

POETRY

Our Mutual Corpse

Alexandra Lewis

“I have been swallowing too much of that word, Pardner. I am no pardner of yours”.
– Gaffer Hexam, Book the First, Chapter 1, Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend*

Lunge. Wrench. For the most part,
follow submissively.
Swallow the tide; the word.

Faint changes of expression –
Has a dead man use for money? –
On a sightless face.

Weird unholy interest.
In a dropped voice,
In a hood.

Disreputable sculling.
Rudder-lines slack in his hands;
His jaw, set dirty
Too crazy and too small.

A broad sweep over slime and ooze
Bird of prey
(too late for that)

Ruffled spell
I touch her dread

Sinking vessel of fellowship
Insoluble absolution
No pardner soul is mine.

Beard and whisker
Coil of rope
Filthy floating, filthy shore

These too were things of usage.

Eyes a-sky! Last blink!
London Bridge lights up like kindling

“For luck!”

Full swift is lashed my
Muffled human form.

And looking up, I see her cheek, pale, as she reels me in.
My pockets empty themselves: the bright tumble of coin bubbling down.
History washes clean. No trace in my wake. No air.

As if it wasn't meat and drink to you.

Belonging to Water (Maggie's Erasure)

Alexandra Lewis

“And water's a very particular thing—you can't pick it up with a pitchfork. That's why it's been nuts to Old Harry and the lawyers. It's plain enough what's the rights and the wrongs of water, if you look at it straightforrard; for a river's a river, and if you've got a mill, you must have water to turn it; and it's no use telling me, Pivart's erigation and nonsense won't stop my wheel: I know what belongs to water better than that.”

– Mr Tulliver, Book Second, Chapter 2, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*

Tingeing with a soft hue
Under the transient glance

Dipping their heads
The rush, a booming

Dreamy deafness

Like a great curtain of sound.

Diamond jets
Pause at the spot

Brandy and power
Should float
A little stronger

There's a thing I've got i' my head

Crown in a basin
Shaking her black locks

Framed in with tall reeds
And glassy – panting –

Groaning with rats,
That hungry monster

It was the plunging of some small body

Rapid
Darting

Swirling
Still

Wide-spreading
White moon
Blessed Virgin sat in the prow

Widely fatal to the helpless cattle

Satiny rendering, his whole mind
– Ear and tongue –
Choking you up again

Give me the oars.

Fowl rustled forth

Turning to sweetness the velvet
Chronicle, the velvet cushion
For bleeding feet
In sober fashion

An innocent drop may fall upon us

Firm tender care:
Arrange the cloak
Open the parasol

No act of will. Flow.
Memory was excluded.

Breath of the unwearied rhythmic dip;
Brim-full solitude mingled, languid,
No inlet to thought.

Where are the pleasure-boats now?

False waking, rising fast,
the splash of the awful starlit sky

*Let us go.
We shall not
be long together.*