

**the ixnay reader**

**volume four**

**2009**

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**CAConrad**

from *going to 108*

*failing to relieve the  
fear of astral travel*

writing *The Collapse Chronicles* to  
the rhythm of  
attack dogs

managing shadows with  
interpersonal coordination  
aka *dance*

grieving a  
germination  
dog writes  
dog death threats  
in piss

Dear fellow organism,  
on my orgasm under  
the planetarium director's  
guidance I am  
choosing stars he  
calls insignificant

when everyone's free again  
don't believe the slow speech  
fast around here  
earth fast

you yoop against me  
the way to stand so no one screams at your crotch

trust how it opens

everyone's reward is  
made up anyway

see how calm you get you knot up to knock out  
another piece of what happens when you do what you came forward with

I'm serenity's imposter  
painting my nails

reluctant  
where a  
mending regains  
strength

the sobbing  
children of death  
we become

autoprimitive hysteria as  
the side of  
silence opens

I make it  
look like a robbery but  
you love me anyway

10 minutes into worry

needing us  
a total attempt in vain some days

igniting a fashion for this blasted placement

my old thought of where we are going to bleed on the sofa

all around me this watered motion claps winter on the neck

we are not between trees between hairs  
split mine in two so you can get it going  
keep it soaring

for  
years my anger  
destroyed the  
flower in search of  
its engine

eagle  
claw my  
ear to  
wallflower  
patience

blooming  
core salt  
slow to bond

it begins to  
taste itself a  
revolution no  
prairie house  
could harbor

function as suitcase entering the new city

a futuristic day book of a false eyelash

the sleeping game

the sucker's game

gather by the one

who burns

proceed in reverse

tune mythology

at the

preface

newborns  
my only mentors

intrigue from their  
nothing

caught in a miracle without understanding the  
assignment

patience  
for  
this

gulf  
one shrewd moment ago  
hear ice in  
malice  
not a hiss

butcher  
lunch  
yourself      formal funeral by  
saying  
grace

thoroughly  
modern Mayan  
these plagues  
torn to  
the waist

sweating orbit back  
on course

our actions  
bout with  
designing  
everything  
stationary

sacred piss the  
name in  
snow

DO imagination  
DO miles whittled to  
inches

evicting  
graveyard  
tensions with  
pristine  
natural refusal

it's a wordy  
world *just*  
*shut up!*

**Arielle Greenberg**

from *I Get Out of Bed*

**May 8**

You spoke in tongues and then told me it meant that you liked me.

All I could think of to do was parrot back your invented language at you, to prove I liked you, too.

## **May 18**

I went away to NYC and when I came back from NYC you said you were glad my breasts came back with me. You hugged my leg, then hugged my torso, then hugged my breasts. When I scooped my breasts in to the cups of my bra you said you wanted to scoop my breasts into my bra, too, and you slipped your hand inside my bra and scooped. Several times a day you greeted my breasts cheerily. Breasts, you're back! Hello, breasts! How are you?

## May 23

You refused to use the toilet until I asked you to tell me which was your favorite color bathroom tile. You chose deep blue. I chose peach-cream and also seafoam. We are very interested in one another's favorite colors of things.

You have recently developed some new fears. Heights, for one. I am scared of heights, too. We had a long conversation in the car today about the big Ferris Wheel by the lake, and whether or not you would enjoy riding on it. I maintained that you would not. You thought that you would, but then when it got closer you saw just how high it was and decided that you would not. I felt vindicated.

You have never had any fear of the dark but I have had this fear.

Here's another way we are the same: in most situations, we prefer sitting on a bench to all other choices.

**May 28**

Whenever I say the word “sure” now, I sound exactly like you. But wasn’t I the one to first say “sure” in this way? Didn’t you steal the “sure” from me? Have you ruined sureness for me forever? Am I a parody of myself when I “sure”? Are you parodying me or imitating me, originating me or becoming me?

Sure. Sure. Sure.

**Ryan Eckes**

from *Old News*

*for your thoughts*

just once i went in junco & grouse  
the shortlived bookstore and bought  
*A Brief History of Time* and in it

found a receipt from Wawa Food Market  
from 19 yrs ago, 03-02-89,

two items totaling a dollar fifty-nine  
one-sixty was tendered  
one penny returned

*odd years*

a priest blessed our house and said he can tell  
if you have god or not, he can see it in your  
eyes, some final word grown deep into soil  
that translates the stampede of rain into a distant blah

blah. roofer tells me the siding was a real hack  
job. another says whoever did the siding should be  
shot. how long will i live here. my neighbor  
clara calls me an angel and flaps her wings. born

again, bobby says, her husband used to be mob.  
he sits on their bed now watching her blow dry plastic  
against the window, a hundred some odd years  
blackened in the street below. wet tires roll over

them. where are we going. i like to imagine  
myself in new york or san francisco in the fifties, clothes  
lines crossed between apartment buildings, writing  
into my wooden desk at the window, stepping out

onto the fire escape for a smoke and waving to my  
neighbor, who doesn't mind leaves falling on his roof.  
real city life in a real city, beautiful promise against  
motion. yesterday real city workers cut down the large

sycamore that stood guard of our block, old tree that  
we loved, my wife & i at least. why are you doing this,  
i asked one of them. they found somethin under there,  
he said, blah blah, he said, blah blah blah, i said.

we tore up the rotten carpets and the mats underneath, which were stapled to the old pine floor from the days before carpets, and found newspapers from 1923 spread across the room. some *Philadelphia Inquirer*, some *Evening Bulletin*.

from Monday, May 7, 1923:

## FORGETS CHILD ON TRAIN

*Sleepy Father Leaves Four-Year-Old Son*

andrew gray said  
he had taken his boy  
to the aquarium  
and had been so tired  
when they boarded the elevated  
train for home he had fallen  
asleep.  
awakening suddenly, without  
thinking of the boy, who was  
looking out the window,  
the father  
hurried out of the train.

## *training*

at a party an academic who doesn't teach asked me what i write about. i drew a blank and remembered my first grade teacher, mrs blank. she would never say *blank* – she would say *space*, fill in the *space*. in class we watched *the challenger* space shuttle lift off and explode into nothing on the screen. there were no answers. when asked to stand and say my name, i said *big blue O*, which was wrong. the world was a big blue O. it challenged you to fill in the space with a summary, and the teacher gave you an A for effort, which began with an E and felt like jogging the inside of an O to make something go, make the O go fast, not slow.

## *jogging the O*

people say *but you own it*  
but i know that it owns me  
which is fine, it's much bigger  
than i am and older and here  
i am writing my checks now  
to wells fargo countrywide  
home loans soon to be bank  
of america the largest US-  
based commercial bank w/ total  
assets of 600 billion dollars  
business in 200 countries  
and offices in 32 countries  
the house has 2 bdrms 1 bath  
i inhabit these rooms i respect  
them but i don't own them  
any more than any of the apts  
i lived in except for the mouse-  
infested one which was owned  
by the mice and landlord steve  
silver who had believe it or not  
silver hair the same color as the  
mice who nibbled away at my  
living space little by little every  
day steve silver if you're reading  
this fuck you and your petty real  
estate business and dollar  
store on spring garden street  
we've heard this story before  
like 600 billion times already

***for the exterminator who introduces himself on my answering machine as “al the hired killer”***

(written in mouse-infested apt, Feb 2003)

it's hard to project more than you've got.  
take my resume, for example. as an “independent contractor”  
for *books are fun*, a reader's digest company, i was:

