

Margin of Error: a Glose after “Mon Semblable” by Stephen Dunn

. . . *but those words unsaid*

*poison every next moment.
I will try to disappoint you
better than anyone ever has . . .*

Is there any way around the failure
of language? I say, *I can't live without you*,
but most days I exist for hours
alone: I read the news, drink coffee, write
poems — and you are at the office or riding your bike—
or even if we are together, absently making the bed,
you are not exactly with me, but
parallel. *You are everything to me* is also not
quite right, naïve words of a romantic or newlywed—
but those words unsaid

are the glaring rectangle of paint
where a picture used to hang.
What can I say to clarify? Sometimes
I don't like how easily I survive
your absence. I breathe in and out;
sometimes I even sleep better alone. I resent
my self-sufficiency—and yours. We lived
without each other for decades. I feel
more present now; I don't let my discontent
poison every next moment.

I'm sorry I don't reveal myself
one mask at a time; I grace you
with no such order, but I do reveal myself
in other ways. So do you. You set
your jaw and look away
when you are angry. I do that, too:
turn stone. But in the center of each of us
there is fire. I hate that neither of us will ever feel
the other's burning — just embers, residue.
I will try to disappoint you

only enough to remind you that my deficiencies,
less since knowing you, are my own.
I'm no longer trying to escape
myself or disappear into someone else;
words fall short. *You saved me*
sounds dramatic. *You show me myself as*
someone you would choose is close. *Of everything,*
I choose you is true. You give me
more than anyone ever has,
better than anyone ever has.