

Charging

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University of Washington

**Abstract**

Charging

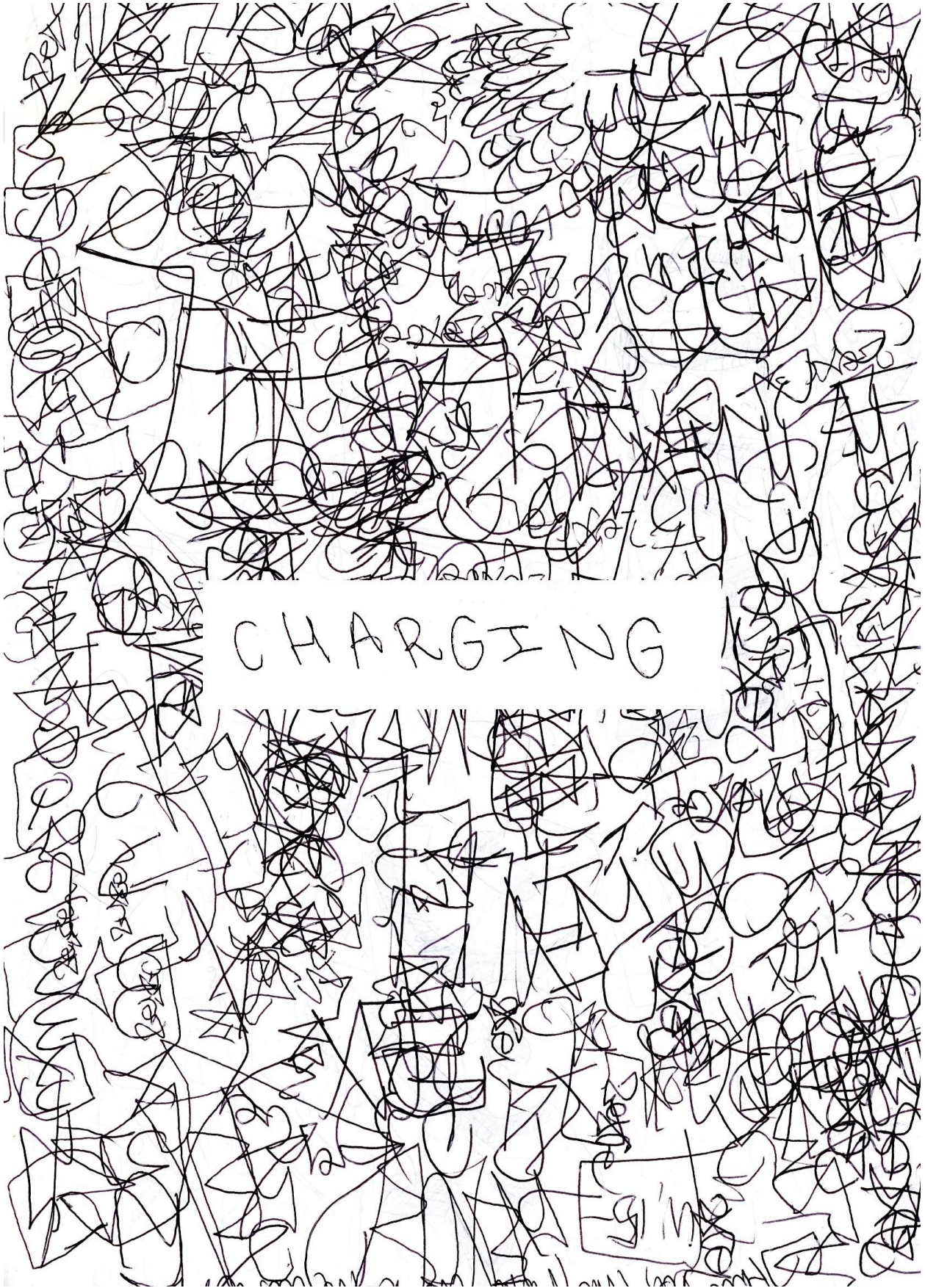
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This is a homemade ceremony and an attempt to understand what home is made of. The present is only here with the past. Each street in Seattle has its own history. The Duwamish River tells the story of settlement in its straightened curves. In this city, there are no individuals. Only complex entanglements, beneath the surface, of life, lineage, and history. Perspective is shaped by experience. Each perspective has its limits of understanding. Charging is an attempt to look deeply into what has been assumed or taken for granted. A process of inviting this city's streets, strangers, trees, rivers, and plants into the body and then onto the page. Weaving together family, city, land, and water it becomes apparent that home is built as much by what we do not know as what we do. These poems and prose explore the tensions between urban and natural space, between concrete and water, and between personal and communal.



CHARGING



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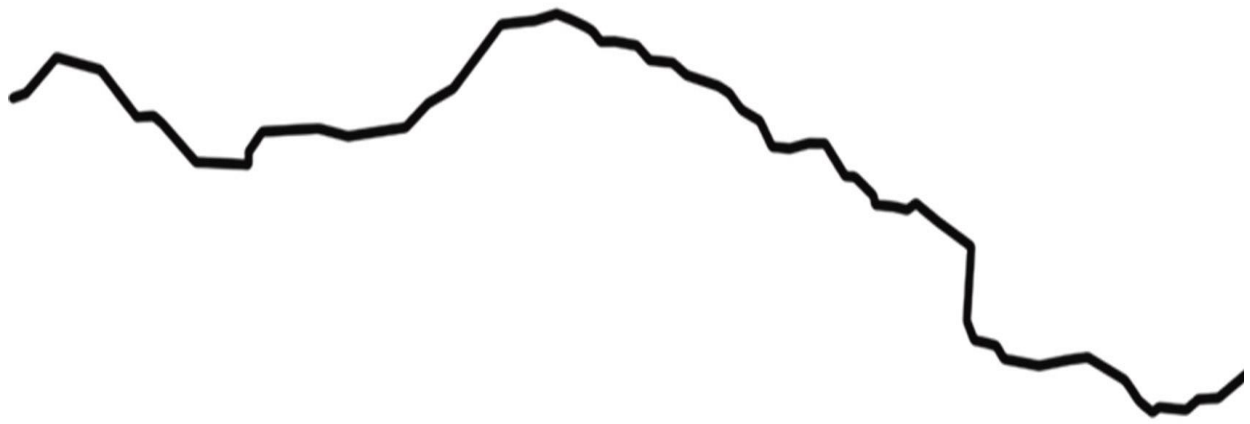
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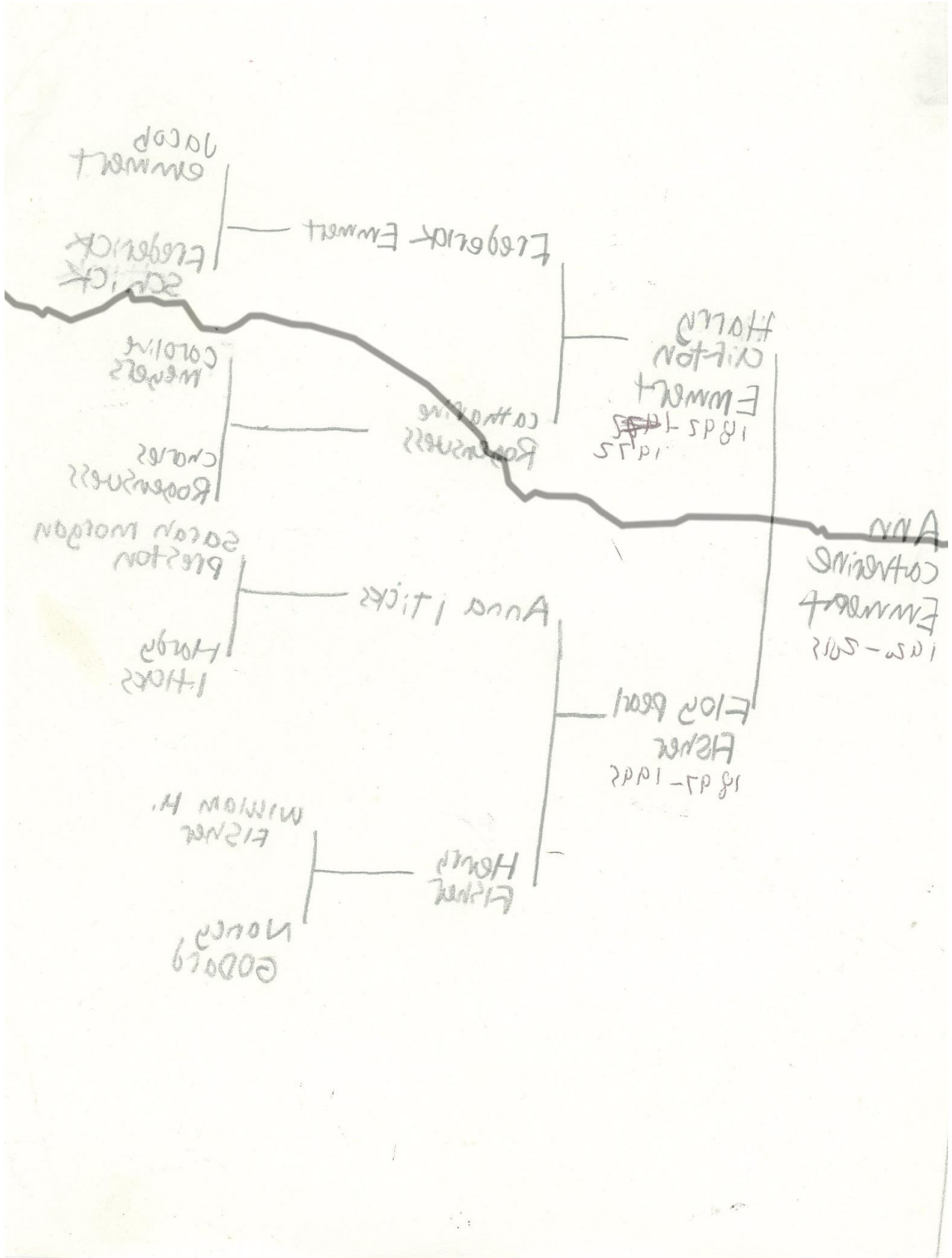
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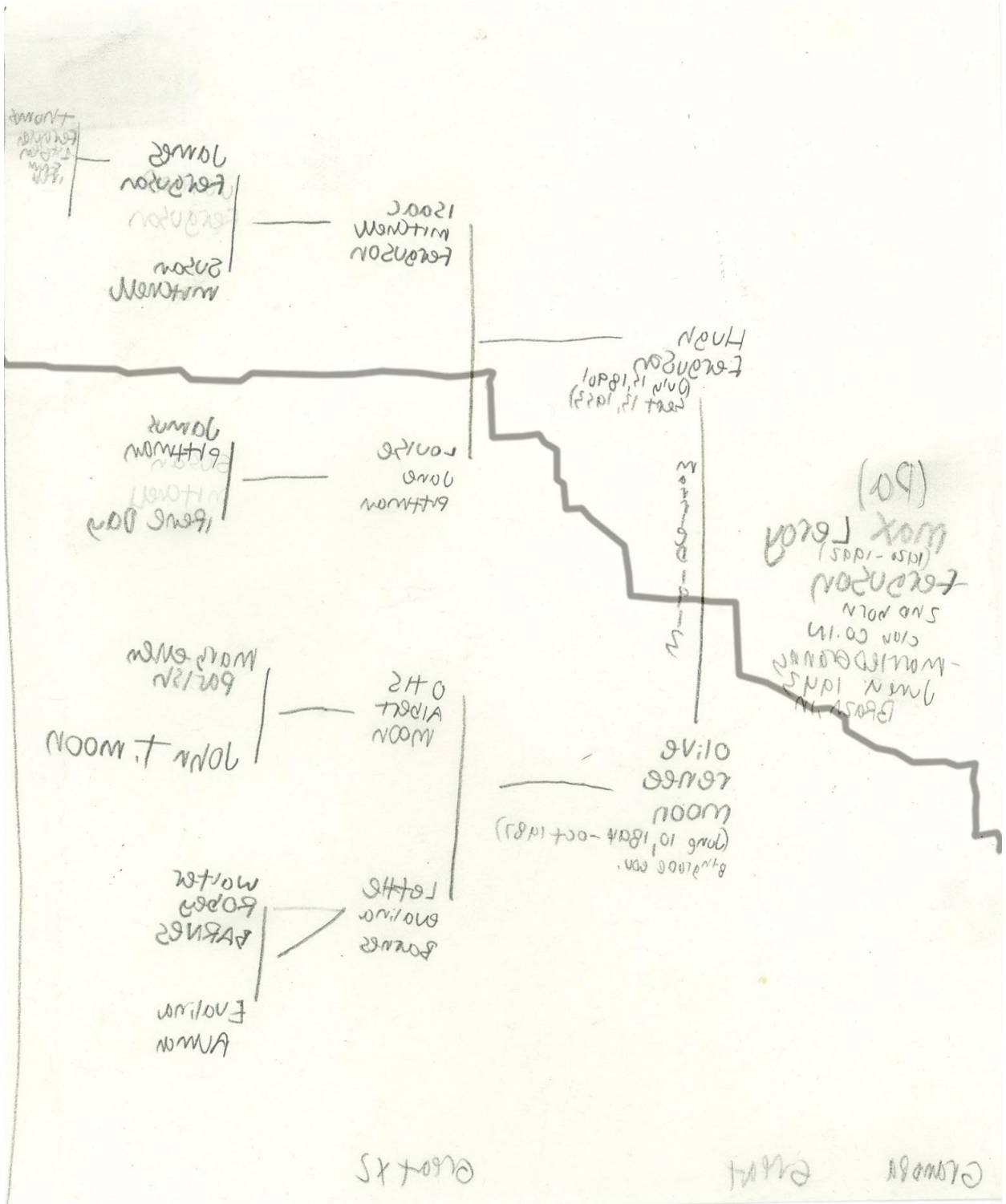
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one