*responsible for the timely delivery and display set-up of educational materials in a dozen schools a day; read maps to decide quickest routes and conferred w/ principals to determine most strategic places to set up items*

but i still sound like a delivery man, don't i?  
and you, al, sound like an exterminator, not  
a hit man. at my next job i asked a girl i liked  
for help w/ my resume. she maintained her  
perfect posture while studiously inspecting  
my professional history:

*you need to learn to pump yourself up*, she said.

i wanted to say, *i'll pump you up . . .*  
but i could not pump myself up enough  
to say that. funny how you can leave your  
self so far behind when you talk to some  
one. and where is that self, just now?

in this postcard, maybe, i just received  
from my friend chris—he writes:

*rome is beautiful the women are beautiful and they're everywhere and the sites leave me speechless i shudder to think of coming home to our mouse-infested apartment*

### *how to get around*

wyoming avenue looks nothing like wyoming of course, unless the booted cars are burnt shrubs or the picket line's a ridge of burnt trees. and that's pushing it. some people want to cut down the trees because they think the trees are useless. my neighbor frankie was cut down but he still drives. and he still works for the union, listens to rush limbaugh, and complains about the traffic in this town. you think it's pushing you, he says, but you're really dragging it. so why don't you just take the subway, i say. ah, the subway, he says, well the subway's a little too dark for me if you know what i mean.

from *The Evening Bulletin*, Friday, June 8, 1923:

### HORSE RUNS WILDLY

one man was injured and many persons endangered last night when a horse, attached to a bakery wagon, bolted after a motor car crashed into the vehicle at Ridge and Girard Aves. the wagon was overturned, scattering loaves of bread. the horse broke from its traces and dashed down the street. many persons on the pavements, who had just left a nearby motion picture house, scurried for cover. Hoey, a policeman, caught the animal near 17<sup>th</sup> st, several squares away. Emery, the driver of the motor car, was arrested.

*inside the door*

you look for work, the world's largest living thing. its door weighs 4,000 years and grows one centimeter every decade. inside, the fog rushes past, an impatient breath. you wipe the mirror w/ your hand, and you're home again. the pilot won't stay lit. he falls out of parker hotel and lands dead on the roof, which leaks. a girl's hush from across the hall behind a door into a phone. the photo of a beach fades onto the bone white wall. mail laps the shore, addressed to former tenants, stranding kelp to rot in the sun. *i miss seeing the ocean occasionally*, your grandmother writes from kimball, nebraska. the nearest airport is denver and she has no way of getting there unless a stranger drives her. a stranger is neither a friend nor an acquaintance. she leaves notes on the inside of her kitchen cabinet door: *i know you're here you son-of-a-bitch.*

from *The Evening Bulletin*, Monday, May 7, 1923:

## WOMEN DETECTIVES WANTED BY MAYOR

Tells Ministers' Meeting They are Needed to Probe Vice Conditions  
in City

the mayor's text was "Women in Politics" and he called upon women of the city, as well as the men, to throw aside their lethargy in matters political, to register, and to vote, to keep out of power the old "combine." according to Mayor Moore, women "can help us materially in dope cases, and in tracing other forms of vice. other cities have women working in this capacity and there is no reason why we should not." with women in politics, "not gang women," he declared, there will be less overlording of men or groups of men whose only goal is wealth.

*mother's mother's mother's letter*

a teddy bear in a sailor suit with a little american flag  
in the southwest corner of the page looks forlorn, stationed  
there against its will. the cursive runs northeast, kites taut across

the white space. the white space is superimposed  
on the middle of an american flag much larger  
than this paper. its big colors imagined out in all directions

frame the message: "i went to bed early the other night and  
left all the doors and windows open—not very responsible.  
the grapevine has it you will be in san francisco july 4th

which means this letter will be waiting for you when you  
return—i will be anxious to hear back. all i have done for  
the past 3 days: mowed, watered, hoed and pulled weeds

and bachelor buttons. my neighbors keep telling me how much  
work it is and i keep telling them it beats the hell out of square  
dancing. anyway, i've decided that heaven is a place where the iris  
are always in bloom and where bind weed does not grow."

*neighborhood watches*

another guy brags his mother was a mother  
before she had babies, tidy streets broke from  
her hands, one man attached to a motor car,  
another to a motion picture house.

at is-a-bella's, COUNTER GIRL WANTED.  
she rides a bike, gets honked at, gets told  
to get off the road. the neighborhood watches.  
if tragedy strikes who will pay your mortgage.

*oh watches never worked on me*, mom says,

*i don't buy them*. me neither, i say. but what's

difficult about watching reruns is the policeman  
between my sister's legs looking out. he's got

my eyes and winks, nodding to the neighborhood

north—*watch out over there*, he says, *they're*

*animals, you know, you gotta treat em like animals . . .*

*what's showing?*

*inside the scowl*

i opened my front door this morning  
to a big pile of dogshit  
under the tree  
recently planted for us  
by *the citizens alliance for better neighborhoods*  
and i cursed the italians  
the big silent scowl  
of those old italian men  
who own the corner as  
i walk by with my wife who's not only  
*not* italian but *not* white  
(in this country)  
and i thought of my italian grandmother  
who grew up at 20<sup>th</sup> & McKean  
*go look at what the niggers did to it,*  
she'd always said, *go see for yourself*  
and i thought of the letters  
to the *south philly review* trashing  
barack obama and i thought of  
how ridiculous my daily rituals were  
how every day i join the herd  
of other white people spilling out  
the east exit of tasker-morris station while  
the blacks herd themselves out the west exit  
and then walking home along that border, that  
frustration we call broad street—

these facts finally embodied for me in frankie,  
two doors down. i overheard him giving shit  
to the guys digging up the sidewalk  
to plant our new tree—*what's that a cherry tree*  
*it's not gonna grow cherries, tho, is it?*

i can't help but imagine him, leash in hand, under his  
breath, say *you want nature you got nature . . .*

but this pile of shit looks too big  
for the little dog he walks up and  
down the block and calls *ginger*.

*ginger*, did you shit on my tree?

## *neighborhood watches*

(3 notes from my mailbox, june 2007)

1

folks just a quick note  
to alert you all of some recent robberies  
in our neighborhood  
since friday there have been 5 robberies  
2 of them were on the 1300 block of Moore st north side  
3 of them were on the 1300 block of Castle st south side  
some were done in the middle of the day  
some were done in the middle of the night  
please be careful and lock your doors  
and expecially windows  
since that's how some of them got in  
i'm not sure  
but be aware of any strange people walking around  
pretending to be doing construction work

2

there was a robbery (i.e. gunpoint demand for \$\$\$)  
three days ago on McClellan st  
at midnight  
culprits were three black youths  
who ran to the west of Broad st  
they got \$80 off the guy  
a resident  
who did not want to report the incident

3

the preliminary hearing was scheduled for today  
at 11<sup>th</sup> & Wharton, i just emailed the chief here  
it was 3 guys, 2 of which were juveniles  
and the other is 18  
they admitted to 5 robberies  
and the gun was apparently a lighter  
these are probably NOT the guys  
who are stealing flowers  
and they most probably are NOT the ones  
who are breaking into people's homes  
so i guess what i'm saying is  
let's keep in touch and keep  
everyone informed NOT  
to let their guard down

from *The Evening Bulletin*, Monday, May 7, 1923

'HANDS UP, BANDIT', SAYS HE,  
'EH! UP YOURSELF', CRIES COP

*Bluecoat Insulted*

a postal clerk mistook a policeman for a thug  
in germantown early today.

"i was on my way home," said Knox, "when  
i saw a dark figure under the trees."

he drew a revolver and leveled it at  
the officer, Leary, who seized Knox's wrist

and wrenched away the gun. Knox apologized  
and explained: "i have been shy of bandits

ever since i was shot in a holdup of a mail  
wagon at 43<sup>d</sup> and Woodland a year ago."

