



Getting on and Through: Bodily Routes for Thought and Knowing

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Thinking Partner, VK Preston

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts, Dance

2022

University of the Arts



Long ago I was swept onto your trail and I've never stepped off.
Ours is a life-long pact. An agreement to which we are both tethered.

I am not after you. I'm not seeking or looking to know what you are.
We don't know what we can be yet.

It helps to think of you as a question and when my body tries to answer it,
I get to find out how life wants to express itself.

When that expression comes through, you fade away. I fade away.
Life doesn't need us anymore.

Until we come back and try again.





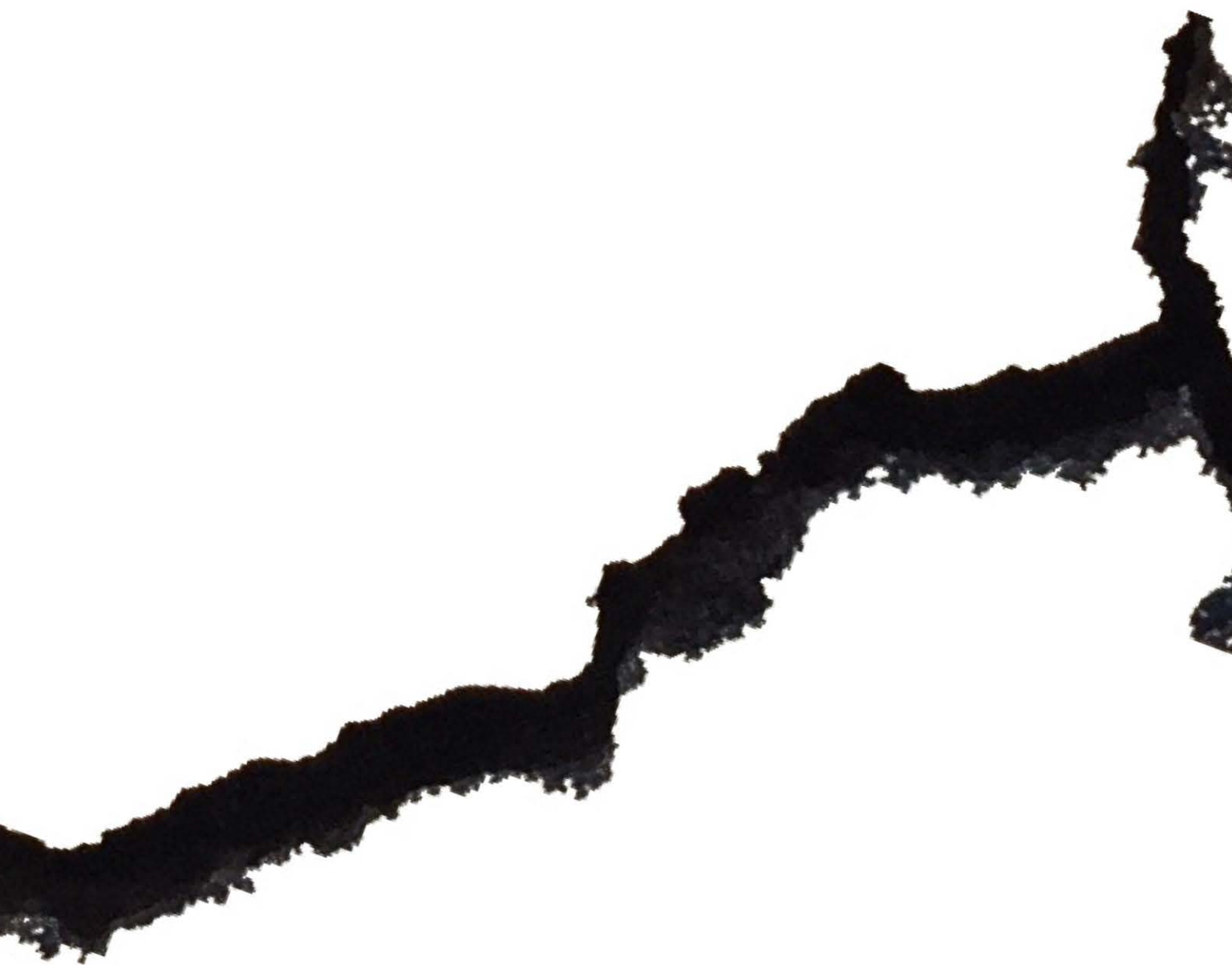
The slippery green frog
that went to his death
in the heron's pink throat
was my small brother,

and the heron
with the white plumes
like a crown on his head
who is washing now his great sword-beak
in the shining pond
is my tall thin brother.

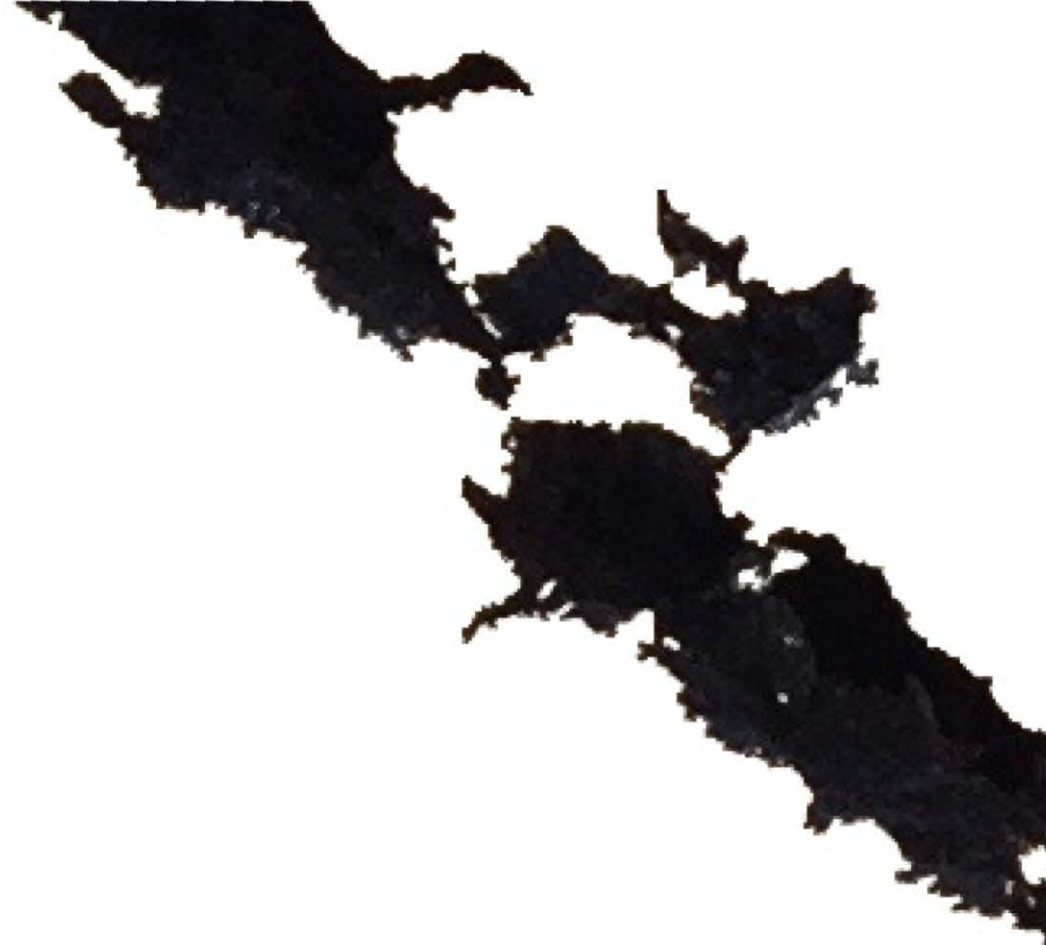
My heart dresses in black
and dances.¹











CONTENTS:

