

Markbooks

with an Introduction by Carla Nappi



Flugwissenschaften

FlugSchriften▲

MARKBOOKS

© 2021



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and you may also remix, transform and build upon the material, as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors (but not in a way that suggests the authors or *Flugschriften* endorses you and your work), you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that for any remixing and transformation, you distribute your rebuild under the same license.

First Published in 2020 by Flugschriften
Pittsburgh and New York
<https://flugschriften.com/>

Flugschriften rekindles the long tradition of 16th-century pamphlets –or ‘flying writings’–giving heterodox, experimental, challenging writings a pair of wings with which to find like-minded readers. *Flugschriften* publishes short, sharp shocks to the system–whether this be the political system, literary system, academic system, or human nervous system.

ISBN: 978-1-7354631-0-0

Front and back cover: Adaptations from “Persons Hand on Yellow Surface” by Cottonbro.
Layout and illustration design: Felipe Mancheno.





Community is a precious thing. As I write this, now more than nine months into a global pandemic, that truth is especially potent. And even as we learn to appreciate the value of community anew, the pandemic is remaking our relations with one another and with ourselves.

This is certainly true of the Translating Vitalities collective, a community of artists, anthropologists, medical and healing practitioners, historians, and other humanists and non-humanists who periodically come together in the service of making collaborative work to understand lifeworlds and their translations and transformations. We were meant to gather in Berlin for several days of sharing space, meals, and fellowship in the summer of 2020. When that became impossible, we gathered virtually instead, each in our separate spaces, projected into little boxes in a window on a screen.

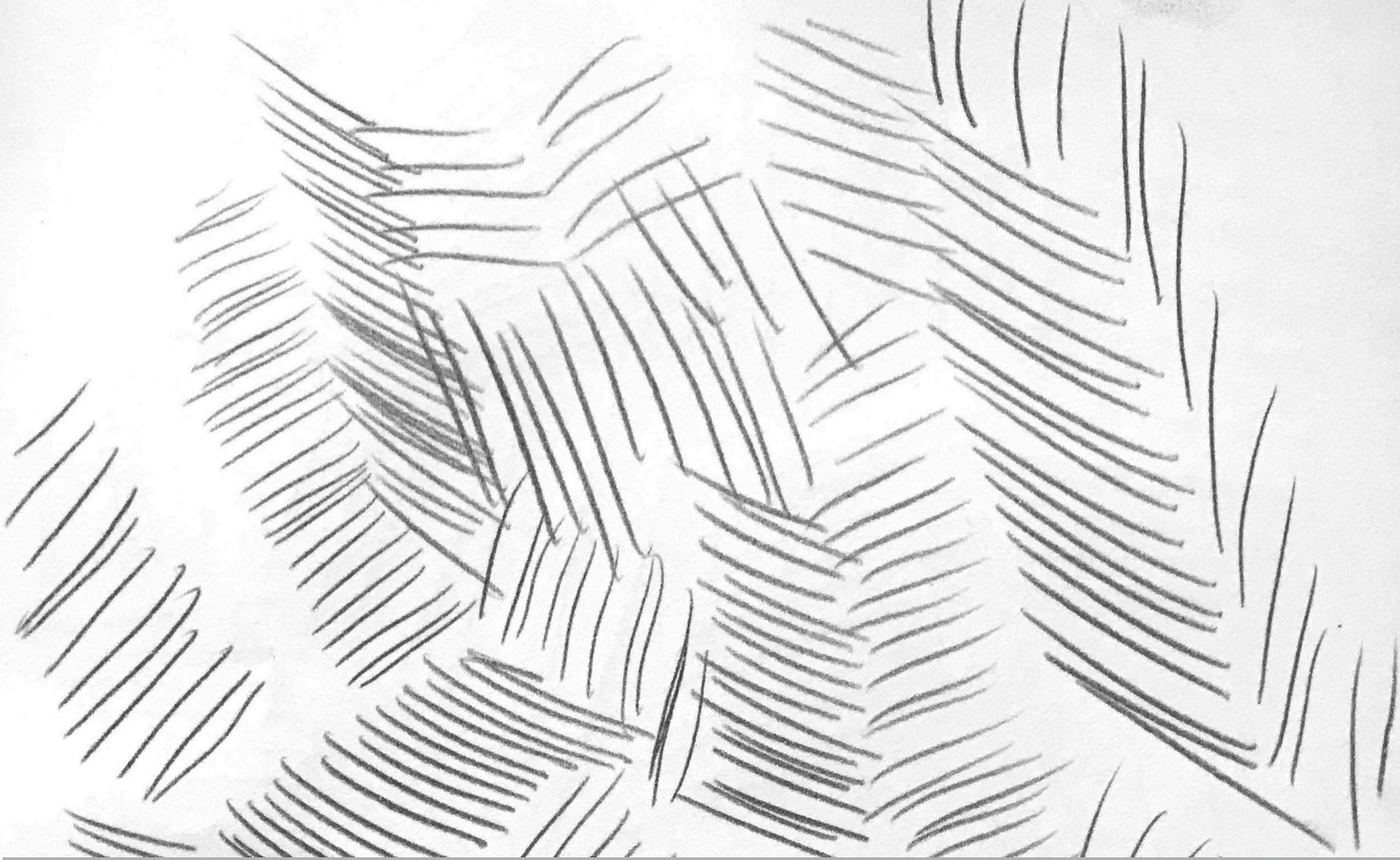
We came into community to extend what had been an ongoing conversation about attention, its ecologies, its forms, and the markings of its passage. It was a privilege to be guided by artist Clare Twomey in a scaled-down version of a practice she had been developing as part of her work, and which focused, in a way, on marking the passage of attention. We each took a page of white paper. We took a pencil. We filled one side

of our paper with short, regular marks of passage. (We paid attention to the marks as we made them.) We turned the paper over, and did the same. We folded the paper into 4 or 8 sections and cut along the seams to make a little book. Then, we read the book. Some of us wrote about the experience. (You can find the directions for the exercise at the end of this volume.)

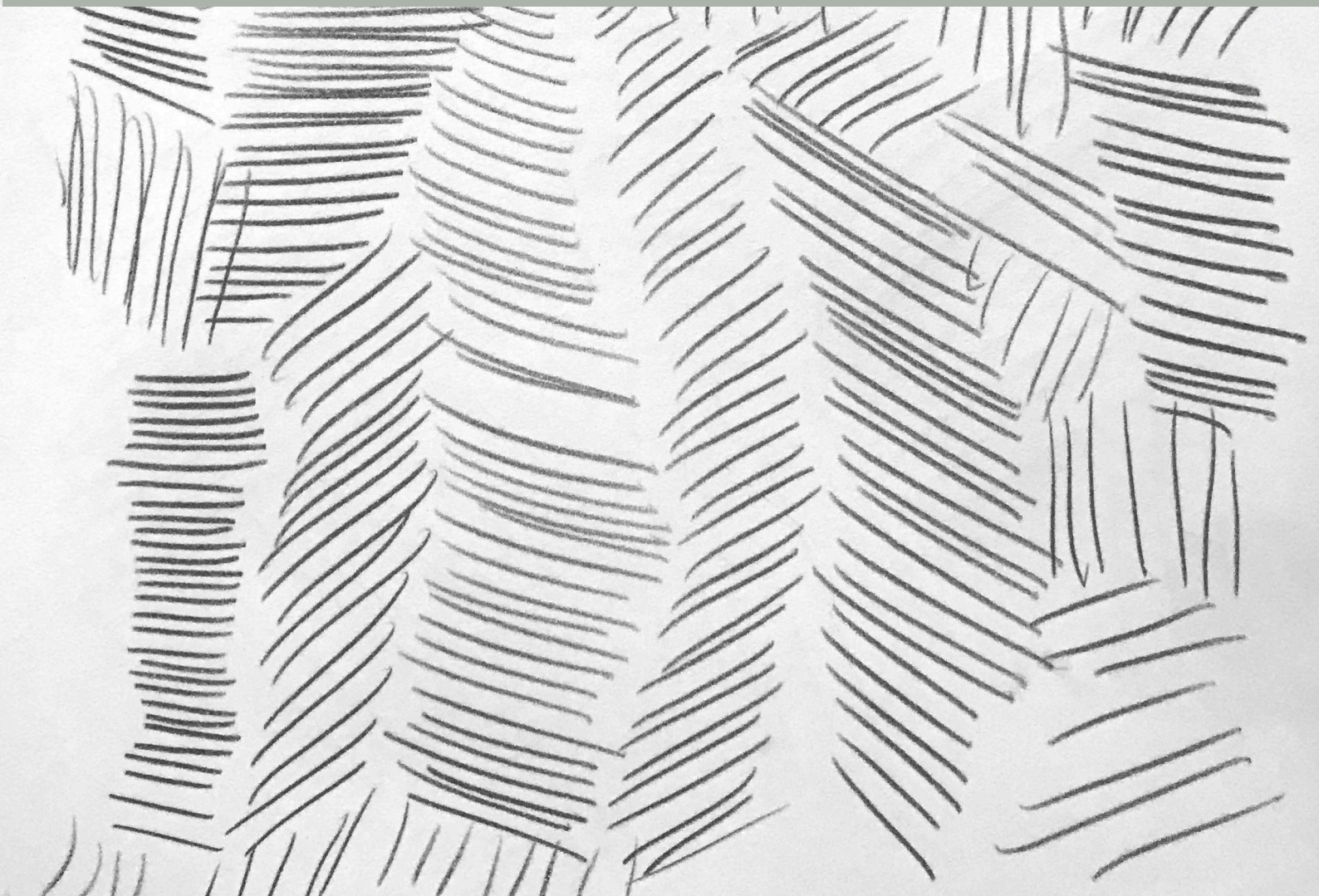
Here, you're invited to read those books along with us. Sometimes an author has accompanied their book with reflections on its making or on its translation. Sometimes the images stand alone. Occasionally you'll find an offering that is not quite a book of marks, but that is nevertheless in comfortable community with its fellows.

For many of the authors included here, the practice of making - and then reading - their little book located them in time. As I write this, in the midst of a chaotic pandemic timespace where so many of us are living in an extended moment without a clear boundary, feeling located in time feels like a fantasy. Everything is now, and at the same time "now" has been bled of meaning without a clear sense of what and when the future will be. (It's unclear what it will feel like to be able to plan a future, again. It's unclear what the past will look like from that vantage point.) Nevertheless, there is paper, and there are pencils, and there are bodies to mark their own motion. Why not pick up a page, and make some marks, and read the results, and see what you find.

Carla Nappi, Pittsburgh, 7 Dec 2020



Leander Schwazer



A Mountain of Lines,

A River bed,

rugged rocks,

smooth moos

morning dew in the grass.

Hotness of a stone,

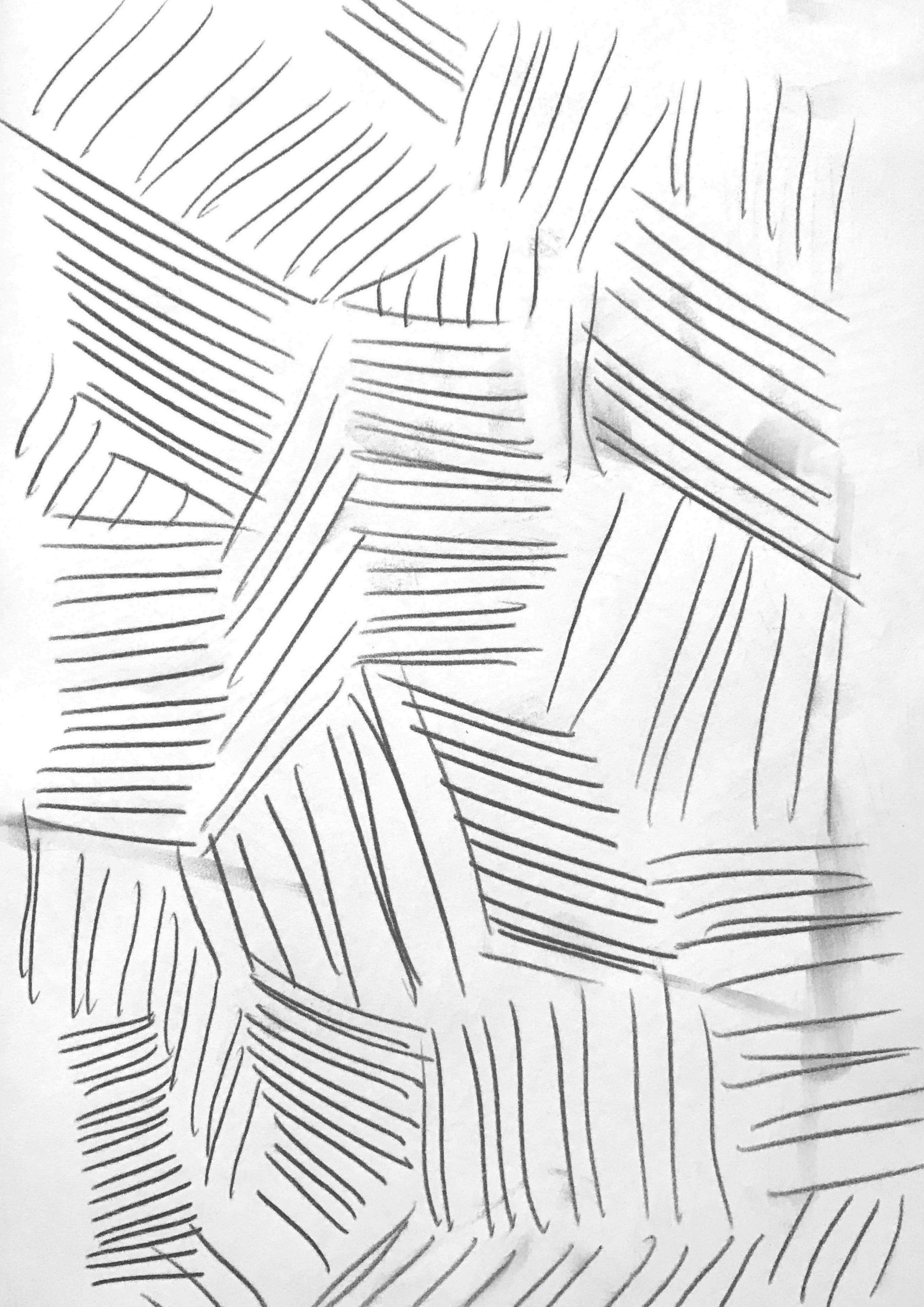
frost flowers of a window,

needles of a tree

falling down and getting up again.

Copy, Repeat from bottom to top,

from top to bottom.





Barry Saunders

Where are inspiration and expiration in this exercise, making a book of marks?

I dropped my torn pages on the deck sometime during our Quarrel. In gathering them I used what I thought was the last page to scribble some keywords from my archival cypress-knee-respiration researches. Terms of botany & botanical speculation inserted in the aerenchyma of the page.

Once I reconstructed a “proper” order of book pages by matching torn edges, approximating pages along the folds, I realized that my keywords had introduced a constraint, re which end of the stack wanted up and which edge wanted binding. The extra writing wound up on page 14.

The pencil used for this exercise was a gift from Todd. Interesting how Josh as well (perhaps others?) has affinity for the Blackwing Palomino.

My experience of writing had a lot to do with the gesture of bringing this pencil to paper. I couldn't quite purge the feeling of violence that accompanied apposition of the point of the pencil. (Punctum? Was this a way of bringing this writing into the field of agency of the unconscious?) As I wrote in the zoom chat, I felt and sounded like a woodpecker. (On a repetitive, compulsive quest for nourishment?) Of course the stab of the paper was only one aspect of gestural interruption. There was also the lifting of

2000000000

MAR 28

2000000000

Vertical

MAR 28

the pencil from the paper. What did I think of that? A rest, a gap, a taking flight? Clare's instruction to make discrete marks surely involved me and all of us in a kind of up-down rhythm with its own incantatory aspect...

Benjamin: "... [t]he more frequently we interrupt someone engaged in acting, the more gestures result. The interruption of an action is thus at the foreground of epic theater."

Was this a writing lesson? Nod to Derrida, along with Todd in our group reflections. In this section of *Of Grammatology*, Derrida revisits Levi-Strauss's quest for origins of writing. Path hewn in the forest. Mark as trace, of lost lively presence. Writing cutting, violence of scribal incision, in complicity with death and absence.

Judy complicated this Derridean insight decades ago with reference John Hay's work on calligraphic continuities. Forms of writing that channel liveliness rather than death. More recently she extended this into questioning my investments in cutting in relation to lively continuities of the chiasm.

Back to Clare's exercise. I love the directionalities and flows that emerged from reading within and among these discrete, perhaps-violent marks. They, and the page-folding and tearing that redirect their towardness and untowardness, bring Derrida and Hay into a lovely kind of reciprocity.