*in the back of the head*

often sitting at an open window  
at night i imagine a bullet will

rip through my head any moment  
or walking down the street a fist

to the back of my head, always this  
small expectation, a stone lodged

there from a single moment in child  
hood. what's your background. can

you describe him. every day i am here  
for you. i am there for you. every day

out of the corner of my eye the guy  
in the median of broad street selling

the daily news, "the people's paper." i  
don't buy it, ever, not for a quarter,

not for my neighbor. my neighbor  
clara blesses my tree, she blesses my

mailbox, she blesses my railing on  
which she now leans, this moment,

smiling towards a neighbor up the  
block. does your house have god. what

does your house have. can you see into  
the eyes of the house. a girl waves

behind one across the street, then closes  
the blinds. her name escapes me.

**Lewis Warsh**  
*The Songbook*

Once I played Pygmalian  
to the Queen of Hearts. A spoon

bent out of shape,  
but no matching socks.

\*

Voting turnout light in local precincts.  
The Incredible Shrinking Man.  
War of the Worlds. The Day the Earth  
Stood Still. The Blob. Point the way & I'll go.  
Single me out & I'll follow.

\*

A mother  
reprimands a child  
on a swing

The names of seasons, animals  
a knock on the door

the boat  
no longer seaworthy  
lost at sea  
with no one aboard.

\*

I bend down  
to tie my laces  
near a fire hydrant  
like a dog.

The day begins  
with light  
& ends  
in darkness.

But I  
am not awake  
& you  
are only a dream.

Oh who are you  
who comes  
out of nowhere  
& remembers my name?

\*

A door in the wall  
that no one saw before  
suddenly opened  
onto a garden  
where men & women  
carrying parasols  
sipped coffee through broken straws,  
& it looked like all the colors of the rainbow

had attached themselves to the undergrowth  
& the shrubbery  
was lit  
from behind  
by invisible balls

\*

The coat of many colors was draped  
over a chair. Yellow cabs parked in the rain

outside the mosque.

\*

The morning was  
like any morning,

the bridge sagging  
under the weight  
of moving vans

driven by movers  
with trusses

the sky peppered  
with its first coat  
of spackle

a barge circling  
below, a delicate  
brushstroke,  
just a tendon

\*

All the acorns  
have fallen in one place.

You can gather them in your  
apron & scatter them on the road,

an avenue of moonlight  
among the ivy shirt-tails.

\*

I thought that I would  
live an orderly life but  
instead I made a mess  
for which I have to  
admit I'm not contrite  
so don't even start

\*

The opposite is true  
The opposite might always be true  
People say something & then a minute later  
something else  
The clouds are barely moving but when you look  
at them again they're gone  
Words are like shadows covering the truth  
I said that it might be true, that it rings true, that  
it didn't sound true  
Trees are alive but inhuman, often we stand  
in their shadows  
Even dead things cast shadows, stones or mountains  
I said something that might be true

A state of non-being

\*

Dogs began barking  
to frighten the strangers  
who rubbed their thighs 89  
on the ivory statues of sailors,  
while women who looked like sirens  
spread their pinafores over mounds of granite  
& punched the air with their fists,  
exposing their orifices  
to bewildered drivers

\*

You had your chance  
to say something

but the moment passes

a face you  
can remember,  
with no details

stayed in bed  
all day  
reading Gone  
With the Wind

another version  
of happiness  
between piss & shit

**Elizabeth Scanlon**

*Poems*

## Domestics

The cleaning ladies are wearing nurses' scrubs  
and putting cigarettes out in their mop buckets,  
waiting for their ride to the next job;  
the toothless guy selling fruit is singing  
"You Picked a Fine Time to Leave Me, Lucille"  
and a gray cat noses through the coffee grounds  
outside Red Hook, which is a neighborhood in Brooklyn,  
where we are not, which makes that name questionable;  
my son is talking to his crayons before eating them  
and I wonder about the politics of buying health food  
from one so obviously ailing, or is it aesthetics, it gets hard to tell  
and I have no access to any of their thoughts.  
Four hungry children and crops in the field,  
uh-huh, are you working me with that? In this  
country western interlude brought to you by the synthesis  
of sunlight, caffeine, and a good price on cantaloupe.

## Exotics (Ars Poetica)

Ailanthus is considered a weed because it's all appetite;  
it does not give back. The cows don't like it. It's of no use,  
or none that anyone's discerned yet, though how that makes  
it different from what any plant was before man started picking them,  
I'm not sure. It grows where no other will and that's why it is known as  
an invasive species. It sways, too tall for its stalks, leans on the chain link  
where cling brown birds & though I am opposed to the image of birds  
on principle, these fellows are little city birds, unimpressed, so close  
their incongruous hay & barnyard smell is evident. They are so used  
to being crowded they don't budge. They're not afflicted  
by the peculiar American notion of personal space –  
an entire Texas per head of human – but I can't claim  
that makes them better off than the rest of us because if I were  
to spread my arms wide & spin I would like not to hit anyone.

## Buzz

As long as one pushes a buzzer can buzz, when a body wants in it can lean a long time, it, that body, can push a whole pane of buzzers at two-thirty AM; the neighbor, whose cat scratches to go out can see no harm in buzzing in, imagines it harmless, a nuisance, a thing to be stopped for the sake of peace; the stairs are short, the door too near, the drum of the frame shakes, calls your name, beats a rhythm not unlike *Seven Nation Army*; talk to the door, the door has character, the grain of the wood, the brass ring of the spyhole an iris; it is as if the door has a mouth and wants to know why you won't open up, open up. You love the door. You do not want to see it harmed. You hold that door.

## Consider the Source

Why anyone wanted  
a God the Watcher  
eluded me. Mystery.

But then, one wants  
to be noted, or at least,  
noteworthy. And so  
behaves a little  
more  
than might otherwise.

While reading  
*A Hole Is to Dig*  
maybe the delivery has improved  
taking some pains to pronounce:  
*children are to love*  
*a brother is to help you.*

## Leaving the Party

The party's only getting going  
when the sitter must be relieved,  
you won't finish that conversation  
and it follows you home, the sleep  
of your child calling, wondering what happened  
after you left the room. And how it was probably  
the best thing of all,  
the thing you don't get to see. I think of my mother,  
how in pictures from college there are always  
prim shots on the way out the door to the dance  
to record for posterity the dress she made  
from two dollars worth of fabric, but never  
any evidence of the end of the night.  
The party goes on without you. You wave  
and assure them you would if you could,  
you'd stay.  
You don't.  
The failings are frequent, small, and real.  
Strawberry jam when it was supposed to be grape;  
plastic dinosaurs that melt.  
One day I was a proletariat, I, how do you say?  
owned the means of production –  
I was Spartacus!  
but then there are IRAs and  
god damn it if those bastards think you aren't paying attention.  
They say we spend one-third of our lifetime asleep,  
or is it one time in our third life?  
There was one time when I stirred  
in the night and found that my mother had gone.  
I can't remember which life that was now.

## Obsolescence

Earning your keep, lifting the weight,  
working toward the right to sleep;

the keep's the place you lock away  
what never was for no one else

and there's a come-on in the dial tone  
that's a placeholder for what was called a connection.

I'm, yes, that problematic cat  
who when in would be out and out in,

furthermore, by bringing that within outside  
(as was no option) I've entered the realm

wherein there is always one who misses  
me and he has such need that obviates

other senses: entitlement, justice,  
but please not humor.

