how she endured the ordeal of her old age.

Durcan also muses upon the beauty of Greek women and questions our need for newspapers and the new religion of golf. He is beguiled by a beggar woman, enraged by a young man picking his nose on the Dublin–Sligo commuter train, and gets into difficulty at the security gate of Dublin airport.

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Andrew Joy:

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