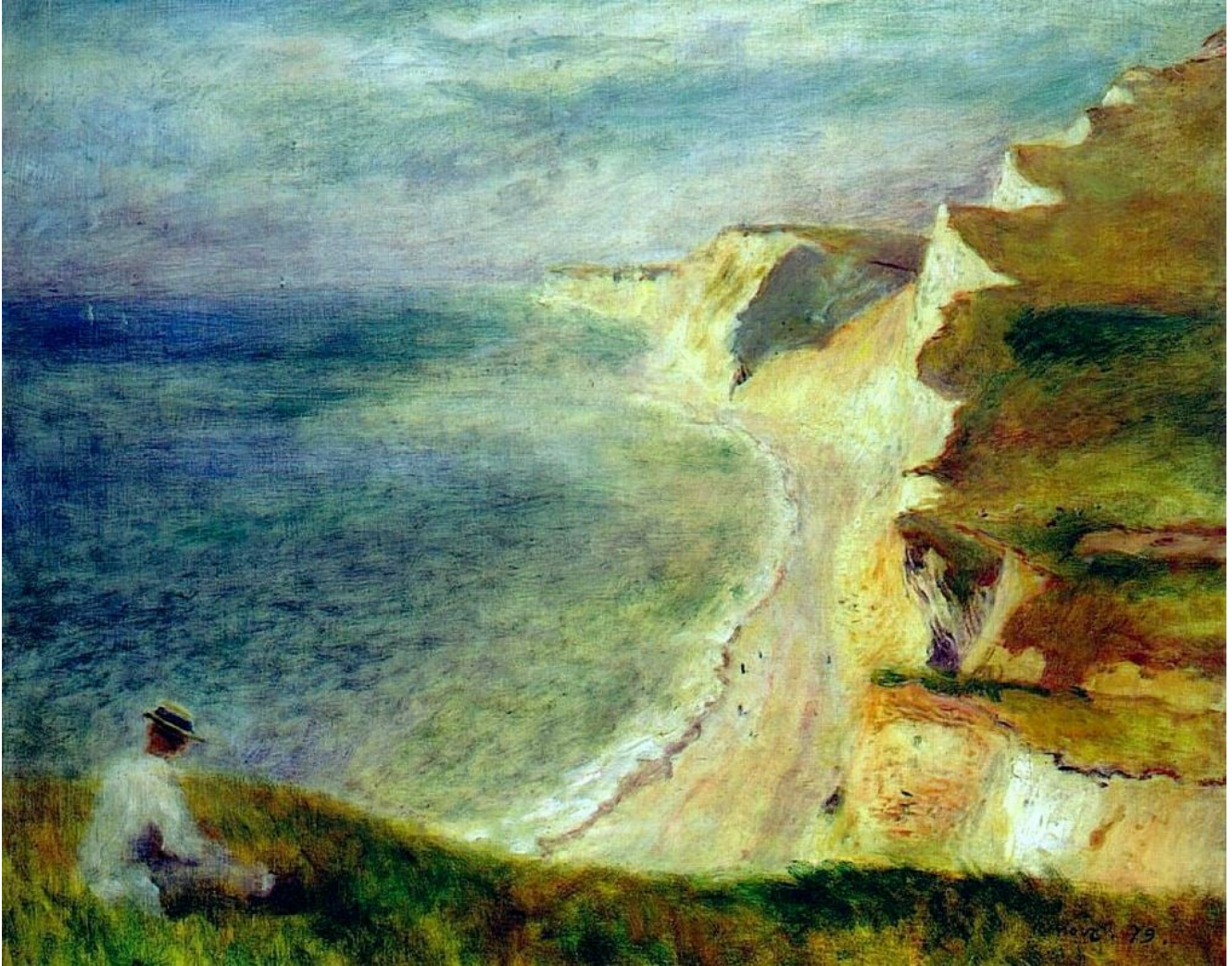


# The Cottage on the Cliffs

by [Lucius Falkland](#) (July 2025)



Cliffs at Pourville (Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 1879)

## The Cottage on the Cliffs

At dusk, Phoebe lay in that cliff-top field  
Her heart too fast, she let just Will speak.  
She knew she could never be fully healed  
And neither, she knew, could he,  
As Phoebe had told him of every bruise  
And of that memory, the one she'd unearthed,

But how she still couldn't bear to lose  
Her nurturer, sustainer; the laughs  
They used to have washing the car, on the beach,  
But it took just a single word out of turn  
Before his eyes would gleam and he'd reach  
For his belt, and strip her and whip to whimpers.