Another art teacher, not Clare, once reproached me for neglecting the edge of the canvas. Because the edge activated the image and vice versa. He disparaged "vignette." When I made marks under Clare's instruction, I tried to cross the edge... Some marks thus crossed onto my work surface (a book cover chosen for size and smoothness). But then, when I folded



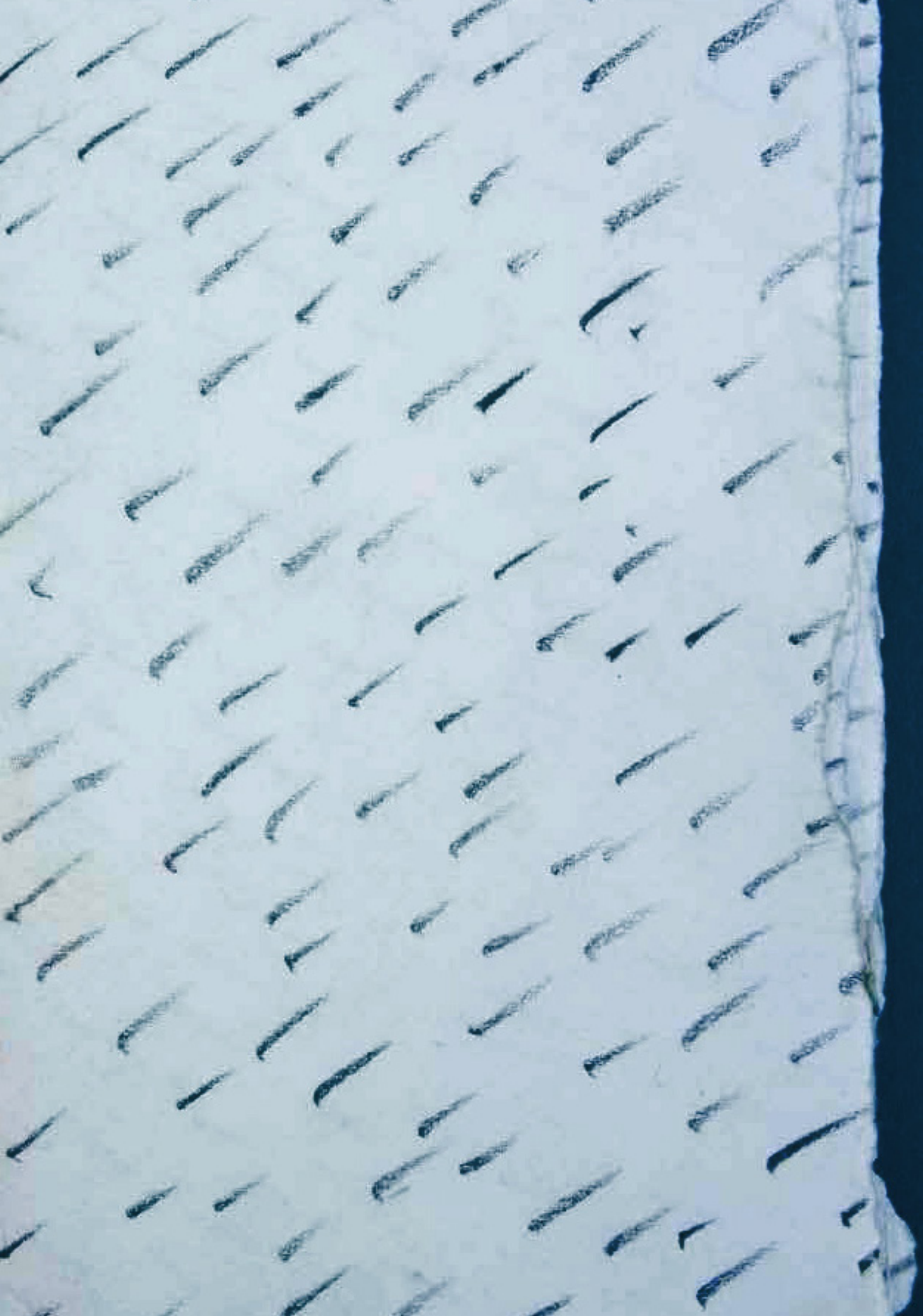
and tore the pages to make the book, I realized that marking the edge had been unnecessary, that further tearing/cutting were “activating” marks by bringing the edge to them. I am not sure how to look at this activation, interaction between the mark and the edge of the page. I wonder about function of margins in so much typography, and the writing that happens in them, at the printery and in acts of reading. I regret that the binding I added to the book, stitchery with thin copper wire, was so close to the edge that some pages have escaped from it.

A year ago my doctoral advisor died and left his library to former students and friends. The most prized books were those fullest of his marginal scribbles and yellow post-its. I kept his copy of Merleau-Ponty's *Visible & Invisible*, from which the chapter on the “chiasm” came that so occupied the “cutting” group of our Translating Vitalities collaborative, Alexa & Jens & Carla & me, in that sun-kissed Istrian summer of 2015. I'd pulled the volume off the shelf on Thursday before our first zoom session. Afterward, as I began drafting these remarks, I opened to one of its post-its, this thing that crosses the margin to bring the marks out to the air, to find on the attached page, one I don't remember ever reading before, phrases resonant with these reflections.

“words ‘struck off’”

“Shall I wrap them together?”

“It is not enough to say (Bergson): a coming and going. It is necessary to say between what and what, and what makes up the interval between them.”



“Retrograde movement of the true’... one finds it again in the materials themselves.”

The occasion of revising these remarks now falls in the shadow of a hard drive crash. Backups gone too, utter disaster, loss of a year of documents, including notes from the Translating Vitalities meeting, and the archive of cypress knee respiration. Mourning might be helped if I knew what was gone. Like Stacey’s ring. The first draft of these remarks would be gone too were they not epistolary, a note of gratitude to Clare, retrievable from email.

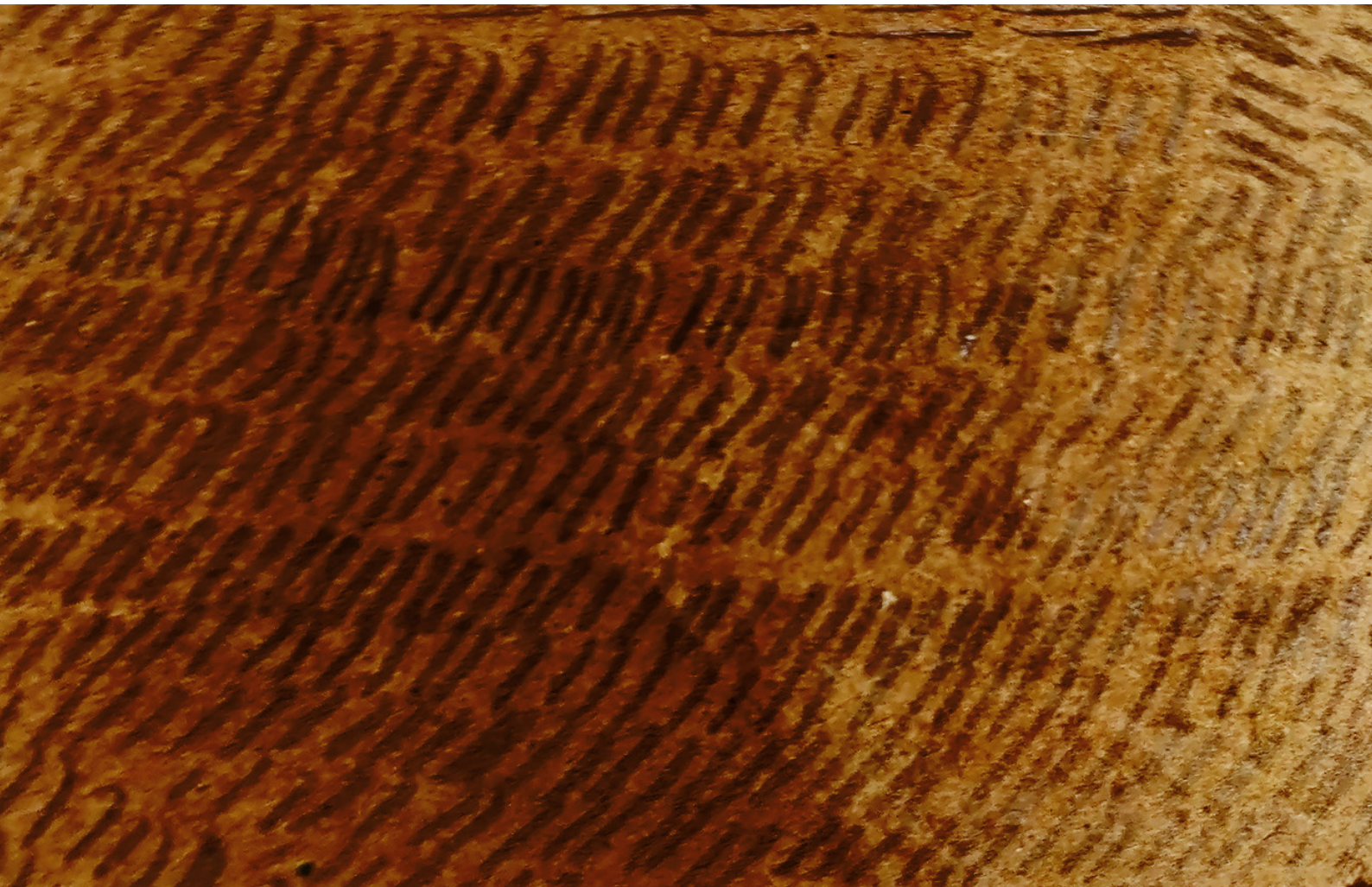
The book of marks remains, though. Torn paper, Palomino graphite marks, copper wire.

I turn back toward the unconscious at play in the book of marks... maybe back toward whatever stole my backups?... to follow the trail of Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm into some writing by Lacan, who registered his own enchantment by that same work in his lectures of 1964. From “Of the objet petit a”:

“Should not the question be brought closer to what I called the rain of the brush? If a bird were to paint would it not be by letting fall its feathers, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting fall its leaves?” Later: “... we [humans] do not have these feathers. The creator will never participate in anything other than the creation of a small dirty deposit, a succession of small dirty deposits juxtaposed. It is through this dimension that we are in scopic creation—the gesture as displayed movement.”



Todd Ochoa





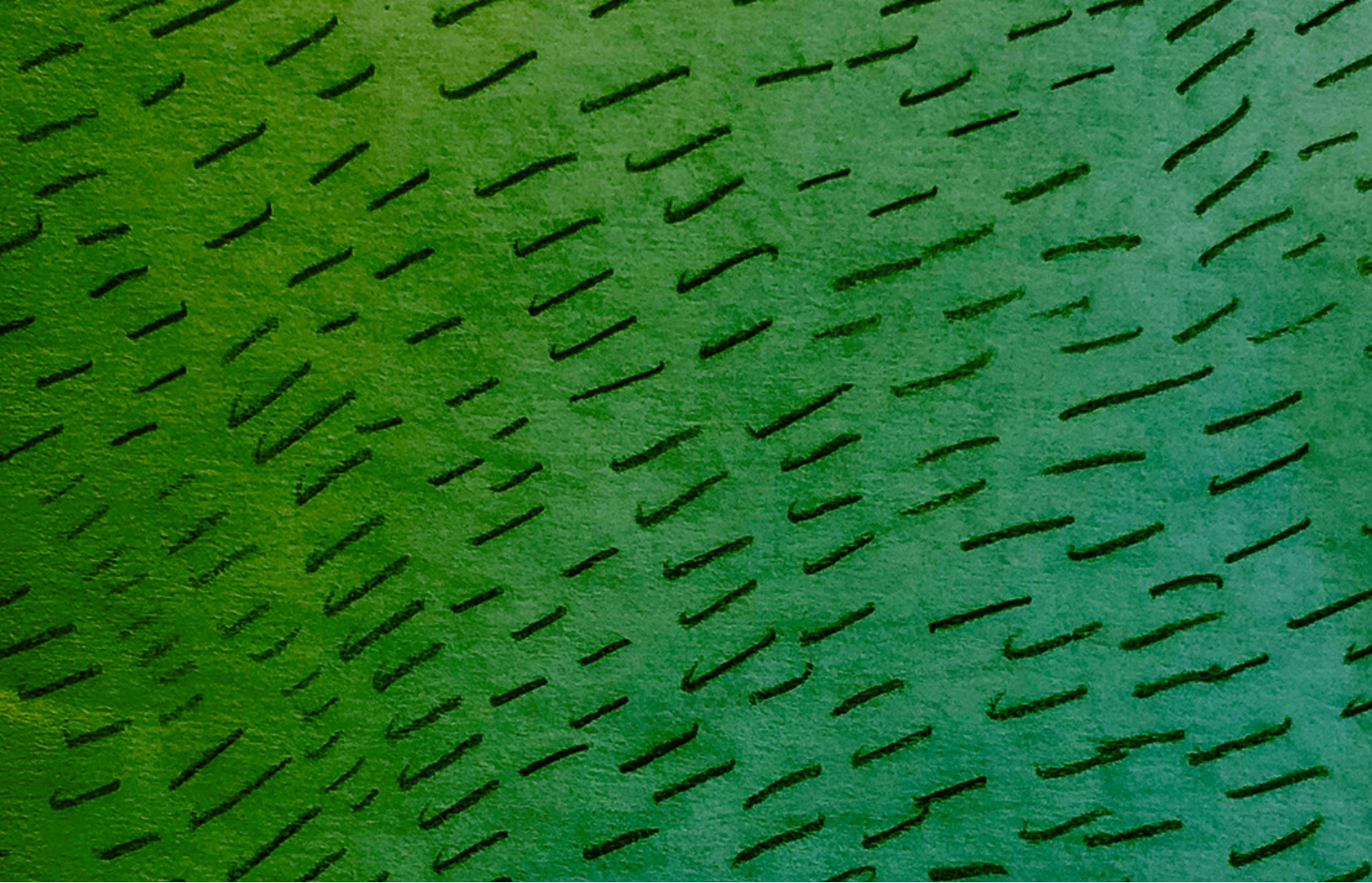
The marks are similar, so many, similars? Plural yes, a doctrine of the similar, no, though I count Walter Benjamin among my dead here, as much for his thoughts on similarity as for this thoughts on translation. I translate this book of marks, months after having composed it. It is a strange, opaque text, devoid of meaning. That was the point.

Composed it by setting the hand, modulating its stroke, settling its cadence and striving for equal measure, which was thankfully impossible. Composed it by surrendering to rhythm, stroke, and the plain discipline to proceed. Surrender as method, surrender within the frame of the exercise, of the experiment with a “formless” (meaningless) stroke. Neither mantra, nor prayer, nor invocation, but yes, a deed. A deed by repetition, and a little less of the “subject” with each stroke.

It is autumn, and the Pin Oak drops so many similars, laying countless leavings under foot. So many leaves, oak tree leavings, spoor, Jacques Derrida (also among my dead) would say. Spoor as the ur-differential, the mark that is less a mark than an index of the space, of the difference, between.

Marks made by a hand set to cadence, less a subject than the deed of leaving difference, behind.





Carla Nappi



If translation can move meaning across moments, then this is a translation in time.

The page is a portal. Reading is a kind of time travel.

Translation is a kind of hospitality. If we were to talk of host languages and guest languages (as many have, though I do not often choose to talk of hosts and guests when talking of translation), the “host language,” the language I am translating to, is Now. The “guest language,” the language I am translating from, is Then.

A story of hosts and guests can too often be a story of the foreign and the familiar, the household and the alien, that which belongs and that which doesn't. (Or that which does belong, but only temporarily and only because of the particular mood of the host. Hospitality is temporally contingent.) I do not tend to think of the movement in terms of welcoming, of dwelling, of making new relations. Perhaps, reflecting upon this is also a way of putting Then into conversation with Now. Perhaps translation should become a kind of welcoming as a result.

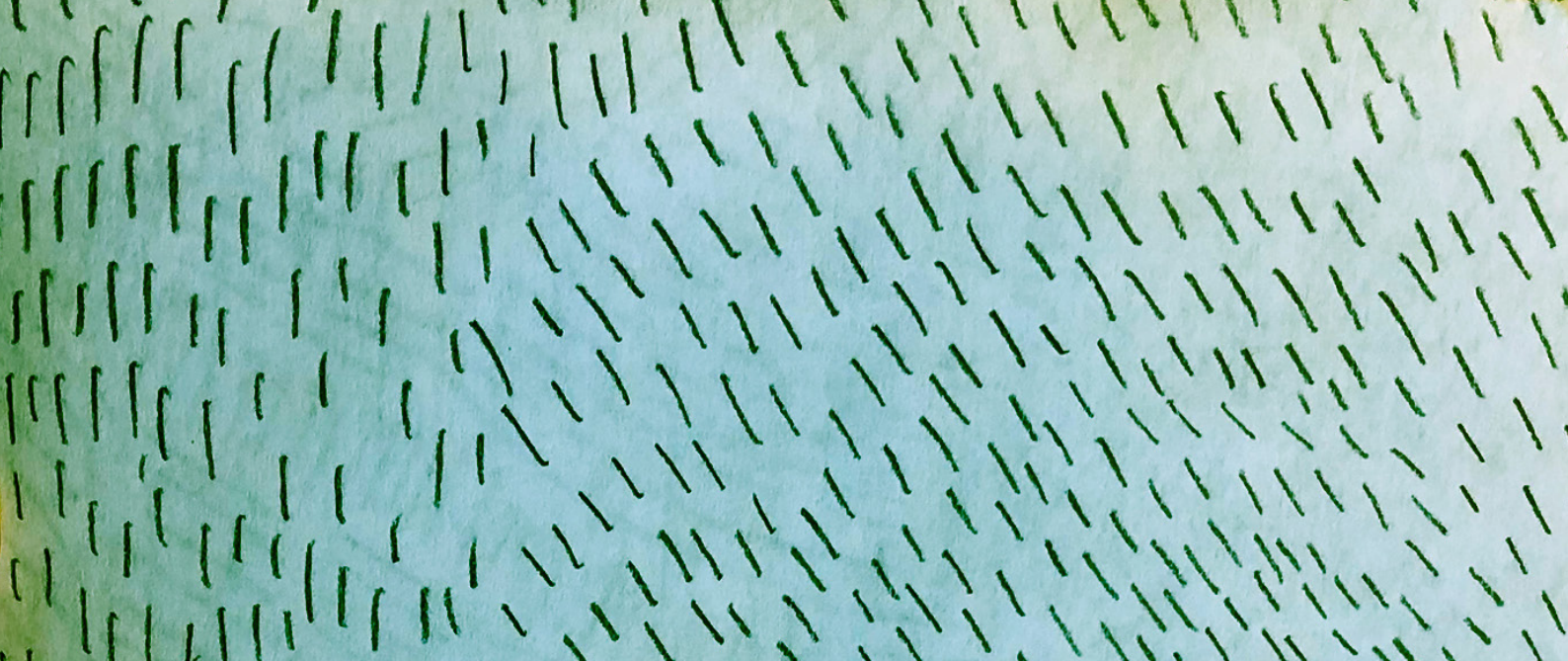
And so I'm sitting here and I'm welcoming Then into Now. And the marks in which Then resides are resonating with the raindrops outside, Now. And so in looking at the page I'm also looking out a window. And the page becomes part of my home.



If translation can move meaning across moments, then this is a translation in space.

I am reading these marks in the same place that I wrote them: the same chair, at the same desk, in front of the same computer. I was here. I am here. Much like Richard McGuire's *Here* (a book of graphic fiction that travels widely in time even as it stays in the same place), the page makes here into a companion, into a place to dwell. And so in reading this page, I'm translating here into itself.