MEMORY

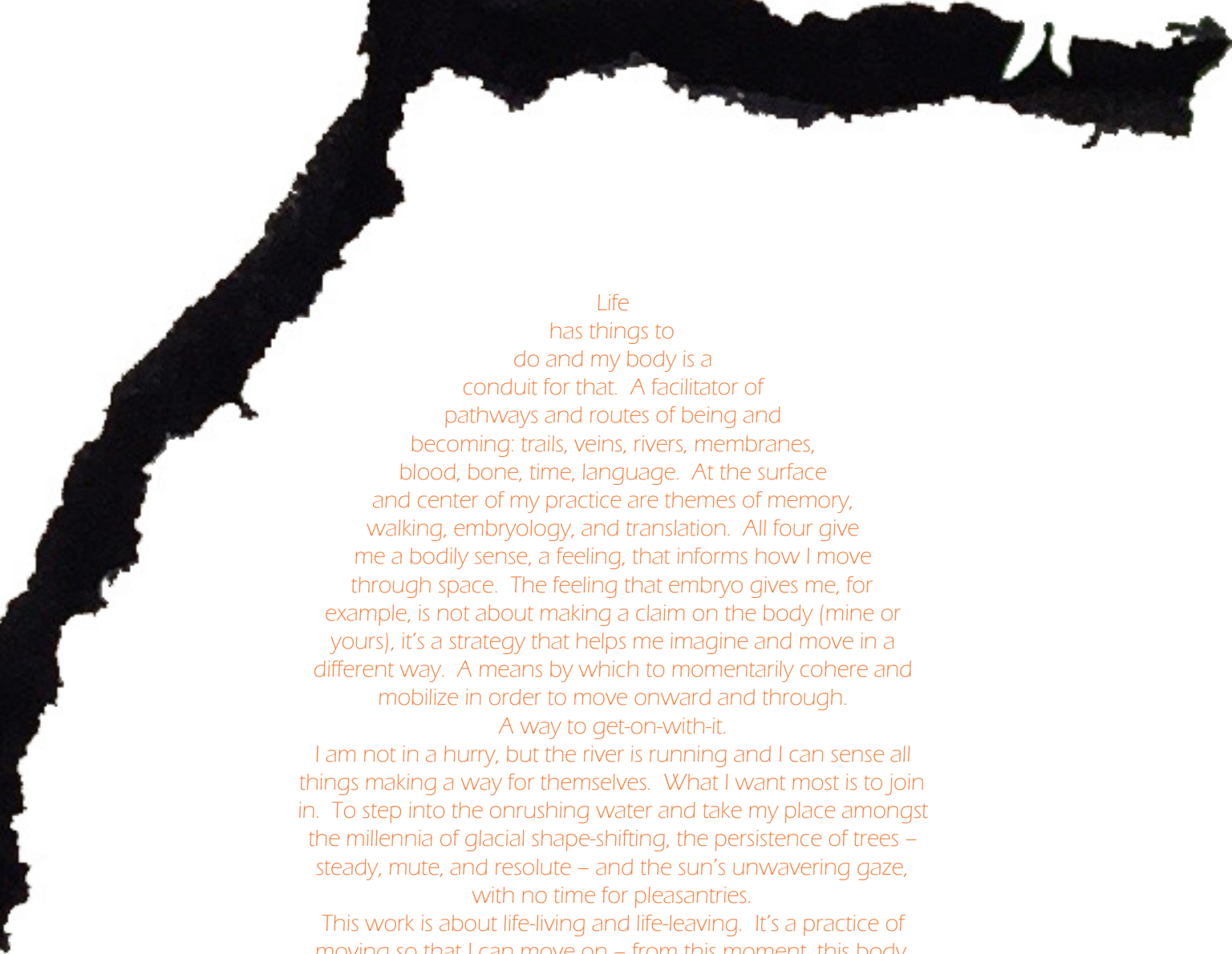
EMBRYO

WALKING

TRANSLATION








Life
has things to
do and my body is a
conduit for that. A facilitator of
pathways and routes of being and
becoming: trails, veins, rivers, membranes,
blood, bone, time, language. At the surface
and center of my practice are themes of memory,
walking, embryology, and translation. All four give
me a bodily sense, a feeling, that informs how I move
through space. The feeling that embryo gives me, for
example, is not about making a claim on the body (mine or
yours), it's a strategy that helps me imagine and move in a
different way. A means by which to momentarily cohere and
mobilize in order to move onward and through.

A way to get-on-with-it.


I am not in a hurry, but the river is running and I can sense all
things making a way for themselves. What I want most is to join
in. To step into the onrushing water and take my place amongst
the millennia of glacial shape-shifting, the persistence of trees –
steady, mute, and resolute – and the sun's unwavering gaze,
with no time for pleasantries.

This work is about life-living and life-leaving. It's a practice of
moving so that I can move on – from this moment, this body,
this self, this life. It's about edging closer to thresholds of
experience that tell me a little bit more about who, where,
and how I am. It's about paying radical attention to the
moment, without lingering or getting too attached.
Discovery without prolonging. Making sensation seen;
the felt visible. Articulating the pre-verbal, if only for
a moment and then releasing it back out into the
untranslatable. Once articulated, it doesn't
need me anymore and its briefness is
so gorgeous.



My earliest memories of movement are of those
individuals closest to me.
Nearby and local.
My mother, father, teacher,
and childhood best friend.
I studied their posture and gestures.
How their bodies were activated by the space
around them,
producing the possibility for something else.
Their movements were propositions for inquiry.
Sites of exploration against which
I could compare and contrast
my own mobilizations.

When I give these memories more space – when I let them
live larger than I have before – I remember more.



I remember a young girl so hungry and curious
about movement she would study herself
on home videos of family vacations to the beach and amuse-
ment parks, pick out which gestures
she found particularly intriguing, and then try those movements
out in other social contexts.
I remember someone up at dawn to review material for her
Royal Academy of Dance exams,
or up past her bedtime determined to learn every step of every
dance recorded on her recital videos.
Or the leather ballet shoes I found in my mom's closet once.
I think she took adult ballet classes at the rec center where she
would later enroll me, but I'm not sure.
No one dances in my family and ballet has always been my
bodily experience, but I wonder
if my mom has any dance memories of her own.
She does love to move.
"I danced a million miles to this song," she always says when
she hears a song from the fifties and sixties.
When my dad was alive, my mom often lamented how she
wished he had been more of a dancer.
She liked to jitterbug.
My dad preferred hiking.
His dance was on the trail.

I saw a large photograph once at the Academy of Sciences – a depiction of the earth some four billion years ago – with hot, molten magma




magma, churning vaporous water and ammonia into the air. As soon as my eyes laid upon it, the feeling was "there I am." Instantly, I recognized an ancestral line, as much as my Russian and Irish roots. My people are fiery lava, rock, gas, and dust. My people came out of the water and went back in. My people walk long distances, hide, and escape. They wait for the others on the other side of the river, sing loudly, and say "over here, you're safe, we've been waiting for you."

Routes and rootedness. Mobility that has roots. I am on the move and also tethered to the earth by the weight of my own body and what it carries. I've been carrying around my earliest memories of movement for almost forty years. These first impressions of body, gesture, shape, and form have been mostly in the background of my thoughts, but they have risen to the surface and feel more awake now. They don't feel in my past, but vitally present.

*movement
Hobbes
movement
K. Agony*

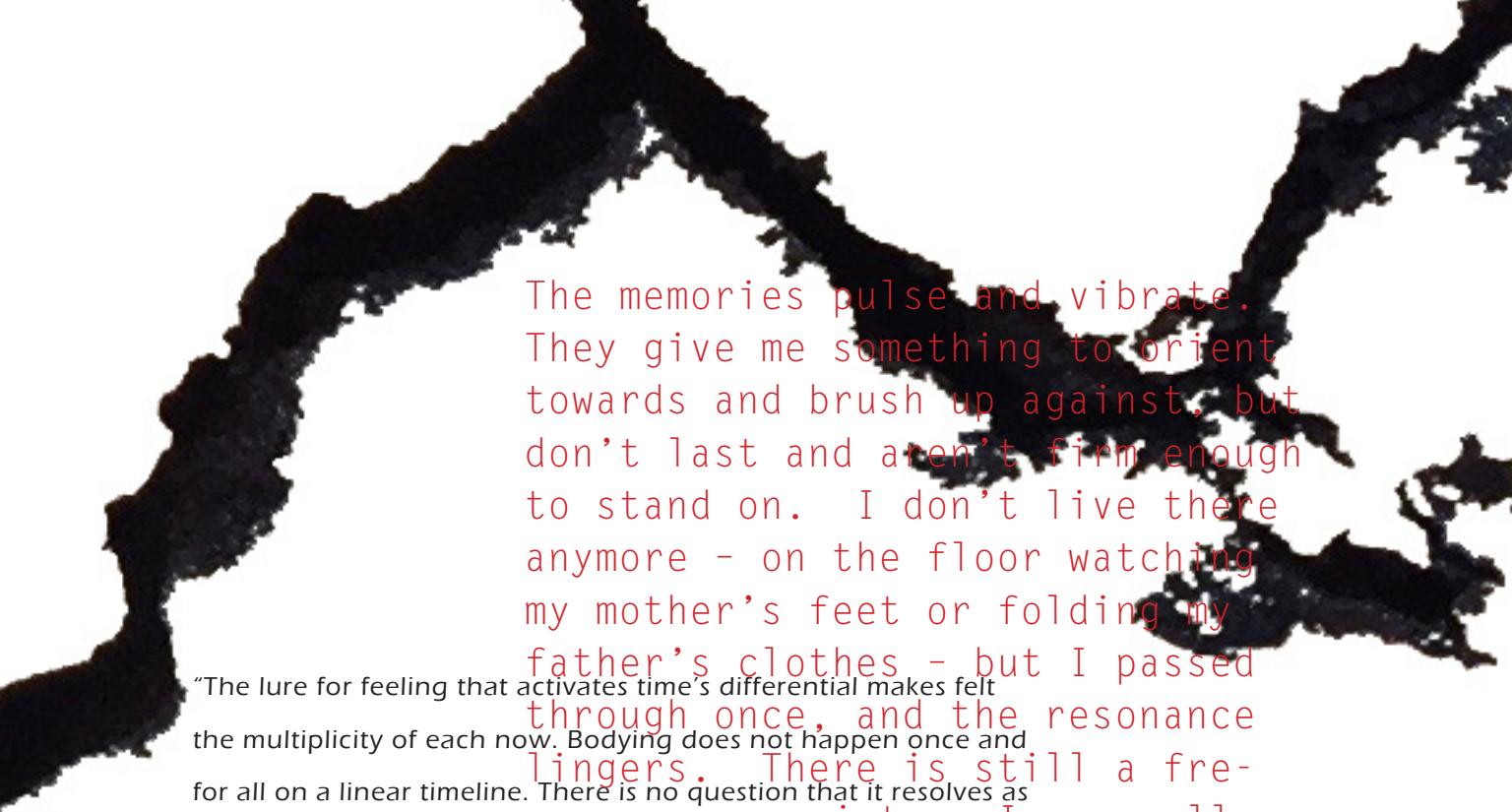
When I was six years old I often watched my mother rock my newborn sister to sleep in the living room. I was mesmerized by my mother's feet. Crossed at the ankles, barefoot, and slightly turned out. I liked the shape they made as they pushed off the floor and landed again. They were long and stretched. Soft, but also defined at the edges. Her back foot did most of the work, pushing off gently with the metatarsals. Her front foot would only touch the floor with the tips of her toes. The gesture was soothing and aesthetically pleasing. There was an undulation and coordination to it all that I was curious about. My mom liked to watch TV as she rocked my sister. I'd lie on the floor and stare at her feet.

What do these activate in me now and how do they help me get on? How are they another pathway onward? Can I move closer to the memories by moving with them? In them? To move in memory. To get on within the past.

A white long-sleeved shirt and white pants are laid out on a light-colored tiled floor. The shirt is at the top, and the pants are at the bottom. A dark, irregular, ink-like smudge runs diagonally across the middle of the image, partially obscuring the shirt and pants.