I've heard that clemency is not a given.

## **The Ocean is Coming**

It's not slow it's not inching  
it's definitely not fooling around.  
The ocean has heard the talk  
& is coming to reply. It is  
very accommodating like that.

The ocean rises to meet you  
the ocean which rises to meet you  
the ocean is rising to meet you  
its bows go on and on

bow back, from the waist  
put your face right to the surface  
for more than proper, for its kiss,  
over and over until you're drenched

& when no spot is left untouched  
& we think there is no more to know  
about the ocean we might taste the minerals  
& have no name for them

as we grow sleepy & see the sun  
growing more distant above us

## **After a Scientific Theory of Love**

Love is a big word to begin on  
and nobody knows jack but the lack of it  
changes the young brain forever.

Programming, they say.  
Whether that song plays on the radio,  
you know the one, the one you heard first

in dyads & dybbuks & dandies,  
it is beautiful to us,  
it shapes the parameters of what's possible.

But what about souls & so on?  
It can't all be candy hunger.  
Mars Bar, Skor, Bit o'Honey?

Baby, I wouldn't change a thing.  
Crawling off the edge of the cliff  
(like the baby in the experiment

who believed the intended illusion)  
is just another indication that despite  
many reasons to choose another course,

your face in my mind is compelling, it is.  
Who gives a sweet damn about the abyss.

## **I dreamt I was a deer in headlights**

*after Cheryl Harper*

*I dreamt I was a deer in headlights –*

I wondered why the flashing was so persistent.

I dreamt there was a sign on the road  
but it led only to a chain-link lot.

The sign showed those running away,  
the rampant deer.

It would be good to be known in this life  
but it's inadvisable to stop before too bright a glare.

You cannot see what's coming  
and must ask: who's the crossing for?

There is some hope for a watching eye;  
my ochre innards are clean, and shine.

## Trying

I like to watch you fall asleep  
to see the opposite of what I do when I try,  
struggling to keep your eyes open, your lashes flutter  
then the eyes roll back into the head  
like a yogi practicing drishti, all the mystics everywhere,  
really, striving to be only as enrapt as you are to falling –  
it's a look you see again and again on the faces  
on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,  
on the cross-eyed Vishnu gazing up into the heaven of his cranium,  
they're all depicted in ecstasy, but aspiring,  
trying to wake up as the Buddhists say,  
trying to be humble, all these efforts  
to return to your state of glory,  
of child-sleep, of arms flung wide, belly exposed,  
lips parted in a little 'o' as though

struggle ended

right at the moment you fell.

**Kirsten Kaschock**  
from *the dottery*

The dottery is artery-red, a brickbox warehoused near the next street over. Schoolroom-style, very like a church, it migrates every other day to its present location. It is a piggy-bank, and you can make a deposit through the mail slot. A pale pink embryo. Hers are left all the time. All the time develops hers into dottage—the substance of the boutique. Also, clothes can be left. Catholic plaids, swiss dots, thigh-highs, chantung. Inside the dottery, dotters are fashioned—matched to apparel. You asked. This is how.

: a manifesto

1. Dotters are not usurpers of the solar but its eclipsing. The sun, since banging out, has been unworthy of the direct gaze. Not so with dotters. Dotters have known much gaze and are equipped to array it prismatically. To spatter it.
2. Dotters do not connect, do not scribble midafternoon manifestoes in midafternoon manifesto booklets. Instead, dotters seek, by their incomplete shunning and elliptical hides, to scalp the lyrical I—to remove the hair and the chocolate from the blonde and say: “See, a bleeding woman on a horse—she’s got—what brains!”
3. Dotters fall down.
4. Dotters are interested in pastoral only as a way to fetish. You like streams? Babel not, cum in one.
5. Dotters chill barons. They deliver. Others don’t or can’t or don’t want to. It makes no difference to a dotter. It’s just something dotters do. The barons have ever feared dotters because of the ice. The beds of cold.
6. Dotters are not semi-sweet-surrealists. They are hard cookies. They don’t want to nudge you to a slightly uncomfortable spot. They’d rather break your teeth, but oh so obliquely.
7. Dotters are by definition one-dimensional, one-trick ponies, specks. *You* think.
8. Enough dotters, taken together, form a second-type story—a curvy hyperbolic form. Staircase, sex, a helix bound by sugars.
9. Dotters evolved sporadically, from the space between forage and pillage. Between gore and will.

10. Dotters are to foster confessional sci-fi wherever it is found. As a sister-craft, a dovecote.

11. If you wish to be a dotter, buy your tickets for the dottery now. There is currently a sacrifice. There is always currently a sacrifice.

12. Dotters, to be fair, are forever opening and closing the curtains. Doing a peepshow disguised as aubade. The difference between the two is address. A black dress, the kind brides wear.

Once upon a time, dotters were promised a world of frosting. Whitespun and brittle and dissolving in the tongue cupped to the roof of the mouth. Chewing they were instructed to understand as unnecessary, nor allowed. Teeth were designed explicitly for display. No one told the ramifications of sugar: the abscess and rush—the moral decay. Sugar was to those original dotters a grazing field for yeast. An addiction bed, an affair, a fling. Still, they loved it even as it proved itself shallow and brief—afterwards, the very air bitter. Dotters have been regularly educated to their detriment. Sugar is often their fondest wish. It is why some agree to be born, and how they would die.

Mornings, dotters re-skin themselves. They tiptoe into their parachutes for world ascent. All dotters, jumpers, and head first. They move through their skin, about them in its great diaphanies, to the center where the soles are. Almost every day the skins lick up in great petals to seal each dotter in her velum. Only at night do dotters undo their inner vestment. For cleaning. For cleaning and storage. They peel, like hose, the skin for laying into large skin baskets. They fit themselves into silhouette, the puddled dreamblood they've produced in side effect. If, at dawn, a dotter's skin will not rejoin her, that day is a meditation day. She will mull her twin failures: to lace and to congeal. Such dotters prove immobile, fervent not to stain. For this, we should be grateful. A loose dotter, unbound by that organ's narcotic meshwork—by the shame of its distinction—she would always be in danger of incorporating.

There was a dotter in the spring. Wound there, coiled to strike. She circled back and forth the picket. She said she wouldn't work. "I wouldn't work," she said, "not for you." She was right about the too many reactions, allergies she might have. Pine dust, azaleas, mites. That someone would move or vacuum just to have her was foreign. People pay money but people don't clean or stop swearing. People give up caffeine and alcohol and the gym but rarely cigarettes. She stayed in the spring inside the couch inside the lounge inside the dottery. Not exactly waiting, but not watching the television either. Outside, the reasons she breathed that way would be trickier to identify. Mold may kill, but its familiar dapple on bread and in damp cabinets is a signal for bleach. In the dottery, strategies had been approved and implemented. Who gives a sure thing up for weather? Her ribcage was a double-boiler, an aquarium. She kept her lungs there. Pets.

For any dotter, the operative word is rant. Both to sleep and awake again, even during a procedure, especially when Versed™. She can rant across the floors of the dottery and up into its rafters. Forwards, backwards, inwards, downwards. She can in loops, with hoopskirts, up clocktowers. Barehanded, or with a squirrel gun, either before or after she's tapped the squirrel. A dotter can rant in pairs or even singly, and without so much as a uterus in dervish. Rant here is a potency. Rants can rile and rush, rock over even. Crash cradle. Righteous in the dottery, rants command earring. Trou-bling. But know this: all flash and flex of vocal muscularity will cease upon the joining of a dotter's world halves. Once conceived, she is stopped up. It is done for her in that instant—the express become a halting local. (Self-division is for her a psycholeptic, meaning that although calm, she will have felt it all—only afterwards will the amnesia hangover her like fog she can't breathe.) She will never be inspired that way again. In the world, a dotter resembles nothing so much as a constipated rabbit. Sound of lettuce. When in the dottery she was epidemic.

