flow –
water
water
water
time
wave
meaning to re-member
meaning to pull out (by root)
time
meaning to hang
wave
meaning to hold on (in space)
time
meaning to take up space in
wave
meaning to be in place
water
meaning formed (out of)
wave
meaning dirt
length
meaning here, in the beginning of
meaning dark into light into
time
meaning into being, seeing
time
seeing meaning
time
meaning to see things for what they are
wave
meaning to see beyond the line of words
length
meaning to drill down into
time
meaning into root into memory
wave
to remember meaning
wave
to pull out
wave
to let it (all) hang (out)
to hang out in space
sound
space meaning out, not in
length
space meaning out instead of in
sound
space out beyond the in
length
meaning the in
sound
the in between
between meanings
length
meaning there is space in and between
wave
meaning private
wave
meaning the opposite of
wave
meaning not hanging out in public
wave
meaning not trunk not branch not leaf
sound
meaning not seeing meaning in but looking for
wave
meaning to drill to dig to root
time
meaning to re-member
length
to re-call
to bring back
to re-member form
form in space
in space
sound
meaning to return, to root –
wave
time
length
body
body
body
a look
that
cuts
slits
cleaves
guts –
a function
of
duration
&
depth –
a way
in –
water
water
water
to be
in
anywhere –
water
water
water
begin –
be in –
anywhere.
my mother
a girl
origin –
my mother
the mountain
my mother
picks cotton
my mother
spins, spins
my mother
a line,
a stream
return /
come back
to –
comes from
an expression
comes from
ex –: out
comes from
– press out
comes from
squeezing
comes from
an intensive force
force
comes from /
origin –
woman
spring
well –
artefact –
to be
an object
all sounds
cell –
alive, all flow –

O, Let the Things Themselves!
Desire(d) Line(s) & the Laws of Thermodynamics as Poetic Practice with/in Space(s)

Dimitra Xidous (poet, researcher)
Paper delivered as part of Poetry's Environments Conference (https://conferences.leeds.ac.uk/poetryenvironment/)
Panel: Bodies, Rhythms, Desiring Lines (Thursday, June 11, 2026).
9-11 June 2026
University of Leeds

Part 1: O, to begin / to be in anywhere…

"[v]isible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it sees and moves itself, it holds things in a circle around itself" - Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

In this state, I go back to the beginning – as a way to re-member myself, in body, then – and what I imagined was the point, when I began writing the poems that would form my part of (S)worn State(s), a poetic collaboration between myself, and poets Annemarie Ni Churreain and Kimberly Campanello **(Figure 1).** The project, which culminated in a letterpress publication by The Salvage Press in 2024, contains work that is characterised by visual, multi-lingual and embodied approaches to language, evoking a wide range of 'states' of female embodiment and thought, including pleasure, joy, and experiences of intellectual interrogation. What an earful – for you…and a mouthful, for me. And yet - when it comes to my state of mind, both then & now, it is important to understand that my ambition – what I desired to do, using my eyes & hands, my throat & mouth – was anything but small **(Figure 2)**.

Figure 1: Poets Kimberly Campanello, Dimitra Xidous, and Annemarie Ni Churreain ((S)worn State(s) collaborators). Photo by: Ror Conaty (2019).

