

# PICASSO and other poems...

By D S Maolalai

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: Mister Maolalai's poetry is sublime. Comparing a locksmith to 'Picasso' in the absence of hyperbole is a feat of genius. 'Lying down afterward' / "in the lapsed heat / of passion" is a can't-miss. 'The realist' is a tribute to, and a handbook for, Everyman who ever needed to be reminded of what is not minutia in order to secure felicitous domesticity: "and the brown taste / of fresh coffee," "gaslighting" is often the best remedy. 'Apples.' 'Being online.' and 'Baking.' are each endeared to me, but 'With apologies to Marianne Moore' has that line, "...the back arching. a watchspring / wound to crisis..." Who could resist? (Spacing and font size are poet's own) HS*

## Picasso.

you think it is perfect,  
and it is. it's easy. banging words  
in an office for work  
like rocks  
shattered  
to sand.

but today  
I went to get a key cut –  
waited  
5 mins  
by this shed  
at a supermarket  
carpark, while the old guy inside  
sliced a fresh one for me,  
casual, like a labourer  
pulling down stacks  
of bananas.

and I had no idea  
this was still  
how it was done –  
freehand  
by eyeball

and the guts of their feet. one of those  
dying skills, I suppose. typing emails  
I can barely beat a sentence  
without hitting the backspace  
a couple of times

but he spun his hands magic  
and like  
a conductor  
of perfect symphonies; like seeing picasso  
paint.  
I walked home  
with a new key  
in my pocket. I'd kept it separate  
so I could test getting in,  
in case of issues,  
and when I tried the door  
it worked  
perfectly.

he must really  
have been picasso  
to get it so right  
the first time.

2008.

2008. december.

christmas trees  
straddling o'connell  
like someone's  
stacked balls  
of shining  
barbed wire.

A good peace.

a good peace –  
from a window  
overlooking the wing  
of an airplane,  
and even waves  
look calm  
and ironed on cloudless  
days,

and birds in flight  
are things of flowing  
metal – no feathers,  
no crease  
in the construction  
of machines.

Lying down afterward.

lying down afterward  
in the lapsed heat  
of passion  
like a flower, wilting  
in a botanic garden  
hothouse. watching  
the room  
as it rises  
to landscape,  
the wallpaper  
which spirals  
away.

The realist.

she complains  
my memory's  
not perfect. and she's right.  
I don't worry  
about detail; don't know  
exactly  
what she said  
and when it was  
she said it. dates  
escape me, places. I forget  
the name of the restaurant  
or even  
the name  
of the street. don't know  
what town we were in  
when it happened. sometimes  
I don't even know  
the country. my memory  
as an abstract painting.  
a series:  
her bedroom – *white no 2*.  
sky-white  
and the dawn in motion  
and the brown taste  
of fresh coffee. I am an impressionist,  
not a realist  
painter. the world  
collapses  
when I pinpoint  
a spot. as a joke  
I accuse her  
of gaslighting –  
"you never told me that,  
you are making it all up." she pulls out the receipts;  
shows messages. it's terrible;  
trying to be an artist  
when people carry cameras.

Apples.

don't grow  
anywhere now.

and my brother?  
sick again.

the world  
a lonely place  
without fish  
or plates of tomato.

flowers  
can go hang;  
tramps  
in nice dresses.

every river  
piss  
and wet shit.

love  
is a thing  
which doesn't happen.

neither  
does anything  
else.

The wedding cake.

we clean up  
after dinner. well, I do –  
you cooked. I stack bowls  
and plates, dirty pots  
and the cutlery. carry them  
quietly to the sink. you go  
to the sofa, with the rest of your wine  
and the dog. read a paperback  
borrowed from the library, idly looking  
at your phone. it's june 1st  
or thereabouts. the end of may  
at latest. through the window  
white flakes  
like sawed through icing  
on the wedding cake  
which I haven't  
arranged for you  
yet.



Being online.