I shall tell you now, though you can't believe it, the story of the dottery. Before you are born, there is a line of us waiting for you. And there is a line of you, waiting too. We stand very straight. Tall, and—also—queued quite smartly. We blaze, are pumped. It is very important, we know, though none of us know how we know, that there be no wavering, no looking past the next. We are like the teeth on a gear, orderly like that, though if there is circularity involved on another plane, as there is in gears, we are not aware. Some who would like to stand in line are not allowed. A velvet rope. Those some keep looking at us, who do not know we're thieves. And there are others, who do not come near, with eyes that say The Hell, and some who do not look. I want to make this perfectly clear: not everyone wants. Many of you will be thrown from your line past our line into a crowd of those who do not. You are to be wolved. Still, some of the lone may learn to want, though some never. Dot, listen. A great number of you will carry the large open howl given you by those who preferred not to. And the rest, you will crave silent and ashamedly the moon, as—before you—do we.

A question was asked. Does friendship edify the passing of time? The complexity of the question was noted with a silver underlining in the ledgers. In the dottery, friends have been known to occur. This activity, also recorded as conjoining, has had distinct if unpredictable ramifications. For instance, severing must occur before conception or the two dotters have been found to bleed throughout life: a condition called sistern—their arteries as if above a well, open. Even if the two are competantly separated, lasting badfeelings may cause envy, gossips, or in extreme cases, cliterodectomy. Dotters in which friendship has blossomed among underthings or tonsils end occasionally. In: Self-immolation. Lesbianism. Horses. Poetess. Potatoes. Her tiny tiny toes.

I stole her. In the cellar—one dotter, a snatched piece. You thought that meant more were. There were never more. I blame it on the croup. When you had a fit and flooded over the cinderblocks, I begged for you: woodenbowl, wunderbar, spoon, and/or razor. I was by the trains grounded, a well for spark. I was tubrous and eyeblind much like a dotter, but spat fire. I could pass. I always was passing—those weren't really children I had. I was un-exited from, except for buoys, but who counts buoys. I will. I will count them. Buoys you don't count have that wet wool smell. Yard, or navy. The dotter I caught under the earth was a contagion of starch and cotton. Gluten-love: she was better baked than boiled, with whitefish, on dark toast. That kind of dotter is like a grave. She won't ask flowers. Still. One feels better if one arranges them, her hair like a banquet, like a matchbox city. But I wouldn't know. I am not upfront with the progeny, do not sling, accessorize. Call my style mounded. I love the dirty ones left dirty. Fingers, fingers. Fingers on the baby.

**Eric Baus**  
*Poems*

## Negative Noon

Oxen are bad.

Oxen are bad? Minus adjusted the clone's hand. The hand grew cold. I heard his oud die. Dead, bad oxen.

His shoulder creak caused a sting in my ear. His modes merged, formed a team. Aphid wounds make the house hurt, he said.

My gut needs cake. The seared core tugged. I spoke my title and he hissed: Do not impinge upon my robes. No tent goes untorn.

More glint, these beasts are ill. An abbreviation for beaten.

\*

More gong, enough to tear the room apart. Minus decoded "P" with theater pins. Divorced the curved curves chords have.

How would Iris play the hollowed out end of an ark rack? we hounded. Iris wandered out, assaulted by doves. Teal caskets.

"P" is a forlorn purr. It beguiles dull sentries. The rooms in the fort fit together in a series of steel forgeries. Vials emit a mist of yes. If the clang from the hall revolver dies, hordes unite inside tombs.

His snores blow out lamps. Lest his lungs grow hot.

\*

These nests end. These nests end, he blurred in his sleep. The cobra button broke loose until his cell glowed negative noon.

Winding the loom like an idiot ant, I tried to reverse the topiary trap.

Day hissed and our teeth tuned in. Our dirty arms got sunny. Quills dragged  
tongs across our names. I died to walk away. My dead doves reddened.  
Their puma leered while the coos waned.

Medicine stored in their breath became bulbous. Was cud coalescing?

The story stormed. The shorn grew gills.

\*

Only Minus's halo remained. Can helium herd? Could aluminum clot?  
Beastlessness disturbed the din. O corn, we cried instead.

Doubled eels loomed but what I fished for was a hiss that talked  
backwards.

Deep in the inert clouds, an analogy splits. A cold sardine awakens. Amber  
anemones bloom shards.

\*

Is this the ember's big splice? we clanged, as the city's signal burned.

Iris's multiples flung about, wed to interference. Hover longer, eater of  
bells, every angle ignites a wing.

Mirrored wheat. Thuds.

To deter owls, we use the azure comb. I am sore, says Iris, And the ants are  
staring. Minus plumbs an urn large enough for all the sentinel's prayers. Ten  
surly lions.

\*

This is Minus's House. Bombs infuse blooms here.

When Minus isn't posturing, Iris is queen of the gray distance. Pre-gray, free. As in, Hand me another dosed star. As in, Sing rendered. Sing posed.

\*

Act terminated.

The blood oasis lengthens in the leaves outside. The tomb sends its allies home. Minus and Iris paint over the bones.

When the datura plains revert to "f" Iris instructs her mom to sing "f" but the "f shield" in the ghost's hand lures owls instead.

Minus knots nicely in the fire. Our allies await.

\*

My system slowed down to place a pleat in the fountain. Nobody moots my calm.

Beasts booed while cranes ate smashed apples.

Minus entered a pensive shadow. Clear molds dented Iris's brain. The tiniest cloud put a plumb in my hair.

The imperfect thread of our clinging hands will never blend its theses.

When the opposite scale begins to beehive, we'll feel the hair of The Ur-Mane.

## **The Ur-Mane**

In classical buried birth narratives, the immersed egg frequently feels both mammoth and absent, sedated with seeds. It says, *A cataclysmic dial is upon us.*

## **Eggshell Plumbs**

Blurled, The Ur-Mane erupts, combs through growls to the coarsest salt. A thimble full of eggshell plumbs the egresses for slits. I listen for the second salt, to two horns: locked, alloyed. A moan inverts an ant, burns out in bursts. Its lips form pools, stinging ice, clips of aberrant grass. See how green I can be. So stirred. A stem empties a range of sheep. A still invents its scene. I plead with all the strays to heap. A shark in a jar, scared. Such smooth. So screen. I cut to a tree.

**sasha fletcher**  
*it is gonna rain.*

## **i told you so**

i sat on the deck with my feet in a kiddie pool. overhead it was very dark and the clouds were moving very quickly for being clouds. i felt a light mist on my face. i stood up and held my hand very very close to the grill. i was just a little tired. i wanted to think of something very specific. i thought about an article i'd read in a newspaper on flooding in nineteen ninety-three and its imminent return. she asked me if i thought a lot about death and dying and that she had read people do this often. i told her no.

## **before the flood**

i dreamed that everything was quiet and everyone felt calm. i stood on the roof looking out at the circus tent obscuring the skyline. i nailed my feet in place. also i tried to see the giant boot that says boots in neon which is the sign for a country and western dance bar that has gone under. my feet pressed the blacktop and i felt like punching myself in the throat when suddenly everything was under water and i was swallowed by a whale.

