A Sheep Grazes on the Shoreline in the Last Flush of Day

after *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Cian Morey

A sheep grazes on the shoreline in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes on the coarse grass of the shoreline in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes on the coarse dark grass of the surf-shorn shoreline in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes on the coarse shrub stubble of the lumpen shoreline while the shepherd looks skyward in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the lumpen shoreline while the young shepherd lifts his tired eyes skyward and the ships set sail in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the lumpen shoreline, while the drowsy shepherd heaves his gaze skyward to the ripening night, and the stout carracks float out in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline, while the drowsy shepherd,

poor of pocket but fortuned with wishes, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, and behind him the stout carracks float out in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline as it fills out into a soft green down, while the drowsy shepherd, peasantry to his boots but with his hardened feet crossed in a dream of softer times, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, past all the many reaching trees, and behind him the stout carracks, with their pale sails, float out in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully, complete and self-sufficient, on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline as it rises and crests into a folk-green hill, folding to the ploughman who layers steps upon steps into this tender earth, while the drowsy shepherd, hugged to his staff, peasantry to his boots but with his hardened feet crossed in a dream of softer times, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, past the ceaseless rivers of trees that flow up and up through their leafy deltas, and behind him the stout carracks, with their pale sails, float out in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully, complete and self-sufficient, on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline as it rises and crests into a folk-green hill, folding to the ploughman who layers steps upon steps into this tender earth, a whole staircase into this ancient new earth, carrying on, like the angler who casts out his line once again, carrying on, while the drowsy shepherd, hugged to his staff, peasantry to his boots but with his sore feet crossed in a dream of leisured living, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, past the ceaseless rivers of

trees that flow up and up through their leafy deltas, and he thinks of all the poetry he could write, and behind him the stout carracks, with their pale toad-throat sails in full bloat, float out in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully, complete and self-sufficient, on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline as it rises and crests into a folk-green hill, spongy and giving, folding to the ploughman who layers steps upon steps into this tender earth, a whole staircase into this ancient new earth, and lowers his eyes from the wondrous sunset to hold to the path and keep true to the work, carrying on, like the angler who flings forth his line one more time on this broad leaden evening of unbitten bait, carrying on, while the drowsy shepherd, hugged to his staff, peasantry to his boots but with his sore feet crossed in a dream of leisured living, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, past the ceaseless rivers of trees that flow up and up through their leafy deltas and are forever disgorging more wandering distributaries into the malachite ocean of heaven, and he thinks of all the poetry he could write, and behind him the stout carracks, with their pale toad-throat sails in full bloat, float out from the bay and its cradling of mountains solid as adamant but pale as smoke, invisibly in motion in the last flush of day.

A sheep grazes peacefully, complete and self-sufficient, on the coarse shrub stubble that bristles the length of the lumpen shoreline as it rises and crests into a folk-green hill, spongy and giving, folding to the ploughman who layers steps upon steps into this tender earth, a whole staircase into this ancient new earth, and lowers his eyes from the wondrous sunset to hold to the path and keep true to the work so that six months from now there will be food on the trenchers of his shining children, carrying on, carrying on, like the angler who flings forth his line one more time on

this broad leaden evening of unbitten bait and unbidden remembrance of the wheelwright's daughter, long gone from the village with the alderman's son, but the angler still is carrying on, carrying on, while the drowsy shepherd, hugged to his staff, peasantry to his boots but with his sore feet crossed in a dream of leisured living, heaves his gaze skyward to the bubbling dusk, past the ceaseless rivers of trees that flow up and up through their leafy deltas and are forever disgorging more wandering distributaries into the malachite ocean of heaven, and he thinks of all the poetry he could write, if only he knew how to shepherd the right letters into all the right words as he shepherds his flock into all the best pastures, week after week, year after year, carrying on, carrying on, and behind him the stout carracks, with their pale toad-throat sails in full bloat, float out to the promise of faraway ports, to the notion of a homecoming in a land they've never known, far from the bay with its cradling of mountains all white as antiquity and gossamered with distance, in imperceptible everlasting motion with the infinite drift of tectonic time, and somewhere a man falls out of myth and into the sea, and the world carries on, as it has always carried on, as it will always carry on, as a sheep grazes on the shoreline in the last flush of day.