Translation makes language into languages. (Makes experiences into objects. Holds a little chaos steady by asking it to look in the mirror.) In the same way, perhaps translation makes time into times, momentariness into moments, location into locations. It makes the experience of sitting, of dwelling, into a "here" that I can think about and travel to.

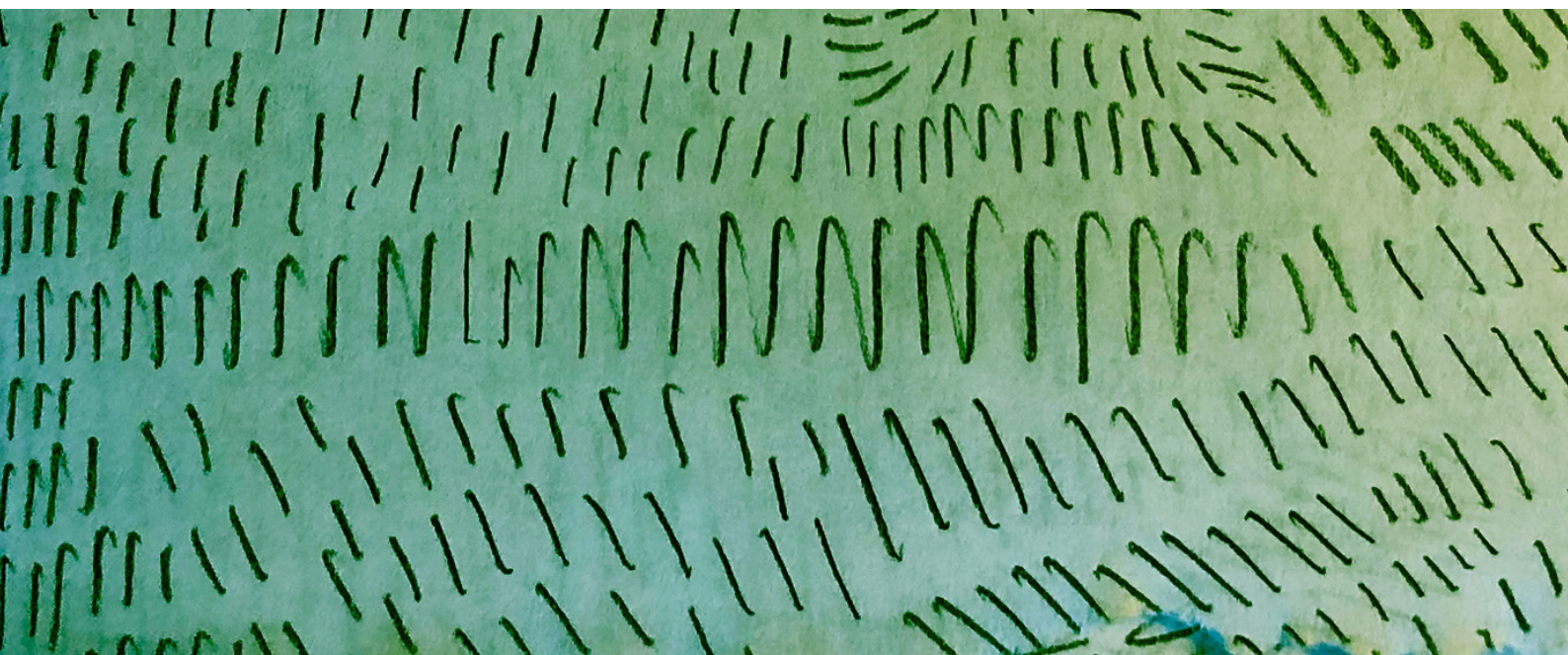


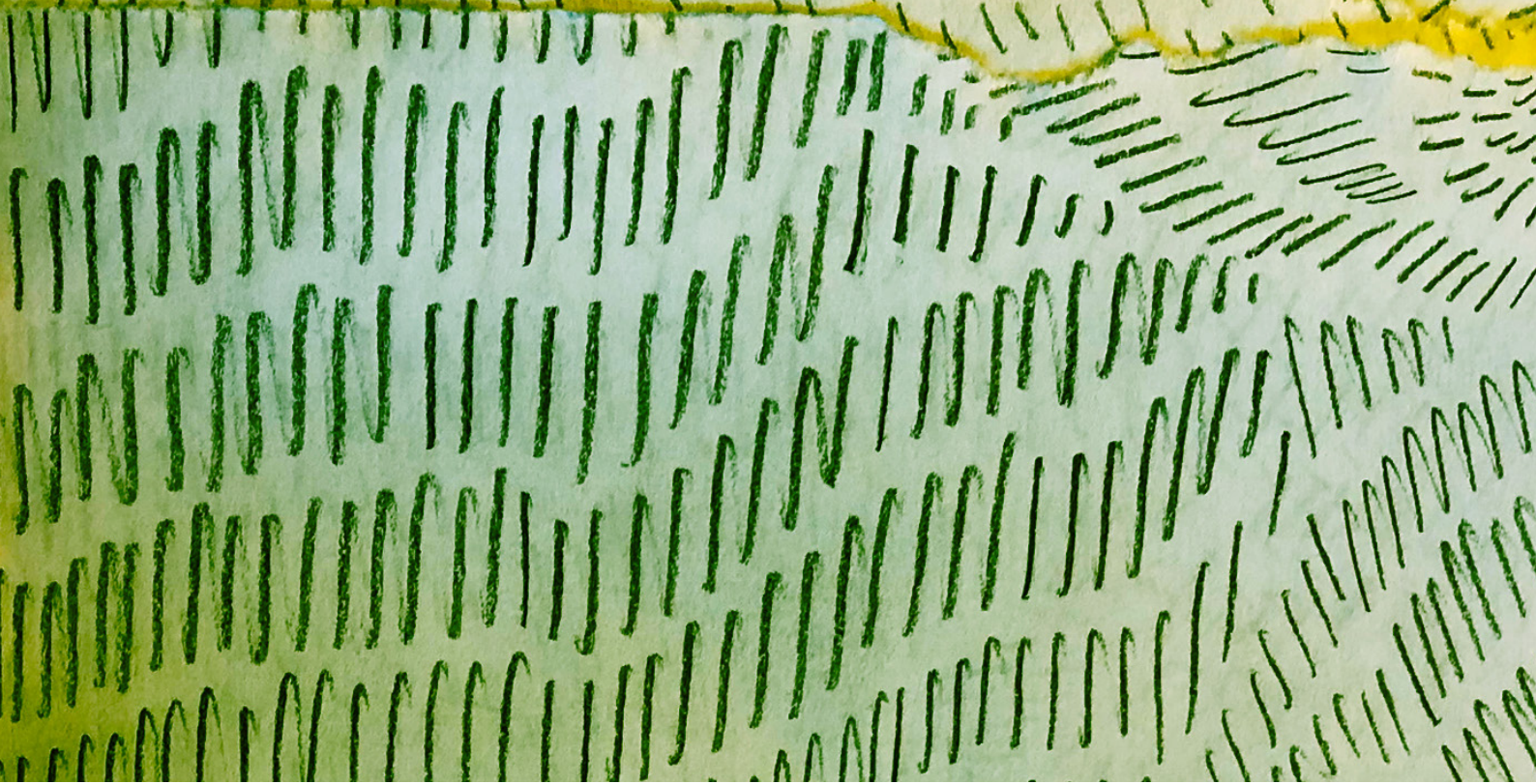
If translation can move meaning across movements, then this is a translation in gesture.

I'm reading a sheet of marks, the traces of a series of small actions. The precipitates of a movement of my body given language by a graphite prosthetic. A visual recording of the voice of my fingers. The crumbs from a repeated, deliberate gesture.

To the left. My hand moves with the page. Marking direction in tiny waves.

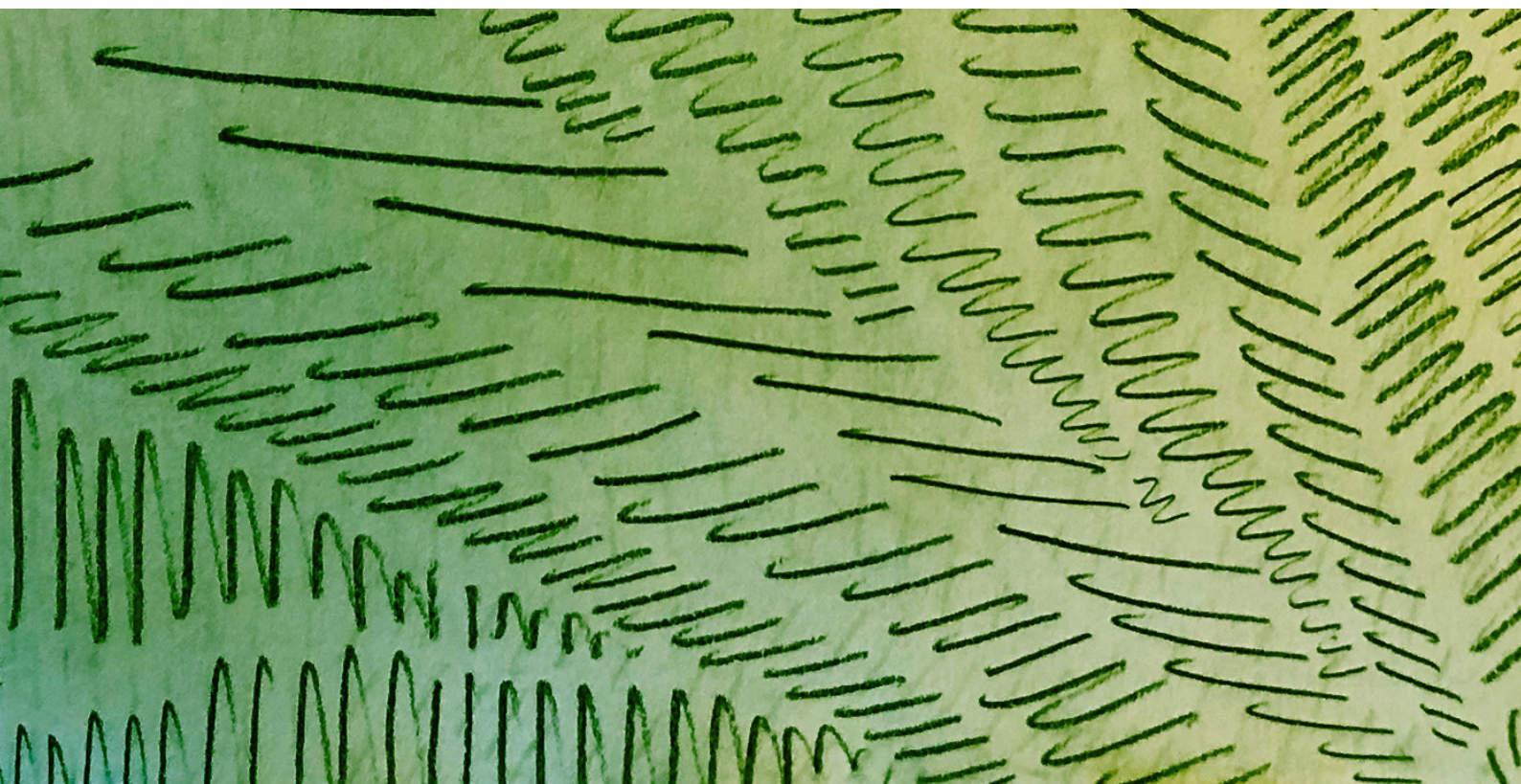
To the right. My hand moves with the page. Turning circles. Following the twisted nap of sea otter fur.





If translation can move meaning across musics, then this is a translation in rhythm.

Translation makes duets. To the left, I see the marks made by hand music, a pencil setting a rhythm. I see intro and verses and chords. To the right, I see a pencil singing loud and soft. Shifting harmonies that play above and toward and finally away from the voice on the left.

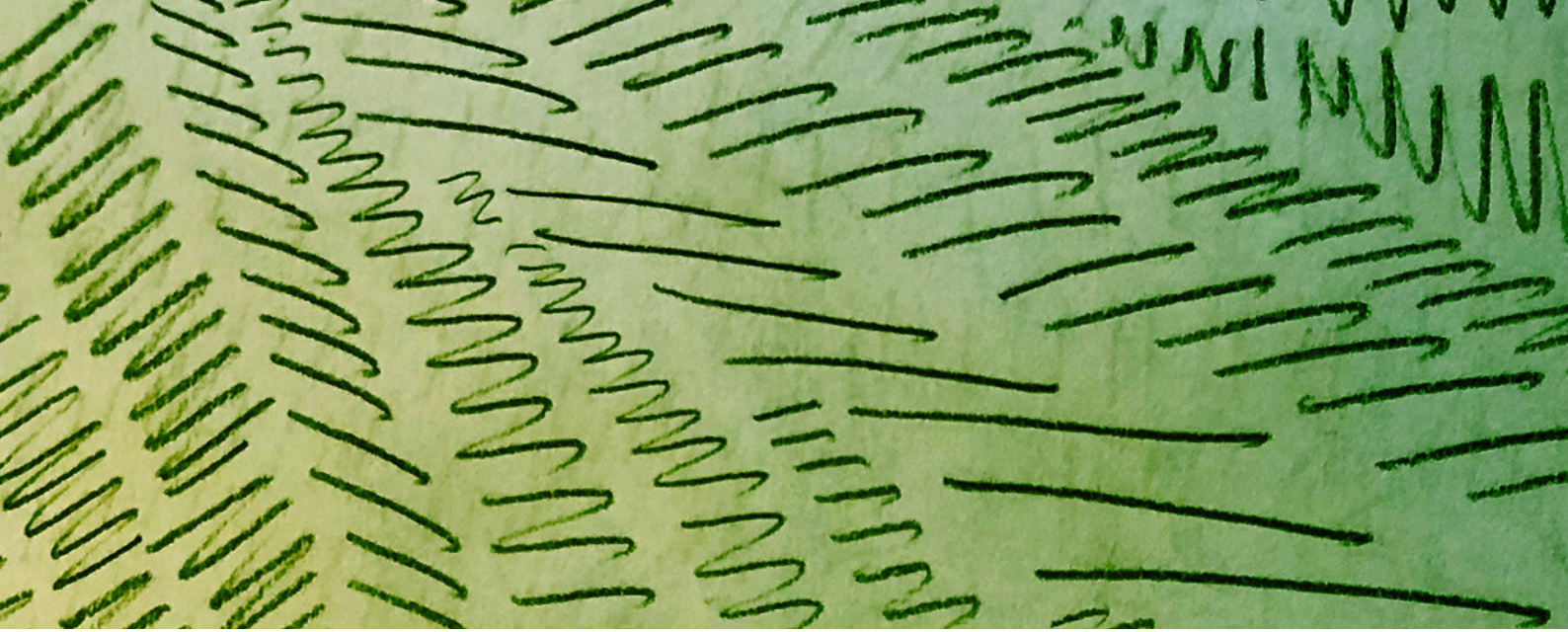




If translation is a practice of recognition that makes constellations, then the page is a sky and this is a translation in stories made of stars.

Here is a sea in the sky in the center of the book. Flows and eddies in light marked in graphite. Rock-skipping ripples on the surface of a pond. Here is the story of a horse, perhaps. Once upon a time it showered in sunlight, concentrating as best it could while trying to catch a tail from the many possible tails blowing by in the wind.



