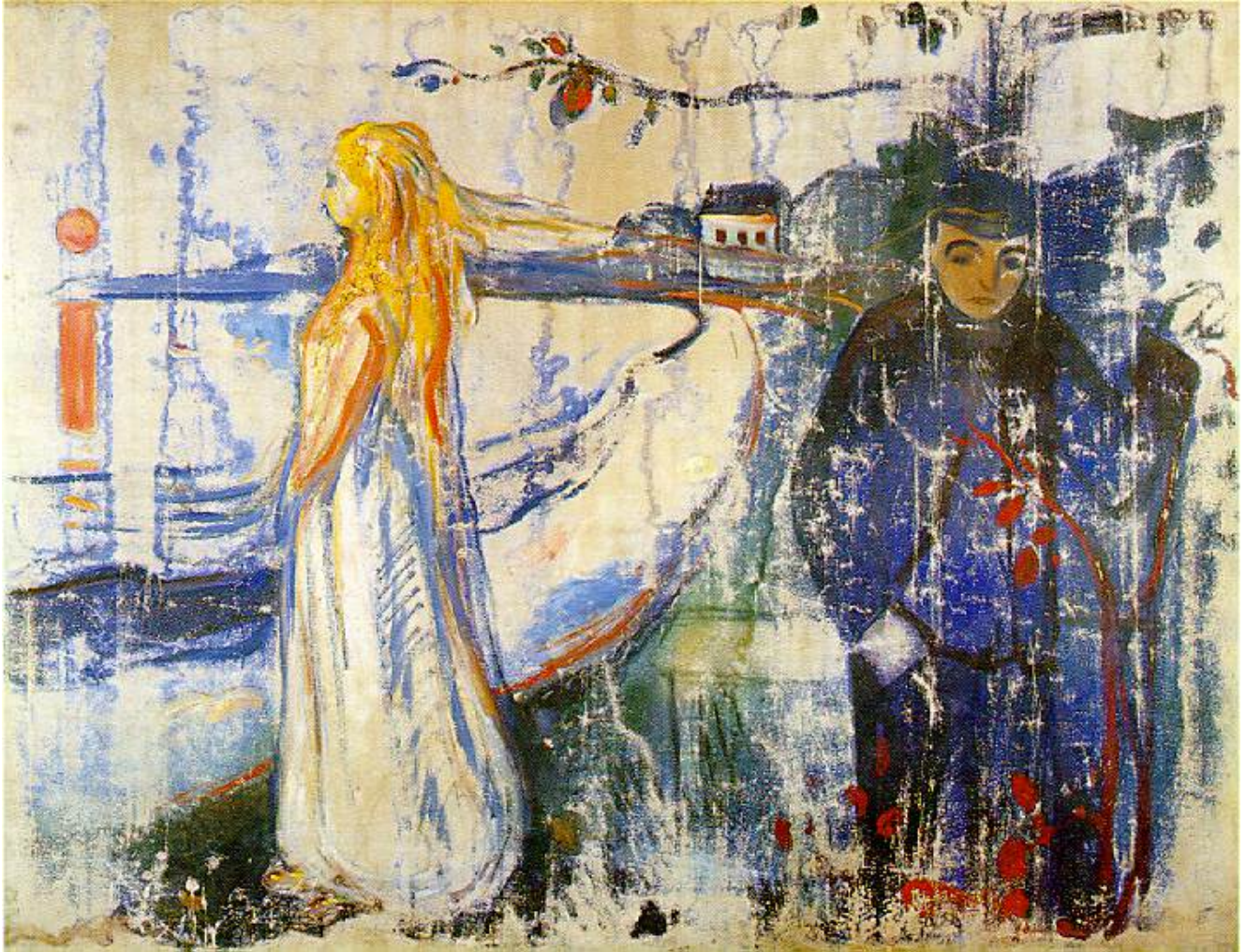


Two Monologues

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (December 2023)



Separation— Edvard Munch, 1894

Ambivalence

Ruth is a woman in her late twenties.

For the problem we seemed unable to solve, you've brought us to the office of a therapist, yours. We needed either a meeting of the minds—a pledge—or a parting. You spoke at some length of circumstances that he must know and I know well; your relatively recent divorce, child support. Your problem, these days a common one, with ambivalence. You elaborate on

that. But you don't fully want to part.

The session was ending. I had barely spoken. Both of you turned on me—waiting, urging. Though I was reluctant, I responded.

What you're naming a problem is a stark and painful fact: to lose me is less threatening than a pledge to stay. That hurts, but it's better for me to leave than not being loved enough to continue. I can't go in the direction of the old cartoon—he flees, she pursues. You say, doctor, that we're living at a confusing time for commitment. I wonder if it's really more so than it seemed in the song by the very sophisticated Cole Porter:

*Old love, new love
Every love
But true love...*

Let's part. Let's do the rearranging: my things that are at your place, yours at mine. I need to feel much more welcome.

Deciding

Liliance is a woman in her mid-twenties.

To keep from hurling myself into traffic, I got on the bus that stopped first ... a rural one in an unfamiliar direction, its initial stop a town I didn't know. The one hotel seemed good enough. Yes, to a night's reservation, early dinner, breakfast, self-service continental.

We were less than two months married, had found, till September, a cottage where two small studies were possible—honeymoon graduate student version.

"This evening I wanted you to be here sooner than the usual

time. Your door stayed closed. In the morning, I'm going to drive all the way to the landlords and cancel our lease."

I had closed up my study at the usual time. You wanted it to be sooner but did not choose to say or even to knock at the door. Your vehement punishment stunned me. I could not speak my thoughts.

I don't think you were this way before. To marry, for you, seemed to assure a guardian angel of sundry gratifications – declared or mute. And beyond that, something fearful: to marry was to have power over life and death.

I had thought–hoped?–it would mostly be like Anne Bradstreet's,

*"My true love hath my heart
And I have his
By just exchange
One to another is given ...
There never was a better bargain driven."*

It was starting to seem more like Chekhov's,

*"If you want to know what
True loneliness is, marry."*

If you were to return, not just for your things, but for us, is that what it would be like? Would the "worse" part of "for better, for worse" mean the near violent solitude of a union that cannot happen?

What, if you were to return, would my own decision be?

As I was falling asleep, I felt a sense of loss and sensed that my exhaustion had an unfamiliar companion–relief.

[Table of Contents](#)

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 and Spanish have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *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*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)