



# **Sex at Noon Taxes: Poems (Walt Whitman Award of the Academy of American Poets)**

*Sally Van Doren*

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Playfully invading the traditional territories of poetry, Sally Van Doren throws into question form, subject matter, and the sound and meaning of words. The poems in *Sex at Noon Taxes* mix straightforward narrative, midwestern vernacular, and linguistic ambivalence, embedded in which is a struggle between the mind and the body. While one poem admonishes the reader to "Forget the phonics / of the focal/fecal. Phrase, / fashion, and effuse," in another the speaker says, "I refine my sense of / pain when you touch me / with something blue." A preoccupation with the visual, artists, and artwork seeps through many of these imagistic minitexts. These poems look for release in descriptions of physical acts and in intricate manipulations of language. Sometimes they find it: "Along comes the sentence to / break up the monotony of possession." More often, though, the questions they pose resist answers: "What extravagant / commodity is sex?" and "Which el- / lipsis omits love?" Gender identification blurs as the poems probe theories of articulation and investigate the geographies of language and love. Through wordplay and word work, these poems travel a tightly crafted sphere of emotions and ideas.

"Preposition"

The before took us right up to the after, even though underneath we should not try over, from being stronger than to,

up shying from its ascent in the face of down. I held on to you and beside you I became with and about.

In our around, the near/far could turn away and toward, within the without. By my above and your below, the where's and

whens retreated, leaving time and space stranded, in off, on out.

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