



2021

## His new moustache

DS Maolalai

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### Recommended Citation

Maolalai, DS (2021) "His new moustache," *The North Meridian Review*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.  
DOI: 10.7825/2769-5115.1052  
Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/thenorthmeridianreview/vol2/iss1/16>

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**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)

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## **His new moustache**

we met him  
up near  
stoneybatter,  
when he was only  
a few days home,  
just after  
a month-long  
binge, he said, in sligo  
in a house  
by the country-  
side mountains,  
where he'd lived  
when the covid  
had hit. he'd been cycling

when we saw him  
toward the stoney-  
batter markets,  
kicking speed  
and wearing  
a rugged moustache,

and he skidded a loop  
through dust and around  
light traffic  
and stopped  
by the courthouse  
to talk.

and we had been out  
a minute easy,  
walking the dog  
and picking up  
our groceries  
and fish grew hot  
by the wine  
and stained our knees  
with sunshine, sweating  
through thin  
plastic shopping bags  
to the seaside smell  
of fresh and dribbled  
piss. and he told us

about his problems  
getting work  
since he'd been back  
and his problems  
getting dole, or any sort  
of covid payment,  
his problems

meeting girls right now  
and meeting his friends –  
our friends –  
for a drink. he talked  
a good 30 minutes – it was  
unusual – he'd been  
in paris  
and australia  
and not talked  
so much.

eventually we made  
excuses – the dog  
needed to be fed –  
our masks were  
sweating us –  
and went on. he must have been  
very lonely  
to want to talk  
so much. afterward,  
crossing the road,  
we looked back  
and he was gone,  
stitching his wheels  
into traffic, dragging  
his sweating body  
and his rugged  
new moustache.