Faults

Fault

Clay

*How far back do I reach?*

In a clear, plowed, wordless field I have forgotten everything.  
There is no silence. Wind and breath blur.

I was three when Pa died. Two, when Granny shoed me into the other room while she gave Pa his medicine.

There is a photo. He holds me grinning. His pale belly out between suspenders. Must be at the end of the day. After work Granny poured him iced tea.

Granny already bought a family plot, room for each of us, at the cemetery down country road 200. In between fields rotated between corn and soybeans, the topsoil is dry and crunchy.

When I was 7, my cousin took me walking through the corn.  
He told me I should never go alone, *it is easy to get lost*. We walked past the sound of the road. He stopped, *listen, the corn is growing*.

Granny and I talked on the phone twice a month. How are you doing, how is the weather, how is the family? I didn't tell her I loved her until she was close to death. At the end of many of her calls she asked, *when are you coming home?*

At Granny's funeral I couldn't cry. The woman in the casket had changed. In her will she had written how she wanted to be buried. In her best church suit, sky blue, her hair curled. Her skin starting to slack like the beam of the barn, the shelf of Pa's tools she never touched.

*The long line has momentary balance.*

Granny knew when she saw him, he was the man she would marry.  
In grade school, she knew who she would love for the rest of her life.

The closest I saw her to crying was later, the last time I stayed with her. After I sponged the white bowls clean of chili soup. After we watched the weather. After she jotted down the day's price for corn and soybeans. She rocked her chair, *uh hu, I don't know why the lord had to take away the one man for me so early, I don't know why. Uh hu.* She stared straight ahead. The grandmother's clock on the wall clanged 9 times. The corners of her eyes were wet. Silent except for the rocking chair and the fan rotating on top of the fridge.

Granny never came to visit, we visited her. Later, I stayed with her for two months. I cleaned and painted barns for my uncle and helped Granny around the house.

*I didn't know until I asked.*

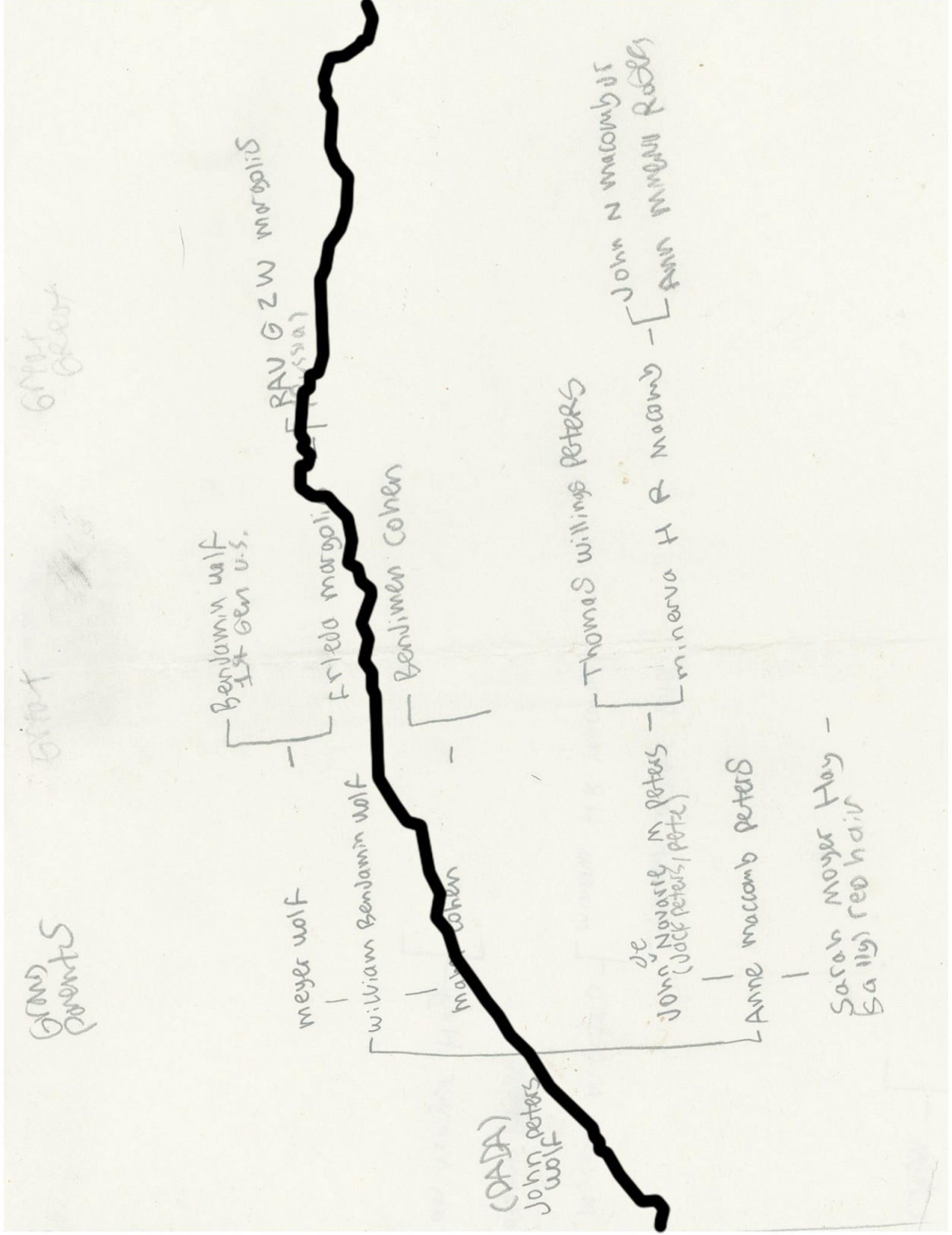
As a senior in high school, Mom was asked out on a date for the first time. Granny waited at the door with a shotgun when he came to get her. Mom left with that man, her first date, boyfriend, directly after her second year of college. Her mother, father and sister came to stop her.