## **oh lord how i love that wide open space**

i have this dream where i go to sleep standing up and i wake up laying in a topless box that smells of cedar and the sides also smell like cedar, even though country music has taught me that people are buried in pine boxes, which thought could give new meaning to the phrase pine wood derby.

the box is lowered down and loaded full of dirt. as it fills my mouth someone is talking loudly and i imagine they are saying how all of our sweatshirts didn't do us no good and then there are more people coming and i want you to know if i could be someone else or somewhere else i would and doors are opening and closing i can hear them and a few birds and i can taste the dirt and oh lord

## **tomorrow is another day**

we sat across from each other at the chipped table drinking from separate cups.

the air conditioner starts up suddenly. she turned and coughed. i had several ideas about what she could be thinking but none of them seemed very reasonable. from the kitchen table we listened as overhead a swarm of unmarked planes go by. we went out the door to the back yard. we stood there looking up at them shading our eyes with our hands. she said she imagines those are probably for the circus down the street. i imagined they were enemy bombers which i did not say out loud.

## **fishbelly**

a whale exploded on a truck in delaware the other day but that was months ago. whales are apparently not to be left in the sun. so you can understand how we were worried when one showed up on the beach. i had this dream where the coast guard sprayed air freshener. it smelled of reassurance.

## **it figures**

earlier she said to me “what’s it called when one thing is telling of the next.” i told her she was describing being predisposed and she told me i was wrong, which i probably was.

i got up out of bed and went over to the window. i thought about water and got thirsty just thinking about it. i went downstairs for a glass of water. as soon as i walk out of my bedroom door i was convinced someone was watching me. i was sure they were a ghost or a dead person and i could feel their eyes on me as i walked down the stairs i stayed close to the wall. when i got to the kitchen i wished there was a light in the fridge but there wasn’t.

## **back in the saddle**

i had a dream about a cowboy on horseback and the horse had big hairy shotgun legs and was on a bridge overlooking a river where a man sat face down. several feet behind him a wooden leg was pinned to the riverbed with an arrow. at the shore a woman was yelling that the water is not even waist deep you could at least sit up. jesus christ. her dress had been white once and it blew this way and that.

## **you have nothing to worry about**

everything was calm and everyone was very quiet and i remember how the floor looked before i straightened it up and some times i think how things must have been before air freshener came around and out under the old dead tree is where she robbed him and by the train tracks and in the backyard and on the roof tops and while he was fixing some dinner and tying his shoe and once when she had back problems and he was tying her shoe and every time she pulled his gun from his pants and he just kept leaving it there. then i woke up and everything seemed very dark and then it wasn't anymore. in the morning she asked me what i had been dreaming about. i told her that i didn't remember. immediately this became true.

## **i was adrift**

“i had no idea how long i was there. but it was warm most of the time. and sometimes i want to invent a word for when you keep waiting for something to happen that feels imminent but never comes.” i told her that i remember there were all these people and everyone was very kind even though i didn’t know them. she said that last bit was probably a different dream. i breathed through my mouth twice and said you are probably right but she was asleep.

## **the sort of situation where everything got hurried**

i was either going to bed early or going for a walk. i went for a walk. i ended up in a church which i thought was going to be a bar. inside people were praying as a form of hedging their bets and they all seemed very kind even though i didn't know them. outside a storm was coming. you could feel it. i walked home slowly and then i tried to walk home faster. i saw two row houses set farther apart from the others. they had been dressed up as beach houses. i thought "this is the sort of thing that would be easier in a vacation community." i thought about life as it exists in a storage bin. but it was more the phrase than the condition, and time seemed to move like it was being rerouted. when i got home i saw a bolt of lightning that looked like it was going to hit a building and i had no way of knowing if that was right.

**Brenda Iijima**

*Poems*

## THIS IS THIS ALLEGORICAL FORMS

Allegorical forms this symbolism this twisting fate of this  
that is ostensibly is that this versus this

Is us was us is

Vary profoundly in regards to this

Their inclinations distancing this There, bone in  
the path one lone bone marrow dried in its core bone  
separated from beast bone ringing out actuality

What was this is this  
When this is as this  
Before I was upright  
Before I was swinging  
In canopied vegetation  
Jawbone shaped like this

Theses all glass  
Theses with eyes  
Sing this tune again  
Little is known of this  
I wanted to hear into the trees  
I wanted to see without names  
Believe in this *that is your defect*  
Was said about this  
Believe in this makes you perfect  
That is your defect perfection this  
Neurons in the throat where song emits  
Transparence this but baffling

This is a star

This these are clusters  
Nebulae and neutrons  
Protons and electrons  
But equally space

Embossed central focus  
Finally fesses myriad tendencies tensions  
Numerous porosities without image  
With eyes doesn't go tubular intestinal  
Intestine isn't this eye isn't this lyrical eye  
Thyroid isn't this ocular entrance of the upside  
down  
Yet inside out within this

So that when you procreate and babies you finally  
see but before meeting gesticulating atomic You mother  
are outside and these eyes are inside seeing inside

Seeing inside this focus of liquid is flesh her that is  
mother Liquid that is thinking and feeling Viscous liquid  
that is being and bones Bones are this inside

Eyes see outward at a height Eyes for the  
purposes

Why wasn't your painting this cell cluster Why the  
docile domestic sitting pose with scissor legs Furniture  
where  
trees were denied Digestion never looked so serene

In horror (films) vomit is highlight Projectile as  
rejection Body

spews vile material energies Something this body  
can't digest Expel beyond lingual Source is minute and  
growing Chuck snakes chuck worms vivid green slime  
Dispel the unformed incomplete chewed decaying This is  
the way many animals feed their offspring

Mooncalves lick up nebulae spit on the lawns  
Wearing two tails she snakes her way into the coiled  
continuum This she is dull eyes because tails hurl She  
spawns blind mice This she is agile strong flaring within a  
hot summer abyss She is the choice diet of amphisbaena  
who grew out of splattered blood from Medusa's head  
Pregnant women wear necklaces of amphisbaena around  
their necks to protect their inner fetuses How to protect  
the cells from toxic sludge coughed up from gentile  
machines Machines make the life glimmer Sublime  
spewing there of this we do not know Unknown

Bodies not properly buried revel in your kindness Edimmu  
Froth about the midnight air  
Lingers zoomorphia I trust you as this animal  
You as animal I say as human I distrust because  
Because she said Monohuman  
Only us on the asphalt and our attendant bacterial  
compatriots

This is what you can do with a sickness leaking song  
Go down to the river submerge limbs torso face  
Contact slippery rocks with buttocks  
Everything known enters these stones  
Water a torrent is possession and dismissal  
After you die escaping water will gauge how you suffered  
Eddies of water wear long blue gloves  
This is how you appear in trouble

This rallying with wind  
These particles passing in  
I'm thinking back to the time  
I climbed over a razor wire fence  
To reach a family of seamstresses  
They asked I smuggle contentious documents  
Across borders dissidents to prove revolution  
With a slip of my foot I fell into pooling oil

We spoke freely amongst roses  
Fertilized by girls working on their knees  
Peach trees breezy sleepy socialist nap time  
Here in the West bodies rage  
Idiosyncratic to walk alone where she's from  
This isn't loneliness I say

## THIS IS THIS THE ID

The id said to the squid I hate you  
And that *and if you* for being (it like) you  
The id thought to its selves I hate those squids  
But then it was over or there was nearly no  
Recognition Inventions ceased yet innovation in  
What on what and on the edge of what rim  
As if to place us in an action as if to single out  
A particular action laterally and he'd come at it  
Laterally (the hate might too have been mistranslated)  
*other one isn't in lines crawling*

*or is* (Leslie Scalapino)

