

The Wilderness of Betrayal

Senior Creative Writing Project

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Cox

Marriage turns Murder

Let's handle this. Let's
unlock the gauge. I don't
care if he cries.

Let's rough him up. Let's
rob his old age. I don't
care who's handcuffed.

Let's take a ride Behind
the wire cage, and forget
about laws.

Who cares tonight?
Tonight is special. I
brought the dogs
along.

The sky's gone dark
—Now the field looks strange.
Did you hear
the barking?

I hear a Bang!
Rip through the front page
of the news
bulletin.

This morning the Birds
don't sing outside. —
surprising, no sirens.

I stare at eggs.
I watch our kids play.
My mind's a
pendulum.

What Didn 't Exist Between Us

Did you watch me
lingering outside the phone booth?

Did you hear me
crossing the street toward your apartment building?

You swept the hallway while I
bribed the doorman.

You dozed off during the news
moments before I let myself in.

You always were difficult — I
was forced to pick the locks.

And I had to rope your hands
after you began waking up.

WolfSong

Little lamb,
let me drape an arm around you.
Let me prepare you my usual dish.
I know how extraordinary you are.

Little lamb,
let me shepherd you.
Forget your large family grazing in that field.
None of them know how extraordinary you are.

Little lamb,
let me latch on and facture upon
before you turn worldly less helpless.
And no, I won't let go —
because we're all alone now far from your home.

Go Outside in the Rain, after Raymond Chandler

We listened to the rain
hitting the roof and the northern windows.
Beyond us there was no other sound.
No cars, no sirens —just the rain.
"Let's take a little walk," I said.
"Let's take a nice little walk."
We took a little walk.
She peered at me part of the time.
Part of the time her earrings beat against my neck
The leaves threatened underfoot
as we wandered into a dark wood of persuasion.

Dream Home

Moving through the new rooms of my carriage heart,
Into the headquarters of our marriage home, Hands
against handsome walls, I feel for a switch To
enlighten quarters more black than pitch.

Is this soft fuzz mold breeding upward
into a grid of patterned lines?
The patio chairs stand neglected outside.
The picket fence loses its tan
during these miserable summer months and those ahead

The diseased waterweeds mate,
waiting under pulsating lily pads.
Beyond sagging limbs of wild oaks, a low field drowns.

The Perfect Widow

In time lapse photography, The
shadows run across your face. You
open your dragon mouth. Smoke
billows out and out. I grab my pillow,
thinking how I want to rub our hands
together and set fire to this house!

Slurring your speech, you speak
in a whiskey whisper, warning me
I do not mourn enough.
The corner snake hisses and rattles,
grateful for this crooked house.
I must stop listening to my dead spouse.

Below the window withers forget-me-nots.
Both they and I desire a different plot.

Our Red Chair

You smoke inside your black limousine.
You hide. But why, darkened darling,
behind the church parking lot so early
in the morning?

The heart shaped and red chair, as
your new wife knows, has been
shorn of its former fabric. Sheila
chose a nasty Easter green.

On the parking lot willow tree,
spring hangs itself from one leaf.

News and Rumors

Large panes let cold weather window inward.
Not even curtains of your belongings were left
to insulate our formerly warm interior.

What I meant to say was better written in today's newspaper:

"Plane crashes into uncharted waters."

I read on:

"Without notification to passengers..."

Have you moved into a stranger's place?

Does she have a more beautiful face?

Does she wear French lace?

Tokyo Drifter

She sings white songs in the snow.
Near the bed, he begins to pack. He
is a drifter, the man from Tokyo.

She ignores the bruise from the unmentioned blow,
while listening to his alibi and its cracks. She sings
white songs in the snow.

He will repay the debt she owes.
With guns and attacks, he settles all she lacks.
He is a drifter, the man from Tokyo.

There is so much she wants him to know, But he
will soon be on a train headed up track. She sings
white songs in the snow.