Mom left the only place she ever knew, the place she had never left before. With him, she drove west on 70 to connect to 90. Later, they divorced. She moved to Olive and Denny.

*Past present.*

Dad and Mom came in the 1970s, separately then somehow were brought together. They are opposites, the farm girl and the hippie beach boy. When they met in Fremont, they did not know I would be writing this now. My mother grew up along country road 200 in Clay County, Indiana. My father grew up in Laguna Beach, California. It is not the furthest west they could have gone. But, it was the most isolated city of its size in this country. Seattle attracts a certain type.





Grand Parents

Grand

Grand Great

(DADA)  
John Peters  
Wolf

Meyer Wolf

William Benjamin Wolf

Benjamin Wolf  
1st Gen U.S.

Frieda Margolis

Benjamin Cohen

Mary Cohen

Thomas Willings Peters

John de Novare, M. Peters  
(Jack Peters, Pete)

Anne Maccomb Peters

Sarah Moyer Hoy  
(Bailey) Redhair

John N. Maccomb  
Ann M. Maccomb  
Roberts

Ray G. Z. W. Margolis  
(Russia)

*Tumbled and Shook. (To my grandfather, Dada)*

When his chest stopped moving he died. I remain, of his blood and name,  
my mind made like his. His stomach, round and hard, until it became still 11 years ago.

I walk to the park near my house. I sit under the Rhody, unnoticed. I watch the sculpture  
that moves large boulders to come out small stones, there is moss growing on them.

News, walks by with a cane. A black dog leads from behind.

The playground is empty, the merry go round spins gently in the wind.

The three Fir trees the city planted turned scorched brown before they died.

For a month every night I dreamt I was expelled from my home and did nothing to stop  
it.

I received his gray Ford Windstar with a velcro square on the dash where he stuck his  
coffee cup while he drove. The year dada turned to ash, my father made small ceramic  
urns for each of us, brown, rough and unglazed, sealed at the top with wax. Which part  
of Dada did I receive?

I did not see my father make the urns, or melt the wax. I was 21 minutes away, turning  
from I-5 onto the west Seattle bridge home, when Dada died.

I kept his ashes in the side pocket of the van that was his; I drove through every state  
west of the Mississippi with him and the hair his dog had left.

When I got to Rich's, Dada's youngest son, I opened the door and the urn jumped out.  
The thin neck and lid broke to spill, coarse gray and bits of bone, a pile on asphalt.

Steve, the middle son, came out with a broom. Before I could speak, he swept  
the ashes violently into the grass and shrubs.

A residue stayed until it rained. None of us talked about what had happened.



*What I don't know made me.*

When Dad was 16, his mother died. He is the oldest of three brothers. Steve tells me. *When our mom died, instead of smoking weed or dropping acid, your dad made these god awful loafs of bread that were tough as bricks but just one slice would have us full all day.*

*One part.*

Dad moved to Whidbey, bought an old run down farm with mushrooms growing in the living room. He pulled everything out of the large old chicken coop. He made a house for Dada. He turned the barn into a pottery studio. I thought it was magic how he worked clay, turning a ball into a slender necked vase. He stayed up late and watched movies on VHS while he worked.

In the back field across the road there is a leaning barn. The bunk house. Dada turned it into his second, third, and fourth offices. He turned the large rectangle barns into a series of plywood walled studies, lined with books. When he died it took us 10 years to sort and get rid of his final box of books.

Mom woke up early every morning and drove to Mercer Island for work. She got home in the evening. I never once thought of her being exhausted. How could she not have been?

*Built like a wall.*

I've seen my father cry once, when we spread his fathers ashes on a fir seedling in Yosemite.

He did not wipe his tears but let his cheeks become fertile ground. An example of when the body has to flood.

He never told me not to cry. No one ever has directly said, first, always be strong, make myself straight and hard like walls. Second, tears are a weakness, which happens when the mess inside begins to show on the surface.

I have learned to be a man is to keep dry cheeks, and a straight face. To keep hidden the thoughts of failure that shake my knees each afternoon.

I have become a dry valley. I have built my body like a city.

I have run my tears through pipes,  
I have organized my water to keep my cheeks dry and face solid.

*Are bones the contents?*

I am never alone. Silence is a sound.

Where I hear comfort has changed. After the humming womb  
the whirling heater put me to sleep. Wind in the Alders unnerved me.

Then, persistent rattling of the highway became comforting, cars screaming through air  
and planes overhead, and distant train's constant metal back and forth.

I did not know what ownership meant, until the forest at the edge of our yard was cut for  
lumber. Then, dad told me it is important to walk the property line once a year.

The dead end road our home was on became a smaller part of me. As I worked to  
memorize the streets and avenues that make Seattle. The bus was my chariot.  
When I was young, I did not need a reason to go anywhere other than to see.  
Buildings instead of old growth. There is no way to count concrete rings.

Alders are the first to grow from clear cut. When I take the hour and a half  
to return to the land I grew on I notice, all the Alders are dying.

My roots in soil, I need water and sun.

My roots in concrete, cracks in the sidewalk mean growth.

My home has no property lines I can walk easily each year.

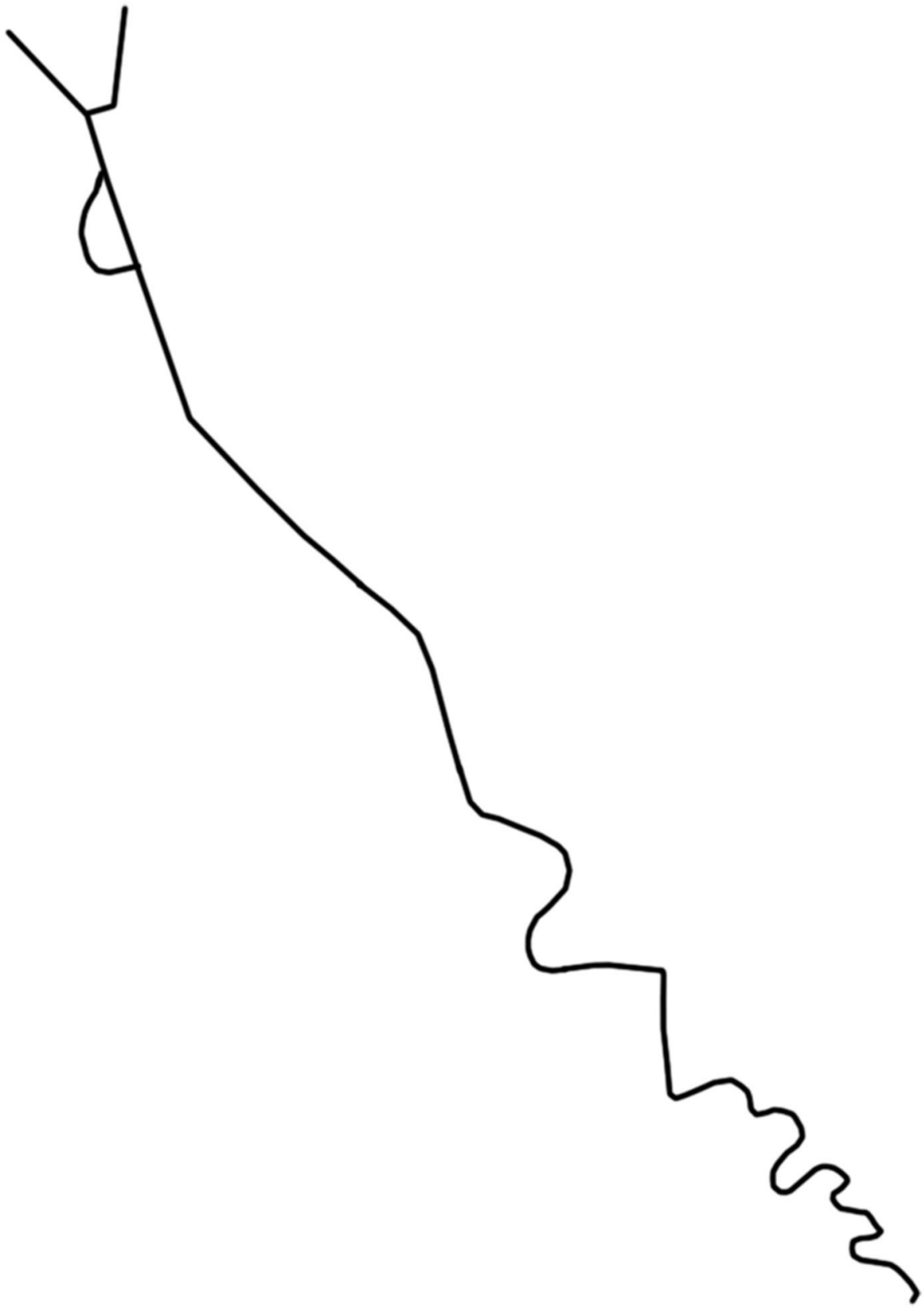
When I was 13  
they sat my sister and I down  
told us we were moving to the city.

