

For a Couple Occasionally on the Verge of Separation

A Poem in Six Movements

by Evelyn Hooven (October 2016)



I

Sunlight through the picture doors.

Coffee, a spoon gleams

Against porcelain—

There is never enough time. . . .

The household's baby stares

At grown strangers—

An expensive development, this—

Yards wide, trees half grown,

Cars live

Behind doors

Of burnt sienna, terra cotta,

Aquamarine.

Five minutes and lovely weather—

Faces strained from hours

Of trying to get through—

Genuine smiles—

Goodbye, enjoy the day,

The cars close and go.

Reading aloud

In Robert Frost

Brings the dark farmhouse,

A timelessness around us—

Are you happy?

Are you afraid?

Will you play with me?

Will you leave me alone?

There are such unmentionables—

There must be no taboos;

We shall talk freely

And not stir issues;

We should be closer

And further apart.

Open the door.

Shut the door?

Don't tell me your thoughts,

I want to relax.

Don't make threats

Or I'll go away.

I would like to go

But think I'll stay.

It is a theatre now;

Together, we are an audience;

We move gently, unfolding,

Holding thoughts lightly and with care

Like comrades who have worn one compass

Borne the identical scar.

(Time passes)

Past midnight at the airport,
Luggage is too late to care.
This is London,
Are you happy?
Let's sleep just anywhere—
Unburdened, defenseless. . . .
Is something lost?
A book, a Spanish fan,
A contraceptive kit,
The baggage circles—
It will be the same. . . .
The Whitman embrace
For humanity
United by objects,
Purpose, memory—
Celebration of patient assemblage—
Tender colors, variety. . . .
Will it sustain us
Past dust and busses,
Past hands extended
Rarely in sympathy—
Will it clarify

The multiple address

Of subways or métros or tubes?

(Time passes)

III

This candid morning—

Feathers cold or asunder—

No seagull stays.

Bread, glints of fish,

A promising rock—

Soaring—

Do not compel her. . . .

The Lighthouse seems near—

Uncleansed glass,

Hornets, pillars shaken—

Not broken—

Can one find such locale

Desirable?

One can relish snapshots

Of worn and worn tides.

(Time passes)

IV

Below the tight bodice, a coral

Flow makes all shapes questionable.

What have I chosen?

The blank walls stare,

I cover them in bright paper

With my mind's eye.

Dream the eaves of birds,

Dream another age—

Four-posters uncurtained

Towards foliage

Vivid, serene. . .

What is loss?

What is blessing?

Does anyone know?

Is anyone home?

(Time passes)

V

I said yes because I was tired.

We made arrangements

According to rain, according to time;

Why open the nest of creatures

Angry, confined?

I feel the reins, the blackmail—

Face averted, fist on the wall,

Scarred by chains, dreaming—

Composure: figure in belted coat

Strap on the shoulder,

Hands do not reach for hands—

What is the matter?

Nothing's the matter;

Voices make no incursion.

We may not return

From this journey alive;

Wishes do not intervene—

Numbness extends its invasion. . .

Amnesia—

Petrification.

(Time passes)

VI

We cannot remember

What caused us

To settle here—

We thought our charts

Docket

Insignia

Would carry *us*

Entirely elsewhere—

It strains our courage

To mention

A strange dream

Of pilgrimage

Past wheels

Past broken music boxes.

Past wheels

Past broken music boxes

Let us attune the mind. . . .

One must admit

That each terrain

Has its limit—

We need not admit

To discord from this land

Nor cease to remember

Nor cease to long for

Rain, morsel, bloom. . . .

Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have appeared in *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

[To comment on this poem, please click](#)