Excommunicate [1]

February 4, 2019 Writing and Faith [2]
Poems [3]

Two Poems by Maryanne Hannan



Ellipses

Is there a more full of flowing-with-honey word,
other than maybe mellifluous itself? I know,

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because I lip-sync-pray to it every morning, “the long
ellipses of the planets,” plural of ellipse, an oval

planetary orbit, not that other Greek plural, beware,
in this ode to Our Mother, who comes as Mary to me,

but, truth to tell, she’s had it with the smarm. Kinda angry,
this Mother, who demands moons, meteors, planets return

to her embrace. She’s pained, it seems, talks of us, each of us
driving the world into an abyss. *Ellipses* depends on how you

say it: plural of ellipse or ellipsis. Could be what’s left out.
What falls short. Despite our best efforts to fill the void.

Excommunicate

We’ll start with the verb,
although noun suffix –*tion*,
with its felicitous pronunciation—
shun—might get us home faster.
First off, from the fancy layering
of word parts, we know this is no
man-on-the-street concoction. Serious
business. So abominable a business,
in fact, that if it happened to you,
you’d be the abomination, anathema,
let’s just say it—damned for all eternity.
No way out. So, o holy men of yore,
what root could rise to the challenge?
Maybe *mun*? That's a good guess: a wall
where so many of our good ideas begin.
Excommunicado, you’d be
outside the wall, divided, shunned
from all participation in our common
enterprise. No mention of all the agony,
of writhing you’d be doing afterward.
This, you’ll be remembering, Galileo’s
fate. But you’d be wrong. Censured,
harassed but never the Big E. Martin
Luther, Henry VIII, yes, leaving us
centuries, wondering on what side of
the wall we should say our Amens.
Whew!, you’ll think, at least that’s over,

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what with Catholics having the walls
breached, our ramparts burst night
and day. You'd be wrong again:
Always someone somewhere
whose wall-kicking must be stopped.
Meanwhile, facts are facts—the word
stinks. Insipid. No punch. Legions of,
or as we say, Catholics in droves
no longer bother to await the shining light
of ecclesial scrutiny. With neither pomp
nor circumstance, they voluntarily quit
the walls, determined, as some say,
to never look back. To free float, fully
aware, into the great wall-less beyond.

Art Information

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Maryanne Hannan has published poems in *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, *The Minnesota Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, *WomenArts Quarterly*, *Windhover*, *Christianity and Literature*, *The Christian Century*, *Ruminate*, and *Gargoyle*. She has also published in several anthologies, including *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology* and *The World Is Charged: Poetic Engagements with Gerard Manley Hopkins*. A "cradle Catholic" and former Latin teacher, she lives in upstate New York.

Find out more on her Maryanne Hannan's website [4] or follow her on Twitter @Maryanne_Hannan [5].

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