I was not sad about leaving home,  
I was excited to have a bigger one.

two







*Now seeing.*

The Denny Party left their home in Illinois, to land at Alki Point. The Collins party spent time in California, mining for gold, before settling the Duwamish Valley.

*When they arrived, the river delta and tidal estuary snaking south of it hosted fifteen longhouses dispersed among five villages. In the network of rivers and lakes making up the larger watershed, at least ninety longhouses, an estimated ten thousand Native people.*

- BJ Cummings, 30

Seattle is the land and water of the Duwamish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Stillaguamish, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Muckleshoot (Ilalkoamish, Stuckamish, and Skopamish) people.

*A name makes a certain bond.*

*The Americans named its lower course the Duwamish, a stream entering ten miles up they named Black River, and another heading into the Cascades became Cedar River, but to the Duwamish people all three made up the single Tlwxudaw.*

- David M. Buerge, 2

The first time I saw the Duwamish River  
was from the back of the 55 bus going over the West Seattle Bridge.

On a hot clear day the sun lays shimmering gold across the river's surface.  
When it rains the water is the color of cement.

*Evidence.*

*Ninety-plus Duwamish longhouses along the watershed's river and lakes were razed and burned. The Duwamish village of Herring's House, near the Denny Party's original West Seattle landing, was the last to go, burned to the ground in 1893.*

- BJ Cummings, 49

A broken piling stabs the sky. When the tide goes out.  
I see where concrete broke, crumbled but still stands.  
At the road end a man sweeps the concrete in front of his tent.  
A crane moves from scrap pile to barge. All metal dragged through  
the sky and dumped. Factory drains, padlocked and chained off  
still drip liquid I will not touch.

The Duwamish People's longhouse is along West Marginal Way.  
Semis shake the ground. There is no sidewalk or crosswalk. Across  
the street is Herring House park. Mud covered rocks of the beach  
glitter with broken glass.

*Immerse.*

I scurry across wet rock, over black sand. Water pooled waiting for the bay's pull.  
Before the fence closes in  
the scrap yard at the end of the train tracks from Nucor.

The back of the factory has no windows.  
Water is easier to pollute when it's not there. Bricks on the beach, all breaking down.  
Gulls, crying out like creaking hinges.  
A fisherman, pulling in his net, looks away when I wave.

River is not allowed to flood. Tidal flat and tributary turned to street and building.  
On the map, river is a line. In the mouth it is musky salt wind and deep breath.

Boundaries limit. The edges grow over with blackberry thorn.  
But, river is an action that never stops. I am lost  
between the name and what is front of me.

My feet sink below the water. I am afraid of what I may step on.  
I must leave behind the logic of roads that shout semi and siren.

I walk waist deep. I lean back to float.

The current does not need words to carry me.

*My ancestors by skin.*

Names and Ages of the Collins Party upon Their Arrival on the Duwamish on September 27, 1851.

Luther Collins, about 37, Diana (Borst) Collins, about 36, Lucinda Collins, 13 or 14, Stephen Collins, about 7, Jacob Maple (or Mapel), 53, Samuel A. Maple (or Mapel), 23, Henry Van Asselt, 34.

(Lang)

Names and Ages of the Denny Party upon Their Arrival on Alki Point on November 13, 1851.

Arthur Denny, his wife, Mary Ann, and their two daughters, Louisa Catherine (b. 1844) and Margaret Lenora (1847-1915); Arthur's parents, John Denny and Sarah Latimer Boren Denny (1805-1888), and their six-weeks-old child, Loretta Denny (1851-1907); Arthur's four unmarried brothers, James Denny (1824-1855), Samuel Denny (1827-1897), Allen Wiley Denny (1834-1901), and David Denny (1832-1903); Mary Ann (Boren) Denny's brother, Carson Boren (1824-1912), his wife Mary Boren (1831-1906) and infant daughter, Gertrude Boren (1850-1912); and Louisa Boren (1827-1918), sister to Mary Ann (Boren) Denny and to Carson Boren.

(Rocheste)

*Duwamish Hill Preserve.*

The outcropping is older than Mt. Rainier where Madrona holds tight.  
At night, frogs yell from the pool of water behind the shooting range  
police use to practice. The frogs quiet as I walk towards them.  
The shooting range is empty except for moon's shadows. I-5 is loud but can't  
cover the infinite clang of trains coming to their mile long stops.

What is the water bird whose call at night is shrill and pleading as calling an ex  
again and again? I see sharp white wings only for a second near the sound.

The link train passes, whirling wind, its track shine blue when it nears.  
Cars park along river, many never move, packed to the windows full. A trucker pulls in  
with the hiss of brakes steps out to pee in the brambles.

Unnoticed on the hill, my feet dangle over the eroding side. River, moon sparkles,  
looks like the street caught in humming fluorescent light.

I do not leave until I feel inseparable from what I see.

*Paddling the Duwamish. (The river guide and the poet)*

We catch the tide going out. Under East Marginal Way. The wall of the bridge is burnt black and gray flaking, a fire for warmth or food now charred wood. Layers of graffiti, make each individual name written blur, illegible. Here, river's current flows gently. We paddle to the middle. The first mile we pronounce our location by the street's landmarks we know. Then, we lose track of ourselves. We are silent. Around the bend widens to reeds and mud flat. Herons in the shallows keep their shadow behind them. I have never traveled this line before. The air, overhead, buzzes with power lines. 99, hugs river's banks, a river of cars that never stops. Under the Green River Trail, there are tires holding the bank, now sags like a stomach over a tight belt. We stop at the end of 8th Ave South. Pull the boat onto the sand. The beach is strewn with shards of glass. There is a bench with orange needle caps collected underneath it and needles unsheathed. Behind the line of Poplar and the fence factory workers park their trucks along, there is a polished boulder. Engraved in its side are the words, *this is a river, not a waterway.*

*Many tools of settlement.*

In 1894, from Santa Rosa, California, Arthur Burbank began to offer his Himalaya Giant– which would eventually be known as the Himalayan blackberry. “By the early 1900s, the Himalaya Giant was especially thriving in the Puget Sound region.”

Although Burbank’s most lasting impact has been this berry. His goals were with Eugenics. Burbank wrote that the crossing, elimination and refining of human strains would result in “an ultimate product that should be the finest race ever known.”

The Himalayan blackberry is not from the Himalayas. The berry is believed to be from Armenia. (Dornfeld)

-

*Himalayan blackberry...forms impenetrable thickets, spreads aggressively and has significant negative impacts to native plants, wildlife, recreation and livestock. Due to the deep roots, digging up large established plants is difficult and may need to be repeated if not all the roots are removed. Repeated cutting can help keep the plants from overtaking over vegetation. Contact the noxious weed program for advice on control methods or see below for more resources.*

- King County

*East Duwamish Greenbelt.*

The woods, in between I 5 and Beacon is loud with everything but birds.

I grieve the stump holding up its phantom limbs.

Rain gathers in the Maple's hollows, something small and shrimp-like is growing there.

This piece of land has only been left alone because its slope makes it too difficult to build on.

Someday, it will be flattened and developed so a few can enjoy the view.

The Cedar trees I plant will outlive me. Or, where I planted them will kill them first.

*When we realize we will not make it all the way.*

Caught in the straight water facing the wind of Elliott Bay. There is no shoreline here, only huge ships, tugboats and barges floating rusting metal scrap down river.

The cuticle of my middle right finger starts to bleed. Ripped from rubbing against the boat as I paddle. Water in small white caps slap the boat. There is nothing to do but keep paddling .

We do not want to get stuck in the middle when a tug comes.

Here, river is also ocean. Here, river is named water way and used for industry. Here, the Tern dives sharply down. Here, the seal follows ten feet behind. Here, river is blood in my temples, and sweat in the overcast sun.

three





*Evolved*

Between home and downtown. I become a stranger.

I gather numbness around me.

I hide the ease with which a stare can make me insecure.

Downtown, numbness is a language is we have all heard.

A man hugging his knees, crying, rocking his rolled back against the marble wall.

Black slacks cross near his nose. As the sun goes Maceys turns on its Christmas display in the window.

I build the city in my head with what I keep. Faces of strangers, bus's wheezing, shoulders that will never rub by again, a cherry tree blooming between a parking garage and brick bar.

*Never bare.*

September 27, 1850,  
the Donation Land Claim Act offered 320 acres free to any “eligible” man  
that could occupy their claim for four years. For those with a wife  
they could claim another 320 acres (Riddle).

*Alone with strangers. (Ludi's)*

I sit at the breakfast bar. Order a Heineken and grilled cheese. They serve the sandwich with dill pickles. I look at the window to the kitchen, small, short rectangle below shelves stacked with bags of white and brown bread, and above a scratched and shining metal counter with coffee mugs stacked against the wall. The dishwasher is the only white employee at this Filipino American diner. He has a ponytail and goatee, wears a dirty white shirt, laughs with the cook while he opens the door with his back, arms full with a bus tub. Ludi is the daughter of the man who owns it. She takes my order. There is an atm at the top of the stairs from the street. The windows are streaked. The door opens and closes. On the sidewalks hundreds of people have walked by. In the back east side is the bar. There are two window tables, one table against the restaurant and a bar with six stools. The tv is always on. In the closest booth there are two black men talking low over, stirring their iced drinks with straws. One is wearing a leather jacket, the other a red Kangol hat. Behind me there are two tables under the window behind the atm. In the small square to my left there are seven tables. European tourists, old white men who sip coffee with a shaking hand and have shoulders of dandruff. Couples nursing hangovers.