My father always wore a suit to work. I was enamored with the inside pocket of his jacket. The way he had to open up one side, reach in with the opposite hand, pull the desired object out, and close the suit. I liked how his body interacted with the suit. That there was this unseen place to store belongings and it required such an elegant and orderly sequence of movements to retrieve them. Shortly after my father died, my mother decided to donate most of his clothes and asked me to go through the pockets in case there was anything to save

This moment still has things to say, still guides me. I often go inside the memory and look around. I use it to wonder towards death and move closer to language rich enough for my experience. When impulse comes at me and for me, it arrives like color, resonance, texture, thickness, weight. Shades of perception and sensation that work in me and look for a way. I will go back to her, always. To bodily sense and feeling to tell me how to move my mind, mouth, and heart.



The memories pulse and vibrate.
They give me something to orient
towards and brush up against, but
don't last and aren't firm enough
to stand on. I don't live there
anymore - on the floor watching
my mother's feet or folding my
father's clothes - but I passed
through once, and the resonance
lingers. There is still a fre-
quency, a register, I can call
upon. Still have a conversation
with. I don't want to settle
into memory or wade in nostalgia,
but hitch a ride on the appetite
that it stirs. The bodily force
of expression that propels me
through and on.

"The lure for feeling that activates time's differential makes felt the multiplicity of each now. Bodying does not happen once and for all on a linear timeline. There is no question that it resolves as an occasion of experience, and that this resolution has a specific date and time, but as a lure for feeling bodying is less a stable rendering of metric time than a collusion of durations.

Lures for feeling do not achieve form per se. They generate attunements, tendencies, force of form...What an occasion ultimately achieves is strictly speaking not a form but a tending, a mobile ecology. An occasion is less an object or a body than a **node**

of relation expressing itself momentarily as this or that — an edging into object, a swerving into body...While the culmination of a process into this or that subjective form has a definite endpoint, the affective tonality of the **now perishing occasion** will continue to color the process of the occasion shifting from its determinate nature to its perishing on the nexus of experience.

From appetite to event back to appetite."²

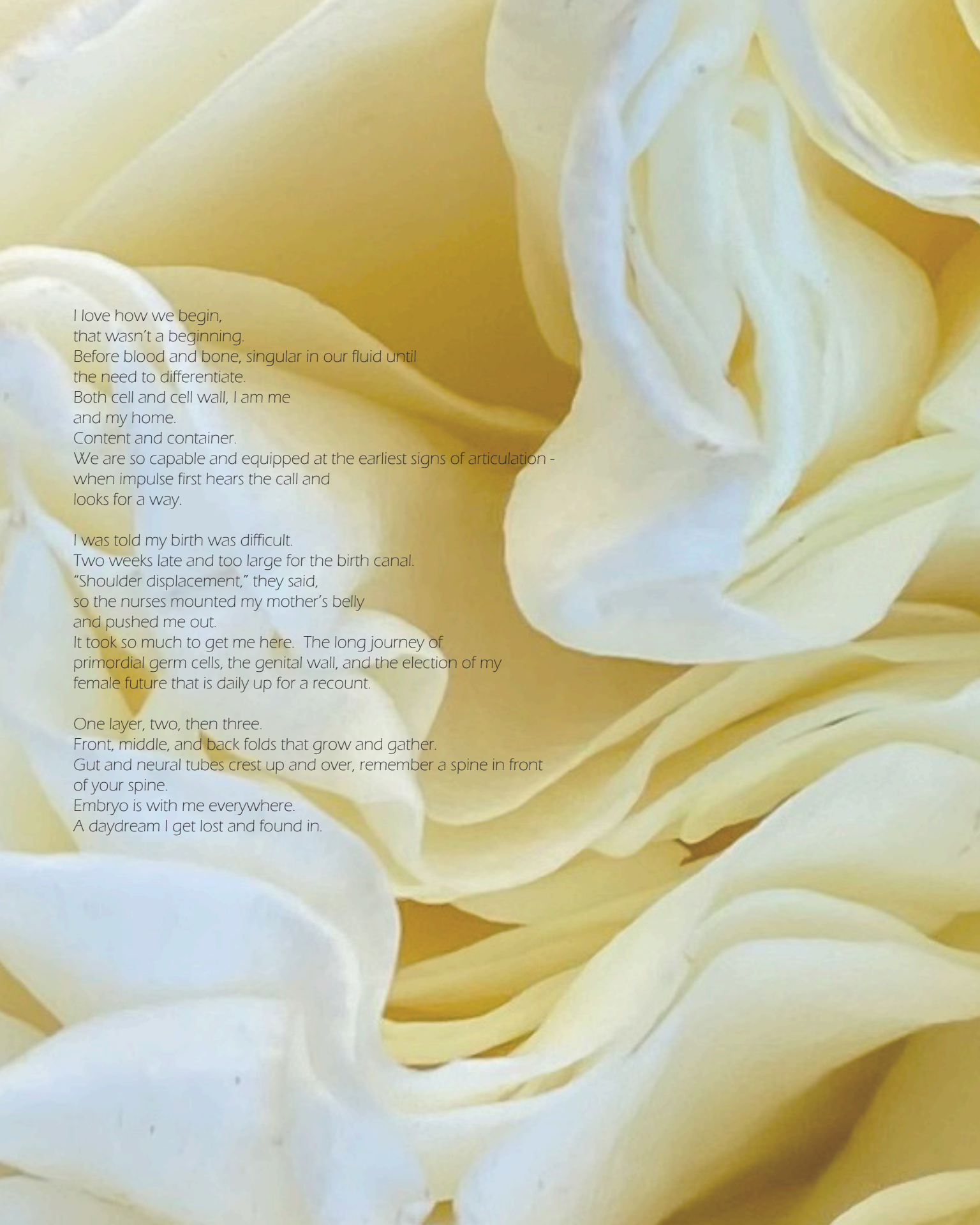








"In the beginning was movement. There was no rest because there was no cessation of movement. Rest was only an image that was too vast of what moved, an infinitely tired image that slowed movement down. In order to rest, we enlarged ourselves, we confused the issue, gathered up space, and unified time into a present that seemed to be everywhere, forever, at once. We breathed a sigh of relief, thinking we'd attained immobility. Finally we saw ourselves within a soothing image of self and world but this was forgetting the movement that continued silently, deep within our bodies. Microscopically, For how would it be possible to pass from rest to movement if movement did not already exist within rest? At the beginning, therefore, there was no beginning." -José Gil³




I love how we begin,
that wasn't a beginning.
Before blood and bone, singular in our fluid until
the need to differentiate.
Both cell and cell wall, I am me
and my home.
Content and container.
We are so capable and equipped at the earliest signs of articulation -
when impulse first hears the call and
looks for a way.

I was told my birth was difficult.
Two weeks late and too large for the birth canal.
"Shoulder displacement," they said,
so the nurses mounted my mother's belly
and pushed me out.
It took so much to get me here. The long journey of
primordial germ cells, the genital wall, and the election of my
female future that is daily up for a recount.

One layer, two, then three.
Front, middle, and back folds that grow and gather.
Gut and neural tubes crest up and over, remember a spine in front
of your spine.
Embryo is with me everywhere.
A daydream I get lost and found in.



A photograph showing a light blue ceramic plate on the right side, partially cut off by the frame. The plate sits on a dark, textured surface of small stones and gravel. Several dried, reddish-pink leaves are scattered on the ground around the plate. The leaves have a delicate, veined structure and some show signs of being crushed or broken. The lighting is natural, casting soft shadows.

When she was in the womb, I felt her coming at me and for me.
She was large, huge, everywhere, and stopped just at the edges of my skin.
I thought she might eat me, devour, swallow me. I wasn't sure there was room
for the both of us. I would have gladly stepped aside if need be.

