

This book contains the first 25 installments in a series of 100 poems, each titled “THE END,” all written between April 2013 and February 2017.¹ During this time period, I used these poems as a place to think about what form does, and about how using the same form for a long time might make new kinds of things visible. I started with a simple task: that of noticing things, and of writing them down as simply as possible. The poems filled up with conversations, and I asked friends whose conversations had filtered into the poems to respond—those responses are mixed in here. I gave myself one constraint: the only kind of punctuation I was allowed to use was the period.²

¹ The last poem in this chapbook was written in early June 2015.

² This constraint developed into a little running joke with myself: one of the things I began to notice and record was the place and time of the beginnings of my own periods. I’ve always liked the idea of the female body as inherently grammatical.

THE END

Open the refrigerator. Moved nonconsecutive across *Anno Domini*. Into tonight. April 2, 2013. What kind of breath brings a body. Commodity flavor. What if there is no book I know. What does Whitman have to say about this. There. Some light. As if the ocean wanted to keep its place. Heavy machinery. An unexpected bird grounded and outsized. Man in sunglasses. Last breath of their expiring friends. My city all indoors. All scraped with light. You are looking where nothing builds. You have a song. Evening comes on fast. Under all the floor tiles. A fireplace where it all gets named. Artificial blood. On a sidewalk in a memory of terror. There is only one word for it. Pattern in the skin. Pattern in the fern. Sour apple. An artificial pink. 2001. What kind of space in sequins. A pear rotting or in shadow. Placed in some dimensions. A camera keeps secret. What do you remember when you speak. Boxes emptied but not discarded. Wide necked bottle. Bodies of theory. Houses from inside. When you might see a wire in the sky. What sort of window moves in this way. Kinds of indoor panic. An arm touched and unfamiliar. A line down the block. Body in a trashcan 1940. Radiator askew. All the tiny cuts half healing. Beamed through time and into a kitchen. Letters blue blue and black. Is the paper soft and how enveloped might the boy find himself. The story of how I shat my pants. Everything for a dollar. Last rights. Dead bees carefully placed in the periphery. Fringe in a hallway. Respiring or repining or expiring. How to make the water colder. A cloud of many small changes. April 3, 2013.

Bus comes around a rounded mountain. Leaves fading in the fading sun. Exit 78. Did you do the dishes. Did you make the bed. Nonintersecting lines as a condition of safety. I said *the typewriter*. I write in the margin *what about the colonies*. In light of progressive industrialization. You stop paying attention and the street numbers get higher. Would you call it a spiritual instrument. Would you consider this an amplification. Talked with a stranger about the best way to cook it. A blood clot makes it hard to climb the stairs. It gets cold at night and colder in morning. There is a song playing but only you can hear it. Four days of paintings by the staircase. Made a mistake and let fronds drag on the pavement. I could tell it was morning by the artificial harp. Then Ian makes a joke in a poem. How is taste a precondition. How to keep the vegetables from going bad. I got my period in the specialist's office. Long white fluorescent lights slide by overhead. The wall was carpeted in a panel behind the tap. A quick rainstorm followed by an hour in air conditioning. It was an afternoon kind of light at the wrong time of day. He said *that's not what that essay is about*. Did they believe in the death of the lyric. When we saw the past in color photographs. I disliked the woman on the bus. Ratatouille. Plums in a sieve. I realize I also read over your shoulder. Distance from your body to the taillights ahead. You don't need to understand the process. When you get to the end you reverse and push off.

IAN WRITES BACK:

And lo, it came to pass that George said to Jerry: 'What'd you do today? There's a show, that's a show.' These could be poems about nothing, if life is nothing and everything that happens is nothing. Which is also to say these are poems about everything, a record of material existence in a disintegrating time. 'What if the perfect poem has an infinitely small audience?' We know what we're waking to—that's what waking is—but not where we've been—and that's called sleep.

'We have been asked to know how we know things. Trying to be everywhere at once. Walk right into the ocean. Water touches the container ship touches my foot.' A kind of timekeeping, a zodiac fashioned from whatever the world gives us. Salvage song. Histories are being desiccated into mere pasts all around us. In these poems we follow the crazy shapes of experience through a life we can almost remember. And there's a beat, a rhythmic push that feels drawn from the pulse of walking and talking. Emergence and eclipse of an episodic sublime. 'All the checks my pale skin writes. Is there someone I can give this receipt to. I saved the lyrics on my phone. I wiped them in the upgrade.'

I read somewhere that Paul Blackburn wanted to record poets for jukeboxes. MC's work would be perfect for this, danceable scholarship that gets theory, romanticism, post-war America—all our excellent bullshit—on the floor. 'Narrated the wedding on my Emoji keyboard. You stayed to watch the lights change slowly. You spread out your scarf like a blanket.'

I am so grateful for these wonderful poems. They prove that there is a world, and that we are, somehow, in it.