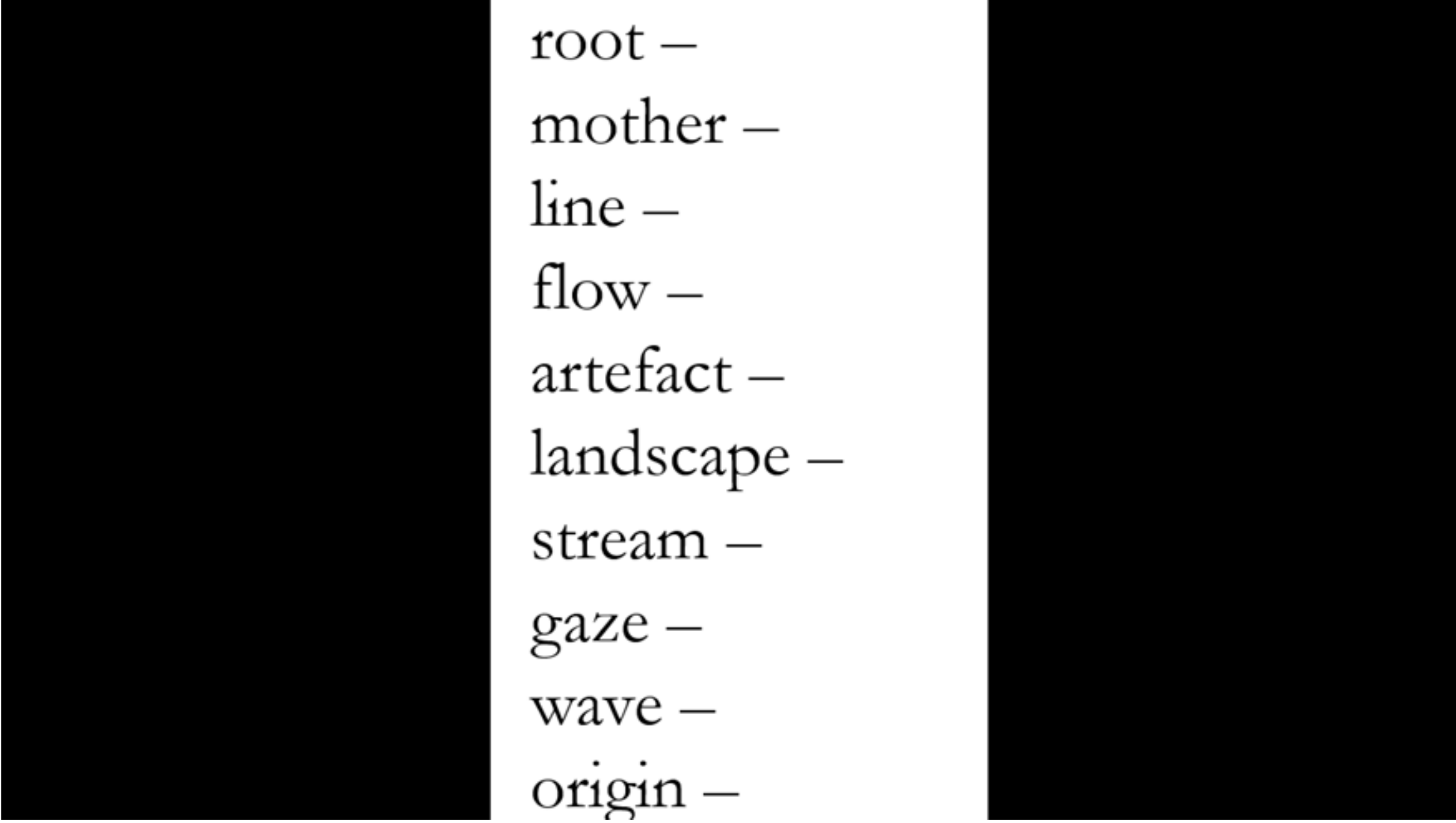

Figure 2: Table of contents: the 10 poems written for (S)worn State(s) collaborative poetry project (2019-2024), published by The Salvage Press in December 2024.

Everything starts, from a point, & here is one worth making, insofar that words are matter that come from nothing (meaning not one thing): every poetic instinct & act I have ever had, have ever done, comes from root, comes from origin – as mother & tongue, together; in other words, everything begins, comes into being, in the beginning (stin) πρώτη μου γλώσσα. And so, from the very beginning, then – & as the sum of all forms of energy must remain constant, because energy cannot be created or destroyed, words become – come-into-being uttered – in another, other-than-mother tongue. Translation is energy transformed, as part of spontaneous process – a movement from some point inside (meaning the hot interior world of the body) towards the cold(er) outside (out into the exterior world, where the body becomes a thing among things). In this & from this process, entropy (always) increases. No matter.

I loved the idea that the poems I would make (out of nothing) would go through a very physical process of being impressed onto / into a page **(Figure 3)**. That my poems made in (& from) my body – from eye to hand, & throat to mouth, would, in time, create the desire in another body to invest a significant amount of energy towards the labour of impression, letter by letter – I could only enjoy this, could only relish in this: bodies, at the same temperature – moving, transforming, in spontaneous process. All because of my big (fat Greek!) desire.

Figure 3: Photos from Jamie's studio, during the making of (S)worn States (2024).

I went into the project to make poems built of lines made up entirely of Greek words – words made of Greek letters, so that, in time, I would come poetic eye-to-I με τη γλώσσα μου, letter -by-letter pressed onto / into the page (**Figure 4**). To be clear, I did not want to erase one for the mother, no; what I wanted was to show, to anyone with eyes that could see it – the weight, the full weight of myself pressed onto / into this other than my-mother-tongue. But also, more. I wanted to do it so full-on, so as to bring this language (the one I am speaking to you right now) to bending point – to the point in when & in where the only thing that could hold it all together (as in a circle) was the Greek language – letters, & words – all made of the ελληνική γλώσσα - αυτή η γλώσσα that roots me to & in the world (even if I spend most of my time speaking and writing in this one).