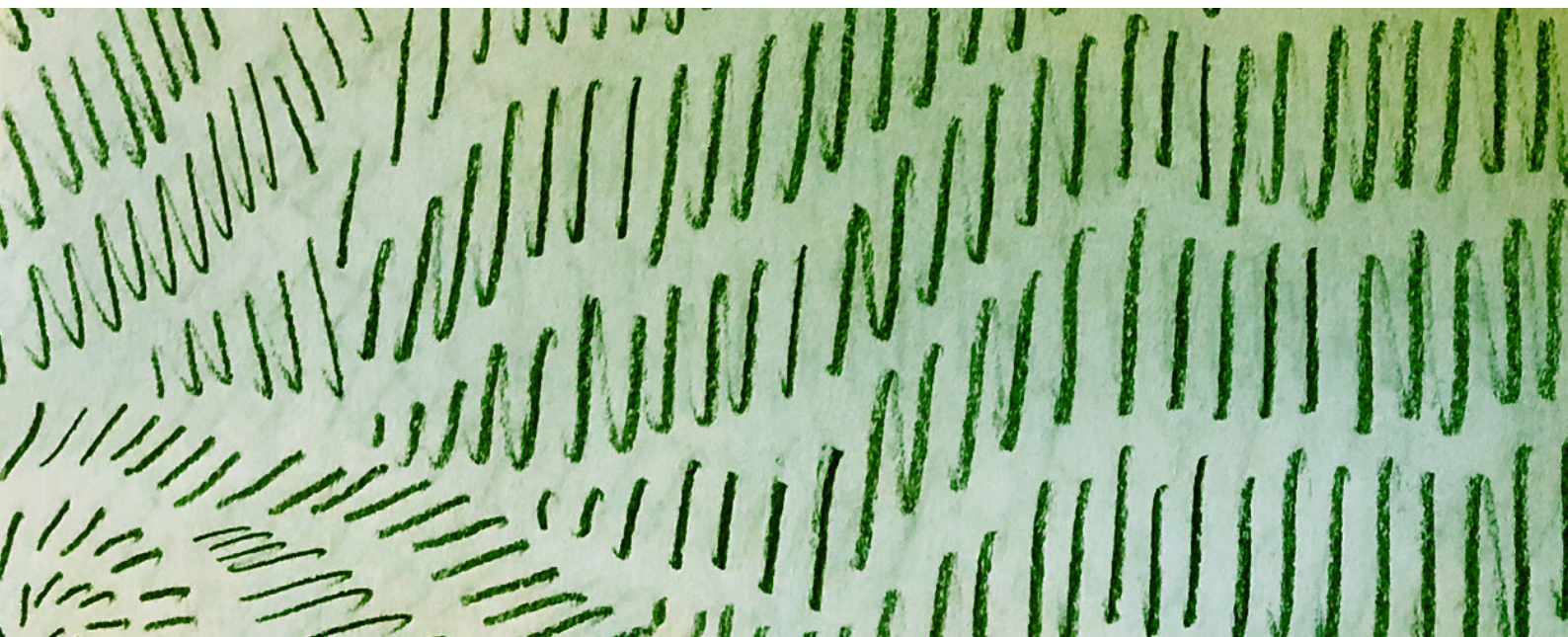


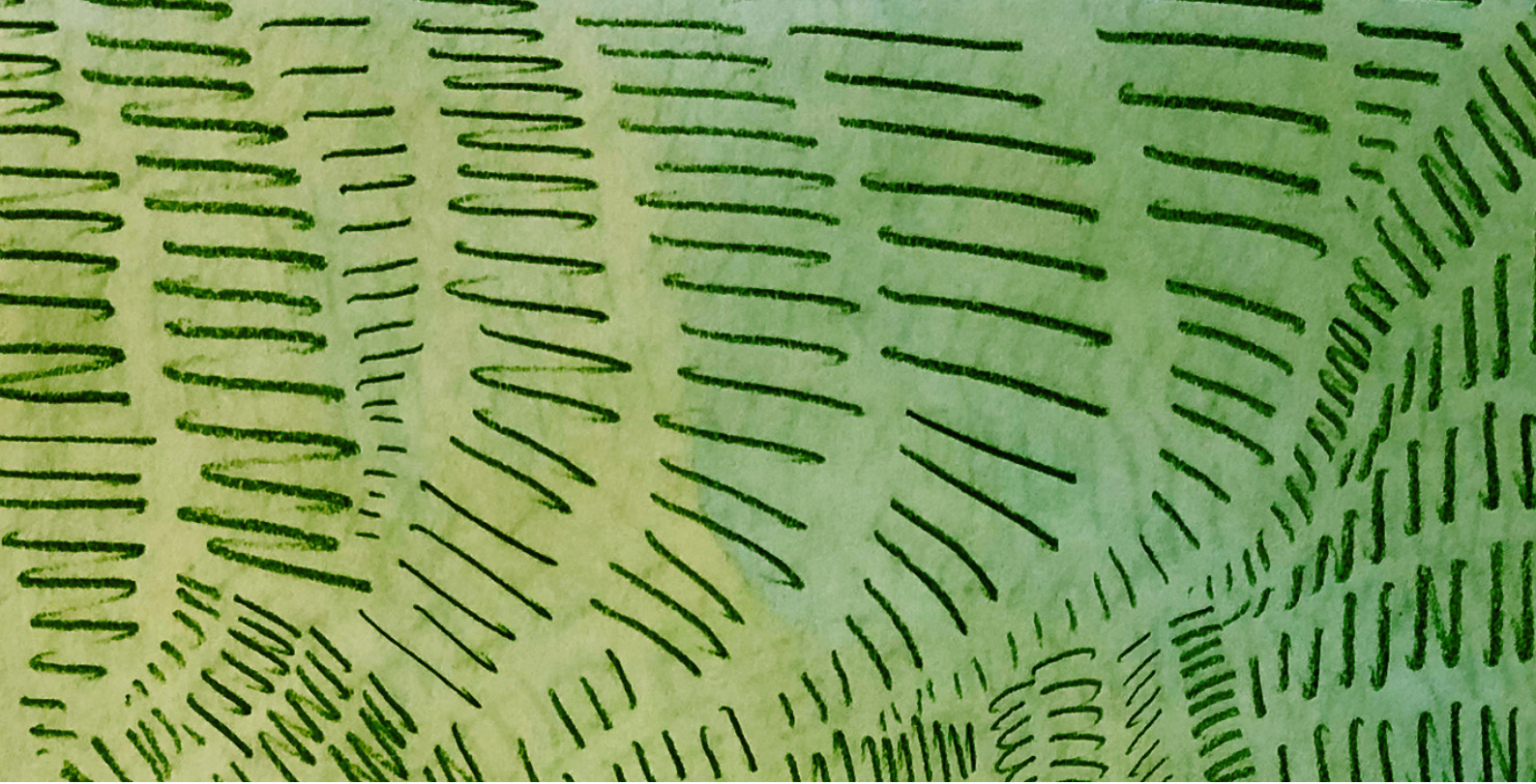
If translation can move meaning across horizons, then this translation is a distorting mirror.

Translation as funhouse visit showing a language a monstrous version of itself, a face sliding away from recognition and a body straining against its boundaries. The page as a distorting mirror, twisting ideas out of shape without breaking them.

Here, we have translation as acrossness. Across the crease, the cut, the fold, the horizon of sense and nonsense.

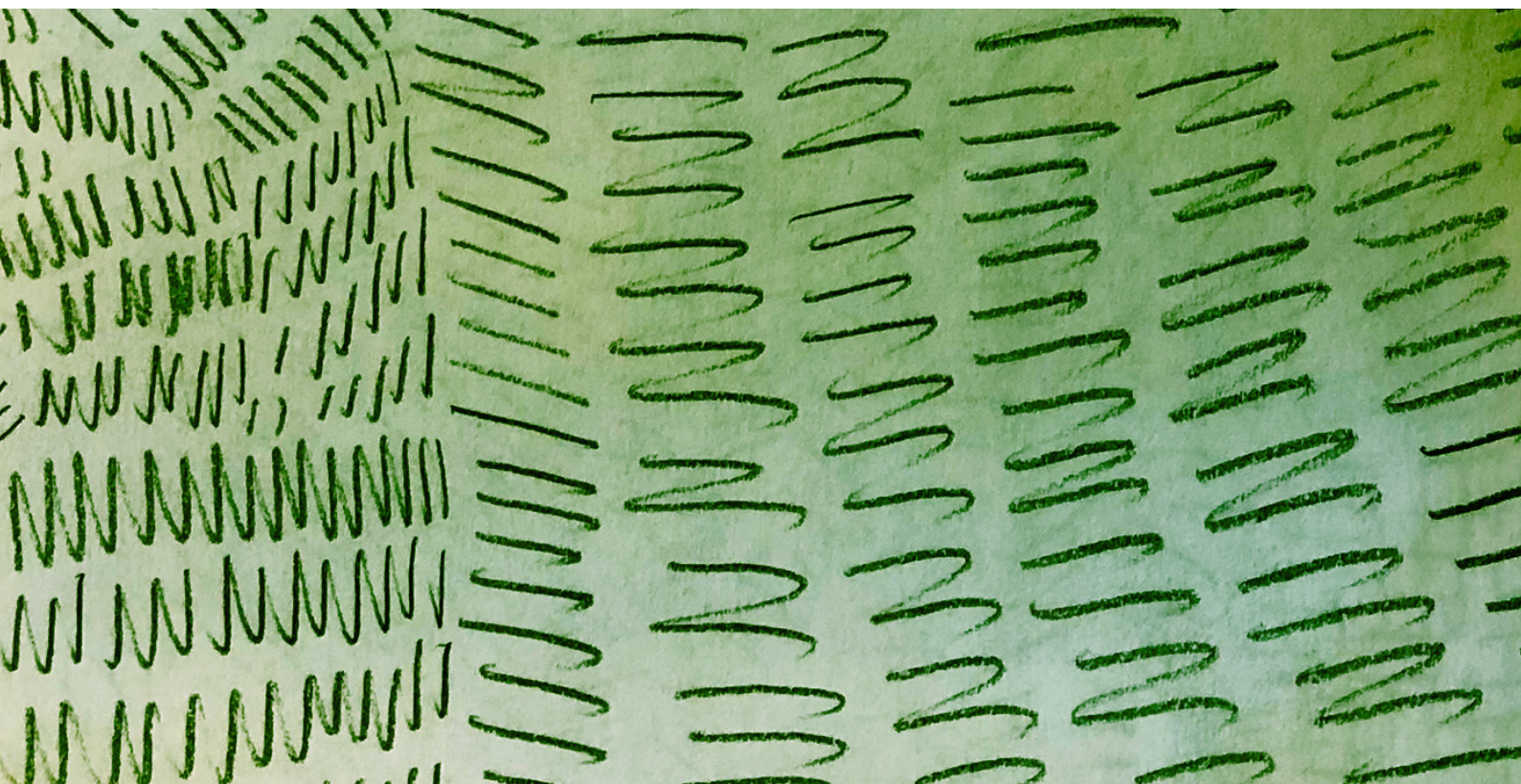
We look in the glass and see little insects forming up like soldiers. The curving path of a cold wind flattening out into regularity. A crush and a squeeze expanding itself.

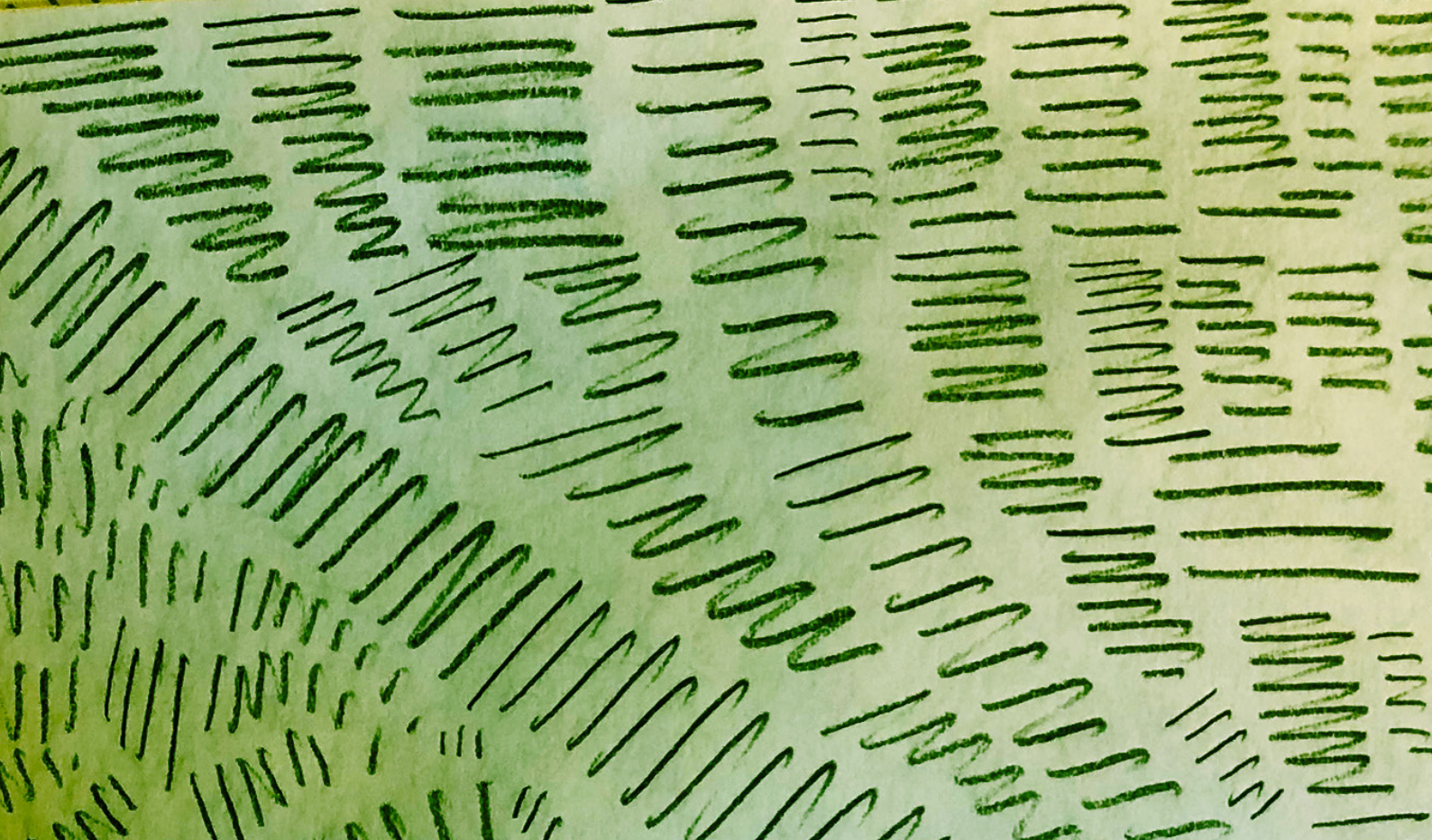




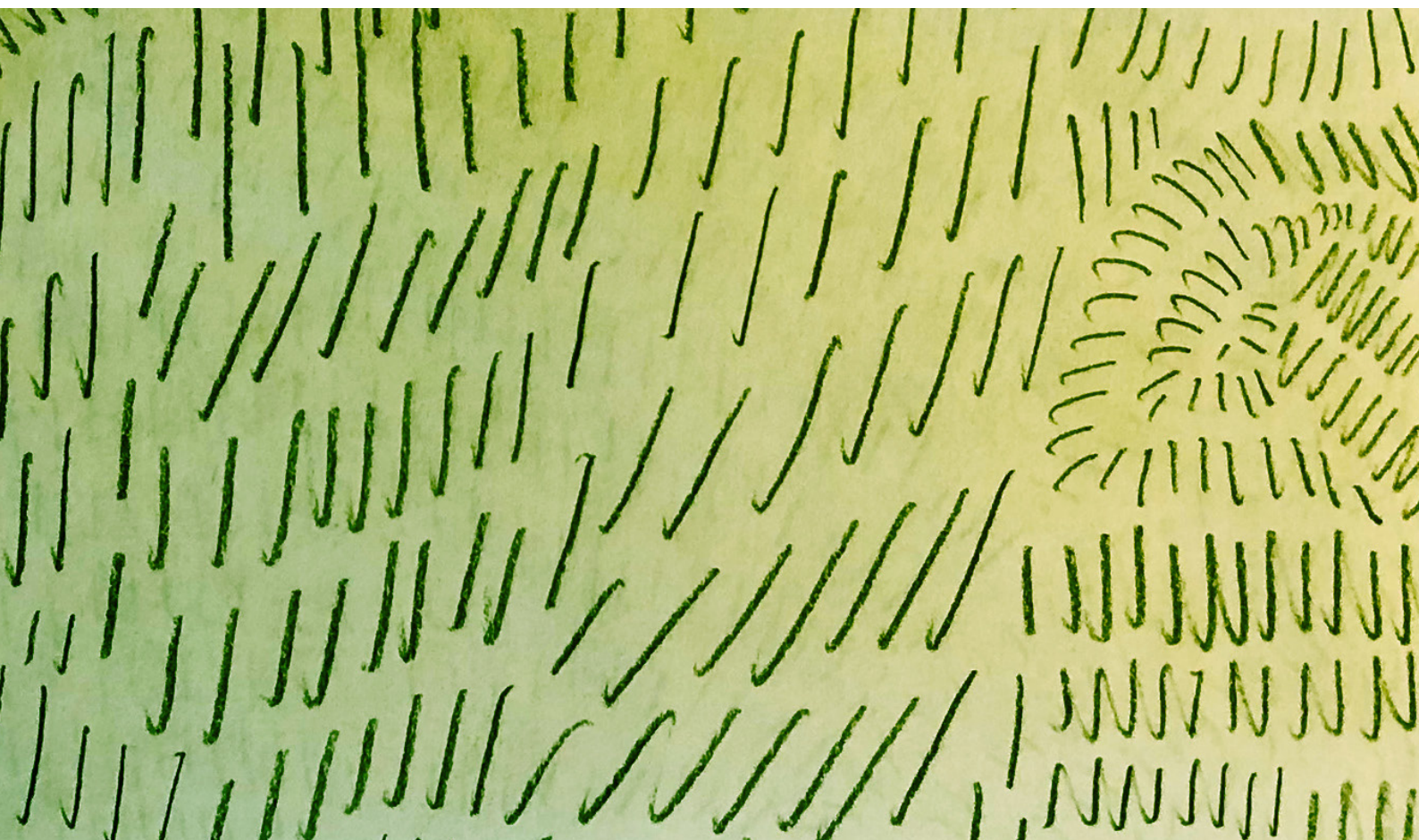
If translation can direct the line of our attention like a thread, then this translation is a weaving.

I see a fabric made of gestural marks, the sewing of a repetition into the page. A beckoning to the reader to lift the book from the desk and drape oneself in it. I read, I clothe myself.





