

Ben Van Buren (Yonkers International Press) →

The internet is so silent, I love that. Silence because you aren't in the room, and I miss you. Or maybe an old author is dead and they stare back at you from the back cover of your favorite version of them. Something called big data echo-locates an outline of ourselves in its mission to overcome our silence and know us without ever having had to ask. The art book, the dance, push back with silence. But they don't have goals the way Big Data does. Choreographic writing is the act of taking responsibility for the relationship between the material and a text at all stages of its life and afterlife. The dance and the art book are popular right now because they know something big data doesn't. An autobiography is never done so long as after the final period is placed the author keeps on breathing. Augustine "wrote" the Confessions incidentally—they accumulated alongside someone doing repetition and memorization for the sake of it. We author our own autobiographies insofar as we interact with the almost entirely sensorized, digitally mediated, and legally agreed upon world of the city. Autobiography shows up alongside us as the happy accident of so many feedback loops. If I miss you it's because I love you. Not a little, I miss you a lot because I love you a lot. And so in between us I make a letter, a text message, a package, a book. We meet there. It's harder with the non-living loves. It's harder because with them you can't entertain any goals. You know there's no seeing them now or ever. The art book knows this. The dance knows this. Knows that silence is the highest form of speech that lovers can share. Sharing a silent room. Conversing. Because such a conversation always accepts the transience of things—silently acknowledges that we're not long for this world. Speaking in silence always renders the act of sharing the space of silence "enough." Poetry's economy of words knows this: knows that it doesn't need to explain everything, because we who read it will remember that which isn't on the page and fill it in ourselves. Adequacy is what we're after. Adequacy, which isn't a compromise between opulence and impoverishment but rather a space made out of nothing in which, to use words that aren't my

own, “Being there together is enough.” Or, said another way with other words not mine, “Why shouldn’t something I’ve always known be the very best there is?” Being an art book has nothing to do with the kind of paper, the binding, the handwritten-ness of the thing. It has to do with intention. With whether or not the author intentionally *wrote* the martial the same way they *designed* the text. (That’s a cheap but fine conflation, sorry.) But who can resist the biography? Who can resist guessing how Wallace or Eileen’s lives shaped the meaning of their poems? I want to know. I want to know because I want to stir alongside whomever has my heart at the moment, in spite of not sharing a bed, or a decade. I can’t help it. Meaning in history is tricky. God only knows. We live in a moment torn between different ideas of what silence actually is. We don’t need church. Maybe we do need to throw up our hands and get off Facebook. But I don’t think so. We need to gather. To get together over and over again until we can’t anymore. We don’t need goals. We don’t need progress. We don’t need the eschatology, modern progress, or the blockchain. The internet is a fever dream from which we would do well to awake, and the digital is the color of distance, not the space we inhabit when we are apart. When I am alone I still only inhabit my body and the room you aren’t in. I want to do things together with you over and over again, until we don’t have to talk about it. And then maybe we’ll laugh.