

after SJ Norman, Duet, 2013.

go click the shears, boys. he blows wide
and his hands are quick around the ringer—
beaten, he curses his blow.
but he has snagged you, bare-bellied.

the old shearer stands grasping out
on the boards, shears in thin bony hands.
eye fixed on you, bare-bellied. glory
if he gets her. he'll make the ringer go.

bottoms caned in the middle of the floor.
the boss is sitting there bored. eyes
everywhere. she notes each come. sees it's taken off.
strict screening. paying clean attention.

the colonial experience man, of course he's there—
just got off. his horse is shiny. legs all around.
gazes like a real connoisseur, scents of soap and
hair cream, smells he can't afford.

we all leave him standing there shouting
for a hand. we all stand round him, every eye
lowering fast. he's on the drink. he works,
goes hard at last. to hell,

boys, click the shears. his blow is wide
and his hands are quick. ringer, he has
blown. beaten, he curses, but
snagged you, bare-bellied.

Note:

The song now known in popular culture as 'Click go the shears' first appeared in Australia in 1891, in the Bacchus Marsh times, as the Bare-Bellied Ewe.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-31/unearthed-lyrics-reveal-early-version-of-click-go-the-shears/5230018>

This poem is an adaptation of the popular version recorded by many over the past 50 years.