

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).