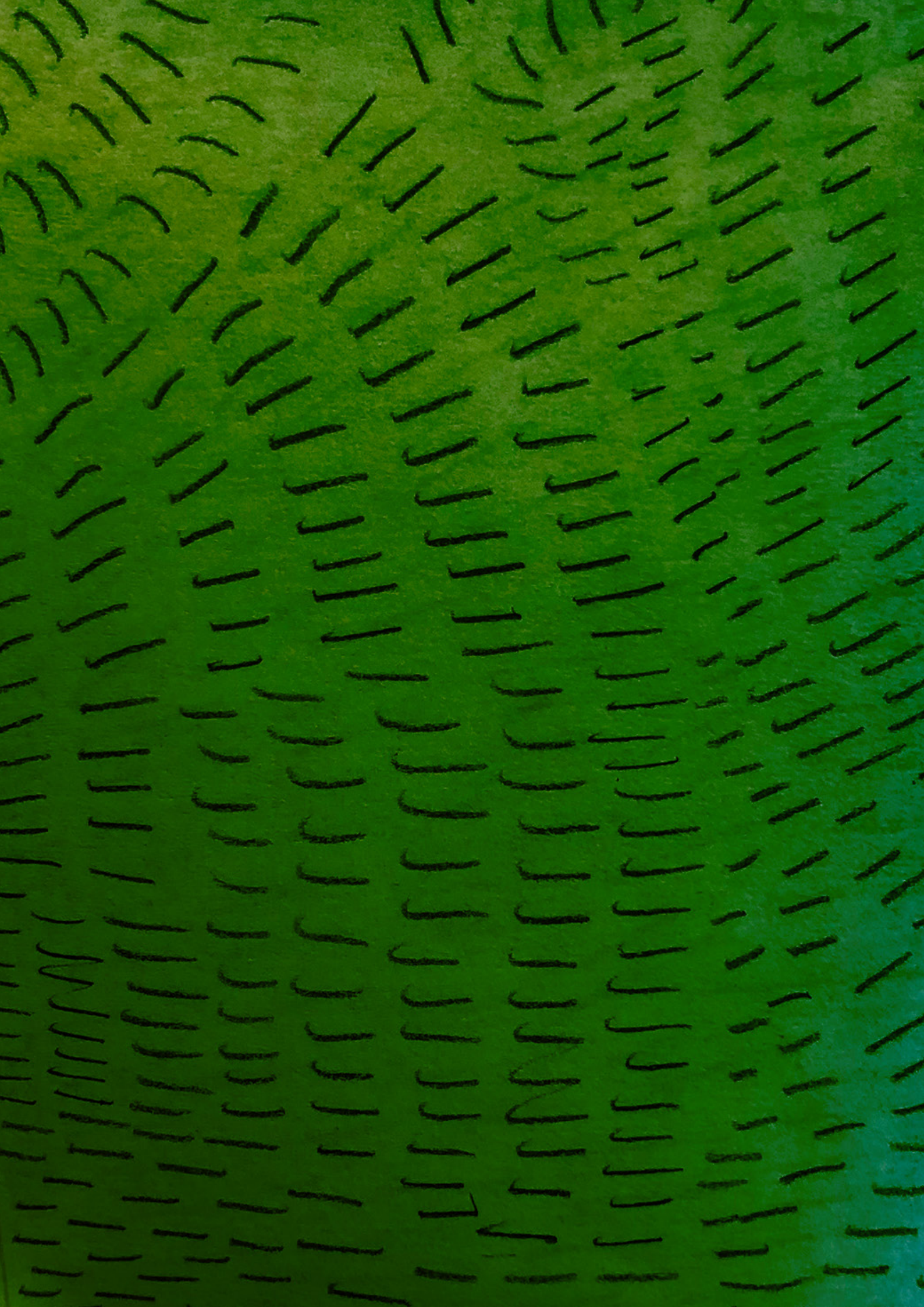
If the claim that a text is untranslatable is a gesture of exhaustion,
if it is simply a call for rest, then this page remains untranslated.

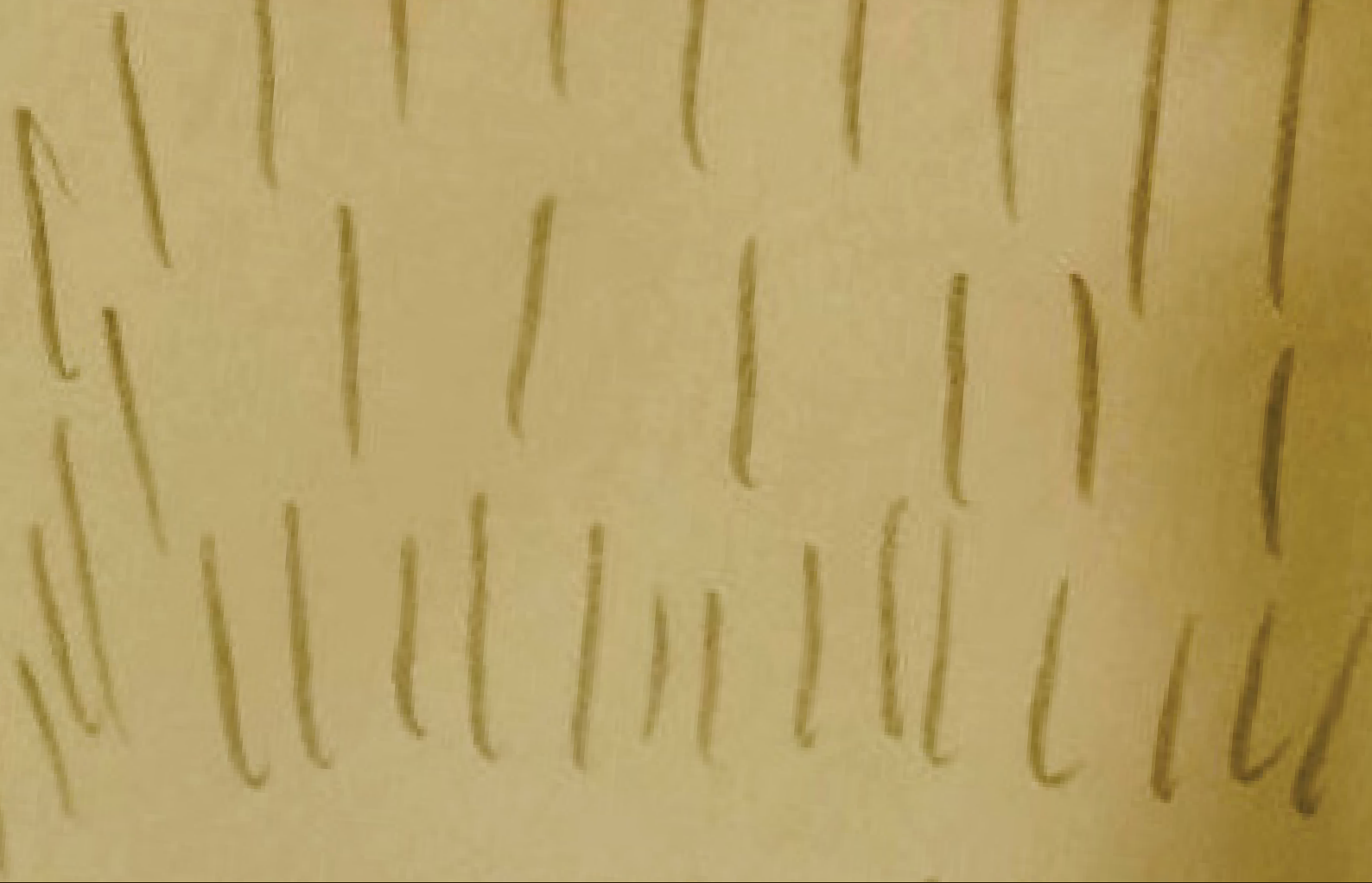


This translation is a garden.

I
read
myself
back
into
that
afternoon
when
I
planted
the
soil
of
the
page
with
the
seeds
of
my
gestures.

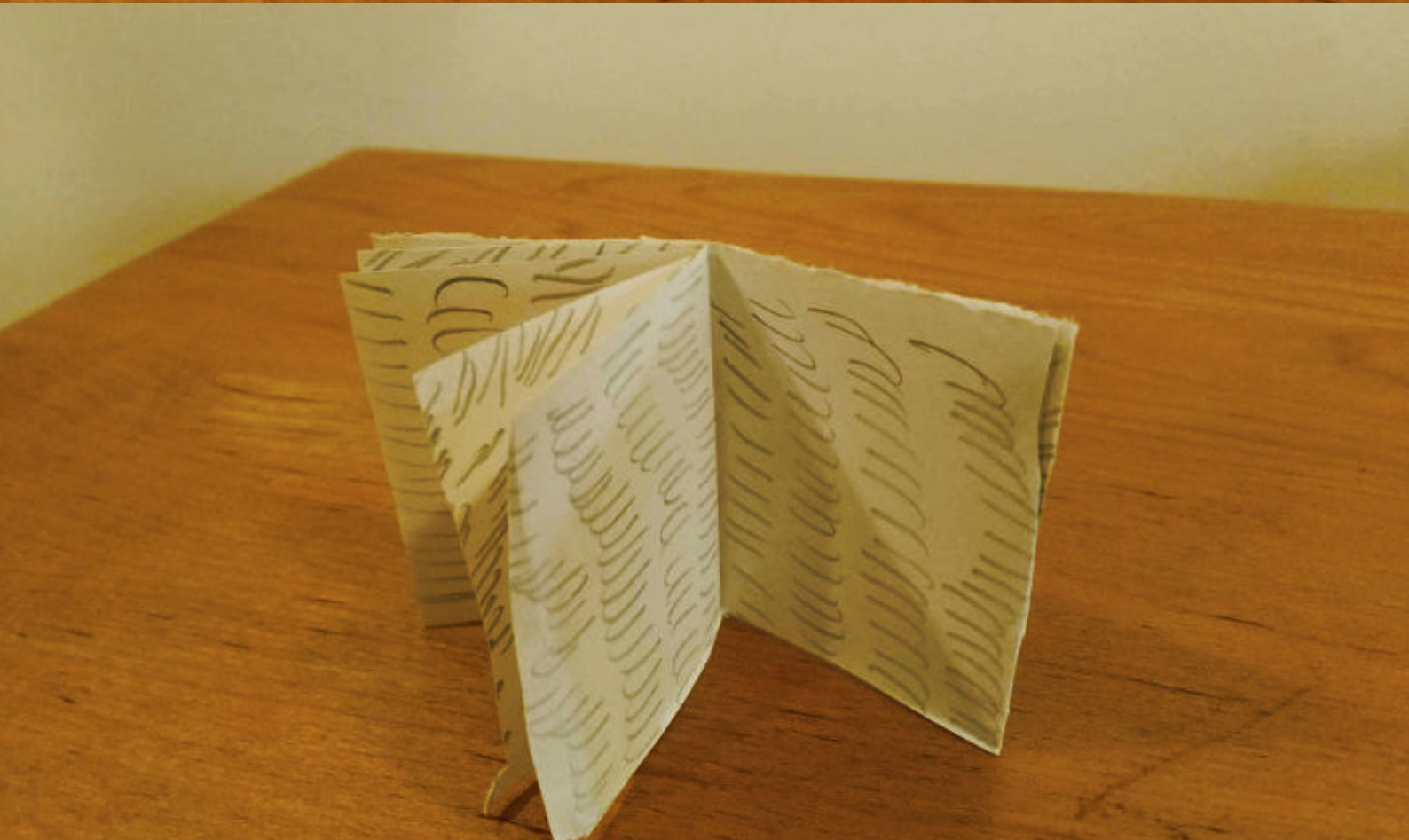
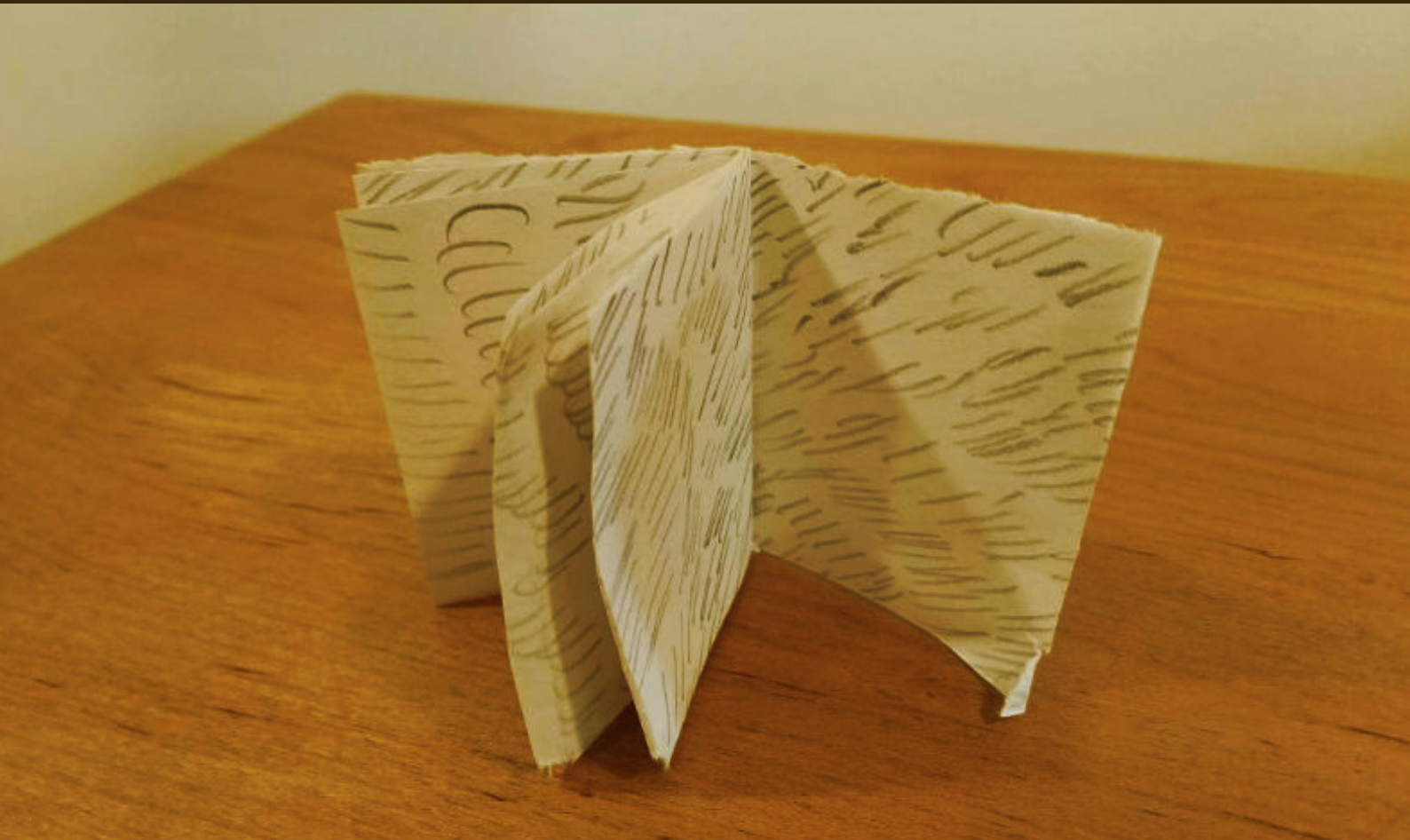
Now I sit and wait and watch them grow.