She throws coins into empty streets below, but
knows wishing will not will him back. He is a
drifter, the man from Tokyo.

Still in the tea rooms, still dressed floral kimono,
she fans away affection from suitors in black. She
sings white songs in the snow. He is a drifter, the
man from Tokyo.

Still my Husband

I called the house today, but you didn't answer your phone.
I called Peter today. He told me you wouldn't be coming home.
I called your mother today. She hadn't seen you, either.
I called your work today. Your boss replied, "I'm sorry —he's no longer
on the schedule."

No one has tended to your garden. No one has raked
your lawn or purified your pool. Mail has piled up
against the front door of your life. Every object inside
resembles a veiled wife.

The bedroom door creaks slowly open —
You forgot to oil its hinges.
The bedspread lies there, still bare, still unruffled,
Like your smooth dark hair
The day we carried your body off into the mountains.

The Milkman

Gus places the milk bottles gingerly
outside her front door, while she slips into
a delicate cream dress. He looks forward to
her address.

Susan reads in the sunroom, steeping
floral tea mid-afternoon, while her
mother tantrums above. Do love
letters ever arrive by dove?

He bends to, but has never touched,
the currency she leaves in the gaping
letterbox. Has the rain rusted its
lock?

She leans inward, then quickly backs away,
taking milk in the morning
and in the evening veal.
Shall they share their next meal?

/ would have been your Nadja, after Andre Breton

Before common use of the telephone and comfortable transportation, I would have been your Nadja.

Only in bars,
would our awkward conversations
cross paths through loosened lips.

Your face haunts building facades and
spoils swarms of crowded strangers. It
appears all across the landscape outside
these passenger windows.

A Desert Interior

Painting the walls of a future home in calm blues with our mind, the paint can rolls over like an obedient dog kicked onto his side. The Buick's music becomes a backseat heart bleating out into a universe. We stay here when too cheap to buy a motel room in the desert.

A dresser drawer blows our clothes into a sandy nowhere, while invisible lovers yawn in flowered fields far beyond these car windows. Some day we will sleep within coral blooms of wishing fishes, but until then, we park under a familiar palm tree.

Your Architecture

The architecture your undergarments impose
is nothing like that of your face,
which shines as a seamless ceiling out in the open.
You appear lighter than air, and silhouetted by dark hair,
you have become sheepish sculpture for wolving lovers.
As their howling grows, you remain exposed, vulnerable.
Before their gnashing and gnarling, your mask remains controlled.

But back inside private corners of a warm room,
your face streams into the snow falling below an
opened tower window in the sky.

Les Amants, for Magritte

Draped in appealing clothing, how
luckily my drapery falls. Luck is
sewn into expensive curtains, I line
insides of house walls.

My shroud, Magritte —
I'm off to the street
to meet a handsome man.

May my skin be taught
to show every pleasant thought.
There are no wrinkles in fine linen.

You have Studied Woman Well

They could never understand the way you move as art moves.
You have studied woman well
and followed her very footprints.
You have become the shadow hanging upon the lonely man's night walls.

Surrounded by raining walls of bamboo shield,
Nothing yields to the wilderness within your beauty.
Nothing yields.

Her Louve, for Mona

You haunt, but who haunts you
under beige night ceilings sans chandeliers?
Not floor-waxers!

Are you tired, Dear,
from being affected?

You hang against the wall of a famous hall, as
the most expensive prostitute among them.
Your name appears on posters.

But like a found Neanderthal,
Your frozen smile is meaningless.
After camera flashes have moved on to motel rooms,
you remain a still life, a tangible myth.
No curator can touch your paper skin of oil.

Admiration, Drawing the face of the holy Madonna

Her face is easy.
Shadows blend into her features seamlessly.
She has no harsh outline about her.

Her doe eyes shine as modest as their glints.
Her hair is parted in the middle. Her cupid's
bow is pronounced. Her lower lip is meekly
swallowed.

