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)