

DS Maolalai

## **If Only I'd Been a Painter**

days on the days  
and then on  
their years  
and I thought of nothing  
but the sky  
and its opening – its red light,  
its dark  
and its melancholy. I thought of it  
much as water  
in a glass must think  
of the glass, as unread books  
must think of the shelf  
they sit upon. the rose  
rising westward  
as the sun fell through  
and burned the clouds  
to thunderstorm. the bearing lines  
of highways, as they humped  
their cargos up. the texture  
of my wallpaper, blue  
shading to black  
and purple. I lay back  
on the sofa,  
eating toast and staring  
through the windows. god,  
stretched on a long  
workday, legs  
to the horizon, flaming  
a blue distance – the colours  
and their autumn  
blues.

## Lunchtime

on weekdays you never  
eat breakfast, but you do  
on weekends - you sleep in;  
eat your breakfast  
at lunchtime. you're a hell of a cook -  
I'm willing  
to wait for it,  
though I'm generally up  
for some hours  
by then. moving  
through the apartment,  
quietly bored,  
like a cat, photographed  
walking in the morning  
across tram-tracks,  
casting a shadow  
the length of a man.  
reading books.  
drinking coffee.  
eating slices  
of toast. I rise  
like a flower, and wonder  
if it's lunchtime.

## People in Daylight Situations

for lunch we sit  
at the bare kitchen  
table, and use  
our spare chair  
to prop open  
the door; allow in  
the light  
and some air  
and the flies. we eat

our broken  
and half-toasted  
sandwiches, drink

hot tea and put  
our phones on silent,  
watching the dog  
as she rolls on the lino  
and begs.

lunchtime: this  
is our daylight  
situation. the river  
outside  
breezing lazy,  
dragging flies  
from wicklow. cups  
of tea and work  
phones off,

avoiding the office  
an hour. peace falling  
like streetdust  
off the wheels of july  
bicycles. passing  
the butter  
to make another  
sandwich. the milk  
for another cup  
of tea

## **In the Park**

picking dried blood  
from the sides  
of my nostrils, like paint  
off an old  
wooden door. wiping my nails  
on a crumpled  
up napkin. inhaling  
quite freely  
and copperish.

## The Trap

I come in from work  
and the kitchen  
collapsing. dog  
barking and sounds  
which sound various,  
like objects  
over-full  
going over. I open the door – a mouse  
is in a trap –  
his mind said bacon  
and then it said  
hide, and he pulled himself  
into a corner,  
just out  
of harms way. the jaw  
has gone down, and one paw  
has gone useless, and the dog  
is barking, yelling excited  
at air around the mouse  
with her ass up.  
the creature,  
very cute.  
confused, wild frantic  
and no real predator – she doesn't know  
what her mind  
should make her do. but here is some interest  
anyway – she knows that  
alright. I pick up the trap  
and the mouse hangs down  
dangled like a key  
from a tasteless keyring.

## The Clothes-Horse

hanging out laundry  
we fold our week  
away; let days drip  
in rhythm,

check stains,  
the wriggles  
of life  
coming loose.

and we spread  
things out,  
dangle them,  
free as the wings  
on a butterfly,  
remembering the dry heat  
of july air  
and the wet heat of packed bars  
heavy with over-  
full glasses.

we hang them to wring  
on the folded  
out clothes-horse  
which orders the kitchen  
and passes the time.  
pours loose dye in its water  
to stain the white lino,  
stands in our way  
when we make cups of tea  
quite politely.

## **A Passing**

am I not  
what caused the hand  
to shudder? to offer someone  
daffodils  
and remember  
it's july? I write  
my fumbling verses  
for my family  
and put them about  
in poetry  
magazines. perhaps  
that is why

I have trouble  
with emotion when I'm sober,  
and then  
only alone. my mother  
complained  
when she called  
to tell me of a passing  
and was cut off suddenly –  
she thought that I'd  
hung up on her  
rather than blame it on the line.  
I complain about that,  
hold the memory  
bitterer than any death.  
is that me?  
throwing roses  
down on caskets  
because they're what bloom  
in any season? I carry  
so many  
books full of poetry.  
pages fall  
off my shoulders  
like petals in heavy rain.

## **Early on**

I wrote quite a lot  
in the voice  
of a character. this was  
early on – I wrote  
about scumbags;  
all bukowski  
and filth.  
thought it was obvious  
that if I wrote poetry  
then what I was writing  
wasn't all about  
me. it wasn't – I  
was a fool. spent my time  
reading damn

stupid magazines. thought  
it was worth it  
to get my word out. it wasn't.  
thought it was artistry – like that's  
always good. like a sun  
shining over a factory  
and burning through various  
carcinogens – such beautiful colours;  
no value at all.

## About the Poet

DS Maolalai has been nominated four times for Best of the Net and three times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016) and *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019).