But then, catastrophe – comes from the Greek *κατά* meaning down + στρέφειν, meaning to turn; in other words, "a sudden end" (**Figure 5**). Jamie, the hands & eyes behind The Salvage Press was quick to use his mouth & throat to '*turn-me- down'*, telling me he had no Greek letters – & therefore could not, would not be able to letterpress any poems that included them. & so, I yielded – because I had to. The poetic output I handed over to him in 2022 to impress into / onto paper (with the weight of his whole body – a transformation of energy that would go towards reinforcing the material matter of words, letters, & indeed, of language itself, is a manifestation of this / my yielding (giving in, because I had to).

α	ι	ϱ
β	κ	σ
γ	λ	τ
δ	μ	υ
ε	ν	φ
ζ	ξ	χ
η	ο	ψ
θ	π	ω

Figure 4: The Greek Alphabet, made up of 24 letters.

Figure 5: Catastrophe (from the Greek, meaning 'sudden end').

& yet, everywhere in the natural world (of which words are a part), energy is neither created nor destroyed; it just changes form. To yield is to give in (yes); but imagine a field, during harvest: it too can and does yield, meaning – it offers up.

Part 2: O, let the things themselves…

How things correspond is of deep concern; correspondence between one thing & another pre-occupies me to such degree that I have spent the better part of my time, in practice, making sum (of things). Some part of this summing owes itself to fragments of correspondence between Salvador Dali and Federico Garcia Lorca from some time, long before now. In a letter to Lorca, Dalí writes, 'I am convinced that in poetry our efforts only make sense when they lead us to evade the ideas our intelligence has forged artificially, and gives things their exact, real sense.' In another, he goes on, writing to Lorca of breasts, of all things: 'an edible white, the metallic white of a stray breast (you know that there are also 'stray breasts,' just the opposite of flying breasts, for the stray one is at peace without knowing what to do and is so defenceless it moves me).' Until, finally, in yet another letter, he gets down to the point (of the matter): 'Let the things themselves decide where their shadows fall!'.

Figure 6: Infinite space (of the page).

Yes, I yielded; I wrote work around a void created by lack; & yet, remember – my desire was not small. Everything I made for (S)worn State(s) began with the consideration of the page as vast and infinite space **(Figure 6).** I had never worked with a letterpress printer before; I had no clue what was achievable (or not) when it came to making material matter concrete & visible (to the physical eye). So, I took it to the limit, pushing against Jamie's margins, & imagining a page that would unfurl itself to accommodate my desire(d) line(s) in any & every direction I wished to take them – whether roots, or lines, streams, or waves **(Figure 7).** Inspired by the time spent with Kimberly & Annemarie in Achill Island, as part of our residency in the Heinrich Boll cottage – where we walked long lines across bogs & up bluffs & Croagh Patrick, I drew much from the natural world to create poetic bodies **– (Figure 8),** each holding their own; at a glance, concrete, visual; in performance, structurally sound & engaging, with & in body– each one phenomenal; each one a thing among things. All in all, a nice sum.

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& then, in the proofing, a shadow! I owe so much to Jamie's eyes & hands during the proofing process, for what his attention and consideration of my work brought to the surface. Nowhere was or indeed is this more true than in the orientation-re-orientation of stream – . Remember: energy is neither created nor destroyed; it just changes form. & so, following thermodynamic law, Jamie performed a mathematical translation of stream – which, in turn, offered up multiple entry points into the whole body of work (all 10 poems I made, one by one with my eyes & hands, throat & mouth). I use the word 'mathematical' with purpose & on purpose because I have come to see math is poetry (& poetry is math); I think, in fact, it could be true that the first poets in the world were (& continue to be) mathematicians. Across all the work I have produced, I have tried to make things add up (do not confuse this with truth; I am speaking about something else). Openings are never left untreated; each poem, in this set of 10, offers something up to every other poem – & together, they prove something (they are (a) proof of the sum of things).

Figure 7: Achill Island, August 2020: bogland, then a stream; further afield, Croagh Patrick.