Her face is a soft oval tilted downward. Her
fingers take the shape of tapered candles. The
bridge of her nose is a guide, A lean line
uniting her center.

She is terra-cotta Italy.
She radiates with gold, yet wears no jewelry.

Where are we going?

It was a lovely party. Their house
was warm, carpeted. Room
temperature vodka passed In
small clinking glasses Amongst
dancing drinking guests.

Nameless faces burned cigarettes,
as they ate ornamented hors d'oeuvres.
But, conversation was a chore,
so I left early without saying goodbye.

We live in a lovely house.
It is spacious and sturdy
and every aspect of it familiar.
I waited for you to come home
(You came home unexpectedly late).

Before you reached over
to feel my thigh with an anxious hand,
the bedroom suddenly lighted,
sobering me out from my under our comforter.

At the edge of the bed, back to me,
you explained how you hated every aspect
of this life with your wife.
In the morning,
I left early without saying goodbye.

The train tracks run from the edge of the river
Into the snowy pines beyond the bank.
My old dog heels,
stamping paw prints inside my boot impressions,
never asking where we are going.

Relationships: a Travel Journal

Charles de Gaulle, 1 June.

Mild background conversation becomes the first bustle of coherence -French, a little Spanish, Portuguese. Nothing makes sense. The walls have been painted a washed teal color. The ceiling is a glass cave -vaulted, belittling. A graying man reads a newspaper, while smoking underneath the neon glow of a pink sign. What day is it? Drool spreads out on the blue couch cushion into a dark navy circle. Is anyone watching me? I rub at my chin noticing no more details.

My husband appears holding white paper cups. "This one tastes like perfume."

We have missed our flight. There's not enough light to be day and not enough dark to be night. Leaning against his shoulder, I read the name printed on the ticket.

The sky blooms into a flower over recent memories of a desert landscape, but outside the window, there are only dense white clouds.

Ibiza, 12 August.

We drive on hairpin roads around the highest parts of the island, in a small Jeep with a nasty old motor. The ocean looks clearer at this height. The dark algae beds wave with fingers below. We speed on. If we flew off these paper cliffs, I wouldn't mind.

At night inside our warm cheap room, the flickering lights from the town center are the only force disturbing and creating the romanticism between us. Hunger never comes.

We fill on bread, olives and musky cheeses. The icebox is filled with cheap beer and silver rum. Scattered cans reflect moonlight from the floor. I feel uncomfortably young lying here with him.

Small ships pass through the night beyond our pension's opened window. They sail through the sea for miles upon miles, passing through a dark vastness that has no home but itself

North Carolina, 3 April.

The rose you bought me was beautiful. It smelled as deep as it was yellow -I remember. The camera flash brightens the scene you've created—me next to the Magnolia tree of our front yard. You smile genuinely, sweeping the hair from my eye just before it begins to rain.

Madrid, 13 September.

I fold laundry in a white apron, inside a dim and silent room of wood flooring. The furniture moves in illusion as street shadows racecar from one end of our room to the other. Rain has begun to fall outside a single window. The window itself is a Magritte, an isolated rectangle of canvas. And with the crash of a close lightning bolt, everything whitens! and then fades to black.

There is no furniture, no television, no telephone, no clean warm laundry neatly folded. He left me. His physical self hangs only on a remembered wall.

Ibiza, July 30.

I sprint through fields of eye-high straw, toward cliffs miles into the distance. A fading sun lights the ocean and everything around it in a postcard unaddressed. The cliffs jut out above a summer ocean of azure sky. What would it be like —to wander off the edge and strike into such hard blueness? I wander further away from the campsite, the others, the friends —him. Things are always different when returning home. Everything I've ever accomplished suddenly appears smaller and farther away. The horizon line biases the sky bigger than the ocean. The moon is a released balloon.

Venice, 14 February.

