

Moving Inland

by [Lucius Falkland](#) (May 2024)



Moonlit Night on the Dnieper –Archip Kuindshi, 1882

Moving Inland

Sometimes, as I floated in your sea,
It was every childhood holiday on the sands,
In Lyme Regis or perhaps in Clovelly,
It was cod and chips and Sally marching bands.

It was home somehow, despite being away.
It was being in that church for *Songs of Praise*
To sing of love eternal, really pray.
The reassuring breathing of your waves.

But sometimes I was wrenched into your sea,
By currents swirling not too far beneath.
Your blackened sky would force the light to flee.
I'd swallow your salt water, grit my teeth,

Search for driftwood, look for anything to keep
Myself afloat as I crashed against your coast
And saw within your icy waters deep
Down something darker than I've ever seen in most.

Something darker that is also part of me:
Those lurking sharks, glass-eyed and tasting blood,
That I realised are dwelling in my sea
Which like yours brings forth tidal waves and floods.

So that even though your coastal town inspires,
Despite the thoughts of Devon and brass bands,
When the storms are so severe, I yearn for spires
In a quieter town that's very far in-land.

The Interval

It's only in the interval you appreciate the play,
Munching cheese and onion crisps and sipping Beaujolais.
With you, I'm deep in drama, like *King Lear*:
There's an icy gale on bitten flesh. But the sky just seems so
clear
With you, and there's the sub-plot, where I laugh as though a
child
Playing by some dark, Grimm forest wherein lies something
wild:
That part of me that's also part of you;
Some Dionysan Mystery Cult, initiates so few,

Which I looked at scientifically, made sense of like a don,
Evans-Pritchard in Sudan structuring what was going on,
But like flaking bark, his logic fell away,
When he saw "the light of witchcraft" and had nothing more to
say.

With you, in that moment, having calmed in the foyer,
Munching cheese and onion crisps and sipping Beaujolais,
I saw and felt our light anew, that part of me that's part of
you,

And colours deepened, and blue was more than blue
And I felt myself drawn back into the play
Where only we know real depths and all the world's our prey.

Sado-Masochism in Love Poetry

Some like being bound up in leather and chains,
Others spanked with a branch from a tree,
But the people who truly get turned on by pain
Try to publish their love poetry.

The poet's not known for his psychical health:
He wrestles despair, feels dejected,
Not that undisposed to killing himself,
Yet his heart's work so often rejected.

Sometimes he must wait the best part of a year,
Like an innocent man on death row,
To have to him confirmed his most terrible fear,
For they are quite sadistically slow.

And the hurt they inflict? It's not over yet.
Do they find wounding fragile souls funny?
Some journals won't read the submissions they get
If the poets don't first send them money!

Once it's crafted and honed and as good as Ted Hughes,
On a par with their earlier choices,
They find a new method to mentally abuse:
They prioritize "marginalised voices."

The agony felt by a hounded young deer
As he's brought to the ground by a predator
Is as nothing compared to the suffering and fear
That's induced in a poet by an editor.

Nettled Graves

*"It nods and curtseys and recovers
When the wind blows above,
The nettle on the graves of lovers
That hanged themselves for love."
—A.E. Housman, A Shropshire Lad, XVI.*

When I see their gravestone now, I'm left inquiring
Of that couple in the earth, "Please be exact . . .
It may break your hearts to answer, love is tiring . . .
But did either of you make our Faustian Pact?"

"Did you find someone so haunted-churchyard like you,
Your double (soul-mate's just too small a word),
In such detail that you smiled: "'Well, what's left to
Do?! We're one again; life's Art; Surreal, Absurd'?"

"Did you almost give up all your deeds of title
To every earthly good, to every prize,
To home and all materially vital,
Before imagining your partner's melting eyes?"

“Before thinking of the comforts they embody?
The kind reliability, like a house,
Modest, terraced; neither grand nor shoddy,
Welcome at your vagrant time. If nothing else . . .

“Their qualities are basically your failings
And their sore points are where you’re pretty able:
There’ll be no heads smashed open on the railings.
For *your* offspring, at least one parent’s stable.”

“Even though, of course, we know you dream of breeding
With your double deep in one of Dante’s Hells,
This is life: you must content yourself with reading,
With marrying while in love with someone else.”

“Why would you hang yourself for love?” my wife
Exclaimed when I read from *A Shropshire Lad*.
We know why. We’d be wedded in another life.
But, for now, I guess, our spouses aren’t that bad.

Spies

I was just behind that rose bush in the graveyard,
Where you kissed, after months apart, in love.
Your Cheshire trip? That village, picture-postcard?
I was spying from the spire, high above.

Those Neolithic stones on your first tryst
Where you wondered if you could be groom and bride?
I was her, that very nosy Ozzie tourist,
Who inquired: “Is she your bit on the side?”

At evensong in Kings Lynn I was sat there
Beside you both, you held onto your mews,

In gown and horsehair wig beneath a black square,
To condemn you for the way that you'd refused

To bow down to Victorian conventions,
To live, like me, without a love that's true.
"You could be found out," I sneered. "And feel those
tensions!"
"You might lose so much, so I'll ruin this for you."

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