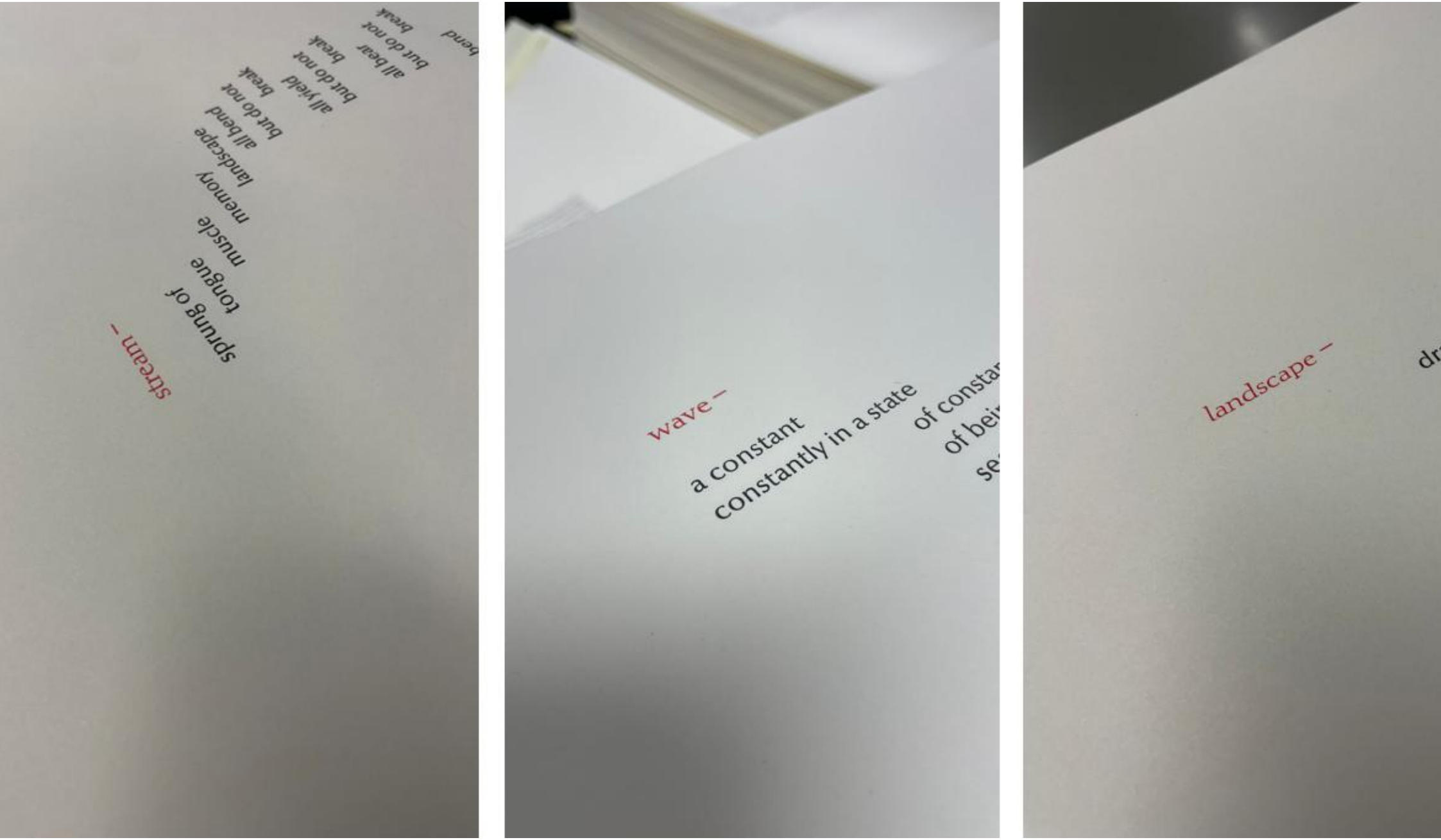

Figure 8: Fragments of poems from (S)worn State(s): stream – , wave – , and landscape – (The Salvage Press, 2024).

Specific to **stream –** , something extra special has happened. In shifting the poem onto the horizontal plane – Jamie created two distinct ways of 'reading' this poem (**Figure 9**). The first requires a 90 degree rotation to allow the poem to be read as I wrote it – as a 'steam' running down a mountain. The second way to read it, is as Jamie has impressed it into/onto the page – is as a mathematical expression – of the cos and sin graphs (I never saw this, not until Jamie applied his re-orientation-cum-mathematical-translation, & now, it is all I can see – and the absolute kicker, when looking at it this way, is what you 'can't see, but is there, if you keep thinking mathematically –turning what Jamie said to me – about what he lacked – into a lie; in other words, he has proofed himself wrong.

Figure 9: Re-orientation of – stream, 90-degree rotation from vertical to horizontal plane.

Here, look, let me show you!

