

A MILDLY ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATION OF BRUEGHEL'S PLOWMAN TO HIS SON

by James Williams

So now take a seed in your palm,
just one though – we have many seeds,
but take only one for now.

Then place the seed in the soil, in a dip,
just like this. Do you understand? Did you see
the depth? The seed is unhappy too low

or too high, and then we shall
not eat at all. Did you hear me?
You're just not paying attention,

are you? You heard a splash? Look,
I couldn't care if you heard the bloody
voice of God. Come on, this is important.

Right, so not too deep in the soil,
for they'll strive and strive and stop;
but neither too shallow, you see,

for they'll emerge listless and thin.
Did you hear me? Oh, you're doing it again:
just leave those feathers alone – the seeds

are so much more beautiful than the feathers.
See the line of the husk.
See how it fits the soil.

So you've looked and thought and placed and thought;
now cover the seed with two handfuls of earth
- only two – and pat it twice.