For Will, it was that bare punishment aged four,  
A biting breeze to Phoebe's storm,  
He'd relive it, control it, but it festered and gnawed  
And mother lied when he confronted her, so he thought it was  
twisted.

Once they'd shared it all, though, the dusk seemed to lighten  
And they both felt the power to get up from the grass  
As if holding each other's hands, less frightened,  
The other'd come through the night, so would they.

On the cliffs, they imagined a cottage; Jacobean, thatched,  
built of wood:  
Stepping inside, every corner was home,  
How it feels to be totally "understood,"  
And the fire'd been lit, just the way that *you* would.

The rain on the chalk cliffs ceased  
And the shame near-dried up with the body heat  
And they both, somehow, felt they'd been released  
From an open prison, into their own little platoon  
That would march forward and keep up the fight.  
The sea lay ahead of them now, calmer,  
But also more enticing, a renewed kind of confidence  
To leave the chalk cliffs behind ... explore.

**Ten Thousand Chavs**

They make them think of factories coughing smoke,  
From lungs abused by tabs and grimed with tar;  
Grinding down their dole to lines of coke.  
On Thursday nights they're puked out from the bar

To daughters sired by idle men in suits,  
In tracksuits, let's be clear. Their arms inscribed  
With Stacey's name; with flags as though recruits  
To a regiment that's every day imbibed:

Ciders apples don't fall far from cider trees:  
They rot in mud, create a stinking paste,  
Attracting ravenous wasps, but never bees:  
They remind them of their failures, of their waste...

"I know I'm something better than these Chavs.  
"My life trips up as though inebriated  
"Or wets itself, collapsing in the lavs...  
"Not racist, though, I'm better educated."

"The Asians? They're all council girls are good for.  
"I know they're twelve but their type grow up quick.  
"From foster care, to children's homes to mosque-whores,  
"Where Punjabis pay to have them suck their dicks.

"But we've got to keep what's happening rather recondite  
In these old factory towns that once coughed smoke  
Or folk'll say, 'These moralising Labourites!  
'They're hypocrites, New Puritans, They're Woke...

"'They don't care for struggling people, not a smatter!  
Or anyone. They wish simply to escape  
From their feelings that they're failures and don't matter,  
And to that end, let 10,000 Chavs get raped.'"

## Early Medieval Stories

The “waterfall” bubbled like an Icelandic geyser  
In that St Cross College, Oxford, study-bedroom;  
The geyser in some great saga, dissected by a don  
Downstairs. But here, as they talked of linguistics  
And modern uses of the word “like,” they somehow  
Became like an Icelandic river as the cataract  
Merged with them, creating so much white froth,  
Before being absorbed by a calmer, spring-time tributary.

“Are you the Devil?” he asked him, as the waterfall smashed  
Against his usually still, quart-gleaming rocks. But then:  
“Are you God?” And in comparison to his friend he felt  
Like one of those ponies that populates the Icelandic fields.  
And sobered up, he thought to himself, “Would self-awareness  
Feel, to one of those ponies, like that just felt to me?”  
“Oblivion, then moments of knowing, stronger and stronger,  
Heart-beating, scintillating, addictive as adrenaline,  
Until we’d try to escape it through steaming skunk  
And analysing Early Medieval stories?”

## [Table of Contents](#)

**Lucius Falkland** is the *nom de plume* of a writer and academic originally from London. His poetry collection, *The Evening The Times Newspaper Turned Into Jane Eyre*, was published in 2025 with Exeter House Publishing.

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