The sin & cos functions (either or, or both together, are the same 'visually' as **'stream – '** (**Figure 10**). The obvious links to the other poems jump out. **flow –** (wave(length) & sound(wave)) – as words written in a poem (as words that I would say 'out loud') are now also represented in **'stream – '**; the poem '**wave – '** and it's undulating 'swelling / dying, swelling, again – ' is here too – in the crest & trough of each graph (& that crest & trough is there, too **in 'stream –'**; (**Figure 11**)**.**

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And finally: on the face of it, & indeed, to the naked eye, the void caused by lack is obvious: there are no Greek letters, no Greek words anywhere in the work I made (out of nothing). But, look again – what the 90 degree rotation from the vertical to horizontal plane has done; look at this graph (**Figure 12**) which shows all kinds of equations, & angles – & see it all, materialize (an extension of the natural world, here on the page, bodies in space – mother-tongue / other-tongue, all at the same *fucking(!)* temperature): Jamie's translation of 'stream – ' onto the horizontal plane has eliminated the void; there is no lack of Greek letters. stream – as a visual expression of the sin &/or cos periods, gives expression to (λ (lamba), π (pi), θ (theta)). They are & they have always been, straight from origin, out of not one thing: each letter a thing, among things, in the whole wide of the natural world).

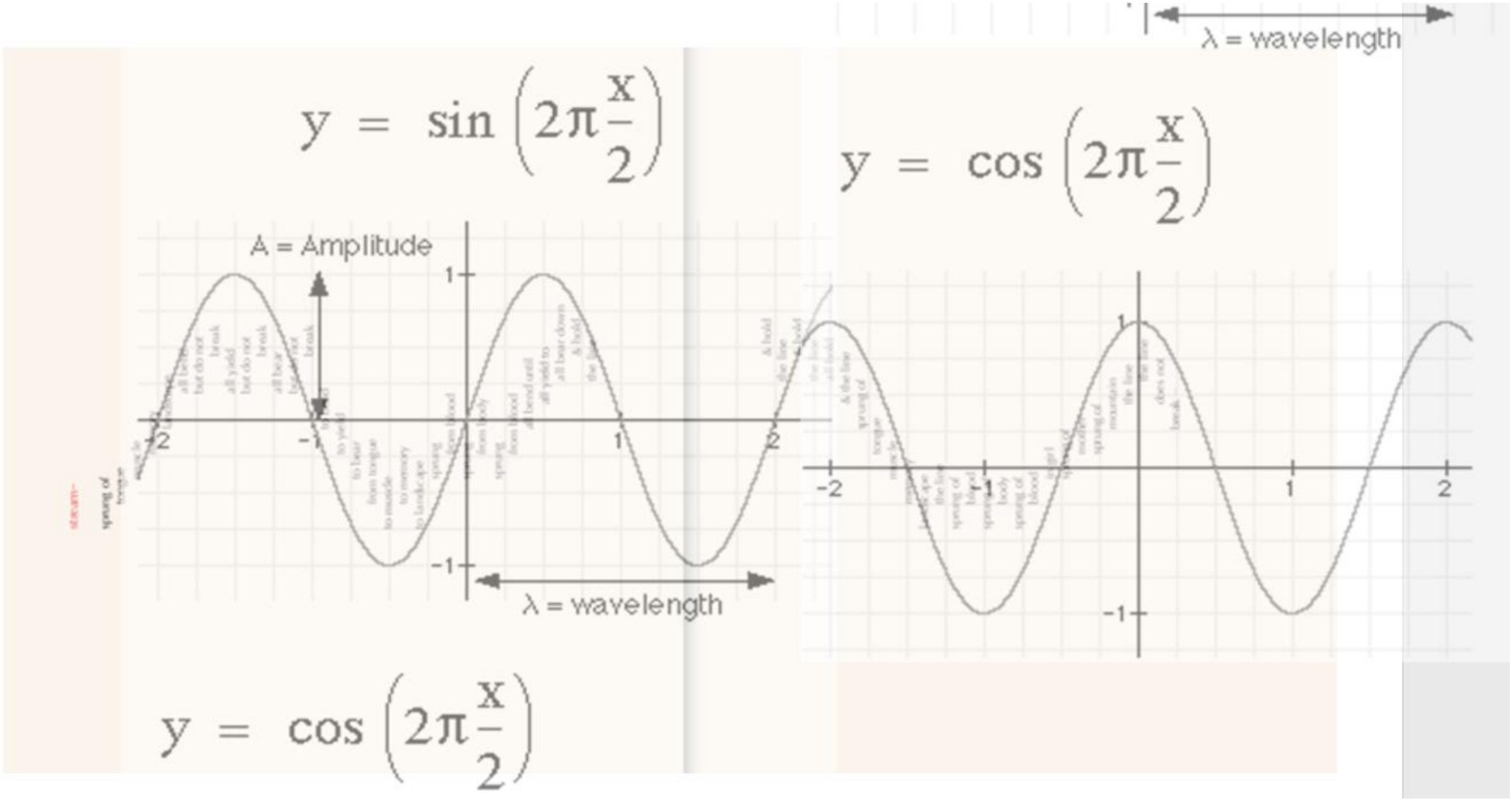

Figure 10: sin and cos functions (either or, or both together, are the same 'visually' as 'stream