He walks across the narrow sandbar while I read from a heavy book. His feet are barely submerged -he has become Christ on top of the water. But, he is too far in the distance to see the color of his eyes. And when he yells, the wind only throws his voice away. He is a breathing memory, a miracle, a mirage walking on water —unrecognizable in a crowd.

Granada, 26 June.

"Picasso, Picasso!" A woman screams outside. Awakening in a single room, on top of neat white sheets, confused, I find myself sitting up and then running to a windowsill, searching for the screaming. Two sandals lie abandoned on the sidewalk. A woman screams behind the glass of a backseat car window. I blink as the shape of a man flints out of view around the bending street corner.

Rome, 1 January.

There is nothing to do in this section of the city except wander the streets. I walk up cobblestone stairs. They are unfamiliar. Again and again I turn onto tight alleyways that lack street signs, only to find myself back in our hotel room, floor one. He leaves me to meet with the other ambassadors.

Montreal, 4 July.

There is an urgency to get back to wherever we last came from. Home has slipped my mind and I feel I have something important there. I bite my fingernails and drink an ounce-glass of rum.

We are on our way into the city, riding in a German car. I tell him I need to get home, but he ignores me. I am restless in the backseat of the full-bodied car and analyze: How well can you really know someone you love? Romanticism clouds over so much of realism.

New Orleans, August 23.

We drive through electronic gates of a large compound. My lover's hand leads us up steps, through a palmetto-lined alcove, and into a courtyard where loosely circled people have gathered, laughing and goofing beside the courtyard swimming pool. The boys talk.

I walk out onto the blue outskirts of an old life. I try to relax into a chair while waiting to be introduced.

A black boy sits in a chair next to me and pulls it up close. "No te gusta?" He asks, quite up in my face, offering the cigar between pinched fingers. I accept the messy cigar, only to pass time, knowing I will not be returning as home soon as I had wished.

Reikjavik, 9 May.

Where would we appear on a world map? Did I take a forgotten train ride, or a forgotten airplane ride, or a forgotten ferry ride? I am at the mercy of others' plans, but stay for fear of being left alone. When alone, my thoughts might float away in released helium balloons. The night becomes darker. I try to find the moon, but there is simply no moon to be found.

The cold streets of the city are full and every passerby pale. A girl in magenta lipstick brushes past. The rest of her is a white ghost smoking down the avenue on the cracked ice. The chalky sidewalk fades into a vanishing point beneath a menacing hemisphere of navy. The town is miniaturized. Where is my lover? I know, I must have one.

Madrid, 16 December.

I run inside a frosted glass alcove where there are warm yellow lights. Music resounds from inside the lobby. This is the only building in sight. Tall African men lean against the walls of the rectangle smoking room like lazy oil paintings. The man closest to me greets me. His face is amiable, kind, reassuring. But he is not my lover, and what would my lover say about this scene?

The other men pretend they don't notice his flirting. The tall man leaning beside me breaks into French as he strokes the wallpaper above his head. I don't belong here. The club seems pleasant, reputable, but it's a fantasy, fiction. I walk into the outside world again, without a lover, or a sidekick dog, or any type of companion.

Halifax, 21 November.

It's cold away from body heat and artificial lighting. Car windshields are coated with ice. The ocean wind is cruel by the bay, forcing me to duck behind an alcove. Should I try to find an old life that I will inevitably lose again? Should I care or not where I *'m* going? I walk through the night streets, uneasy without direction. I feel quite upside down at this position above the equator. The gravity seems wrong and I feel misinformed.

Malaga, 27 October.

I awake from a chilling nightmare —In it, I had lost something that doesn't exist and worry wondering what it could have been. In some one else's bed, yet alone, the sheets smell unfamiliar. The walls have been painted a lemon yellow. Lime-colored bamboo grows up the wallpaper. A table lamp shines on the fruits in the fruit bowl. The air is heavy with breath.