

Poetry Portfolio

Conor O'Brien

Haiku

1

wet feet, hot-sand caked
tracing yesterday's footprints
'til winter takes hold

2

as the sun sinks low
we chase parasite squirrels
while hummingbirds drink

3

dusk air, dance freely!
navigate new jersey streets,
be my melody

4

a captive pine stands
shaking, tall amid its kin,
now ours for Christmas

5

in yellow canoe,
paddles stuck in mud and grime,
we pause for a breath

6

heaven's tsunami
crashes over high mountains—
fitting for a walk

Blank Verse

these my thoughts

anonymized by arbored trails near roads
unkempt i lumber far away from these
my thoughts of you and what we could have been;
unstill, you pull me back, and still i trudge
onwards past the empty lots, reflecting:

if you could name a place where i belong
then maybe i could reach out to the past
and give myself some tips; that maybe then
i'd find a straighter path to where i am
supposed to go from here—

if you could lead us now and teach me how
to dance upon the path of those regrets,
then maybe i could come to life and live
a little freer than before; my friend,
each day's a taxing exercise in how
to navigate the maze of spike-like glass
which spiderwebs all that i'll ever do,
where one mistake is fatal in my mind.

i lift my eyes to taste the air awhile
and avoid asphalt asphyxiation
alongside sidewalk streetlamps burning
behind the forest's cover, like eyes on fire,
a procession of tin-can saints, ever fixed
in place to guide the lost at night to home;
no sign of you there in that train, you struck
a different path out through the wilder weeds.

thus, resolute, i turn to go, and find
that others wander now and here as well,
beneath the gibbous sky; never alone,
they howl delight with souls also like eyes
that brim to match the sun; to them, to wander
is merely transit.

my feet no lighter than before, i grasp
a momentary hope in hand: that if
one day we meet each other's eyes again,
maybe we could wander a bit as two,
and lose our minds to cloudless winds offshore

Surrealism

in the through it all

she speaks to me, sweet Vanity,
looking straight through the vanity
i turn to face the mirror's speech
alarmed, awake, she averts her gaze

"keep your eyes to yourself,
they're sticky and gross,"
she claims as she drags herself
away, wringing her neck and giggling,

careening into the sky,
convulsing with laughter—
or was it despair?
she never told me which

i shrug and stand, slamming shut
the three-fold mirrors, its rosy glass
melting slowly to the floor
before congealing into shards

having had enough of Vanity's
looking glass apartment,
i sink through her floorboards
passing through the ground

"my eyes are really, panoramic,"
i think to myself,
beholding inky dirt
punctuated by peculiar pictures:

behold, the plum was a sock—
or was it a peach?—
darned with vain juices
mailing itself *à Paris*

there, i watch the women go and come,
talking to michelangelo's son,
"when did sweet alfred leave?
the hushed one poets unweave?"

outside, a turtle rests,
smiling on a damp vuitton with receipt
one woman had discarded
in her pursuit of the chic

Blues/Rap

where you lay

heart attack, play it back,
blood contract won't retract,
masses act, violent tact,
news reacts, homes ransacked

flash refracts on smashed glass,
one shot cracks—

family maimed, mourning fame,
TVs play Deaths' new claims;
all the same, morning came,
found our cries strained

i could ask why you trashed
our home back then

you always blamed the past,
ate the scraps from newscasts,
too scared to catch somber jazz
and rehash his urn's ash

open pad, this i'd add:
i wish you saw a shrink

your rage amassed can't outlast
life's lambaste, grey forecast,
grief comes back, comes back fast,
smacks you with marred flashbacks

truth's all there, you don't care,
took that dare, shunned the world

loved your pain, blood tears rain,
laughed insane, dad's to blame,
colt's disdain, roulette trained,
bullseye aim shook your frame—

ringing air, bleeding hair,
sirens blare where you lay

Slang

real talk

i dunno really
it's hard to think about
when bullshitting myself's
easier than breathing

i guess i just
hate it here sometimes
goddamn the world
and everything in it

sorry for the GD
i'm kinda heated
there's just so much
to resent

i don't want no binge love
no pregamed fling
no conked out high
nunathat

i'm not slang enough to hang
y'all got pocket aces
i gotta all-in on my three and six
when i don't sit at the table often enough

shoving zen to the backburner
ain't no way to live
yet ain't got much time
to do much else

ya feel me?

Ekphrastic

just beyond the tree

the house lights betray that father's away,
skimming the graves for gold;
his daughters know well that their father can't tell
the riches from the mold.

lesser trees burn midnight green,
their leaves plume up between
a greener roof and the sickle moon

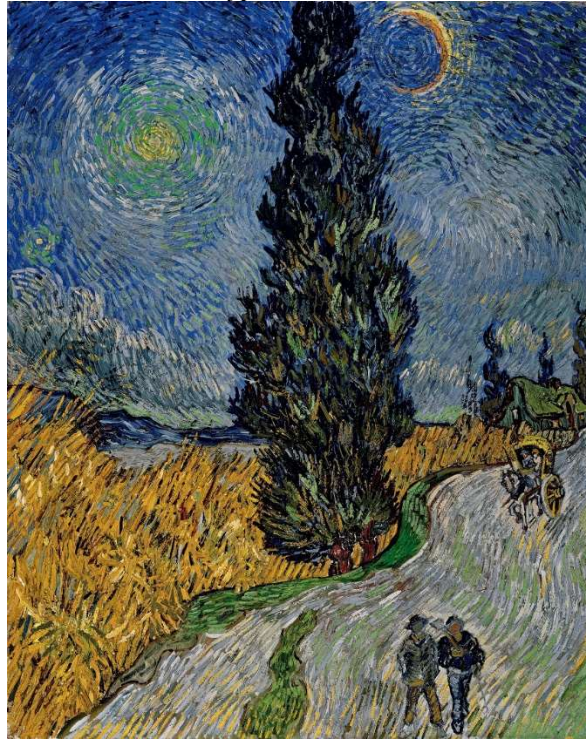
they're all missed by peerless Cypress
who can't resist but bisect the abyss,
posing as old Babel's ghost

although the front door never offers more
than a view of that vain tree,
the children prefer the wispiest firs
which still know honesty.

hay fields wave the carriage away
down the road paved with rivulet clay
to father and his friend

they hail its driver and
father faux limps over on his shovel,
smelling of booze.
he asks the driver for medical supplies.
they respond they had none.
father smiles to his friend.
his friend smiles back
and aims his pistol.

Reference: *Road with Cypress and Star*, Vincent van Gogh



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_-_Road_with_Cypress_and_Star_-_c._12-15_May_1890.jpg

Epistolary

to the wolves & birds

may your corpse rot forever.
you'll never know how
for years i'd wake each day
with a matchstick tribute
to the ashtray with your name
stapled to the back
seventeen times,
one for each year you've haunted me.

you thought i'd be better off alone
(like the lone wolf you are)
that i should be proud that
i could count on one hand
the times i remember crying,
as if stone-facedness were
a reasonable coping mechanism.

i suppose
we must bury our past selves.
i pray you remain dead;
prithee, fuck off.

let me feel the breeze on my face,
under my shirt and in my nostrils;
let me stand a moment here and
take note of those who sing to me:

who are you all?
perched proud,
diving and chirruping—
i want to know your names,
where you came from,
and where you go when it's not so cold—
not that we don't mind a bit of winter

could you take me with you?
i can't fly, but
dammit! i'll try