Ludi's, meaning gone now. Ludi's, meaning silog and ube pancakes and bottomless coffee mug. Meaning bathroom with 5 minute limit in the bathroom, wall covered in tags and mirror covered in scribes. I come to sit close to strangers, to say nothing but listen with my eyes. I come to find where bodies are together, our hearts beating this city true.

*Existence once seen.*

In an attempt to locate the fabled Northwest Passage, British Royal Navy captain George Vancouver anchored his ship *Discovery* on May 19, 1792, on the shores of Seattle. “His...are the first Western description of native life on the Puget Sound” (Buerge, 23).

*Expansion*

Land holds lineage.  
My white skin. White men  
first settlers here. Wrenched city from earth.  
And before, explorers, traders and here,  
with me as I write this. I have been silent.  
A loss for words. What do I mean here? Or,  
my hands are not stained in blood yet my home is.  
The past is not over. Settlement continues.  
I take part in daily forgetting of history to believe  
It is ok, that I am ok.

I learned to see from the words I have, been taught from hearing.  
What lingers is the tide asking for its shore back.

*The Duwamish people have been in the Seattle/Greater King County area since time immemorial...We are the host tribe for Seattle... Many of our enrolled members still live on Duwamish aboriginal territory, which includes Seattle, Burien, Tukwila, Renton, and Redmond. Our tribe is governed by a 1925 constitution and its bylaws. The six-members\* tribal council, headed by Cecile Hansen since 1975, meets monthly, and tribal gatherings are held at least annually.*

- *Duwamish Tribe*

*First Ave between 1 and 3pm.*

Trucks, semi's and sedans, vans with sagging backs, they each pass quickly.

A woman with a shaking walk leans against a wheelchair across the street on a red light. She knows the timing of traffic well.

Engine roar of a plane flying low overhead. I press the button to cross the street.

A line of rvs along the curb, biding their time before the city's next sweep.

Workers will come, with a truck, in hazmat suits treat each person like toxic waste.

An empty propane tank fashioned into a wind chime swings from a coat hanger bent around a side mirror.

A tarp on the back of a RV named "The Executive" flaps in the wind.

I keep piles too, like these outside of each closed door. Tangle of wire, bikes in a pile, a box of magazines.

There is no one to say hello to. What else would I say if there was?

A Lilac blooms behind a barbed wire fence.

A block south, a peel of Paper Birche's bark blows in the wind.

*Median.*

On October 18, 1899, a 60-foot totem pole from Fort Tongass, Alaska, is unveiled in Pioneer Square and "greeted by cheers of a multitude of people."

The totem had been stolen from a Tlingit, Raven Clan, village several weeks before and was presented to the City of Seattle by the "Chamber of Commerce 'Committee of Fifteen" (Wilma).

Under the totem is a bronze bust of Chief Seattle.

Under the totem is a glass and bronze pergola built in the early 1900s.

Under the totem are benches people sit at with many bags. A shirtless man yells against the wall nearby.

Under the pergola are five tents, a charcoal bbq is smoking.

In 1970 London Plane trees were planted down the middle of First Ave. The trees are perfect for the city. They break off pieces of bark to cleanse themselves of the pollution they collect.

*Consuming.*

Over,  
     under  
 and through  
 fences.    Ivy knows no borders  
                                     only open sun, water and spreading.  
     I spent the summer with a back pack of herbicide  
     painting fields of ivy blue.

The herbicide is not good.

    There is no budget to pull it all out by hand.  
     We plant native species when the ivy dies and turns to mulch.

The ivy  
     traces  
 its steps  
     back  
 every    spring.

“English ivy was brought to the United States by colonial settlers who craved the aesthetics of European gardens. The earliest record of English ivy in the Pacific Northwest dates back to gardens of the 1890s” (Rolph).

*Passed out.*

Here I am. I base my home on land I own, that cannot be owned.  
Property marked by fence. I tend the garden. I de-moss the roof.

First, the flooding was stopped,  
The Green River Damned,  
the Cedar re-routed,  
the cut made at Montlake  
drained the lake by 15 feet.

Dry land is easier to own. No thought to the water's need to flood to spread its nutrients.  
Earth turned to dirt.

The first settlers saw their surroundings to use. Did not look for what they didn't already know.

I am not a blank canvas. I carry with me more than these pounds of body.

*Working perspective.*

I have a partial view.

I see quickly.

Knowledge being. Time based.

I have not walked every street.

Each street being one way to listen.

If a city is not growing it dies.

What I knew has already been taken. Corners turned to glass lobbies.

The remaining feeling I hold, is like the leaves wind stirs into a swirling pile  
in the doorways off the street.







Thank you:

Mom and Dad, Prof. Ching-In Chen, Prof. Ted Hiebert, Prof. Diana Khoi Nguyen, and  
Prof. Jeanne Heuving.

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## Skipping Stone

I grew up on the south end of Whidbey Island. The field around our home grew to my waist every summer. Its blades cut my shins. My sweat ran into the cuts and itched until I slept.

When I was 13, we moved south to West Seattle. My only images of the city, at the time, were walking to and from Mariner's games in the Kingdome. Seattle was mostly unknown to me. Yet I did not feel afraid. I took off into the streets on my skateboard, and caught the 55 home by my curfew.

When I first moved here, I did not know the Duwamish People or River existed, I did not know the Kingdome was built where tidal flats used to be. I only knew the feeling of movement downtown. At 4:45, business people in dark suits blend with homeless wearing layers, teens in baggy pants and ball caps, students with heavy book bags and loud headphones, and elders moving slowly to enter the bus in the rush.

Seattle is my home. This means more than that I have lived here for most of my life. Home is not just where I lay my head. Home is this land and its rivers as well as this city and its streets. Home happens inside of me as much as it does on the outside.

My house is on the far southern end of Beacon Hill. Where Beacon Ave becomes 39th then Carkeek crosses Martin Luther King and changes to Henderson. I know by heart the streets where I have spent the most time. First and Third Ave, Airport Way, California Ave and the alleyways on each of its sides, Fautleroy, West Seattle Bridge, I5, Pike, Pine, and Broadway. Knowing by heart means that these streets, sidewalks, and buildings, exist within me. I have created my home in this city from my collection of past experiences mixed with what is here now. To me, Broadway means the old Than Brothers, as well as Vivace in the old house where the Link station is now. These specific places are gone but remain within me. Each street holds specific memories for me. The past is always present. My image of home is built with what no longer remains. The city remains changing.

The Seattle I grew up in is the foundation for my understanding of this city. The landmarks of this past are gone. I ask myself. With everything changing, what is it that I am calling home? What about all that happened before I existed here? The past of Seattle that I do not know is what has made the Seattle I do know. My perspective is

narrow. There is so much more here. This land and city are shaped by settlement, violence, agriculture, and industry. How do I acknowledge and work with this history as part of my home?

I am comfortable here. I work, I garden, I see my friends and parents, I go to the grocery store once a week. In my daily actions and movement, my belonging here is assumed. I am a white male. I am not questioned or confronted. I have taken for granted my free movement through Seattle. I need to question this. I have created my idea of home from my limited time here and my specific perspective. When I enter any place I bring this home with me. I see what is in front of me through the lens of what I have seen before. I only see what I know. I am beginning to look for what I don't.

Who has lived and who has died here? What water was damned and piped? What has been polluted? What has been kept clean? My lineage here is with the first white settlers but I have never before imagined them as part of my home. This is what I am working on. Through writing, I begin to answer these questions. I am finding so many more questions along the way.

Writing allows me to linger. The page is where I can ponder my connection to the moments and places I am drawn to. I begin to see an interwoven web. Sitting along the Duwamish River, I begin to see its connection to First Ave. How one can not exist without the other. Words allow me to tie together my present and past. My process begins with recording the details I have taken in. I write to enhance and deepen my experiences with Seattle. I write to expand specific moments. I do this by focusing on the image of the place, testing how details show it. Once I have set up the image I am working within, writing allows me to patiently find and explore the gaps. I write, then go back through to see what I did not think to look for at the moment.

In this process, going between history, personal experience, memory, and imagination I find that I write about different places differently. I work in poetry and prose. I work with found material, facts, quotes, plants, and pieces of the urban environment. In poetry, I show a brief moment and try to work in a deeper nuanced meaning. In my poetry, I focus a lot on what I do not know. Poetry allows me to explore the feelings of connection I have with specific places. This feeling does not lend itself to words right away. Poetry allows me the space to sit in this unknowing. In prose, I can expand the moment by creating long, possibly overwhelming, lines full of specific details. In poetry I feel I need

to pick details carefully, to make sure that they fit the feeling of the piece. In prose, I feel free to pile on more and more detail. I feel there is more room to write into. Using both of these forms I can create a work that feels more true to how my mind works.

I want to show the overwhelming layers of my city on the page. I want my words to immerse the reader in the history of Seattle woven with my personal experience and history of my family. I want to write poems in which everything exists at once and all together. Poems that are full of history, family, ancestors, land, and water. To write poems that immerse the reader I explore ways of immersing myself in my surroundings.

