

Trivial Explosives: Three Poems

Thirteen Ways of looking at a Dash

I.
Space between words—accentuated.

II.
—hush—
splitting two swift drumbeats.

III.
Matrimony of silence and pause—
their delicate offspring: frail pause
aborted silence

IV
Quiet gasp—or, not
quite gasp but fluttery moment preceding
it—dividing whole from splintered crash—.

V
Breezy familiarity—“hold
on a sec I have to go to the bathroom!”

VI
Subtraction or—protraction.
Division? Sure!
Multiplication? Never—well, maybe sometimes.
Really, though, it’s a word problem—right?

VII
It’s a clarification
--straight-shot William Tell arrow
striding toward legend
precise as a scalpel slit
—Or not—

VIII
Fluidity unbuttoned by rude interruption—
(yawn):
a chink in the mortar of the tower of Babble.

IX
Pencil thin diving platform of
language—“I think what you meant to say
was...”

X
Lips faltering at the brink of parting—.
“Oh, never mind.”
A mid-sentence about-face.
The exposed rosary string
earmark to prayerlessness.

XI
Tomb for the Unknown word.

XII
That measured line—
shorter than the short half of a wishbone—
spanning two dates.
Never before – never again

XIII
Frivolity of speech
fraying into the sonorous timidity of the
unsaid—

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50 States

Coming out of the interstate—or possibly the dream state—
she finds herself in a state of heightened awareness
and states categorically that everything is in such a state
of disarray that all the world resembles an Ann Taylor Loft
Outlet shop after a state holiday: blouses puddled on the sales floor,
silky dresses slouching off hangers, and queer lime Kool-Aid-dyed
sweaters so implausible as to provoke shoppers to state their allegiance
to clothes that understate and are, in any case, priced to leave
no one intestate, and sometimes even induce a state
of euphoria. But let's not overstate the obvious. Let's not spew
statesmanlike a whiffle full of nouns, or replay well-worn verbs
as in the Thoughts and Prayers statement, pronounced in all 50
states, infiltrating the static between the mountains on the New
York State Thruway when the music grows gravelly, unravels into some-
one else's news replaying statements after violence that devastate,
that make her feel like an apostate who hesitates to believe words
will gestate into action, when all she wants is to reinstate the music
on the oldies station so she can sing along to Tom Petty
runnin' down the dream state.

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For S

Some things I like to keep private, like how
your hasty retreat—deep stain on your soul
scrubbed by tender hug to looming shadow—
left a church parking lot, post-communion

flavor on my tongue that lingered stale,
unleavened, awaiting spiritualization
a little too long past the exit.
Or how smarmy sadness settled over

me and now lays haunting as a Latin
phrase in a Gregorian chant, composed
for a cathedral, but whispered in chapel:
a minor loss triggering a small-scale

dustbowl of dejection that coats my skin,
fine as crematory ash, or gunpowder
ground from such trivial explosives as
leaves from fall's firecracker foliage,

blown to particle by a solemn wind
that shoves my lips straight, singing as it palls
like the last note of a recessional hymn
a cantor can't stop holding.