

MELANIE JORDAN

A MURAL IN THE ABANDONED CANE HILL ASYLUM

Someone, a Giotto just learning to turn
angels, pilfered paint from the wards,

arrowed into a pastoral *v*
a state-approved horizon, trees

flat as tape, sheep cottage-big.
The sky is only blue like this

in mind, as sheep are clouds with legs,
but clouds nonetheless, implying

a wind's cradle, boundless drift.
In riffling heaps, papers warp

in the next room, still-legible
little accountants: they seep

pneumonia, thrombosis, schizophrenia,
each patient's cordwood years,

typed by one of an army of Royal
machines like the one flashing

mute keys, hunched widow
in its mustardseed room.

In Art Therapy, I think, someone
mastered for a common room

a common vision easy as breathing,
as hard to describe as snow evaporating

Sou'wester

on a mitten. Someone stenciled
look what they've done to my brain, ma

in rainbow pencils on a page.
All the paint has bubbled and split.

At the top of the wall, before the scene
trucks itself into a door,

a train runs central on a track
like a black beak on a green wing.

It hovers there like a raised arm
on one reclaimed wall, sanctioned

and still bearing down, the locomotive
like a sentence you were asked

not to repeat, like a word
no one wants to hear.