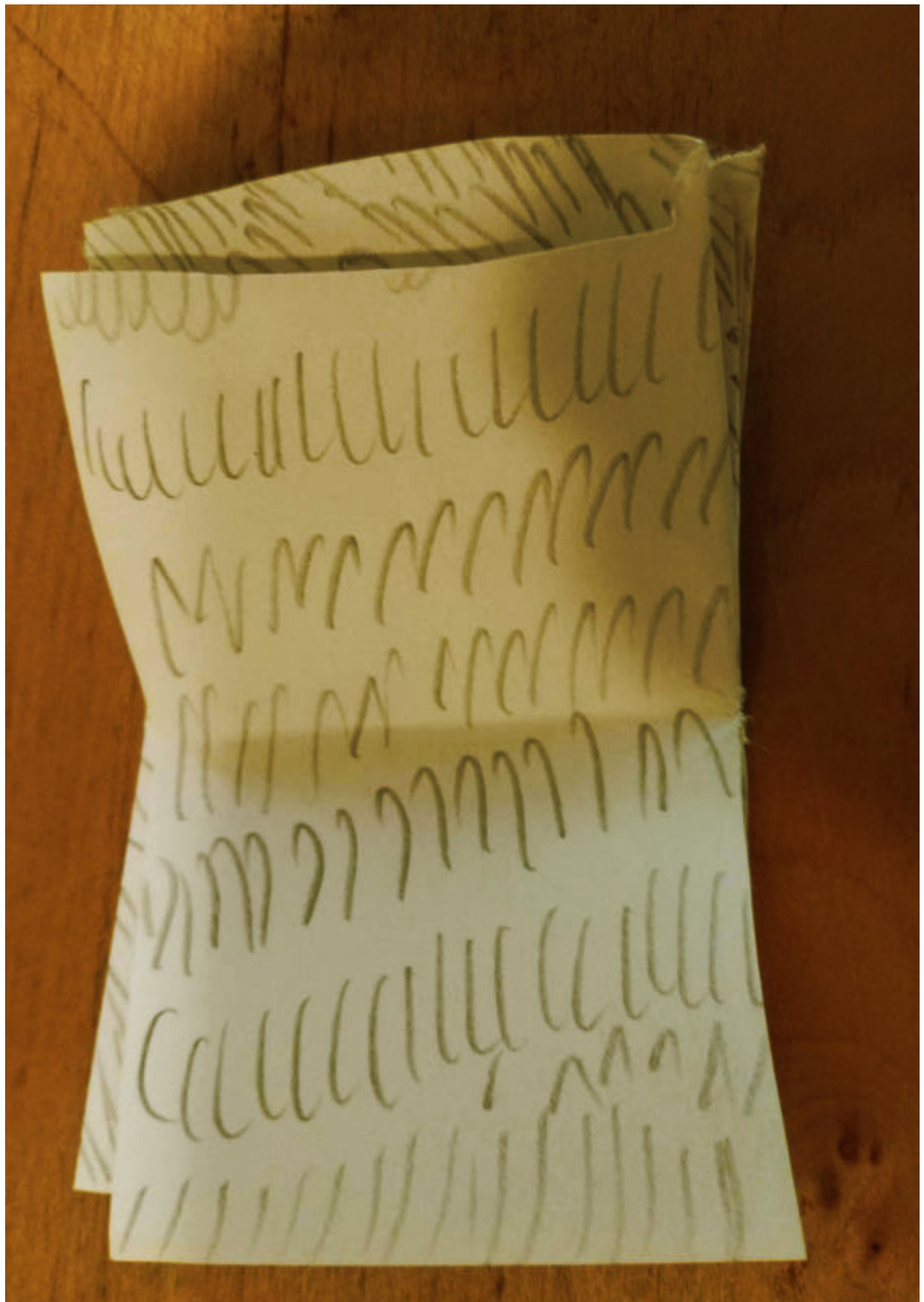


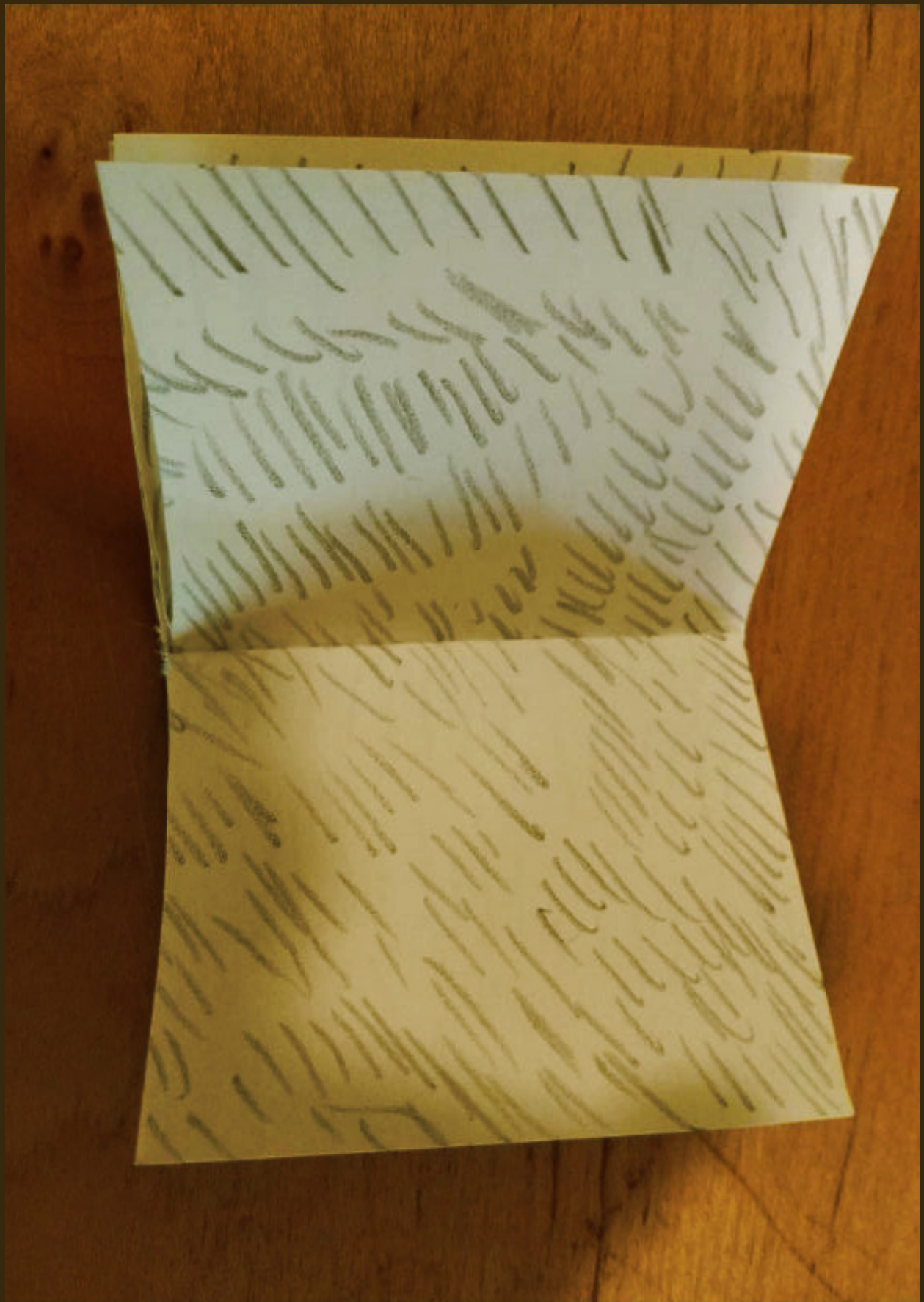


Josh Berson

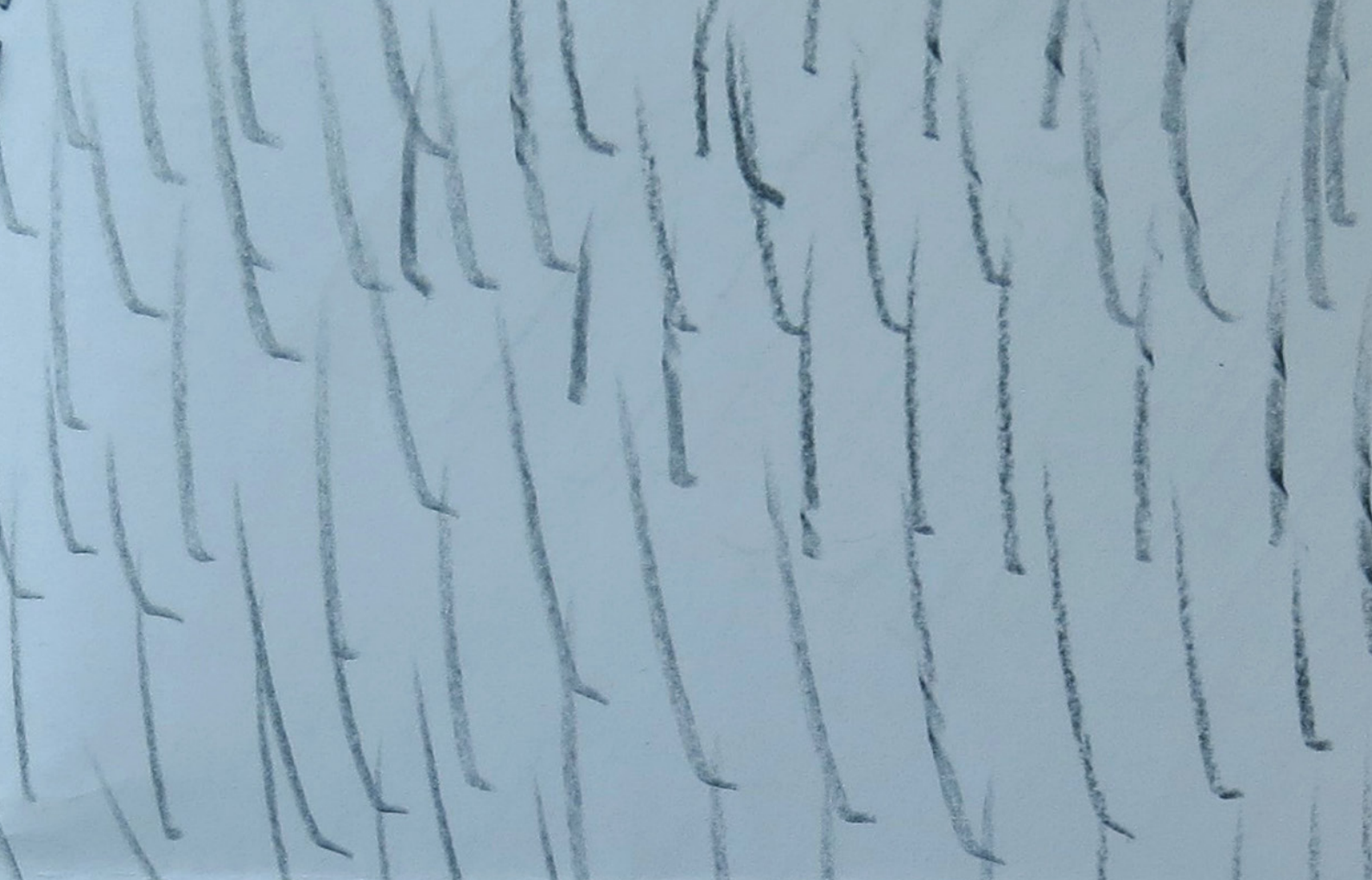




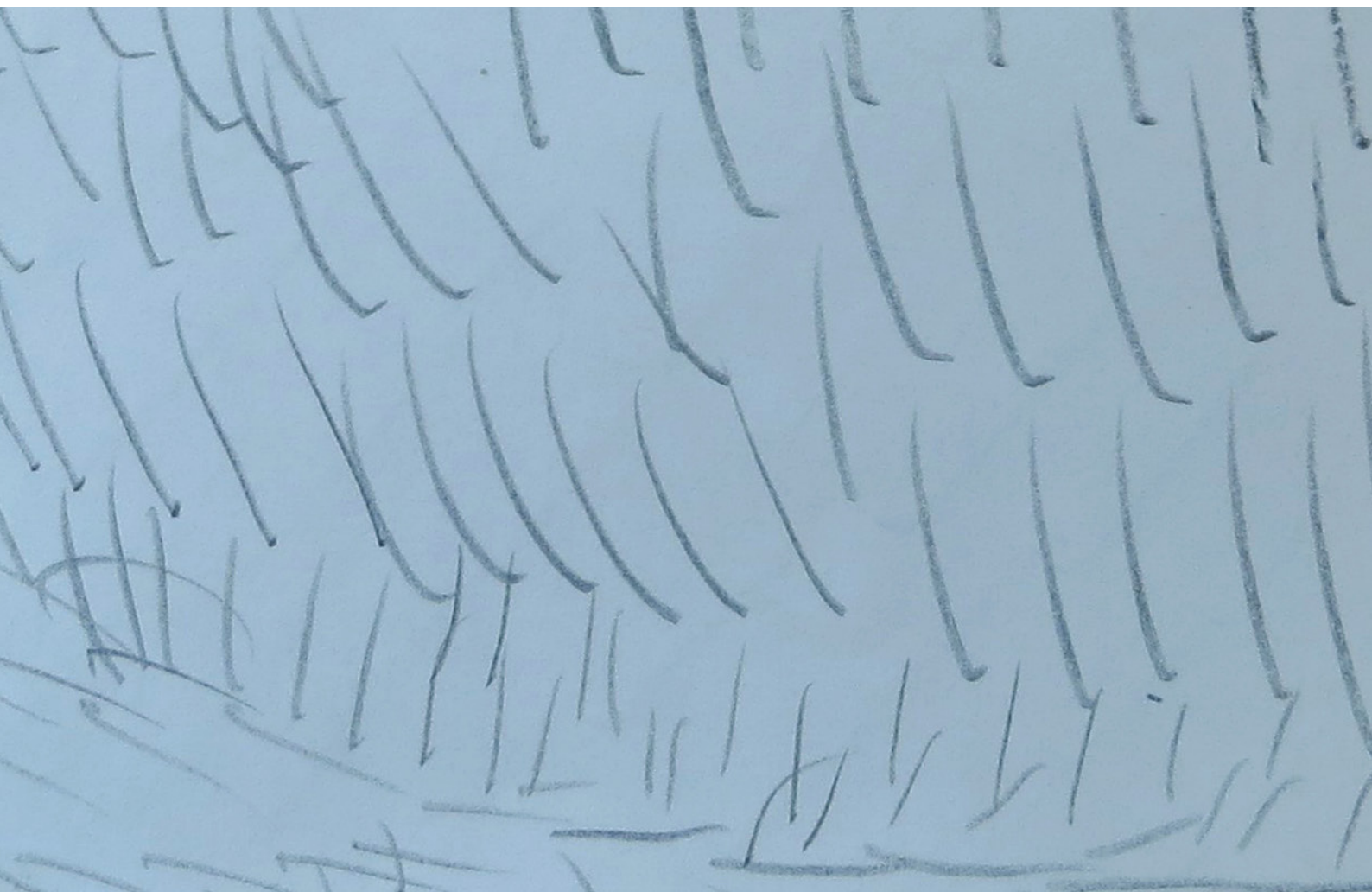








Angelika Messner



Drawing the strokes

Immediately brought me decades back to times when

as a small child (I) was watching snow-flakes falling down from the heaven
falling and falling and falling and falling and falling and falling and falling
some funny, rotating in the air

the stillness now within this snow

changes everything around – the house, the trees, the cat

everything

everything

it is a silky-ness in the air – you do not need to say a word – words are not heard –

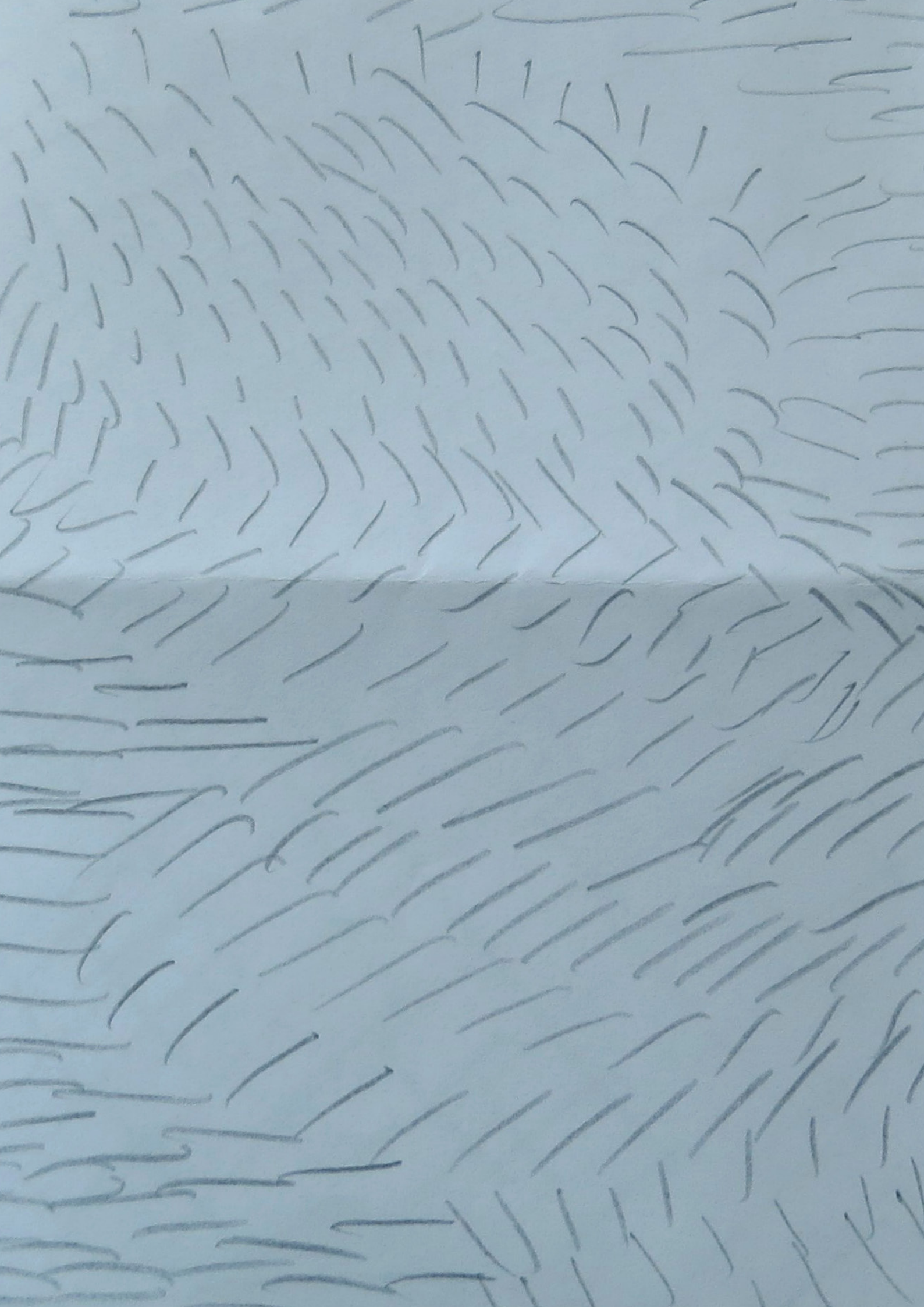
the lines in your heart are directly moving into these lines in your hand
today and go back within the falling snow-lines.

Such a miracle.

Drawing the strokes – moreover –

brought me to the old deep river near the house –smoothly moving and
fresh – observing the lines in the river – again with me in the middle of
the waves –

Thank you!

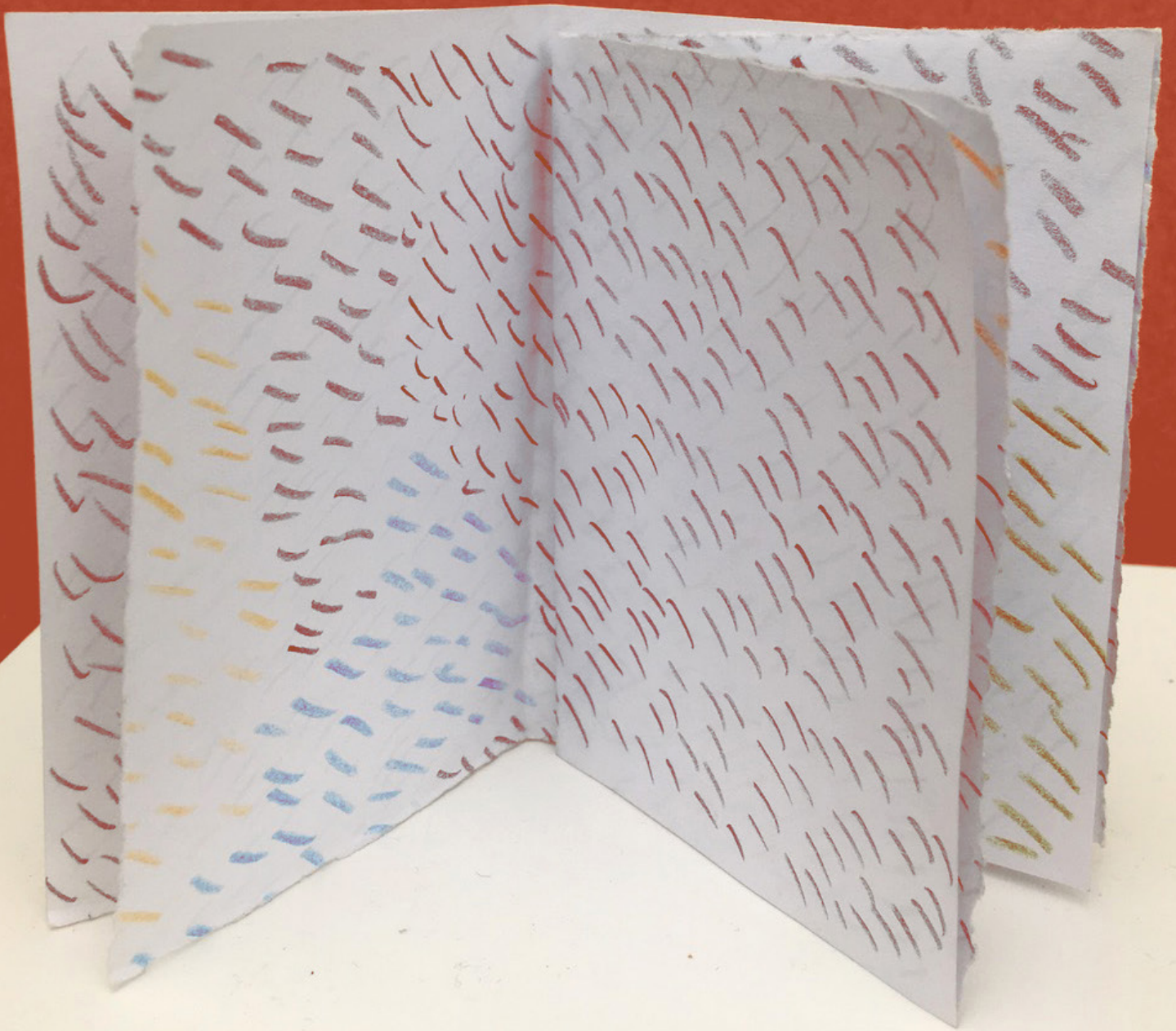




Christie Brown



While making my Book of Marks for Clare Twomey's project I found myself in a state of frustration and hurry. Not for me the quiet contemplative meditation of repetition and rhythm that is implied in this exercise. I was too keen to see what the finished object would look like once it was folded and able to be read. As an artist who draws in an illustrative representational way the repetitive nature of the mark making was a challenge. I wanted to let the marks develop into a clear narrative. And I suppose that is why I broke with the instruction to use the much-admired graphite pencil and added colour into my pages so that when I read the book it would be more of a surprise and an adventure, which it was.