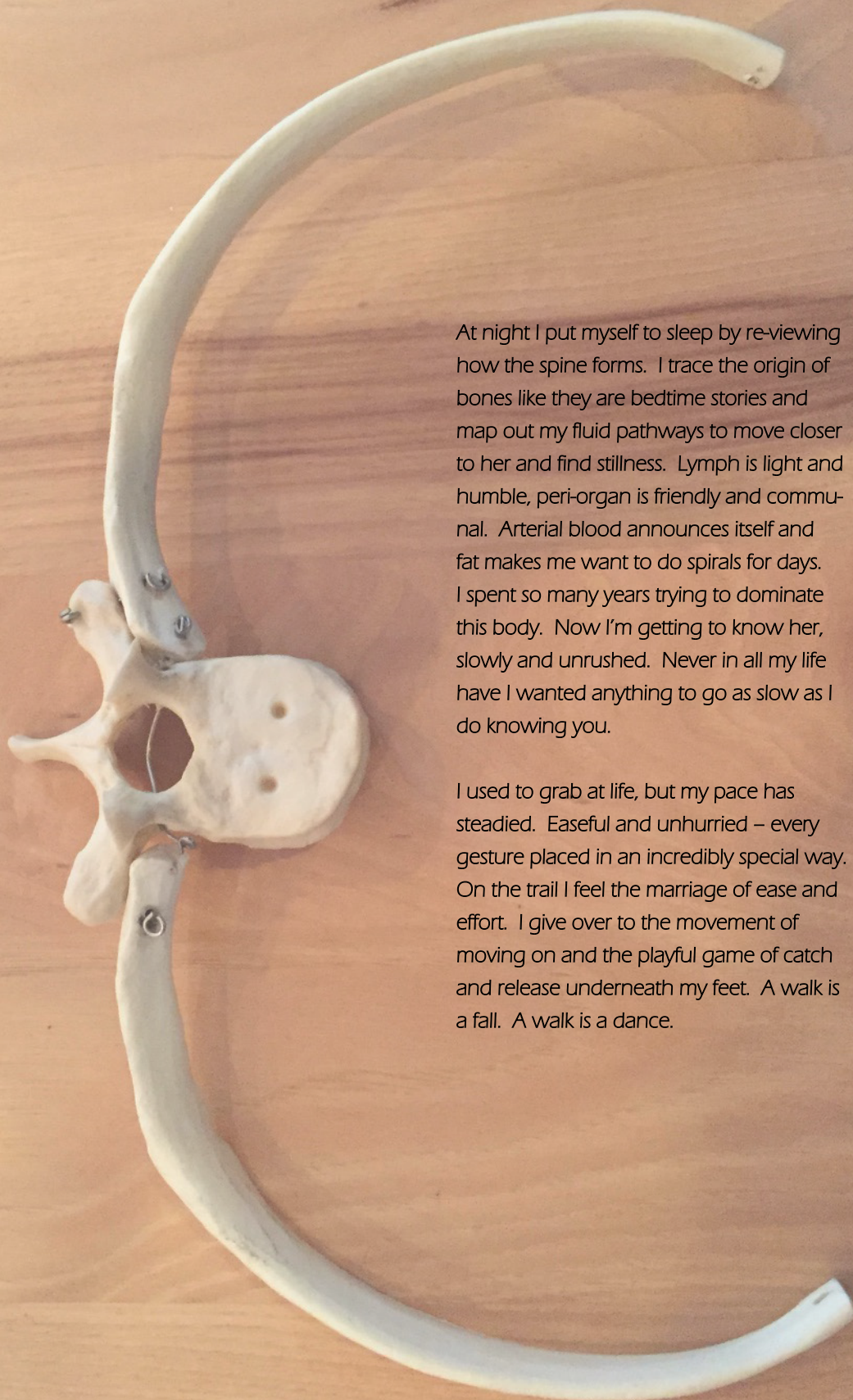


When I was six years old I often watched my mother sleep in the living room. I was mesmerized by my mother's ankles, barefoot, and slightly turned out. I had the idea also defined at the floor and loaded again. I had the idea with the metaphors. Her back foot did most of the work. The gesture was soothing and aesthetically pleasing. undulation and coordination in it all that I was curious about watch TV in the room my sister. I'd lie on the floor and





Photographs by Angel Edwards (Left) and Aura Fischbeck (right), July 30, 2022, Montpellier, France.

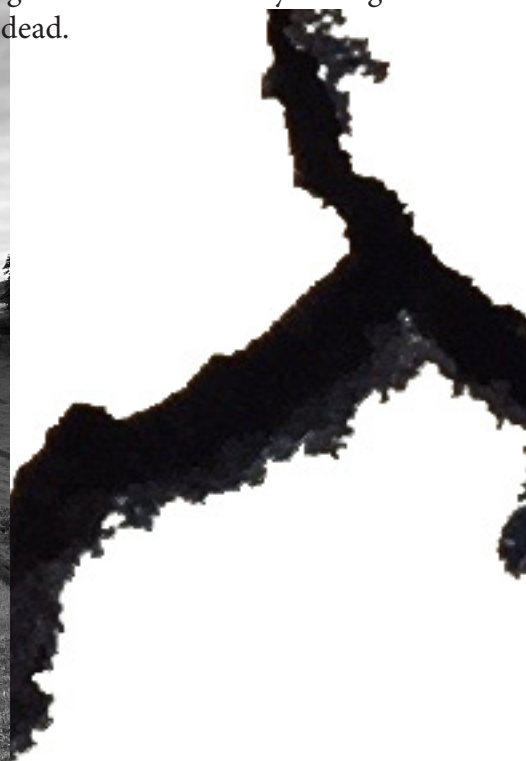
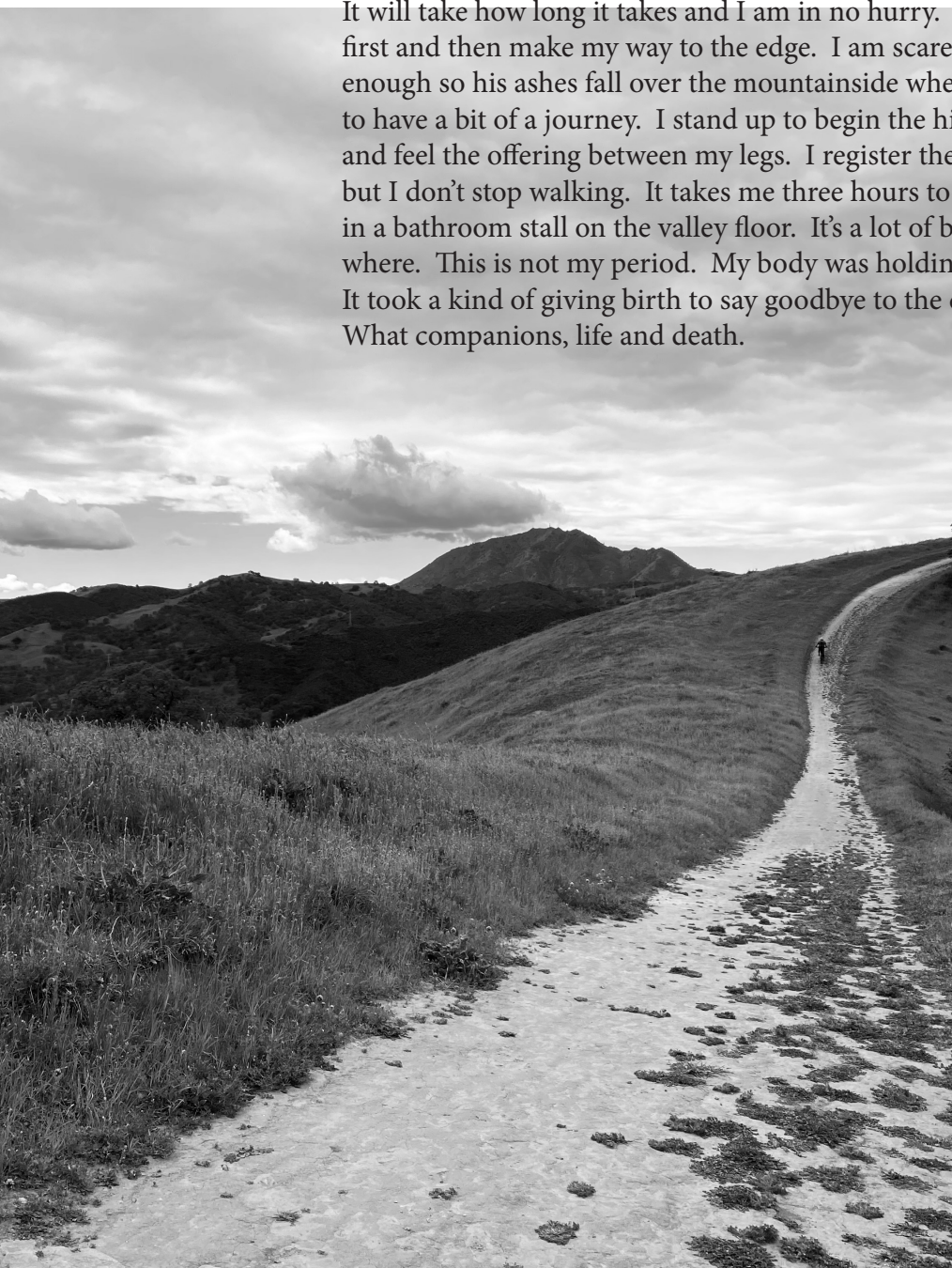


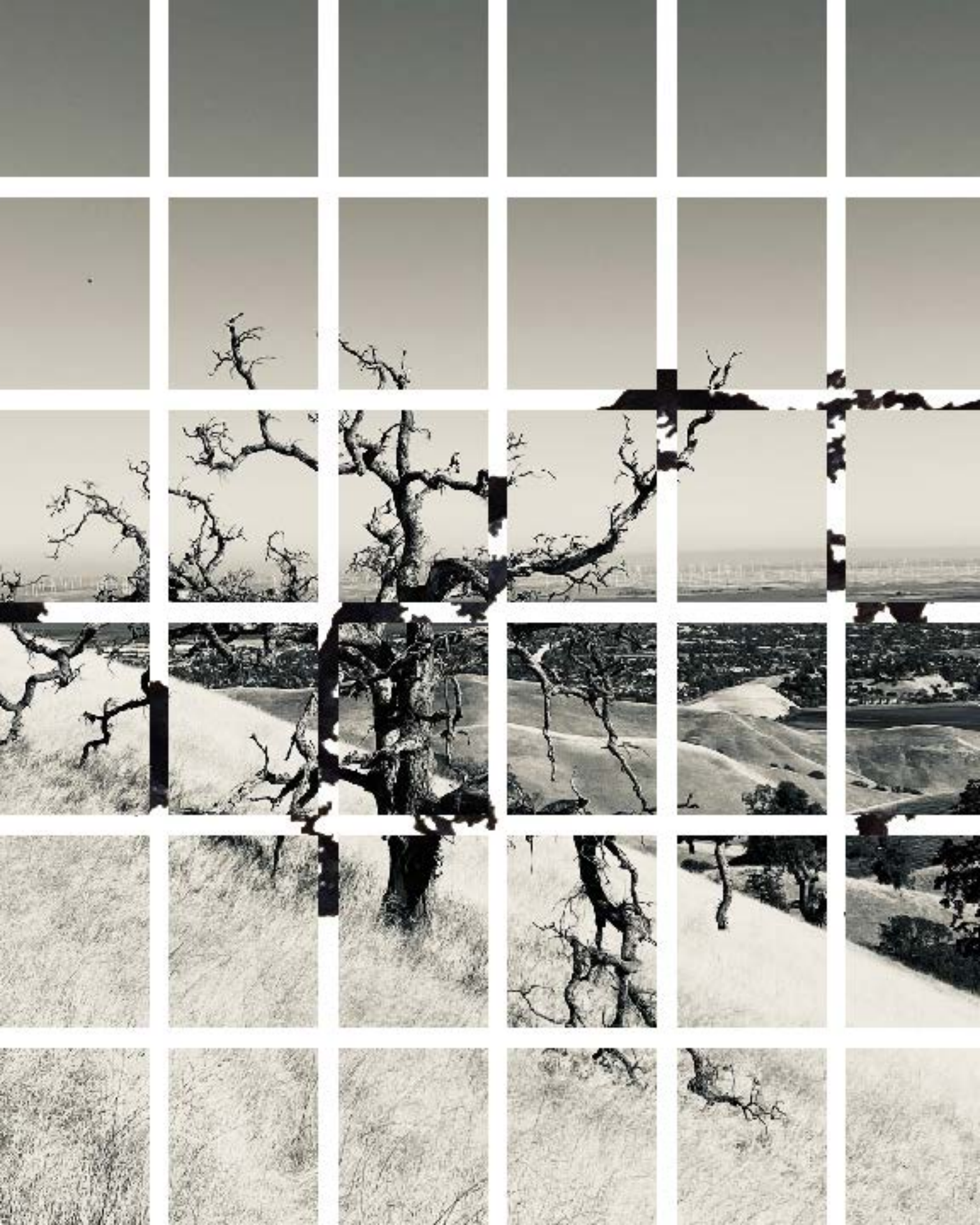
At night I put myself to sleep by re-viewing how the spine forms. I trace the origin of bones like they are bedtime stories and map out my fluid pathways to move closer to her and find stillness. Lymph is light and humble, peri-organ is friendly and communal. Arterial blood announces itself and fat makes me want to do spirals for days. I spent so many years trying to dominate this body. Now I'm getting to know her, slowly and unrushed. Never in all my life have I wanted anything to go as slow as I do knowing you.