*a hopelessly naive poem.*

it should be more  
like real life is  
really – think of it  
as an office  
going away party,  
full of people  
you work with  
but don't really  
know well.

just keep  
certain things  
shut up private  
if they're things  
which would get you fired  
in an office. that way  
people generally  
don't act all that  
racist, and mostly  
things slowly

improve. just dumb jokes  
about bad spelling  
and puns – I remember  
when the internet  
was all  
dumb jokes.

Baking.

life, regular  
as loaves  
in an oven. five years ago  
all my friends  
were travelling. now, at parties  
we talk about property  
and who's getting married  
and when. I suppose  
in ten years  
we'll be discussing divorces,  
children doing quite well  
at school. I sit at the table,  
drinking my wine  
and watching my friends  
drink their wine. we talk  
and heat rises, steady  
and wholesomely  
boring.

With apologies to Marianne Moore.

no water so still  
as the dead fountains at versailles. and no stretch  
so satisfying  
as the tension of a dog  
in yawn. the breaking of extension  
and the breaking  
of release. the twist  
and the tongue extending  
like a smooth  
and blooming flower  
brimming, inviting  
to bees.  
the tremble around legs  
and the back arching. a watchspring  
wound to crisis  
and pulling against a wrist. how could anyone  
put out a hand  
and break this. her head  
looking upward  
very offended.

**THE POET SPEAKS:** *Reader, forgive me –I’ve never been much of a prose man. Expect me to ramble. For me, poetry is easier –you can hopefully see it there. Once or twice a week I open a bottle of wine, sit at a laptop and wake up to 5 or 6 poems the next day. As far as methods, I think what I do is, in a sense, automatic writing, or hiking a new trail. I don’t start on the road with any destination in mind –just find the place where the first foot rests steadily, then take the next step. Writing isn’t really an art-form, I don’t think –it’s primarily a habit, and a way to order my thoughts. I would never be anything but embarrassed if I were to try describing some great mountain, at the top of which is The Meaning of Poetry. I go to the occasional reading(though I don’t make a habit of going it) and seen plenty of times where the readers will spend longer explaining the beauty of their inspiration than they do reading the actual words. That said, what you could say inspired a lot in these poems is the sense of art as a mundane thing, rather than a higher order –Marianne Moore, who’s various versions of “Poetry” I pillaged for the poem which bears her name, was exceptionally good at this, and wrote with a clipped precision, using a lot of the same language that one might find in an encyclopaedia, as if she were writing*

*straightforward prose only broken by the form. In the first long version of "Poetry" she describes writing as being about "imaginary gardens with real toads in them" and how "things are important not because a high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are useful" –I think that's the best way to describe my own attitude. The same thing comes with the attempt at drawing the line between the man cutting a key in a shed in a supermarket car park and Picasso's painting in "Picasso", and the connection between memory and the arts in "The realist"–it's all about bringing down the attitude people have toward the arts, and elevating the attitude they have toward the mundane. Not bringing down the things themselves, I mean, but people's view of them. Picasso was written about a real guy who worked from a Portakabin in Darndale, a semi-sketchy neighbourhood in Dublin, and cut some keys freehand for me after I lost a set drunk. The fact that he took my spare and carved a new set freehand, just by eye and hand, seems far more impressive to me than any amount of poetry.*

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** 'A little about myself; I'm a graduate of English Literature from Trinity College in Dublin and recently returned there after four years abroad in the UK and Canada. I have been writing poetry and short fiction for the past five or six years with some success. My writing has appeared in such publications as 4'33', Strange Bounce and Bong is Bard, Down in the Dirt Magazine, Out of Ours, The Eunoia Review, Kerouac's Dog, More Said Than Done, Star Tips, Myths Magazine, Ariadne's Thread, The Belleville Park Pages, Killing the Angel and Unrorean Broadsheet, by whom I was twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. I have also had my work published in two collections; 'Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden' and 'Sad Havoc Among the Birds'.'

D S 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)