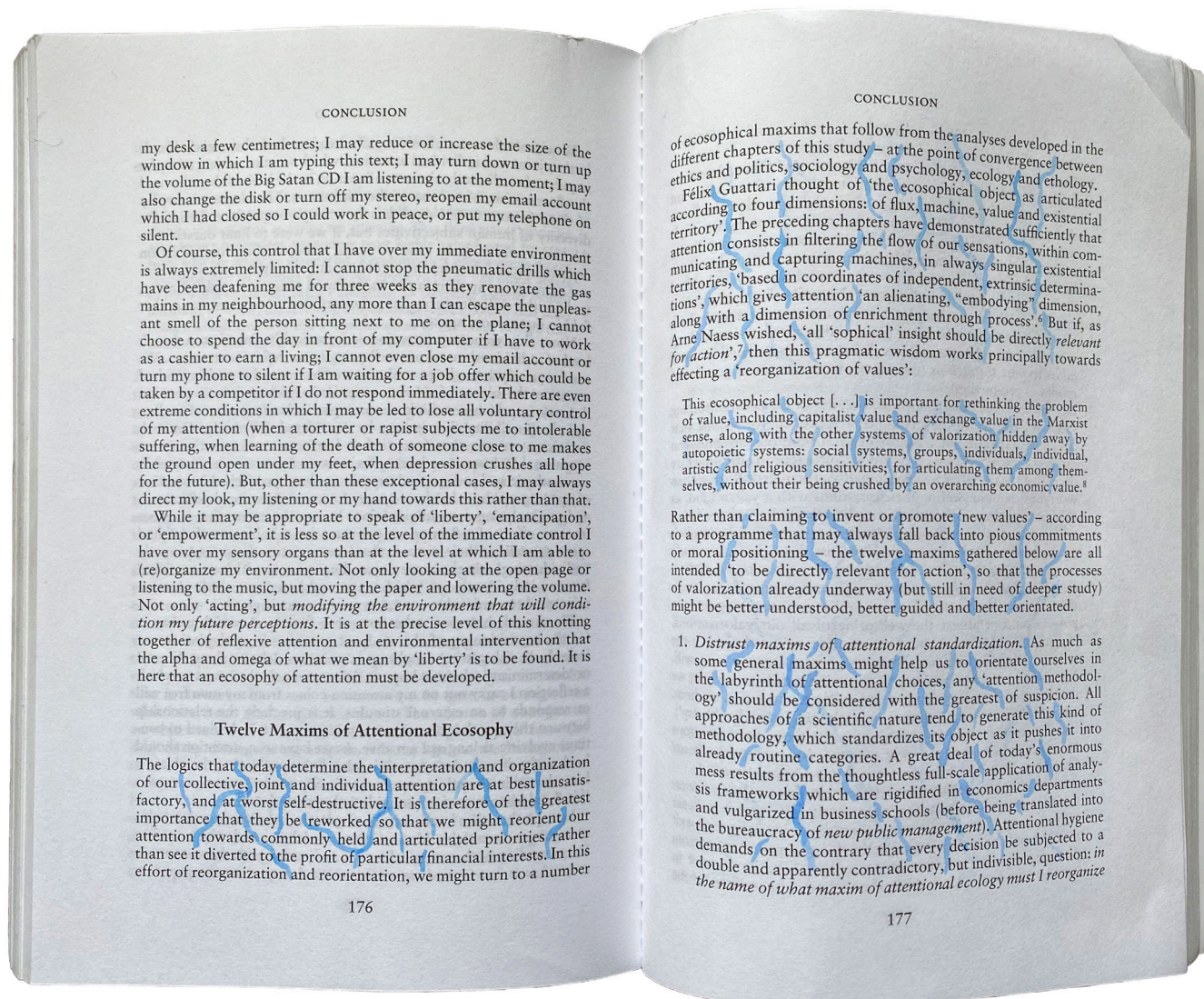


arrests my look on what it sees: my look is replete, blocked, arrested. The icon does not arrest my look on what is there to be seen; here, there is a presence that opens me further. From the visible, I go towards the invisible; the look becomes broader. . . .¹⁰ Things as different as a Hollywood action film, a photograph of a bearded 'terrorist' or a rise in GDP have an idol effect on most of our attentions, 'arresting our look on what is there to be seen'. On the other hand, a page of Edouard Glissant, a Gaston Bachelard painting, a Kiripi Katembo Siku photograph or a Pedro Costa film offer us icons, which broaden our look to make us attentive to an invisible presence inhabiting the visible. From which come two complementary questions to bear in mind: *how do we look at all images as icons? How can we increase the proportion of icons in the images that circulate among us?*

Dianna Frid

necessarily limited, we might suspect that any background contains figures that are only waiting to be identified as such. Beyond this progressive discovery of the neglected wealth of the background, it is above all urgent that *we become attentive to the properties of the background as background* – to what in its very distinctiveness enables it to make figures appear. What we today call the 'common(s)' provides a good illustration of this productivity peculiar to the background: water, air, climate, seeds, languages, know-how and accumulated manners – all of these are usually situated below the level of private property, protected from individual appropriation by their status as a common background to all human activities. It is by blinding itself to the imperceptible (because ubiquitous) role played by the commons in the continuation of our societies that individualist ideology has been

Every text has the potential of having rivers. Look here and you may find several. Rivers appear when the spaces between words align vertically. Once you see them you cannot un-see them.



CONCLUSION

my desk a few centimetres; I may reduce or increase the size of the window in which I am typing this text; I may turn down or turn up the volume of the Big Satan CD I am listening to at the moment; I may also change the disk or turn off my stereo, reopen my email account which I had closed so I could work in peace, or put my telephone on silent.

Of course, this control that I have over my immediate environment is always extremely limited: I cannot stop the pneumatic drills which have been deafening me for three weeks as they renovate the gas mains in my neighbourhood, any more than I can escape the unpleasant smell of the person sitting next to me on the plane; I cannot choose to spend the day in front of my computer if I have to work as a cashier to earn a living; I cannot even close my email account or turn my phone to silent if I am waiting for a job offer which could be taken by a competitor if I do not respond immediately. There are even extreme conditions in which I may be led to lose all voluntary control of my attention (when a torturer or rapist subjects me to intolerable suffering, when learning of the death of someone close to me makes the ground open under my feet, when depression crushes all hope for the future). But, other than these exceptional cases, I may always direct my look, my listening or my hand towards this rather than that.

While it may be appropriate to speak of 'liberty', 'emancipation', or 'empowerment', it is less so at the level of the immediate control I have over my sensory organs than at the level at which I am able to (re)organize my environment. Not only looking at the open page or listening to the music, but moving the paper and lowering the volume. Not only 'acting', but *modifying the environment that will condition my future perceptions*. It is at the precise level of this knotting together of reflexive attention and environmental intervention that the alpha and omega of what we mean by 'liberty' is to be found. It is here that an ecosophy of attention must be developed.

Twelve Maxims of Attentional Ecosophy

The logics that today determine the interpretation and organization of our collective, joint and individual attention are at best unsatisfactory, and at worst self-destructive. It is therefore of the greatest importance that they be reworked so that we might reorient our attention towards commonly held and articulated priorities rather than see it diverted to the profit of particular financial interests. In this effort of reorganization and reorientation, we might turn to a number

CONCLUSION

of ecosophical maxims that follow from the analyses developed in the different chapters of this study – at the point of convergence between ethics and politics, sociology and psychology, ecology and ethology.

Félix Guattari thought of 'the ecosophical object as articulated according to four dimensions: of flux, machine, value and existential territory'. The preceding chapters have demonstrated sufficiently that attention consists in filtering the flow of our sensations, within communicating and capturing machines, in always singular existential territories, 'based in coordinates of independent, extrinsic determinations', which gives attention 'an alienating, "embodying" dimension, along with a dimension of enrichment through process'.⁶ But if, as Arne Naess wished, 'all "sophical" insight should be directly *relevant for action*',⁷ then this pragmatic wisdom works principally towards effecting a 'reorganization of values':

This ecosophical object [...] is important for rethinking the problem of value, including capitalist value and exchange value in the Marxist sense, along with the other systems of valorization hidden away by autopoietic systems: social systems, groups, individuals, individual, artistic and religious sensitivities; for articulating them among themselves, without their being crushed by an overarching economic value.⁸

Rather than claiming to invent or promote 'new values' – according to a programme that may always fall back into pious commitments or moral positioning – the twelve maxims gathered below are all intended 'to be directly relevant for action', so that the processes of valorization already underway (but still in need of deeper study) might be better understood, better guided and better orientated.

1. *Distrust maxims of attentional standardization*. As much as some general maxims might help us to orientate ourselves in the labyrinth of attentional choices, any 'attention methodology' should be considered with the greatest of suspicion. All approaches of a scientific nature tend to generate this kind of methodology, which standardizes its object as it pushes it into already routine categories. A great deal of today's enormous mess results from the thoughtless full-scale application of analysis frameworks which are rigidified in economics departments and vulgarized in business schools (before being translated into the bureaucracy of *new public management*). Attentional hygiene demands on the contrary that every decision be subjected to a double and apparently contradictory, but indivisible, question: *in the name of what maxim of attentional ecology must I reorganize*

We can think of typographical rivers not as errors but as the spaces in between two shores. Each shore is a ridge of words. The English translation of Yves Citton's *The Ecology of Attention*¹ has many rivers, which also means that it has many ridges. When somebody—usually a designer—typesets a text, they may or may not lookout for rivers.

Rivers usually become visible when we squint at a page of text, or when we were not looking for them. Sooner or later the text interrupts the rivers' flowing. The text is, hierarchically speaking, the matter of import. The rivers come and go—in and out of focus, in and out of our modes of perception. The text and its meanings is what the book is for.

The Swiss graphic designer and typographer, Adrian Frutiger, thought that good typography meant that you did not notice the letters as distractions. But noticing letters and typesetting gives us an opportunity to pay another kind of attention to the text. The two can be simultaneous confluences.

The Rivers of Attention were always already in the English translation of Yves Citton's *The Ecology of Attention*. He might not have anticipated that his book is also an Atlas of rivulets still unnamed.

¹ Images from the typography / topography of Yves Citton's *The Ecology of Attention* US / UK Edition, Polity Press, 2017

Understand the consequences of the primacy of filters. Attention being a matter of selection, the positions of power in an attention economy are defined according to their ability to filter the flows that pass through us. The teams of journalists selecting the day's news have as much power as the government teams regulating the circulation of our taxes. Wherever they are situated in these hierarchies and intertwined power networks, every individual and every group should be understood as a filtering operator in a circulation that now takes place on a planetary scale. From which comes a question in which our political demands converge, along with our ethical responsibilities: *what will we (or will we not) allow to pass through us* (discourses, words, types of goods and modes of production)?

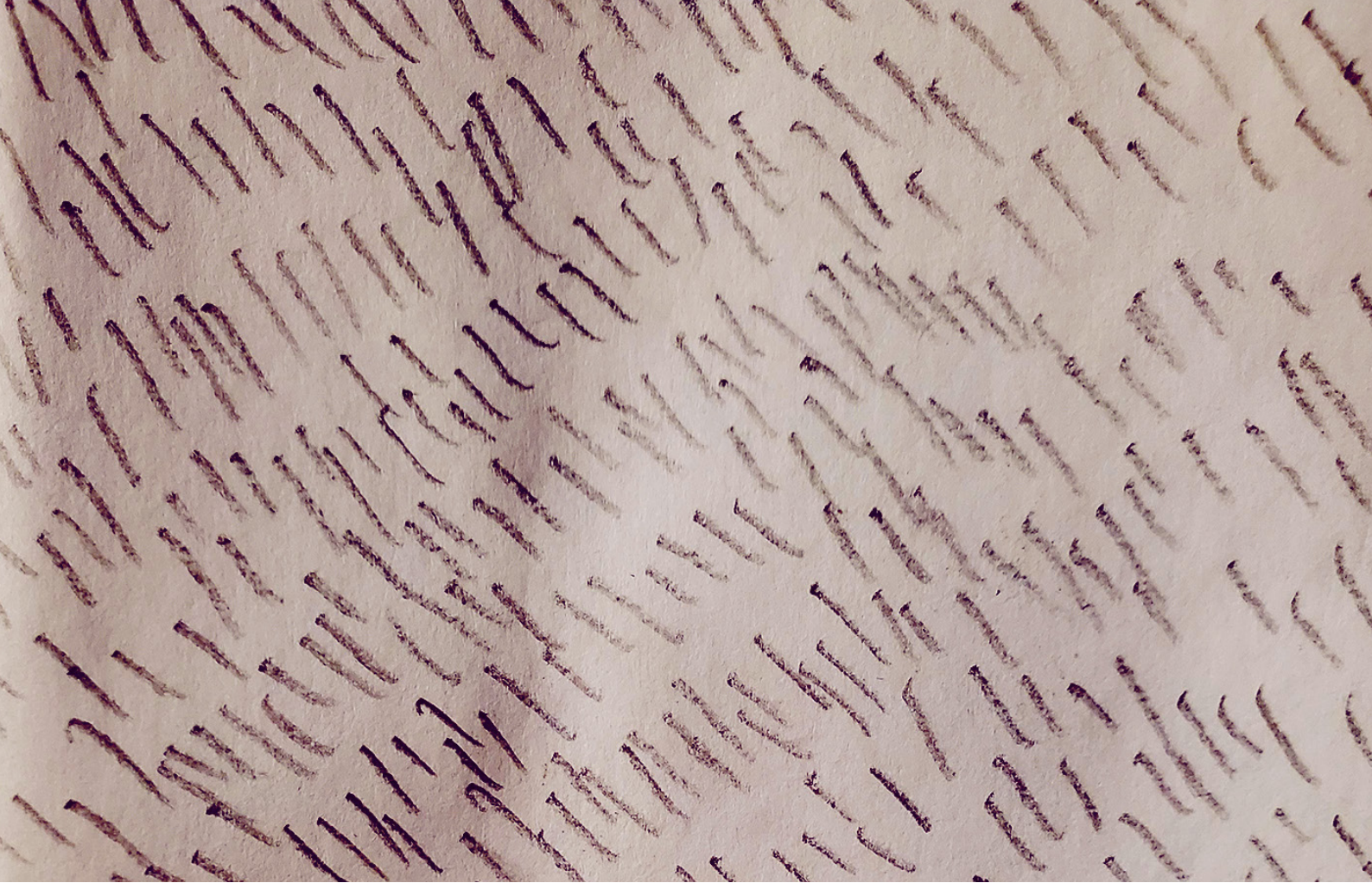
Get behind mediatized questions. Because of the self-reinforcing loops that structure the mass-media space, the questions that circulate among us often tend to concentrate our attention on (at best) secondary issues or (more often) problems that are deceptive because they have been badly articulated. Rather than worrying about answering these questions with a yes or a no, as the polls require, or about knowing whether what we are being told is true or false, we would do better to get behind the implicit presuppositions of the questions that pass through us: *is it truly important that our attention should be focused on this issue?*

Be strategic about your attentional valorization. Our individual and collective attention is the most precious thing that we possess, since it affects the wellspring of all our valorizations. We transform ourselves into 'representatives' of the other the moment we give him our attention – often against our will. Even when we denounce, attack, or criticize ideas or people, we contribute to drawing our joint and collective attention to them, and so valorizing them ('there is no such thing as bad publicity'). Faced with the positivity of adverse attention, two questions follow from one another: *what will we chose to speak about? Should we do our enemies the favour of criticizing them?*