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*I went to the river for a poem because I could imaginatively realize self-acceptance there that I had not felt closer to home.*

- Richard Hugo, 13

I first saw the Duwamish River from the back of the bus going over the West Seattle Bridge. In the summer, the sun turns its surface into glittering diamonds. Soon after, I waded in from the black muddy sand at Herring House Park. This river is so easy to overlook. Without the Duwamish River and the Duwamish People there would be no Seattle. The Duwamish River has become a guide for me in my work. I return to it again and again. I find the paths that plummet through blackberry at the backs of factories so I can sit along its banks and work to listen to what it says.

I come first to Richard Hugo because he based much of his work on this same river. I write in his lineage. Reading, *The Real West Marginal Way*, I was greatly inspired by Hugo's steadfast dedication to the power a place holds. "It seemed the place was more important than the event since the event happened and was done while the place remained...If I could find the place I could find the poem" (158). I took this literally. I set out to find physical places to find poems. I did this by going to sit along the river or walk through downtown with my hand and head in my journal writing everything that came to mind. I was not satisfied with the work this created. It felt limited. It felt too based within without letting my surroundings in.

I came back to Hugo's at this point to find tension with his poetics. "Too much memory remains to interfere with the imagination...if I tried to root my poems in White Center, [these memories would] have gotten in the way" (18). Hugo felt he could not write poems about White Center, his home, because there was too much memory and history that got in the way of him creating work. For me, the complications and questions that memory and home illicit are what I am after. This is the crux of my issues with Hugo. He did not allow the complicated layers of his surroundings in. He comes to the place to extend himself across it. The river was where he "could melodramatically extend and exploit certain feelings [he] had about [him]self and ignore others" (18). He recognized the importance of place. But he did not write into the complicated histories and past of

these places. The river was to him, a thing to be used in his poetry, a backdrop for him to stage his internal struggle and imagination. He did not bother with the memory of the places he wrote from.

“In many of my early poems...I am, somewhere along..the slow lower reaches of the Duwamish River... one might think I spent much time in that area and had an intimate knowledge of the place, but that's not true“ (3). For Hugo, the river was a place he went to in his mind. The river populates his work but he never asks or does not care to question, how the river has come to be, or how he has come to be there concerning settlement and the forming of Seattle. I come to this same river to develop my own engagement with its banks and water. I do not want to cast myself over my surroundings. I want to write from my specific experience while allowing the space into me. To me, this means I do not project my perceived knowledge over my surroundings. I do not assume anything. Instead, I research what I do not know. I bring into my work, scraps, quotes, and facts of the past so that I am forced to reckon with them. So that I begin to be able to specifically say what my home being in Seattle is made of.

I am growing from Hugo's work. While limited, Hugo does represent a deepening relationship with this land. But I want to go further. Hugo and I are continuations of white settler perspective. He did not seem to ever question this. I grow from his work by beginning to question and push back against him. From researching The Duwamish River I am learning how white settlement turned a vast and bountiful watershed into a segmented, damned one with the Duwamish so polluted that it is a superfund site. I write into this tension permitting myself to become overwhelmed, confused, and to lose my grounding. Through this work, I break through my surface-level engagement. Breaking through I find a deeper footing in my work as well as with myself living on this land.

I have found which places draw me back again and again: the corner of the Duwamish Substation overlooking Salmon Cover, the top of Duwamish Hill, the beach at Herring House, Shoreline Park, and Fort Dent where the banks of the river are being re-planted with native species. These places are too charged with history to be only used as a staging ground for my poems. To write these places onto the page in a way that a reader can immerse themselves in I begin exploring how I can immerse myself into them. I realize that my writing started with my engagement with the place, and only after I have begun this relationship with place can I begin to write about it.

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*I think most people immerse poorly, particularly if they're moving into an area...they think they know. Or their filters are thick, or there are so many false ideas they bring with them. So they don't leave any room to listen, or to see, or to truly allow themselves to experience something.*

- Vieve Francis

Vieve Francis is a black female poet. In our identities we are opposite. Francis grew up in rural Texas, outside of Asheville, North Carolina, Atlanta, and urban Detroit. Different as we are. I found an immediate feeling of connection with Francis when she says, in a *Salvation in In The Dark*, an interview with Helena de Groot, "I'm an awkward blend of a city person with rural roots." Because of my move from Whidbey Island to Seattle when I was 13 I have always felt a similar awkwardness. I say similar because our experiences are different. I navigate the world as a white male. My belonging is rarely questioned. I am not forced to adapt to my surroundings as Francis was. "I had an accent that was for the northern ear extreme...I would simply listen to Midwestern radio, and I would imitate the sounds. And I worked out my accent...it's almost impossible...But I was going to lose that accent." In her move to Detroit she was faced

not only with a different language but vastly different surroundings. But, Francis seems to never have shied away from difference, “it actually put me into a state of elation, because I discovered in myself a love of exploring and learning.” This is what inspires me so much from Francis. How her curiosity of her surroundings lead her to a deeper engagement with herself. From Detroit, Francis moved to the Blue Mountains of North Carolina. The move she says, “altered my trajectory.” From this move to the woods came her book *Forest Primeval*.

In the interview, *This Is My Name: A Conversation with Vievee Francis*, Nomie Stone asks Francis about the first lines of her poem *Another Antipastoral* which begins *Forest Primeval*. “The first line of this wonderful book is: ‘I want to put down what the mountain has awakened...’ I was thinking of that idiom of the white male poet who stands on top of the mountain, taming it...writing verse about it. But instead, you say that nature ‘will have its way’ — that we ‘build only way stations.’ How do you think about wildness or wilderness?” This relates directly to the flaws I feel are in Hugo’s poetics. This question forces me to confront the perspective I can easily fall into as “the white male poet.” This white male gaze is what I mean when I talk about my surface-level engagement. I do not want to tame the land onto my page. I want to engage with it.

Francis, in answering Stone’s question, supports my belief that I learn about myself through learning about this land. “The wilderness unraveled me — those boundaries of self and the performance of the self. And I had to confront myself in the wilderness — who I thought I was, and then there was the person I was becoming as I was there. The wilderness is so much larger than man. It took me off-center, and I’m glad it did. It forced me to explore not just the natural world but the wilderness within me. Why was it unraveling me? That really was the starting point. I had to negotiate what the wilderness was doing to me, and there was no pretense that I was taming it. It was un-taming me!” Through her experiences with the wilderness, she was forced to confront herself. Francis did not shy away from what was new to her. Instead, she immersed herself. I am drawn to this question of “Why is it unraveling me?” This develops the importance of the place I had drawn from Hugo and brings in the questioning of the experience. In this questioning, I can go deeper.

In her interview with Groot, Francis explains her outlook on her internal process and relationship with place. “If I didn’t break, if I didn’t allow the release of any rigidity of thought, I wasn’t going to be able to do it. So, I kind of had to open myself up, but it unraveled me. It shifted how I thought about nature, it shifted how I thought about

America, it shifted how I thought about me. And it led to an exploration of the wilderness that was roiling inside of me, the forest within.” Francis helps me to push against Hugo. For her, the place does not remain outside of her, it becomes a part of her. She shows me the importance of spending time with the places I write about. That spending time allows for a personal relationship to develop. From this relationship, my engagement can deepen. But how do I go deeper? How do I allow my surroundings in, in an attempt at “letting the self go, a part of the self go, [so] then another self develops or develops alongside or merges with that,” so I can immerse myself in the experiences and places that have the power to “change [me].”

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*Listening in wild places, we are audience to conversation in a language not our own..to name and describe you must first see.*

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, 48

Robin Wall Kimmerer “is a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation” (Kimmerer, 2020). In her work *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer challenges how, “In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top--the pinnacle of evolution...and the plants at the bottom.” Kimmerer learned this hierarchy as a botanist and scientist; she learned the taxonomy of plants and life. In this book, Kimmerer brings together this western knowledge while pushing against it by always returning to and honoring how, “in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as ‘the younger brothers of creation.’ We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn--we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance” (9). To my question of how I can fully immerse myself, Kimmerer says, listen. This is similar to Francis’ idea of full immersion but Kimmerer does not include the breaking down of walls. Instead, she weaves her indigenous knowledge with western knowledge to see and be able to show the world that is specific and unique to her. While at the same time she speaks to natural truths of the ways plants and humans have lived and still live together.

I come to Kimmerer at this point because her ideas allow me to shift from how I want to engage with my surroundings to how I can start to write with them. Kimmerer says, yes, this place is speaking to you but has its own language you must learn. I came to Kimmerer feeling that in my writing on Seattle and The Duwamish River that something was missing. I realize that what is missing is this new language that I do not know. Here, Kimmerer pivots into her beginning to learn her mother tongue. “My first taste of the missing language was the word Puhpowee on my tongue.” The word translates to, “the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight.” As a biologist, I was stunned such a word existed. In all its technical vocabulary, Western science has no such term, no words to hold this mystery...What lies beyond our grasp remains unnamed” (49). Kimmerer finds, in her own language a deeper way of engaging with the land around her. My mother tongue is English. This language that only has one word for the many types of rain, has turned the river into an object rather than an active being.

