

Shepherd

The last time I saw father
in his death
was among the leaves
outside a parish church
as a late afternoon
waved the hour on
and sank to its knees.

The indolence you knew
is long past me, he said,
and pointed at
the time-bedevelled doors.

This is what I do now.
So we listened as,
with something between
a rustle and a sob,
another soul was loosed
for its minute's lallygag
among the beams, the pigeon-stops,
the nook where a top E
was always left hanging—
before being kitted
in sorrow and dispatch,
before being tipped out
into his waiting arms
for the brace-up
the soothing murmur
the slow step
the road after road
with the first of night
already at the sky.