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it is to catch sight of yourself in a mirrored room from an angle just off from dead-on, how it takes a moment to ratchet back into yourself from the position of someone observing you. We've all had experiences when, after reading something dozens of times, even over several years, you suddenly realize that a word or a phrase is totally different from the way you had been reading it, and for a moment you negotiate between the alternatives, as if it really could be either way.

Eric Baus's careful and beautiful second book, *Tuned Drones*, is written in the belief that such experiences have metaphorical and romantic resonance. Baus has said in an interview that people tend to misread the book's title as "turned doves" and "tuned bones," and the language often seems to invite these kinds of mistakes. The line, "To me it is like I am walking to a microphone," asks, to me anyway, to be misread ("To me it is like I am talking to a microphone"). The line is from the sequence "I Know the Letters This Way," a title that practically apologizes for any misunderstandings.

Misreadings are so personal, though, so who's to say whether anyone else will see these things the way I do? *Tuned Drones* was built for questions like this: Patterns suggest themselves—words repeated at meaningful intervals, poems that seem to be the product of mechanical compositional methods, a sort of he and she narrative, or the use of titles within poems—but the patterns *only* suggest themselves. Take, for instance, whatever mechanical compositional methods might be at work. Baus said in an interview that he used different kinds of "mechanical processes that didn't involve a lot of my conscious intervention: putting things in columns, cutting them up, mulching and harvesting the language." It's interesting, though. These poems aren't like Ted Berrigan's Sonnet XV, where the compositional method used is fairly apparent. Whatever processes Baus used, he didn't accept their results like the outcome of a survey. And yet at the same time, it certainly does seem like a mechanical process was at work. And that's how all the larger patterns are. They leave no discernable hook, so one is left with occasional suggestions

Tuned Drones
Eric Baus
(Octopus Books 2009)
REVIEW BY PAUL KILLEBREW

It's so difficult to break the mind out of its habits. Slavoj Žižek talks about how strange

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that surface and dissipate like déjà vu sensations. What happens to you after you pick up on something like that? What kinds of decisions are you making, and why do you make the decisions you do?

Tuned Doves is constructed so that there's time to consider. Much of the book has a fairly spartan vocabulary, and one- and two-syllable words predominate: "The way I talk is a result of the way I hear her I was told but it took how long to show up in cursive." The austerity of the words pulls the poems down to rudiments, but it doesn't make the poems any chummier. If anything, it's like an Ian Tyson image made up of blocks of blue or gray; the poems strike you with the incredible abstraction that resides at the very basic levels of the medium.

Tuning involves modulating a pitch or frequency within an interval until you find a desired point: "A boy becomes related to water. A body recording over waves." Imagine a kind of tuning where the point can't be found because it keeps slipping. Like the title of one poem, "Inside any good song someone is lost," words in *Tuned Doves* are moving targets: "What is wood is wood, what is cast is beautifully cast." Or consider the dense reverb in this title: "An echoed exoskeleton". Or "It's raining.' It's raining."

I used the word "romantic" earlier and did so for a reason. It's not only because Baus gendered the poems in *Tuned Doves*—we have a he and a she, a boy and a man and a woman (though never a girl), a Mrs. Hand and Miss Toy, a woman named "Ding"—but also because romance is one way to tap into the broader meanings of the modulations occurring at the level of language. I thought of it this way: say one day I realize I have developed an unfavorable impression of another person, and the same day a friend brings up that person in a conversation. I ask, What do you think of him? My friend says, I really like him, he's so nice! I don't quite know what to say. I ask myself, Is there something wrong with me? Does my friend know something I don't? Later, I fall in love with him, and later still I think, No, I had him pegged all along. This, I think, is largely how I've come to know anything about the world. New experiences recalibrate expectations,

a process that feels like refinement while it's happening but that in retrospect is probably better described as flailing. What narratives there are in *Tuned Doves* seem to follow this course, one that "romance" seems to capture well enough. "She appears as herself. The same someone else." "I am not her son. A ding and its echo, snow." But the narratives are only part of it; thermostatic familiarity pervades *Tuned Doves*. We see it happen to the speaker and his voice ("Out of the bus and talking, he is trying to reappear."), and to the poems and their words ("Hello. Normal Hello.") The book's great beauty is to make it all of a piece.

Paul Killebrew is the author of *Flowers*, forthcoming from Canarium Books. He is a lawyer at Innocence Project New Orleans.