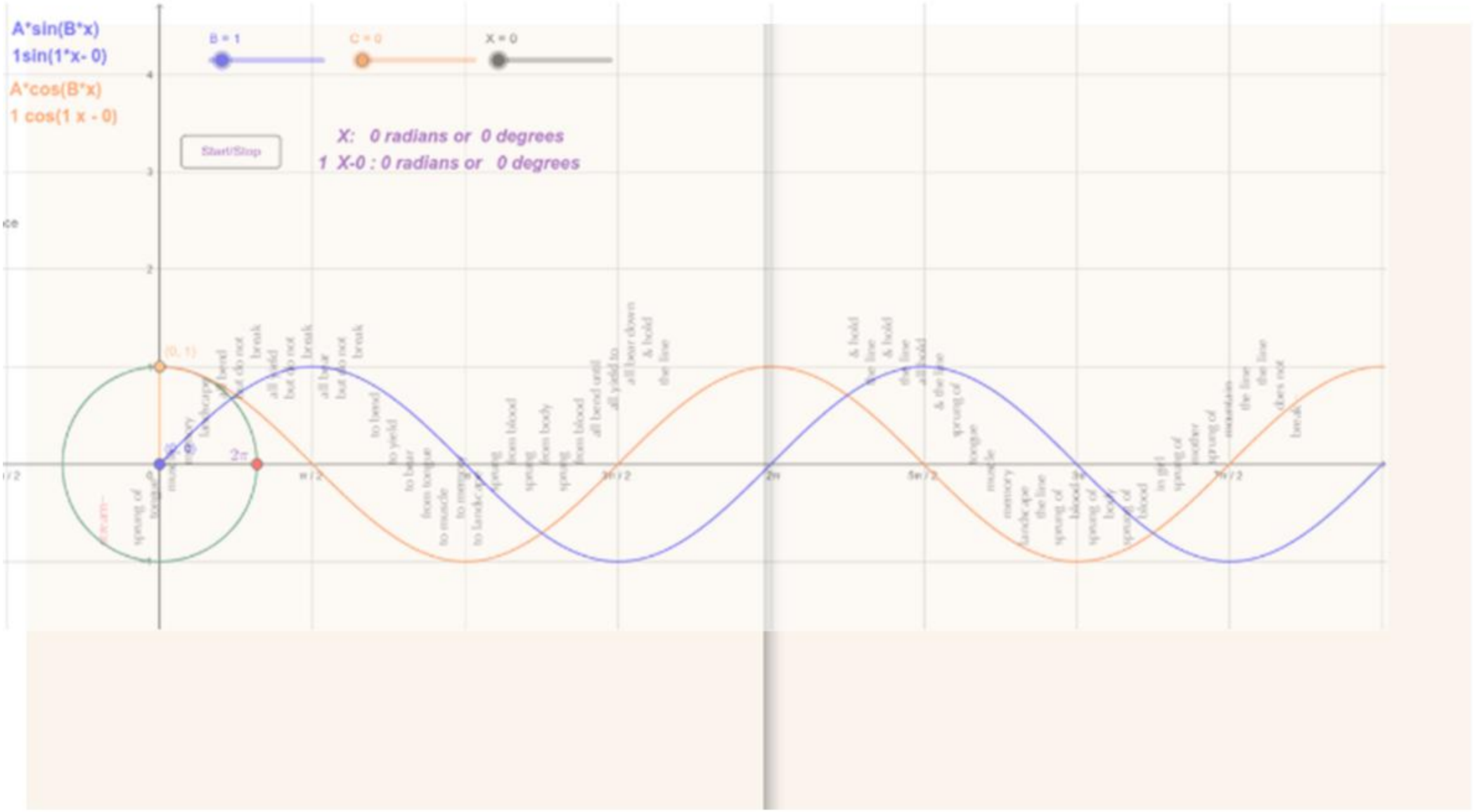

Figure 11: flow – , wave – (poetic bodies) represented in stream –

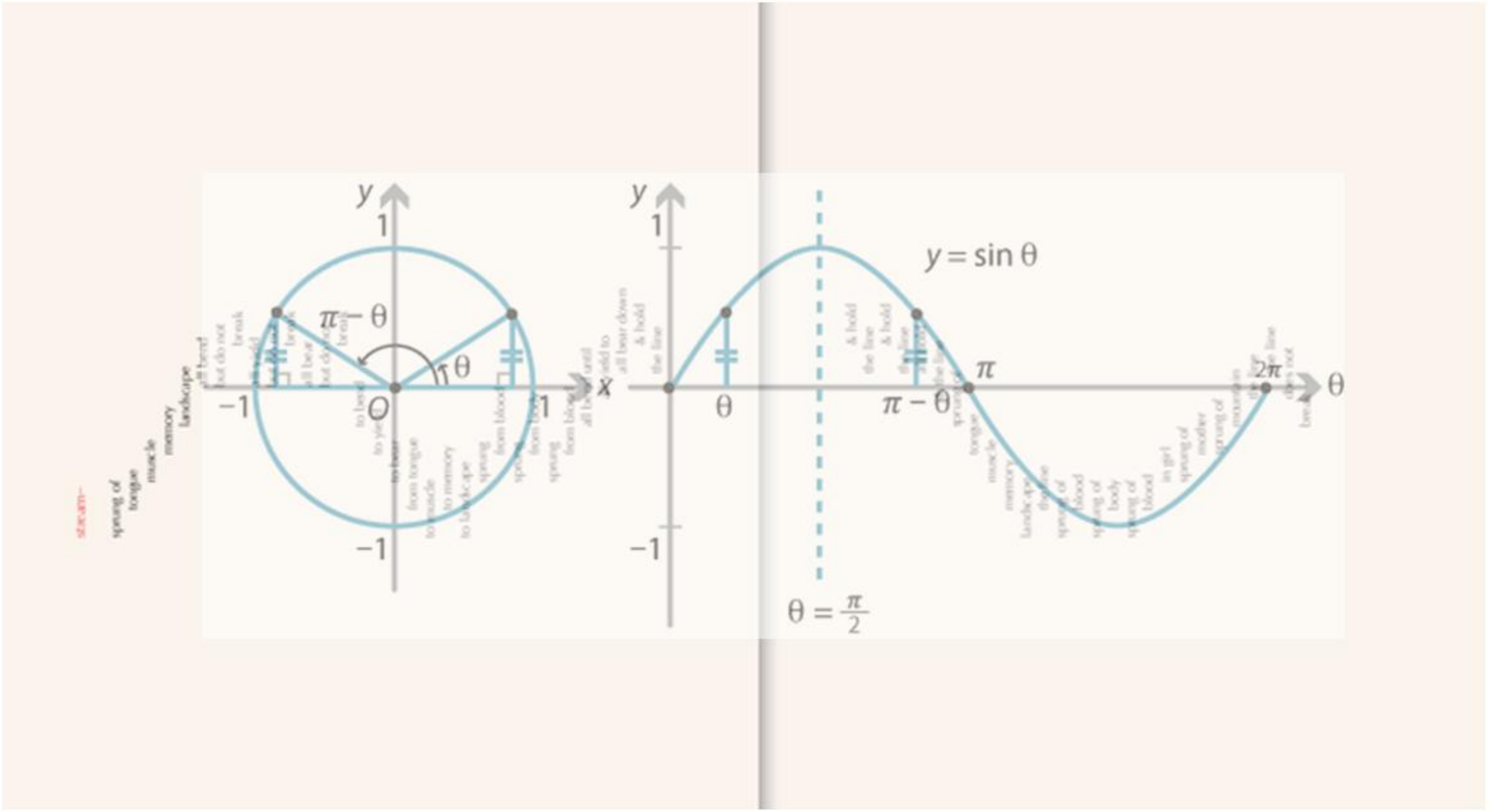

Figure 12: stream – as visual expression of the sin and/or cos periods, gives expression to (λ (lamba), π (pi), θ (theta)).

Of all things, I never imagined a stream, as body of water in flow, would let fall such a deep, long shadow. It continues to reach out, even now, as desire itself does, in all directions.

Part 3: O, have you seen my ghost (seen my ghost, seen my ghost…)

Figure 13…:seen my ghost, seen my ghost…?