I used to grab at life, but my pace has steadied. Easeful and unhurried – every gesture placed in an incredibly special way. On the trail I feel the marriage of ease and effort. I give over to the movement of moving on and the playful game of catch and release underneath my feet. A walk is a fall. A walk is a dance.



High up at the peak of the falls I can hear the wind before I feel it. It rustles the leaves above me, I look up, and then a gust always sweeps across my body. It's quiet and dangerous up there. Especially in the snow on those narrow curves that hug the side of the mountain. At a certain point the ascent feels neverending (no matter how many times I climb it) and passersby like to tell you how much longer until you reach the top. I quietly hate this. I don't need to know how much longer. It will take how long it takes and I am in no hurry. At the summit I decide to rest first and then make my way to the edge. I am scared of heights, but I get close enough so his ashes fall over the mountainside when I release them. I want them to have a bit of a journey. I stand up to begin the hike back down, take a few steps, and feel the offering between my legs. I register the heavy and sudden warmth, but I don't stop walking. It takes me three hours to descend and I finally stand still in a bathroom stall on the valley floor. It's a lot of blood. Dark, bright, and everywhere. This is not my period. My body was holding on until it was ready to let go. It took a kind of giving birth to say goodbye to the dead. What companions, life and death.





When I stand at the foot of her – cold, still, and at work – I feel in my right proportion. No longer the mountainous lord my other life tells me I am. Back at sea level I feel oversized and too large for the furniture in my room. A false dominion.



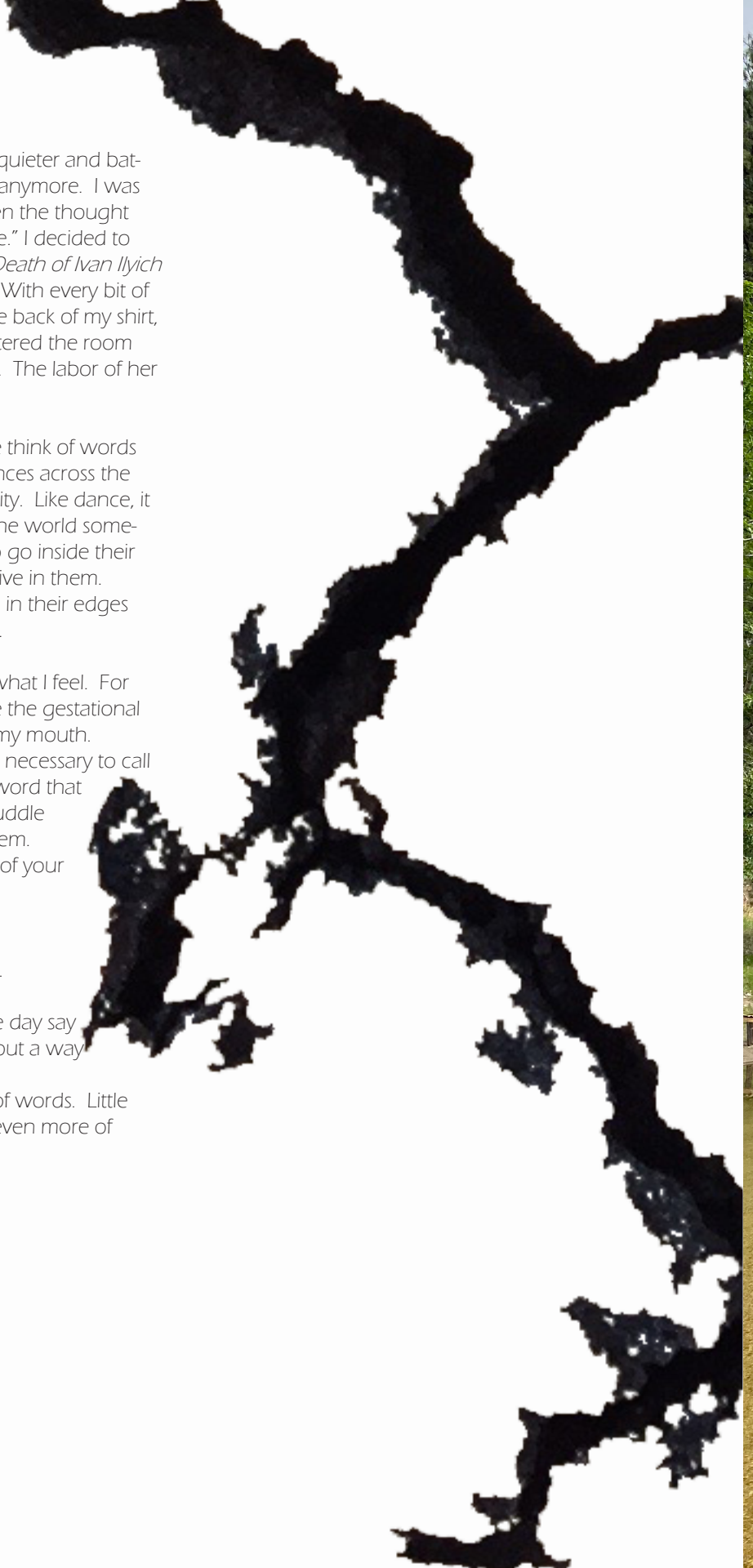


I remember a gradual retreat. Getting quieter and quieter and battling away words because they didn't feel sufficient anymore. I was on a hike one day in the black diamond mines when the thought came to me: "I need a new relationship to language." I decided to revisit Russian and began translating Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* as a way to practice. My first session was arduous. With every bit of effort forward it felt like someone was pulling on the back of my shirt, keeping me at a measured pace. Slowness had entered the room and I enjoyed the toil and effort she required of me. The labor of her steady pace.

To translate means to "carry across." This makes me think of words as little capsules, ferrying our thoughts and experiences across the rivers between us. Language travels and has mobility. Like dance, it doesn't have any inherent meaning. It isn't out in the world somewhere waiting to be discovered. Words need us to go inside their capsules – their little houses that we've built – and live in them. Stretching, pulling, folding, cinching, and gathering in their edges and seams. They don't know yet what they can be.

I want so much for what I say to accurately reflect what I feel. For language to be birthed at the cellular level and take the gestational time it needs. I cannot always put experience into my mouth. And nor do I want to. But sometimes it's absolutely necessary to call up a friend and say "Meet me for lunch. I found a word that describes how I feel about you." The two of you huddle around these six letters and try to move closer to them. Eventually, you each make them a permanent part of your flesh late one night in Washington Square Park.

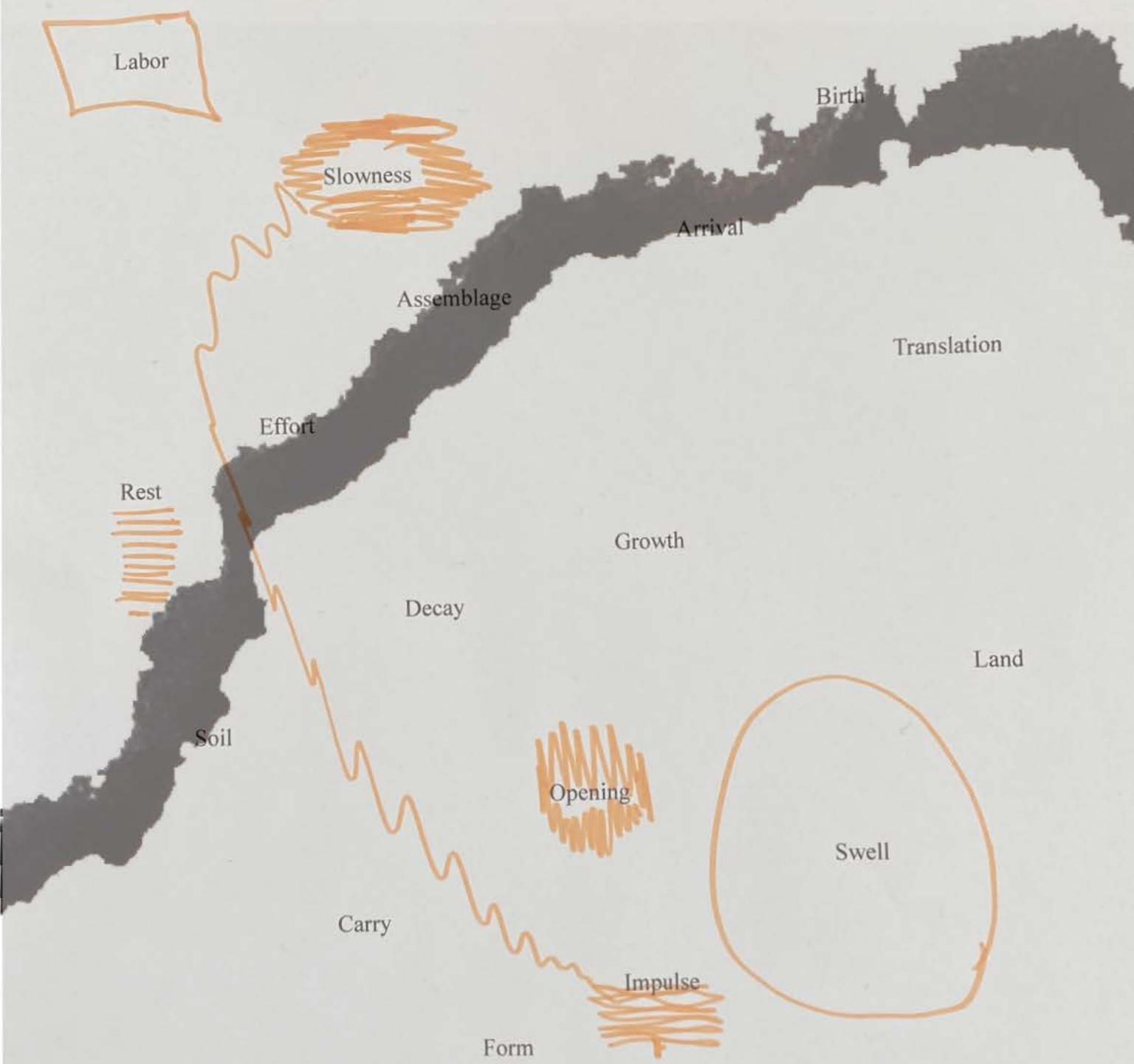
And what of the eternal? *Sub specie aeternitatis*. More skin given over for this symbolic arrangement. I don't think of it as permanent; life is not that long. And exactly because of that briefness, I hope to one day say things in front of you again. To face you as I work out a way on and through. For you to watch – as I hook on, hug, and press up against the shape of words. Little agreements with leverage and force that become even more of themselves as we try each other on.