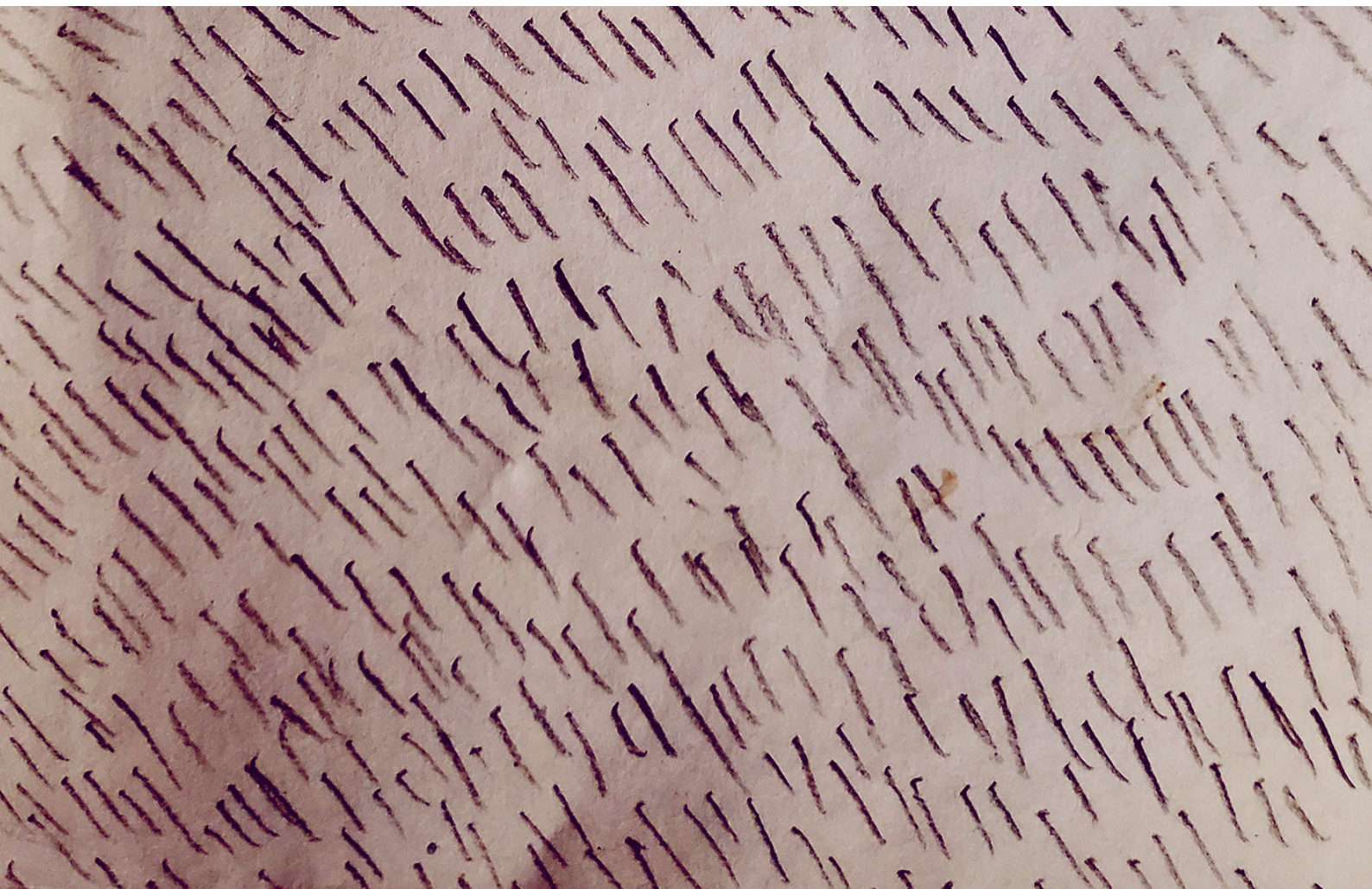
attentive being, called by what he tends to (*ad-tendere*) to become other than what he is. What the denouncers of our contemporary distraction lament is precisely that we no longer can, or no longer know how to, alienate ourselves profoundly in the contemplation of an experience or a work. The aim of individuating attention is not, therefore, to escape alienation, but to judiciously choose our alienations: *what forms of alienation enrich us?*

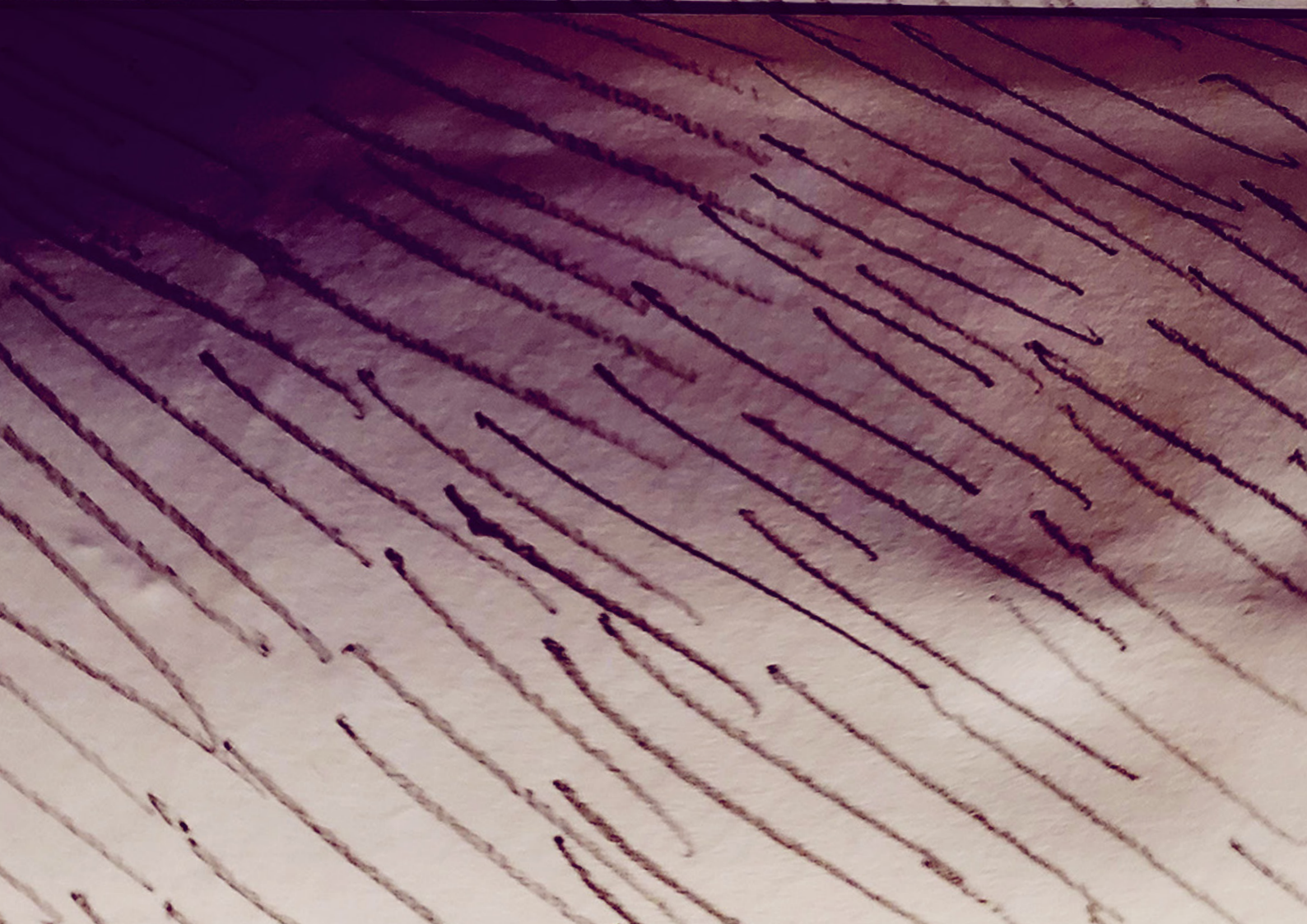
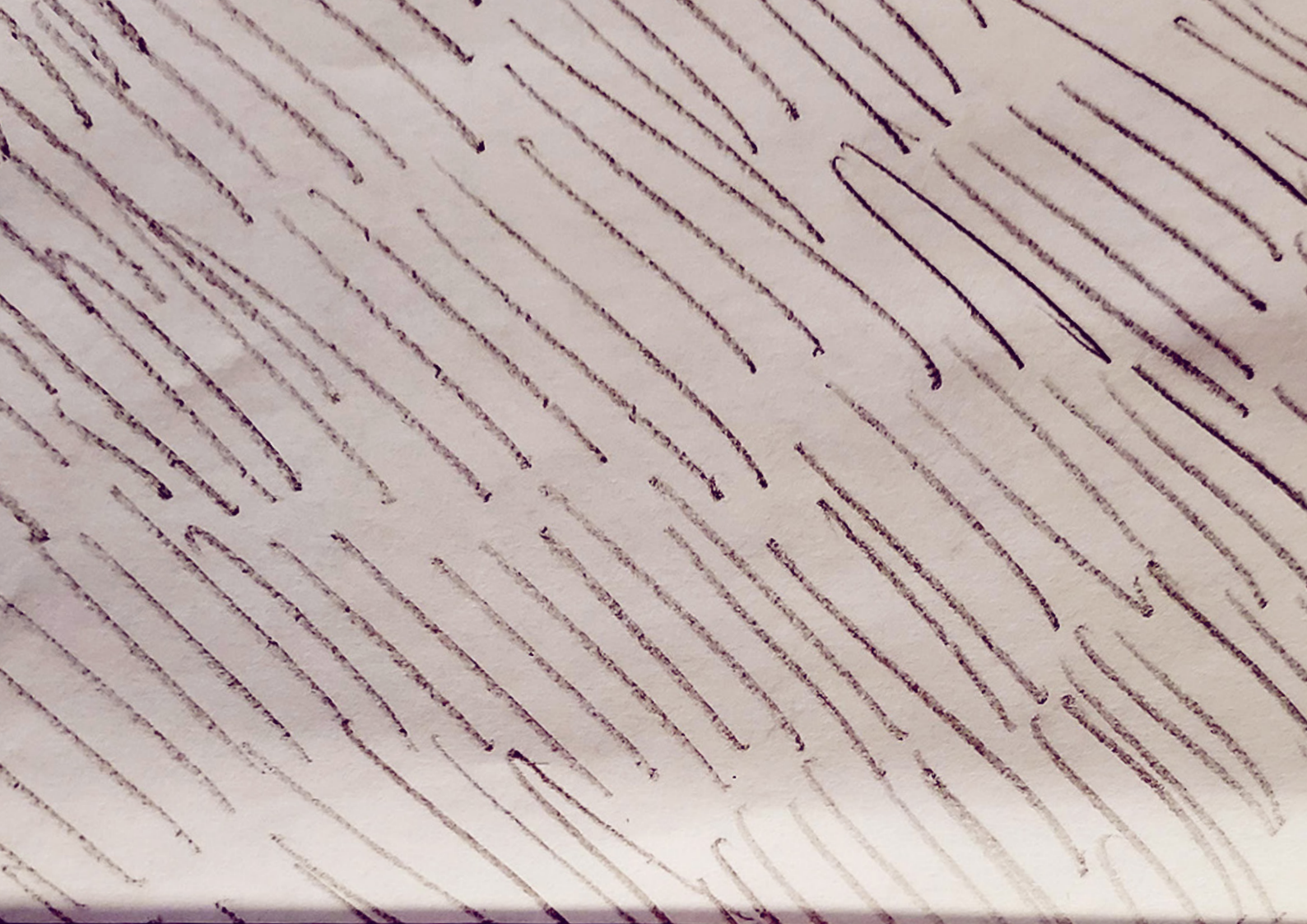
Struggle against apparatuses of attentional enslavement. The reason we must choose our alienations is because certain kinds of alienation can be exhausting or overwhelming – like those denounced by Simone Weil in her analysis of the worker's conditions on the assembly line. We impose on the soldier responsible for standing guard, and the Taylorian worker, 'the paradox of an attention that is appealed to and kept alert without being invigorated': there is suffering and enslavement because the agent 'cannot make do with carrying out their gestures in an automatic and unconscious way, but must, on the contrary, give them all their attention'.⁹ Far from decreasing with the progressive replacement of humans by machines in industrial production, this enslavement tends to become more generalized with the increasing hold of neoliberal bureaucracy: the combined pressures of an intensified competition, a generalized surveillance and ubiquitous evaluation have brought this enslavement out of the factory to overrun offices, hospitals and schools. From which emerges a question that is inextricably economic, ethical and political: *how do we organize all our work places so that we make them places of invigorating rather than enslaving attention?*

Beware of the risks of inhibition inherent in opportunity cost calculations. Faced with any choice, the 'opportunity cost' represents the loss of potential gains brought by alternative possibilities that we are made to forego by the choice taken. This is the cancer eating away at globalized capitalism, as it requires

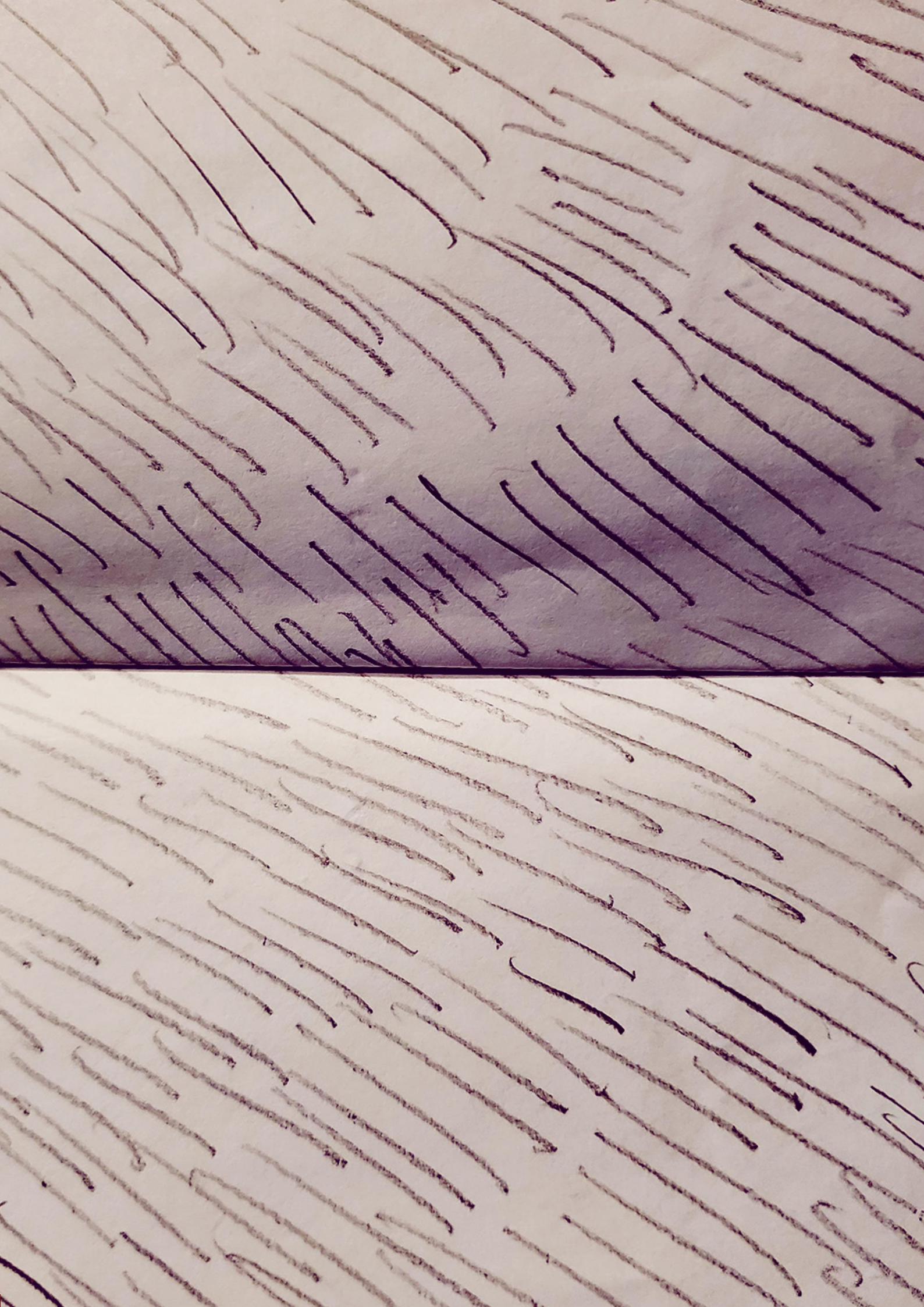


Vincent Duclos











Judith Farquhar

We wrote our books of marks under directions from Clare Twomey. She led the way with a beautiful and disciplined video of her own hands, making her own book. I could not help but recall an earlier *Translating Vitalities* occasion in Croatia, when Clare tried to teach us to make simple porcelain bowls, all the same, in silence, anonymous shapes expressing nothing in particular, having minimum individuality. We all failed at that task! My own failure had to do with a strange over-commitment to personal creativity, to a myth of individual voice. My porcelain dishes were all different, all ugly, none of them suitable even as an ashtray. This time, asked to make a book that covered its pages with marks that “meant” precisely nothing, I tried to leave that myth behind. Drawing short lines with the nice soft pencil I had found, I kept myself from thinking about the outcome. After all, “the book” would only be compiled as such after I had covered both sides of one piece of paper with many tiny, homogeneous marks. Listening to the sound of the lead on the paper as I worked, I wanted to guard against both too many regularities (rows, flows, masses) and too many irregularities (curving lines, crossing lines, extra big or extra small lines). Refusing to time myself, resisting the pressure of other commitments, I wrote, simply wrote. (It did occur to me, this is not what Derrida meant by writing!



Maybe Clare's point is that there can be a book that is not Writing.) It was a struggle not to think forward in time to imagine and configure the reading process. I did not allow myself to think about what I, or you, would find when we turned to "reading" this little book. Now that it's done, I wish you could hold it in your hand and turn its few pages. What do you read here? Utter homogeneity, or microscopic variations? A minimalist digital array, zeros and ones, pure presence and absence, a smooth rain of atoms, uncaused? Are there swerves, folds, and clumps visible to the sensitive reader? I promise you, I didn't intend them!



Clare Twomey

attention / care / attention

THE READING

I spent time reading and thinking about two main texts:

The Ecology of Attention by Yves Citton

Care in Trouble - Ecologies of Support Below & Beyond the Human
by Vincent Duclos (Drexel University) & Tomás S. Criado (Humboldt-
University of Berlin)

THE MAKING

1 – Working with pencil and paper became my witness to my thought process. The reading of the texts allowed me to think about the ways in which we care and pay attention. The drawings were asking questions of the materials and my role, my care and attention.

Draw continuously small lines to fill the page. Make sure you lift the pencil after each line. By making many separate lines you draw attention to the start and finish of that moment.

2 - Turn over the same piece of paper and repeat.

To repeat was an important part of this work. It asked the question of attention. How long could I sustain this work.

3 - The next step is to make this one piece of paper into a book by folding it in half, cutting along the line.

To make a book of these lines was important as it challenged the idea of knowledge and how it can be read and how it can be personal to the reader. It also asked for the lines to be considered deeply as one would a text. Each page was given the opportunity to be examined and seen as a whole. Now we are paying attention to the pages one by one.

This work is a mirror to the words I have read.



About the Authors

Josh Berson

Christie Brown

Vincent Duclos

Judith Farquhar

Dianna Frid

Angelika Messner

Carla Nappi

Todd Ochoa

Barry Saunders

Leander Schwazer

Clare Twomey

