

RODNEY PYBUS:

*O Shine That Field*

(after Samuel Palmer: 'A Rustic Scene' 1825)

Rush of the day's first  
blaze of gold –  
                  above the dark wood  
the hill also rises  
          in a balance  
of night and day, and  
neither, quite.

The ploughman has drawn lines  
          across the acres

as Samuel Palmer is re-inventing  
          with pen and brush the dream  
          that will grow familiar, this amateur of Kent,  
of its dimples and hollows and  
          buxom little hills.

The pen, quicker than the plough, makes  
its verses and reverses,  
          delimiting leaves  
          and twigs and seeds  
of illumination  
          (the mind in mid-spin); 1 – 2 – 3  
apples on the branch as summer  
          has begun its late turn towards sepia –  
          so maybe three kinds of knowledge here  
          and each one is love.

He leans forward, the ploughman, over  
the faithful conjugation of the beasts, each docile ox  
          under the sickle of the weakening moon  
          as if he might be saying to them  
'We're ready, but we'll not go yet,'  
as if each day we could expect his  
          sight of harvest if only  
we believed more – believed enough  
          in our terrain, our presence and  
our maybe's perishable days.

                                  Palmer knew for sure  
          his God was in the cuttlefish ink, and in  
the motion of the pen, and in the corn  
          thick-packed under his hand.

(*Darkness Inside Out*, Carcanet)

