Mark O'Flynn

BLAND LANDSCAPES

At a thin brown desk in this stifling hotel room
I dare not wonder about my antecedents,
but whether they too have studied alone under a rotating fan
that mundane, perfect landscape on the wall.

Old stone church (denomination unknown—there's no bell
in the tower), with its arched windows aspiring to a gothic
heaven. In the foreground the patchwork rustings
of corrugated iron rooves. These sandstone buildings
and the gradual angle of the hills—
                they might be the hills
of the town my mother paints in her own watery way,
empty always of people, dogs, dementia,
though is that a snake track scribbling
its way across the road, or the artist's wormy signature?

It must be early morning. The mist slowly burning off
towards an indiscriminate patch of scrub
where, I know, my dead brother lies
                forever searching for his keys.
This theme never seems to leave me.
Not even in the anonymity of far hotel rooms;
whatever awful blessing, tribulation, sour memory,
comfort or curse such bland landscapes offer
under a beating fan.