I often think about how the words I work with are the same ones said at the bank, and at the grocery store. I don't have another language to help me get deeper into the plants, land, and city around me. So, how do I begin to use my language in a way that allows the mystery of the place to exist on the page. At the beginning of this project, I went to places throughout Seattle and along the Duwamish River and I sat and I wrote. With Kimmerer's idea, I returned to these same places but I did not write, I simply sat and tried to "listen" the way Kimmerer talks about. In this process, I began to find what listening means to me. Listening is not just only taking in sounds through my ears. It means becoming a receptacle. Through listening, I feel a little bit of me unraveling. It feels like clearer vision. It feels like letting go of assumptions to be conscious of what surrounds me and not only how I understand it.

Through deep listening, I do not find new words. I find a feeling I am not sure how to word. Before my experiences of Kimmerer's listening, my work shied away from the complications of the places I wrote about. I relied on generalities. In listening for the language of this land I have found new specifics. New details that are truer to the places I write about than the assumptions I had been writing from before. Sitting at the corner of the Duwamish Substation. I sit with my hat low to block the sun. I had been writing about the river's current as a thing that goes in one direction. As this force that no stone could hold up against. But, now sitting overlooking Salmon Cover I see that with The Duwamish River this is not true. Here, the river's current meets Elliot Bay's. Neither one takes over the other, they both exist simultaneously. And at the same time in the far reaches of the cove, the surface of the water is still, and at the corner I sit on water forms a swirling eddy, spiraling back onto itself. Kimmerer pushes me to sit in these places. In my writing this allows me to move to a new level of detail in my work. Through listening, I recognize the importance of allowing all currents to happen at once. I bring this to my writing by pushing myself to go past my assumptions and to word all that I can witness. Kimmerer gives me the instructions to challenge my habitual engagement with places while offering the tools of how to move forward through deep listening.

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*Writing is a mysterious process...So how can a writer locate himself or herself in a moment? I think when I write these images, I'm looking for charged moments, or what I would call heat moments, in a poem.*

- Arthur Sze

Arthur Sze is a poet that translates powerful images of experience and place onto the page. He writes poems that hold and grip me. He brings together images that are almost jarring in their differences but so well arranged they form a feeling of balance on the page. He writes from his experience to create work that holds many histories and moments at the same time. In the interview, *Charging the Line*, Ayleen Perry asks Sze how he has come to his particular process of writing. "For me, as a Chinese-American poet, I'm drawing on the lineage of great classical Chinese poetry and philosophy...I also taught at the Institute of American Indian Arts for 22 years...That wouldn't have happened if I didn't move to Santa Fe, but having lived there for 45 years, that interaction with Native American cultures has been really influential to me." I come to Sze because he helps me to move from theory into practice. His poems come from his lived experience. Perry begins the interview by situating Sze's work. "Jon Davis discussed the evolution of Arthur Sze's poetry, writing that, in *River River*, 'Sze was not embodying a preconceived idea, he was exploring a world of things and events that were happening simultaneously, but that were also synchronous—meaningfully, but mysteriously, related.'"

Arthur Sze locates himself through charged moments. He also calls them "heat moments," this heat brings in the body. The moments become something that can be physically felt. I find that this idea explains best, the charged connection I feel with specific places in Seattle and along the Duwamish River. Until now, I have been focusing on how I want to engage with these. Feeling that through a deeper engagement I can write better work. Francis and Kimmerer gave me ways to deepen my engagement and began to move me towards the page. With Sze I am able to move this process of engagement, that I have been exploring, into a process of writing.

In this description of Sze's work, I find a connection to Kimmerer. This ability to "not embody a preconceived idea," seems to be the goal of deep listening. As well, by not embodying a preconceived idea it seems similar to how Francis fully immerses by

breaking her own walls down. In Sze's work, I find an entanglement of perspective, language, place, history, and self. Sze's "exploring of things and events...happening all at once," is my specific goal in writing with Seattle. A city is not defined by one thing or one individual. Seattle is made because of every person who is here as well as every street, building, and sidewalk. Seattle is alive and every day everything happens at once. Yet, I am only privy to what I see. Sze can write poems that move past only his perspective while staying genuine and without assumption. In the second part of his poem, *The Leaves of a Dream are the Leaves of an Onion*, from *River River*, Sze shows how he is able to write simply with complex ideas while remaining grounded.

"The invention of the scissors  
has everything to do with the invention of the telescope.  
A map of the world has everything to do  
with the cactus by the window...  
The man who sacrifices himself and throws a Molotov  
cocktail at a tank has everything to do  
with a sunflower that bends to the light" (14).

In this Sze brings together the image of a sunflower with a man throwing a molotov cocktail. This connection surprises me but he has already, through the more obvious connection between scissors and telescope, set me up to trust him. These short images are not complex. As a reader he gives them directly to me. Tension forms only when starting to feel that the gaps between these images are as immense as they are being shown to be close together. Yet, the poem does not overwhelm, it feels like a meditation, an engaged interaction with every present moment. This is also an example of Sze's charged moment. In this poem every line is charged because every image has its tension. Scissors cut, telescopes discover, the map of the world is fraught with politics and colonization, the cactus in the window seems mundane but operates as a grounding because it is an image I feel many of us can connect to if we have house plants. And then, I feel, saving the best for last he makes me think of the explosion and death of a man to the explosion of color, petals, and seeds that sunflower is. There is not a dull moment in these words, I am held throughout. The way Sze brings together these images makes me think of the way the many currents of water exist all at once in Salmon Cove. There is something so natural in Sze's use of words. But it is a naturalness that comes only after years spent working with words and living a life of experience, learning, and reading.

“I would say that if you start writing a poem with a preconceived idea, the tendency is to direct the poem in order to accomplish or fulfill that idea. The problem is that there’s less discovery, there’s less surprise, and ultimately, there’s less urgency to that kind of a poem.” I conceived that I would write about Seattle. I immediately became stuck. I did not yet know Sze’s advice. I tried to write again and again about the Seattle that I knew. But the poems felt flat, felt empty. When I did find this advice I felt how freeing it could be. I found that to write about Seattle I first may have to write about the Robin’s in my backyard or about how the sound of the garbage truck is different from that of a recycle truck on Friday morning. Hugo wrote about his need to find a place before finding a poem. It feels like Sze is doing something similar. With a far different background than Hugo, Sze works with place by bringing what seems to be far flung moments directly next to each other where they rub their edges. Sze has had years developing his writing process. While I feel that I am just beginning to find my own. In trying to write about Seattle I became stuck because it felt too big. I want to write poems that are as full as Third and Pike at rush hour. I want to find the specific facts, quotes, and images that show my exploration into the history of white settlement in Seattle and how through this I am learning about myself

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Seattle is so big. Physically and internally. At the top Duwamish Hill Preserve I see the skyline from 9.3 miles south. And when I am downtown, the buildings block out the sun and sharpen the wind. There is no clear line where the influence of Seattle's urbanness ends and nature takes over. Everything is blended. Everything effects while being affected.

How do I write about something that I can barely grasp? This is why I write. Because I want to go into and expand the spaces I can not grasp. This city is bigger than me. I am drawn to write about Seattle to learn about myself and what it is specifically that I call home. Sze has set me up to realize which places and moments I want to bring to my poems. And he tells me to be aware of these places of heat and allow them to guide me. But Sze's poems, so much more developed than I am capable of, do not offer me a direct way for me to enter the charged moments he helped me define. Because what each place and moment is charged with is history, of white settlement, of tribal raids, of potlatches and Salmon runs. There are so many directions I could go.

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*Native Americans, who vastly outnumbered white settlers in 1854, today represent less than 2 percent of Washington State's population.*

- David M. Buerge, Intro, 23

*Prior to the twentieth century, the Duwamish River had the most complex watershed in Western Washington.*

- David M. Buerge, 2

The Duwamish River is now a superfund site, one of the most polluted sites in this country.

Although the Duwamish People were the first to sign the Treaty of Point Elliott in January 1855, the Duwamish people, to this day, are not recognized as a Tribe by the federal government. They are still here!

The Green River was dammed. The Montlake Cut was made and lowered Lake Washington by ten feet. On this day the Black River was drained. The settlers celebrated and filled their sacks with the gasping fish. Where the Duwamish once had one of their main villages, their canoes were suddenly landlocked and it was no longer possible to travel from the Duwamish to the lake or the Cedar River.

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*The slightest push can offer a new side entrance to the poem...especially now when we feel so chronically...disrespected we can't kind of just face it head-on because it's too heavy, there's too much coming at us. So yeah the side entrance, the daily detail...daily details you know, the incidental kind of detail.*

- Cedar Sigo

In his talk at From the Convergence Zone, Cedar Sigo gave us a window into his poetics and process. I was touched by this. I feel that he is acutely aware of what he is doing. But he does get stuck in this awareness. I mean, his awareness does not lend itself to becoming a preconceived way of understanding. In his writing he explores. “Cedar Sigo was raised on the Suquamish Reservation in the Pacific Northwest and studied at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute” (Sigo, Wave). Sigo’s poems elicit a floating feeling in me. His work surprises me in how I am caused to hang on a single word. Or, I am given a dream-like image and then a glimpse into Sigo’s vulnerability. In the poem *Magic Mountain* from his book *Royals* I see how Sigo might be using his concept of the side entrance.

“I dreamt I was an orator  
     Trapped in a typewriter--  
  
     Now I seem to have  
 come out on  
     the other side:”

There is so much in these first stanzas that I am not given. Sigo's power comes from his ability to make me aware of and comfortable with this not knowing. I see the orator as the side entrance Sigo uses to create this poem about his poetics. What I like so much about his work is that it feels so much of a specific mind place in which he exists. “It’s been about 10 years since the element of poetry has bled over into every aspect of my life,” Sigo says this and I see it. His poems move in an ethereal way. There is something intangible in them. This intangibility feels soft, it becomes a texture I experience through his book. His poems put me into a different state of mind. They feel almost religious. Or, like a prayer, I can utter in the woods to have a side entrance, into an old cedar, open up.

