

MAGGIE SMITH

from *The Little Book of Folk Weights and Measures*

Sheppey

It's the closest distance at which
sheep remain picturesque—

about $\frac{7}{8}$ of a mile. After that
I can see the dirty, matted wool,

spray-painted as a way of being
claimed. I can see the gnarls

of their faces, the curled leaves
of their ears. Then the wide-set

eyes and horizontal pupils
of prey. I could have used

that panoramic view to see
what was coming. The dark

hackles rising. From where
I stand, the sheep on the hill

are white bits of cloud torn off
and dropped to the earth.

If you were up there, you'd be
a smudge of color, whatever

color you were wearing. And if
you looked down, you'd see me

in the field, a speck of blue.
From this distance the silence

would be natural. We'd have no
faces, no mouths. We might

love, even forgive, from here.