Nourishing,
legibility, structure,
form, listen, current, discursive,
arrest, rigorous, curious, research,
entelechy (that which helps realize potential),
translate (carry across), embryo (into swelling), undertow,
source (to rise), incantatory, invocation, coercion, errantry,
obsolescence, yield, retreat, recession, exuberance, exaltation, exhilaration,
finesse, ecology, oikos, affect, transduction, integration, resonance, stance,
viewpoint, onward, inertia, solemn, conspiratorial, severe, polemic, lyric, inhere,
immense, voluminosity, slight, theory, sense, dictation, root, language, movement,
land, refinement, mysterious, bewilderment, element, particular, sufficient, efficient, particular,
strategy, pathway, motility, mobility, millennia, resolute, activate,
articulation, interact, appetite, register, propel,
slowness, site, ritual, gestation,
nostalgia





Labor

Slowness

Birth

Arrival

Assemblage

Translation

Effort

Rest

Growth

Decay

Land

Soil

Opening

Swell

Carry

Impulse

Form

gerçek arzusu / tutkusunu → belki de
kollektif ortak bir yorumda birleşme
arzusu → kollektif yorum ve arzusunun
totaliter olma eğilimi ile boşa etmek.
Buna karşın küçük ortaklıkların kıymetini
arzulamak. Gerçek dardı neden? Her şey
hepimizin yorumları. Hepsi yorum, aynı anda
yorumları. Bu yüzden bu çapıllık, ve boğulmuş/
birlikte tutulmuş. Sınır sistemi bu çapıllıkla
hazır değil.

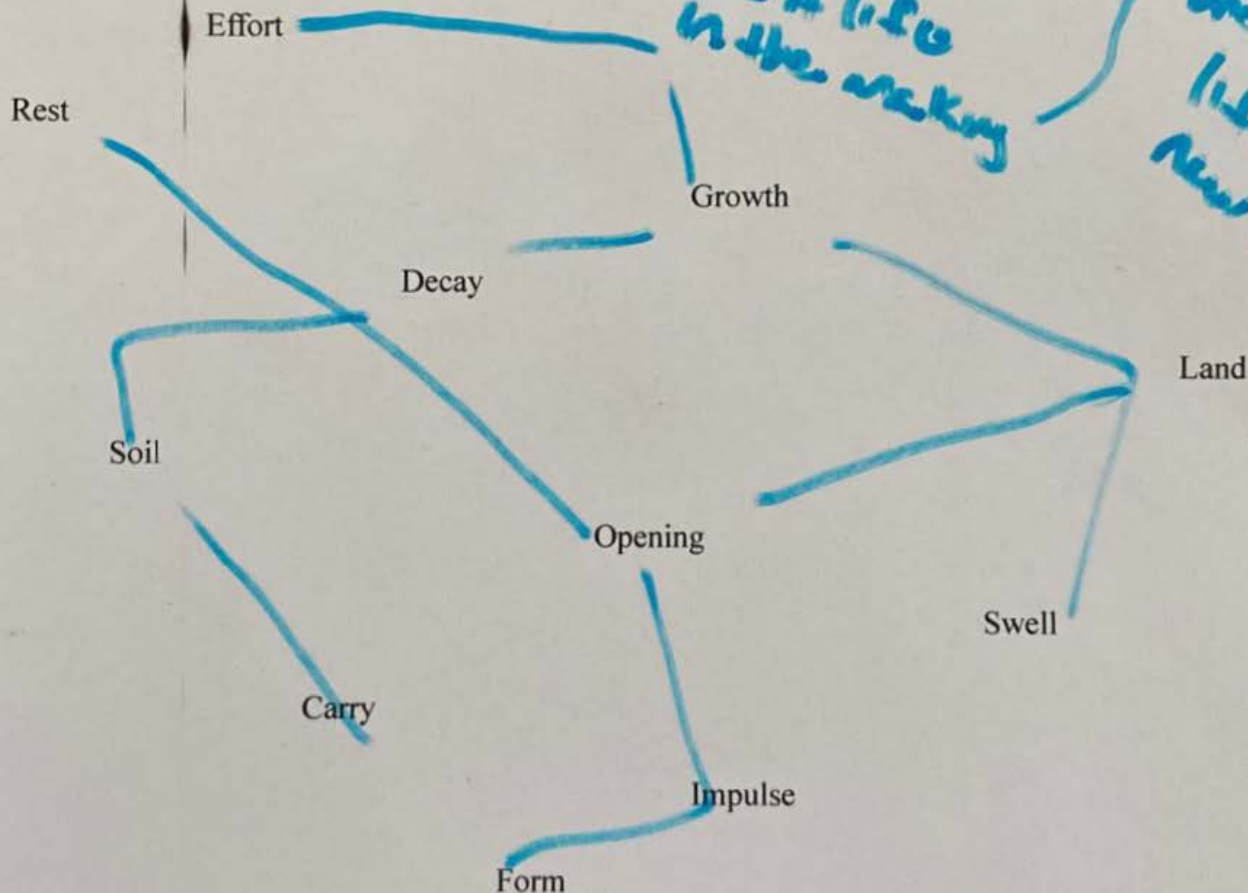


Labor
bringing life into the world ~ Birth

Slowness
to grow
and move
forward
Arrival
of a life

Assemblage
Assemble a life
in the making

Translation
understanding
life in
new ways



the
Hymn
Hobae
omniscience
K. J. J. J.

the
edge of
expression

a comb
K. J. J. J.
repetition

The
possibility
for
something
else

a normal
faga,
a faggot

How are
we holding
each other?

