

JAMES MAGORIAN

Van Gogh's Olive Orchard

The practical trees lunge at something unseen,
lash out as we do at what we can't control.
Hankering for opposites, shifts of power, they
rise like beasts from the burrows of the sea,

gulping air, all muscle and mistake, outlastings.
Red dawn, nameless fluff of noon.
The pure turning of pages.
Art pretties up the blank wall,
takes us, our shadows dragging behind,

from one idea to another
without the flub of thought.
Yellow ochre, gray, doubt-green, the grasses
shrink to a courtesy, an old law on the margin
of prophecy, seams of a spent pleasure.

Or the ladder on its back in the tall weeds,
parlors of fringed pillows and cat piss.
What is the correct vista for an asylum?
Umber-blue tree trunks and branches.
The south of France a better place

than most in which to go crazy, for flesh
and spirit to sputter against impossibilities.
The sky's silver-blue foliage rustling too.
The mail delivery to Paris reliable.