“                  I color in  
 the outline as one would  
                   the border of a country  
  
                   whatever techniques  
 are called upon  
  
 to welcome the body  
                   of the poem

Into the room”

(39)

I zone in on this as a call to being open to trying new ways of writing to allow the poem to come through me. Cedar’s poems have breath in the air in them. They feel like realizations from a deep connection with self and place. For Sigo, the side entrance is not a permanent thing. It happens when a certain arrangement of the moment and thoughts in the head come together to show a way to begin. Or, happens when I manage to shift my perspective. Or, rearrange the words of a line I have been knocking my head against for days to finally find something that feels right.

Sigo’s side entrance and his call to “welcome the body/of the poem” gives me the motivation to try new things, to come to familiar topics in new ways. This idea pushed me to always start with the most minute detail; how the air pulls a leaf or how a stranger’s foot sounds slapping down on the sidewalk. By writing, I can sit with these details as the individual pieces that I can arrange to create the world my poems exist within. I needed this concept of side entrances to continue at a point in my work when I didn’t know how to move further within. The side entrance guides me to use my writing as a place to focus. And to realize that to write about what feels so large I must write about what feels small.

“I would let rhyme tell me certain things about itself instead of the other way around.”

Thinking about listening deeply and immersing myself, I come to this quote of Robert Duncan’s that Sigo uses to position his own poetics. In my work, I am listening to rhymes as well. I recognize though that I am not listening for rhyme that appears immediately on the surface when two words mimic each other’s endings. I broaden this definition of rhyme to represent a certain amount of balance in the work. That as far the work swings one way it swings back the other as well. And I realize that this is what I am listening for in my work. Because each charged moment I have in these places can only occur with the unique arrangement of time, place, self, season, and land. So that these moments contain in them a certain balance. A balance that is centered around me holding everything at once to form my perspective. This type of listening draws a line between Kimmerer’s being with wilderness to realize a new language and listening to the language that I do know. This leads me to ask how the river wants to be worded.

In the moments that I switch to writing prose, it happens because the subject matter needs it. The mindset that comes over me in prose allows me to sit with the moment in a different way than poetry does. In my poetry, I deal with what I do not know. In my poetry, I am discovering. I am working to have the moment of the piece create its own context. But then I feel that the poem alone does not create the feeling that I want the reader to have. I want the reader to be able to situate themselves within my world. Enough so that they can move along with me down First Ave. and along The Duwamish River.

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*A line is a moment, and a moment is intrinsically non-narrative. That is, a moment does not move forward, not readily, not right away. A moment stops, and stopping is the friendly nemesis of narrative. A line is a moment that has value right then, and which deserves some of our time. To go past a moment is to lose something. In our lives, finally, it is the moments we savor and it is the moments we savor in our reading as well.*

- Alberto Rios, 207

“Alberto Ríos has won acclaim as a writer who uses language in lyrical and unexpected ways in both his poems and short stories, which reflect his Chicano heritage and contain elements of magical realism” (Rios, 21). I found his thoughts on what a line of poetry can be in, *A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line*, edited by Emily Rosko and Anton Vander Zee. I could not stop coming back to his words. I was drawn back because he forced me to look closer at my lines than I ever had before. “The Best Line in a poem better be the one I am reading” (207). Rios’ ideas on the line challenge me to think deeper about what I want to do with the space on the page. And inspired me with a deep belief of the power of the line to impart emotion, feeling, and experience to its reader.

Reading Rios I underlined almost everything except for part 1 which is the quote I have started this section with. Over this quote, I had only penciled in a question mark over “intrinsically non-narrative” (207). I was avoiding this concept because it confused me. It made me realize that I have been working with the moment as a piece of narrative. Reading these words I felt threatened. My gut pushed immediately against the idea of a moment being non-narrative. How can it be? There is always time. There is always a first line and a last line. There is always the life that has led to the moment. I only get to the places I focus on by choosing to walk there.

Each of my poems starts moments of my experience with myself, Seattle, and the Duwamish River. Some of my poems I want them to be part of a story. Others, I want to exist by themselves. I feel so much tension with Rios’ idea because I am so attached to the idea of a narrative being what draws a reader through the work. And looking at my work, I see how I have, without being aware, worked hard to create a narrative.

I realize I am forcing a narrative onto this project because I am convinced that narrative is the only way of making meaning. And from this, I realize that all the work I have done to engage and immerse still comes against this wall in my writing. Where I am still trying to force the places and moments into a narrative structure that I wish to be able to say, here, this is my Seattle. I have convinced myself that I am creating poems that allow linear thinking to break down. I have convinced myself that in my writing, I have allowed everything to exist at once without trying to force it into any particular story. But through

Rios, I now see how I have been working against myself. I have been forcing this work into a narrative. And in this, I have created lines that I have taxed with too much work. I have felt I need to fill in the gaps instead of letting them breathe.

“A line is an easy chair as well as a line-not half an easy chair. Another line is a lamp, another is a fireplace-not parts of each. Together they make the room you are describing, then the house, then the street, then the city. Whole lines make the city. Half lines do half the job. In the city that will give you incomplete direction. In the kitchen, it will get you toast and. Stanza, as a point of information, means ‘room’ in Italian” ( 209).

I still fight with the idea of the moment of the line being non-narrative. As the whole line makes the city. No city exists without millions of stories. I work to populate my poems with the strangers' faces that have stuck in my head after passing only once in the street of the city, with the bars, restaurants, and benches that have been taken out by new development projects to build new apartments. I use my words to bring these strangers and the pieces of the city that are gone into my work and onto the page. I want some of my lines to be like ivy, which reaches and spreads, suffocating its surroundings. I want others to be like cement, statements that take work to break. These are parts of the city I feel I have to include. But how am I writing like ivy, how am I writing like cement? I have listened more to the river's current than I have intently to the moments of each line.

“I am an advocate-or rather, and appreciator--of the long long line in poems, though by that I do not at all mean lines with simply more words. I mean instead, lines that are long in their moment, that make me linger and give me the effect of having encountered something, something worth stopping for” (207).

When I look at my work with Rios's idea in mind, I find I am not creating these long lines as he advocates. But instead, I am creating the opposite. I am constantly drawn to and tempted to see what the line can hold. I have taken on this pursuit by adding simply more words. I have the impulse to simply use more words because downtown I am overwhelmed and feel that everything there is simply more and more. That, yes, the long line as Rios appreciates allows for the reader to pause. But what about the moments in the city that when I see them I do not pause but look the other way? The man making his bed out of cardboard under the lights Macy's has just turned on for Christmas. Or, the woman asleep with a needle in her arm on Alaska way. In the

moment of the day, I do not pause, I keep going, I mind my own business. It is not until later when I am writing when these sights re-emerge that I realize their importance. So I fill my lines with more words, more faces, more smells, more sounds. These lines are not the ones to get the reader to pause but instead to get the reader to feel immersed in my city.

Stillness elongates time. Along the Duwamish River, I can sit still without feeling like I am in anyone's way. As I re-approach my poems with the river, I see the importance of Rios' long lines in a new light. As much as I have full lines, I also want to write lines that do cause a pause in the reader. Because the Duwamish River has caused me to pause so many times in my life and inspired me to sit and listen. So in my poems for the river, I do wonder what of my overwhelmed feeling with the rest of the city comes with me to this place. And how through my writing am I able to allow the same pause I find. Even more than this I want each poem, each moment, to come out of the page. Just as I am working to allow my surroundings in, I am striving to have my work move outwards. So that it can grab its reader as Sze does with his choice of images, and as Sigo does with his use of space and creation of an ethereal vibe.

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*What else can you offer the earth, which has everything? What else can you give but something of yourself? A homemade ceremony, a ceremony that makes a home.*

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, 38

This work is my homemade ceremony. Writing about Seattle has become a side entrance to write about myself. In researching the past of the city I was forced to ask myself questions of my past. As a white settler, to see where I continue in my lineage and where I break from it.

I set out to listen to the city and the river and to write how these places want to be written. I set out to write the overwhelming feeling I have here; to create a work that shows the connection between past and present, personal and communal.

I feel a change coming over me. A deepening in my engagement. I have opened myself to not shape my perspective by only my experience. There is a ceremony in researching the past. Latching onto certain quotes that draw me in. Trusting my gut to follow what intrigues me. There is energy in the past that makes the present into charged moments. I come to each place feeling more aware of what it means for me to be here. More aware of the human forces that shaped the land and urban landscape I took for granted.

Seattle is my home. This means I am in a relationship with this land, water, and city. I have nothing to offer but myself. Writing is my ceremony. Writing allows me to weave together the many parts that are connected but distant from each other. With me, I bring Downtown to the Duwamish River and vice versa. I write to find myself. To locate me within the context of the greater movements of this city and land. I go inside myself to locate in me what exactly my feeling of home is created by and consists of.

Everything exists at once and at the same time. From memory, lineage, and history, blackberry, sword fern, and fence I build my home on the page. I ask you, the reader, to look around with wonder and to realize that the land around you has been shaped. That you are not only an observer but a part of this place in your everyday actions. And that each one of us brings with us a line of ancestors, memories, and experience. And that together we make this city what it is.

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