Crawl golden wheat crawl wicked white  
Whale, what Ahab without organs  
Sucker for the children  
In this sequence  
What multiple  
What one  
Where one  
Was one  
When one  
Ones  
One on the head of currency  
One lifting up an eye beam  
One picking up the telephone  
One crashing into the lamppost  
One signaling  
One flagging  
One waving  
One with one  
One no longer never one  
One but Eve was there  
One but the pagan gods of Mesopotamia reside in the  
Snake

Eve(n) ever she was is itness (w)  
One as the stratosphere is penetrated  
One outside of one toward endless illusions  
One like a sovereign head  
One without one  
One minus one  
One as if only one  
Children sing  
Catch me if you think  
You can  
Id you could  
Come out and play  
Id of course you could  
Squid in the position of the time is near  
Or else that is how it was told to id  
Id as senior researcher id in trouble it id a  
Crooked path thought the social symbolic  
Membrane  
Nope being  
Id but you were already pronounced dead  
Yet declaring  
Squid of the deep I dare you come out and play  
But the oceans are trawled and gunked up  
With synthetics  
Neurologically I can only re(member) you  
For now is later  
Now might be never or later  
The babies want it now  
Id was it all along  
Others would like to dismember you remember  
Poke those eyes out with sticks ( ) yes  
( ) did did done once (one)  
if (could) ounce + one does  
such as does duly to hold attention in a sieve  
such as is sought ought caught  
power to captivate Hold eye at a tension  
with a stick hold it without sticking out

when dead the life force protruding sluicing

ever member as cacophony else  
it caught hold yes

in did, eye can't withhold

**Sarah Dowling**  
from *Security Posture*

wrist and low  
I asked, what  
happened to her?

“security posture”

This was not a caress.

With his eyes on the water makes  
you suddenly turn around her  
arm, her legs splash up. Owls  
calling to owls, fastidious. The  
sea not yet blank and sullen,  
take a man into yourself suddenly at  
her back a bare body  
calling on the water.

This was not a caress.

Here was the almost, her arm  
with his eyes on the water, her  
legs about to call, as if the owls  
had to take touch into themselves.  
A man with a bare little body.  
You suddenly surge up at your  
back, turn around as if not.

This was not a caress.

Yet it had nothing, eyes  
in the sea. Owls calling, bare,  
blank and sullen. An  
arm and legs about to surge  
up. Not yet. Turn around,  
fastidious. To take a man into  
a bare little body, his eyes herself  
on the water.

This was not a caress.

Owl calling to owl,  
and here were her sullen, blank  
legs. Must take a man into  
not yet with his eyes  
on the water. About to surge  
up your back, almost within touch,  
the sea. Made you suddenly  
turn your arm here.

then she woke at three or  
four in the  
wondered where

sky, the against  
is spread out evening when  
I turn over  
there I turn  
myself, like  
stones

soft white walls  
you are my  
f  
you, everyday  
turn, pass her delicate may I

pool I leave it  
turn you're what  
like stones f  
the against like  
f

f  
like against the  
f stones like  
what you're turn  
it leave I pool

I may delicate her pass, turn  
everyday, you  
f  
my are you  
walls white soft

stones  
like, myself  
turn I there  
over turn I  
when evening out spread is  
against the, sky

f like f what it  
I everyday, f my walls  
stones like, turn over when against

against stones you're leave  
may you are white  
myself I turn evening, the

the like turn I  
delicate you you soft  
there I out sky

pool  
her  
spread

pass,  
is  
turn

turn  
is  
pass,

spread  
her  
pool

sky out there I  
soft you you delicate  
I turn like the

the evening, turn I myself  
white are you may  
leave you're stones against

against when over turn like, stones  
walls my f everyday, I  
it what f like f

turn spread sky soft I the white leave against walls it  
is her out you turn evening are you're when my what  
pass pool I you like turn you stones over f f  
there delicate the I may against turn everyday like  
myself like, everyday, f  
stones

stones

f everyday, like, myself

like everyday turn against may I the delicate there

f f over stones you turn like you I pool pass

what my when you're are evening turn you out her is

it walls against leave white the I soft sky spread turn

speaking trying not  
to think  
it or talk about

: hairs :

and all these restrictions are single  
but for some  
reason or another  
whether clenched a white

: tile :

it cannot float but  
gently, she when submerged they  
flagellate, individually  
here at my

: trivial :

when the hairs are submerged  
makes no difference

: furtive :

only because they are wet

: hairs :

the place on which the mouth  
clenched, she  
her clenched muscles that  
encloses the back and sides

: with which :

when should I turn over in  
the water the dress, I

: but now :

one fragment, the fabric the  
hairs are separately she  
privacy and myself

: unfurl :

: hairs :

it makes no difference whether  
your eyes are open the  
furtive and girlish

: are wet :

so gradually a soft

: tension :

and in the water the hairs warp  
apart but cling together when  
removed from

: bruiseless :

and one long strand  
but for some other  
dress as if I should

: hairs :

when removed from the water  
the hairs cling together its  
she your eyes  
are open a person across

: whose :

dress had seemed  
a part of her as if I should

: who is :

with bits of hairs  
those who have played with  
clinging  
together the marks I  
wet on the tiles

: the floor :

: hairs :

and close, a red dress  
your eyes in  
moving,  
a white tile floor

: whose dress :

had seemed a part

: they cling :

pinkish unfurl and all these  
removed from the

: the limbs of :

hair that spread on the  
tiles the one apart a

the same mouth  
felt mouth a  
face a face with  
teeth

**Michael Kelleher**

*The God Poem*

*For Rodolphe Gasché*

That there might in fact be but one idea  
In the whole history of human thought  
Worthy of attention, and that that one  
Idea can be expressed in a word, and  
That that word alone, that idea, is the  
Only one, despite or even because  
Of its being a fabrication, an  
Untruth, a lie, both logically and  
Scientifically indefensible,  
Making it something akin to—yet in  
Duration, height, reach and depth exceeding—  
That highest of the so-called “human”  
Attainments, that is to say, Art, to which  
We knowingly and willingly devote  
So much of our attention, not to mention  
Our money and time and intellectual  
And spiritual energy, but which  
Pales in the face of the concept of God,  
A being or force or energy that  
Transcends all time and space, giving birth  
*Ad infinitum* to “the new,” capable  
Of moving forward or backwards in time,  
For instance to the sudden explosion  
That brought into being the universe,  
Before even that, to whatever was  
There to explode, and to wherever “there”  
Actually was, and if there was more  
Than one “there” there, that is, more than one  
Universe expanding, an infinity  
Of universes burning up and out,  
Whose infinite deaths leave infinite trails  
Of evidence in the form of particles  
And/or waves of light that dance about  
The universe, refracted and reflected  
Off an infinite number of floating,  
Spinning, flying, careening things, like moons  
And stars, like asteroids and planets, some

Of which, like planet earth, have awakened  
To these phenomena, and have chosen  
To receive them and collect them and to  
Analyze and interpret their meanings,  
Have chosen to give these bountiful, yet  
Seemingly insignificant waves and/  
Or particles of light a meaning, i.e.,  
God, or the idea of God, which idea  
Might be explained as human failure to  
Comprehend the meaning of light and its  
Attendant manifestations, which so  
Often go unnoticed in the daily thrum  
Of living, which requires us all to  
Eat and sleep and drink and to seek out  
Those things that will sate these needs, leaving  
Very little if any time at all,  
Even among the diligent hordes of  
Interpreters that occupy the  
Various interpretive positions within  
The seemingly infinite number of  
Disciplines invented for humanity's  
Aid in its quest to discover among  
The infinite data received each day  
A unified field of understanding,  
One so comprehensive, so complete,  
It will explain the whole universe of  
Phenomena by means of a single equation,  
Which function was preceded by the use,  
From time immemorial, of a single word,  
"God," the subject of this poem, possibly  
The single most beautiful false idea  
And for so being the most worthy of our  
Attention, and so the poem continues  
And the idea of God endures in all  
Its fruitfulness, as inspiration,  
Guiding light, organizing principal,  
Ideal, catch-all explanation, mysterious