Bodily
routes for
thought and
knowing

Slowness
Birth
LABOR
ARRIVAL

stone
walking
pressure
Besinuing

to find
out
what's on
the other
side

A path

A path

A path

OUTSIDE

Practice & translation

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

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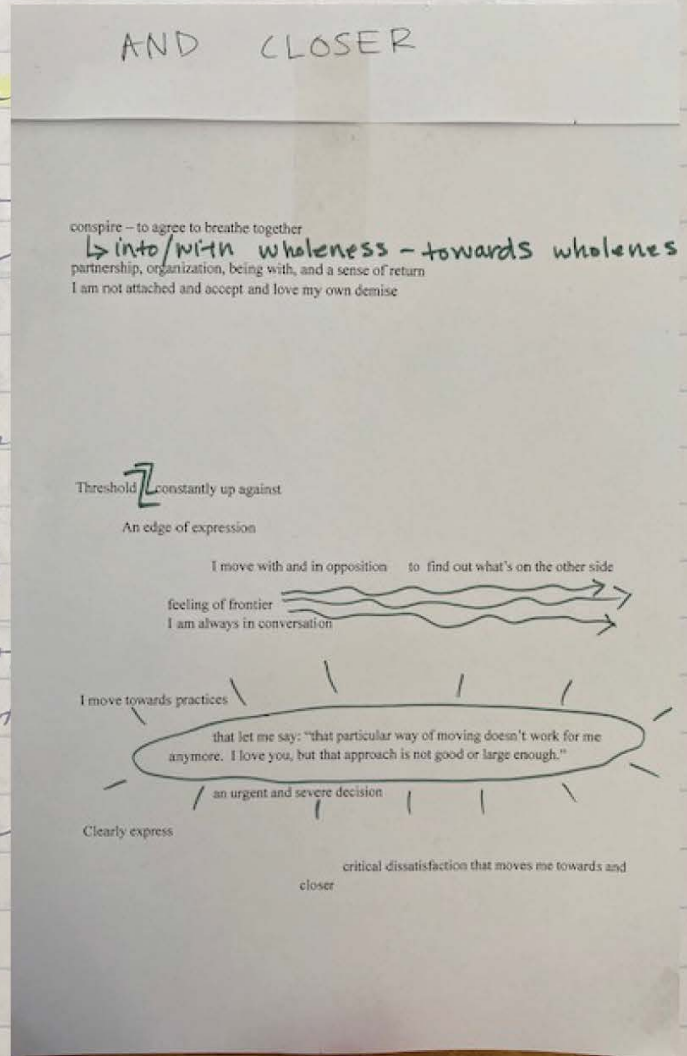
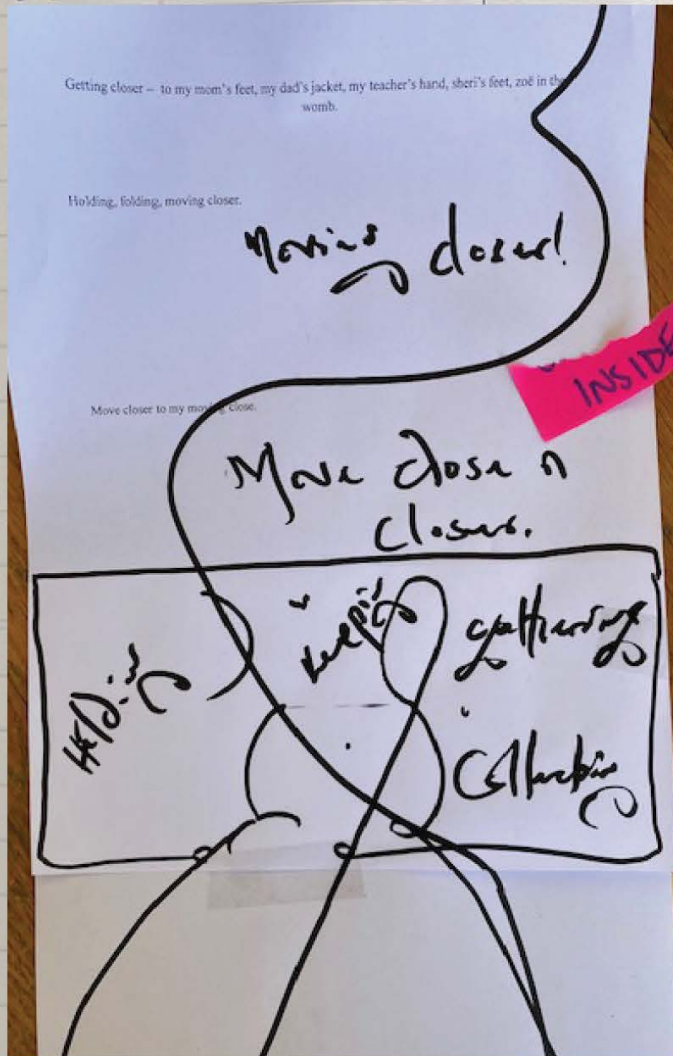
a note, bag, u baggy

a note, bag, u baggy

regeneration

C14
or
air &
then
er us

Skin - 14 days
gut lining - 5 days
intestine - 15 years
fat cells - 10 years
cortex (abstract thinking) - old as you are
voluntary movement



Impulse → Form

Translation

Farming // land // soil

Labor & Effort → Slowness → Stop

a kind of capsule, transportation

Translate → carried across
to express in different terms
to change into a different form

Translation - to carry across

Ecology - study of home

LABOR & Effort

Slowness

Arrival - conditions for

Birth, Embryo

Land, Soil, Farming

Art is the material with which to THINK
TO BE.

What are you doing to get back to me?

1. Capture an image a day → impulse
2. Childhood gestures to form
3. List: The Things that stream

Micro practice?

Embryo - Into (Em) growth or swelling
(bruen)

Into Swelling
Into growth

Dickenson and my List

Raspberries & cream

Hills Slowness

Indoor/outdoors (Studies/nature)

Biodegradable paper - words traveling
down stream

Translate: move across

Embryo: Into Swelling/growth

Ecology: Study of Home, habitat,
environment
family

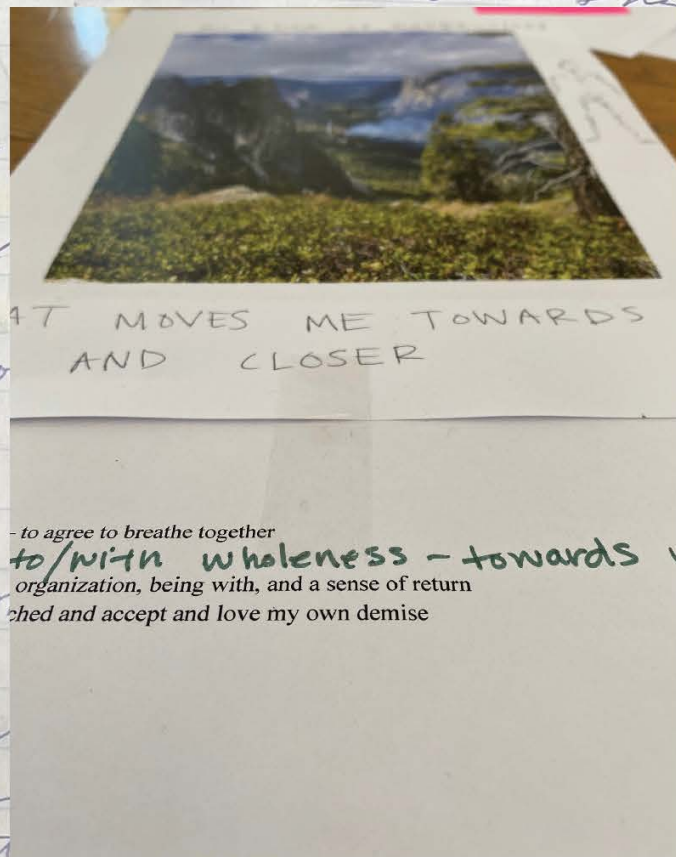
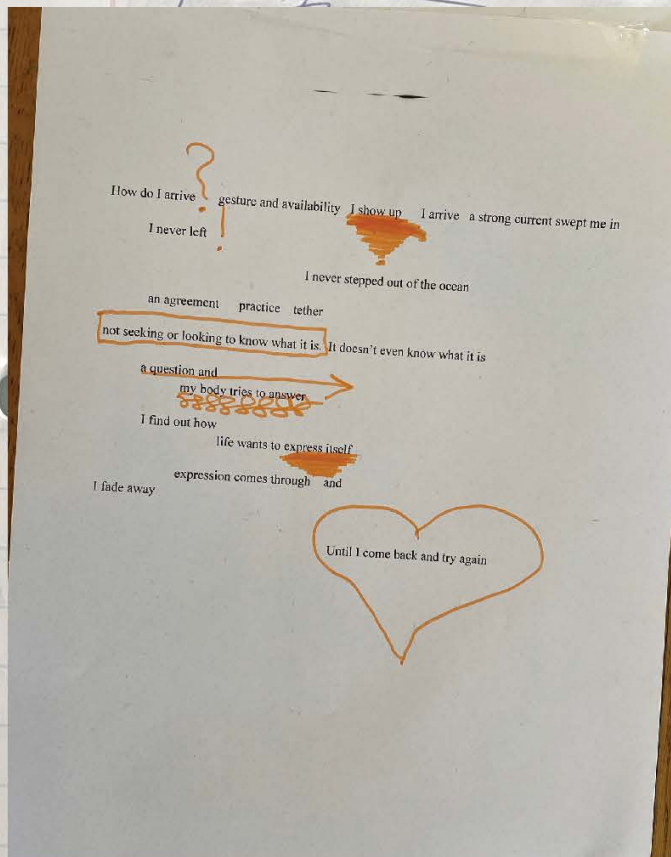
What are my Kinetic openings?

What is my relationship to home?

The body in translation

Committed to taking more photos -
Thinking about orientation →
photos I choose aren't completely
set up by me, but there is an
impulse to orient a certain
way, look, crouch, angle, bend
toward an object or scene.

What is my relationship to the outdoors?
 thought about capturing monument
 phase ~~in~~ in your mind but didn't want
 to insert myself! Didn't want to
 put dancer there. Rather, thinking about
 where am I already? where is my
body here, what is the relationships



Social Somatics - deep democracy = when
 "Everything in them is in me"

Dreaming - The dreamer that supports
 everyday reality.

lets do the work & go to the party

Social

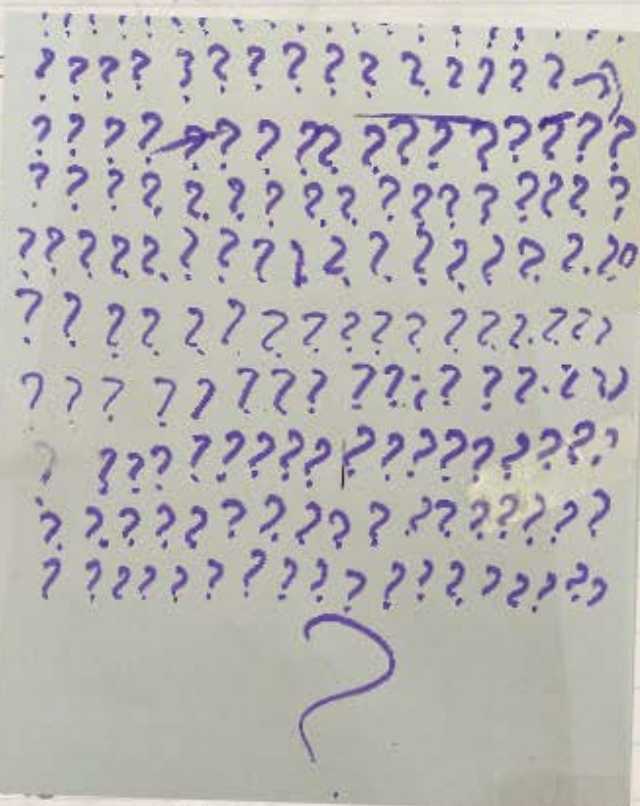
- Maybe writing doesn't need to be read - I speak something else?
My sense involves other writing?

Breathing, various like

What's Revealed, in

★ Cocoon (held on

a different
Be more vis
to not be
the held



exceed the claim
tradition - in

★ beyond state → PLEASURE?

Revolution must have dancing

- Finding other ways around
and through - a word making

Writing as dance
Walking as dance
Memory as dance

Overread the dance - There's so much more available to see and describe than just the aesthetic, line, form

"The Bodily" - not body

* a different kind of hold → not a grabbing, claiming,

to be held

now - finding way to be like this knowing

seams) not property of body, but a constitution of a body.



The Sense / feeling that emerges gives me as a strategy to move / mobilize differently and is difference - not making claim about body



Sex Gender, hair, are private
we don't want to
onstage
ation of NEA but
certain kind of art
rted, cis, white, ma

s particular
s particular AND
Stays moving

To be in somatic difference
Be messy / no common sense

Don't need to create coherence -
can be more - than the sum of
its parts.

More than and still untranslatable

Do we need to recite those stories
what's beyond them? what
They make me think about /

Am on the other side of technique
and thinking about these small
gestures, are they so small?

Do these actions tell other stories



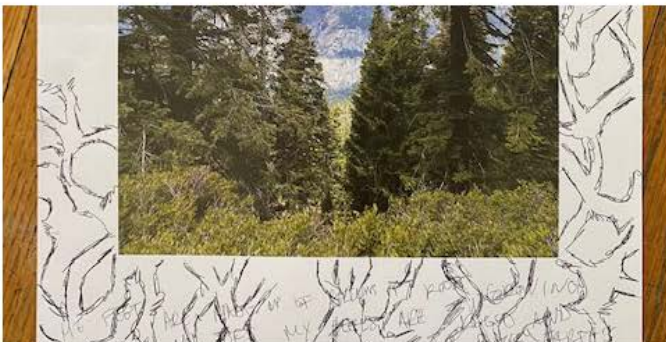
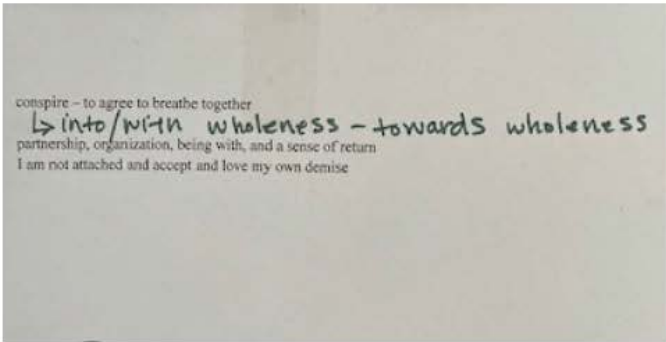
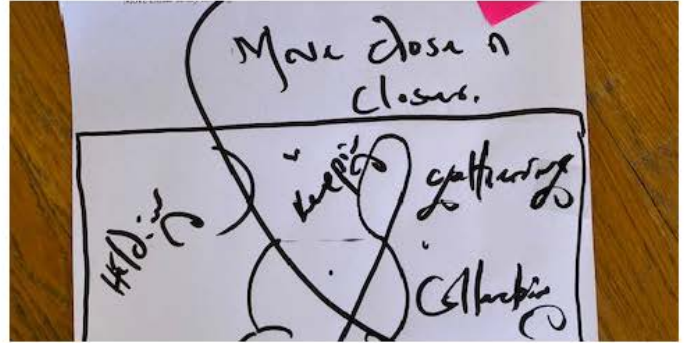
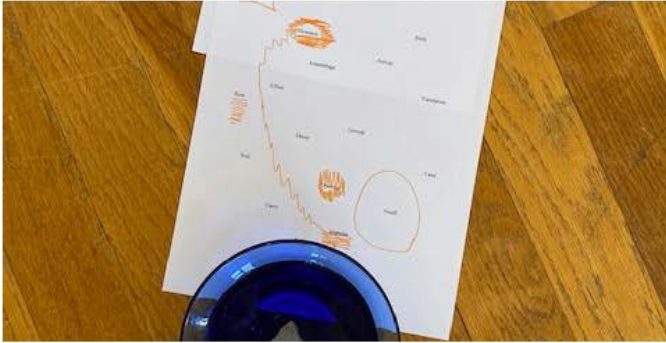


Can we find a way together?









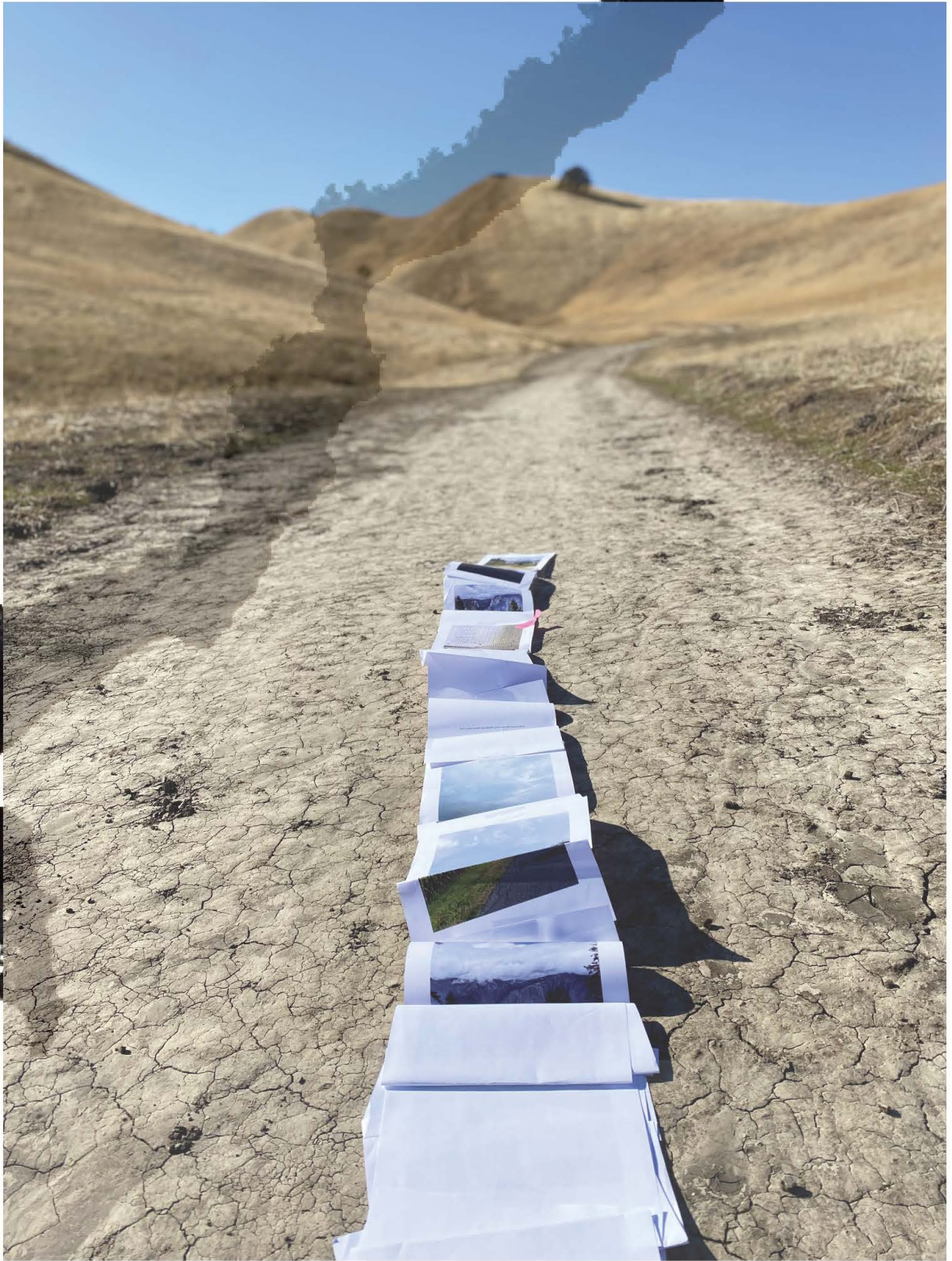






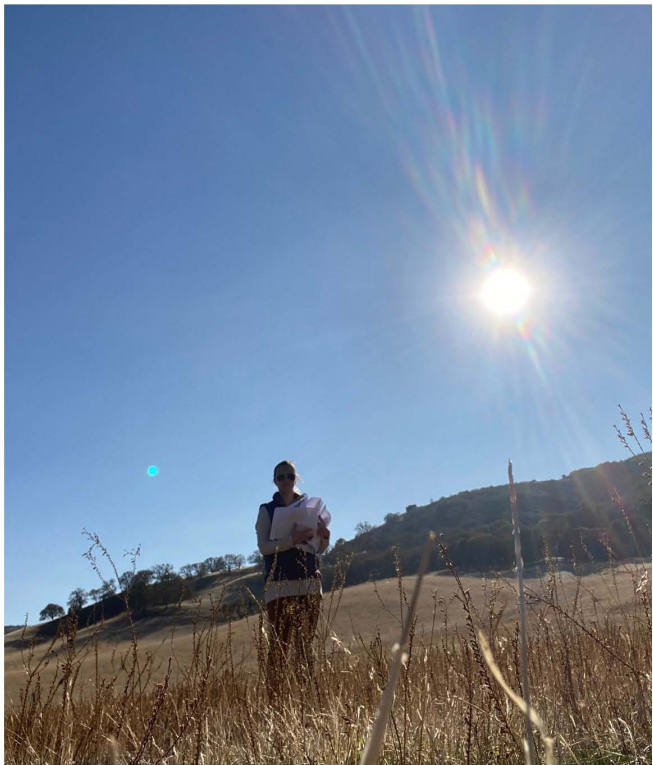












Slow down

Step in

Get on with it

Love the one who eats and the one who is eaten

Dance and mourn for both

Remember but don't stay too long

Strategize but make no claims

Make a way

On and through

Live

Love

Leave

Acknowledgements

To Sandra and Sergei Orloff for showing me how to be kind and to love nature.

VK Preston for your calm encouragement and wise direction.

Ben Pranger for helping to envision and build my trail.

Sandra Chinn for widening the course of my dancing life.

Ashley Flaner for your life-long friendship, powerful perception, and deep love for the art.

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Endnotes

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3. José Gil, as quoted in Erin Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. 13.