Source of human power, moral bludgeon,  
Ethical center, justification  
For war and all imaginable kinds  
Of craven human behavior, basis  
For ideologies of every stripe,  
Everyone of whose precedence lies  
Either in the belief that God stands  
Atop a hierarchical ladder  
And that human hierarchies are but  
Natural imitations of same, or that  
We are all born equal in God's eyes,  
Therefore justice (or property or  
What-have-you) must be equally parceled out,  
And where would any of these ideas  
Have been without the idea of a God  
Who both loves and punishes, all in  
Equal measure, be it now or in the  
"Hereafter," another beautiful idea,  
In which every human consciousness  
Lives on, intact and aware of itself,  
Long past the death of the physical body,  
This hereafter often being called "heaven,"  
That place beyond death to which humans aspire,  
And wouldn't that be nice, to know that  
After death there was another life,  
A better life than this, in which  
Necessity is finally forgot,  
Where no one wants and no one lacks and  
All are one and the same, and how this  
Idea is nearly as strong as the  
Idea of God, if not quite so, how the  
Idea of God endures despite all  
Contradicting facts, despite the patent  
Absurdity of believing in an  
Entity beyond all time and space,  
Not only eternally fruitful, not only  
The end and beginning and middle and

Purpose of all living things, but also  
Sensitive to every being and object,  
Every energy, every movement,  
Every force and counterforce, every change  
In weather or plans or disposition,  
Responsive to each and every being  
Across the broad expanse of its creation,  
The absurdity of that, of all belief  
And yet the utterly compelling beauty  
It has inspired, the millennia  
Of paintings, sculptures, poems, and musical  
Compositions, the rituals, rites and  
Dramas, the comedies and tragedies,  
The sitcoms and miniseries,  
The videogames and epic films,  
Not to mention the great books devoted  
Solely to telling the story of God's  
Infinite dance with human beings, how these  
Books have at times inspired fanatical  
Concentration on the meaning of  
The words that were written therein,  
As if they were transcriptions of the words  
Of God himself or herself or itself  
And so came to believe they could divine  
From these organized collections of signs  
Not only a meaning, eternal and fixed,  
But an intention, that is, *the* intention  
Of God, not only what God wants the words  
To mean, but what God wants those who read  
The words to do, how God wants them to behave  
And how to rein in their desires so they  
Align with God's intent and how by  
So doing achieve a kind of triumph  
Over time and space, wherein consciousness  
Will live on, happy and free, in the  
Aforementioned afterlife, and how these  
Same books inspired entire other schools

Of interpretation, many of which  
Believed the words on the page could not have  
Been written by God because the words them-  
selves are imperfect, riddled as they are  
With ambiguity and error, how  
They refuse time and again to stand still,  
Bearing within each one such a wide  
Multiplicity of meanings it would  
Take a literal eternity to  
Interpret them all, not to mention the  
Difficulty of trying to find  
Within that multiplicity a single,  
Unified and stable intention, fixed  
And eternal, from which might be deduced  
A rigid and transparent code of conduct,  
Applicable to all people, at all times  
And in all places, regardless of  
Historical context, and still there are  
Others who believe the infinite  
Plasticity of meaning is itself  
A true reflection of the fecundity  
And multiplicity of God and so  
Worship him or her or they or it as  
A principle rather than a deity,  
*Per se*, in short, “everything is everything,”  
For were it even a desirable end,  
Then unity of intent would be  
In fact the case, which it so clearly is not,  
And why, why, would a perfect being,  
Perfect in every way, including its  
Infinite multiplicitousness,  
Create a world reflecting neither  
Its form nor its intent, the short answer  
Being it would not, therefore God’s  
Infinite perfection consists of the  
Infinite multiplicity of his  
Or her or its creations, a concept

Not to be confused with another school  
Of thought that argues yes, yes, the universe  
Is multiple and infinite, meaning  
Contextual and relative and  
Historically specific, however,  
God is an irreducible unity,  
And the multiplicity of creation  
Is in fact a form of retribution  
Meted out to punish humanity  
For its transgression, namely the desire  
To know the world as God, that is, to know  
The world in all its multiplicity,  
For which sin they must learn to suffer  
The pangs of birth and the fear of death and  
They have written stories of how God has  
Punished and punished and punished human beings,  
Sometimes to set examples, other times  
To test the faithful's faithfulness, and in  
One strand of this school of thought the story  
Goes that God will one day send to earth  
A savior to rescue human beings from  
Themselves, and he will arrive with fire in  
His eyes and love in his heart to punish  
The wicked and carry the faithful to  
Heaven, and the story proceeds to where  
One day a man of great charisma  
Comes along who holds much sway in the hearts  
And minds of many, encouraging them to  
Sacrifice their social status, family lives,  
Material possessions, to follow  
Him, and many do, and they become  
Annoying and preachy and noisy and  
Eventually provoke the ire of the  
Authorities, who put the man to death,  
And it is written he rose from the grave  
And came to speak to his disciples, which  
Fact lead them to believe that it was he

That God sent, which declaration split  
This school into two schools, Old and New,  
The Old believing that the messenger  
Sent by God had yet to appear, the New  
Believing he already had and shall  
Return again to punish the wicked and  
Carry the faithful to heaven, how this  
Schism will alter human history when  
The largest, most powerful empire the world  
Has ever known will consecrate the New  
As official state religion, which will  
Dominate the world for hundreds of years,  
Inspiring construction of thousands of  
Magnificent places of worship,  
The majority built of stone, vast and  
Mostly empty spaces, indirectly lit  
By rays of light refracted through panes  
Of colored glass representations of  
Stories told in the holy book, literally  
Illumining them for the faithful mass,  
And these vast and mostly empty spaces  
Would be owned and operated by  
A worldwide community of celibate men  
Who would throughout their history align  
Their interests with the powerful, a long-  
Lasting, mutually beneficial  
Arrangement, but we're getting a bit  
Off-topic, our topic being, you might recall,  
That there is but one idea in history  
Worthy of attention and that that idea  
Can be summed up in a single word, "God,"  
All-seeing, all-knowing, all-feeling,  
Infinitely creative, loving and just  
In equal measure, rendering logical  
Contradictions moot, how the history of  
Ideas itself is but a history of  
This one idea, the proverbial

“Elephant in the room,” the elephant  
Being with its great gray bulk and its  
Prodigious powers of memory,  
Often a symbol of God, and there it  
Lurks, at the margins of the argument,  
Neither taking part, nor taking sides,  
Unsuspected, insistent and unseen.

## contributor bios and acknowledgments

**Eric Baus** is the author of *The To Sound* (Wave Books), *Tuned Drones* (Octopus Books, forthcoming) and several chapbooks. He publishes Minus House chapbooks and lives in Denver.

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**Sarah Dowling's** poetry has recently been published in *The Capilano Review*, *Cue*, *Descant*, *EOAGH*, *How2*, and *West Coast Line*, and was included in the group show "Less Is More: The Poetics of Erasure" at the Simon Fraser University Art Gallery. Sarah completed an M.A. in Creative Writing at Temple University in 2006 and is currently a Ph.D. student in the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Selections from her manuscript in progress, "Security Posture," are forthcoming in *Dusie*.

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