"Things are an annex or prolongation of my body; they are incrusted in its flesh; they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body" - Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Nothing – not one thing – happens in isolation, or in a vacuum. Everything is connected to everything else. & so, some sum of time after Jamie's translation, I was myself in Valencia, to see a Francesca Woodman & Julia Margaret Cameron exhibition: Portraits to Dream In. In particular I was there for Woodman's work, as it very much informs a current on-going project called ' a ghost, an animal, or a dead body –'. The title draws on a quotation by Woodman herself: "Am I in the picture? Am I getting in or out of it? I could be a ghost, an animal or a dead body, not just this girl standing on the corner …" …which is a nice way to move from one point to another, in time.

Figure 14: Reflecting, bending (the) body back

Over the last 4 years, I have been repeating myself, returning again & again to the same space & there, I have taken photos of myself – 'self(ies)' in reflection **(Figure 14**). Each reflection offers up meaning; to begin, reflecting is the throwing back by a body or surface of light, heat, or sound without absorbing the light; it also means – a thing that is a consequence of or arises from something else; & it also means this – an idea about something, especially one that is written down or expressed. Another mouth-&-earful. But, already, I am getting ahead of myself.

Some time ago, a friend sent me a paper by Rosalind Krauss on 'grids'. In it, Krauss writes: [t]he grid appears in symbolist art in the form of windows, the material presence of their panes expressed by the geometrical intervention of the window's mullions".

Figure 15: I began from (I was being in) this point

She continues: "the window is experienced as simultaneously transparent and opaque. As a transparent vehicle, the window is that which admits light-or spirit into the initial darkness of the room (insert: & here, I can't help but insert my own reflection in the mix in form of correspondence between meaning of spirit & ghost – two words, as bodies in space, each in thermal equilibrium with me, & therefore, also, with each other. But back to Krauss) – But if glass transmits, it also reflects. And so the window is experienced…as a mirror as well something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being".

Before writing anything very much at all, I began from (I was being in) this point (**Figure 15**): I selected (– comes from *seligere*, Latin for 'select by separating off') a small group of photographs I had already taken of myself, this body, in this space with & in time; in sum, I 'separated off' photographs I had taken with my iPhone, photographs I then distorted (by playing with, among other things, aspects of light, various levels of exposure, volume of highlight, degrees of contrast, & counter-acts of balance). Sometimes (after I had done all this) I posted these photographs online. The photographs were interesting to me & once I realized they were central to this (body of) work, I returned (again) & looked (again) with fresh(?) eyes on this small selection of photographs, & then, I did this: I ran them through (& through) another act of distortion – playing with various frames & expressions of transparency (meaning, on the one hand, the quality of being easily seen through (like, for example, a window(!)), & also, on the other (hand) – the quality of allowing light to pass through so that objects behind can be distinctly seen).

In sum: I brought the two hands together & I layered transparent photographs one on top of the other, & I did this, all of it, in digital 'space'. What arose from these experiments excited me (even more). But – very soon, I realized a new transformation (meaning – a marked change in form, nature, or appearance; but also, & more to the point – a process by which one figure, expression, or function is converted into another one of similar [insert by me: similar, but not exact] value) was necessary (meaning, among other things – happening by natural laws [insert by me: & therefore, inevitable]). I went with the flow & brought the digital transparencies into the 'real world'. For an entire afternoon, some (not to far back) time ago, I layered them (again) one on top of the other (all these different combinations of time (of myself, reflected, in time – coming together & apart, in time) – from one grid, onto another (in time), & then, again, I/my eye took another set of photographs (catching all sorts of lines of light, across an entire afternoon) with my iPhone/eye-to-phone, drawing everything back & into the digital world (again).

The result, in sum, is here (**Figure 16**). Here are photographs/images as representation(s) of reflection & distortion (meaning – a change in the form of an electrical signal or sound wave during processing; also meaning – a distorted form or part; also meaning – the action of giving a misleading account or impression) & transformation – of temporal and spatial planes; with /in the digital / analogue divide; until the line between the two dissolves (a spontaneous process (!)) towards absolute zero(!).

Figure 16: Photographs/images as representation(s) of reflection & distortion, meaning –

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The real world is always reflecting things back to me. Throwing my body back to my time in Valencia, I remember a line that recalled a body of water, running down a mountain; and then, because I desired it, I enacted my own translation – a rotation of 90 degrees, from horizontal to vertical plane; and there it is again – the body, a thing among things, in full flesh. A work, in progress (**Figures 17-19**).

Figure 17: Throwing my body back to my time in Valencia, I remember a line that recalled …

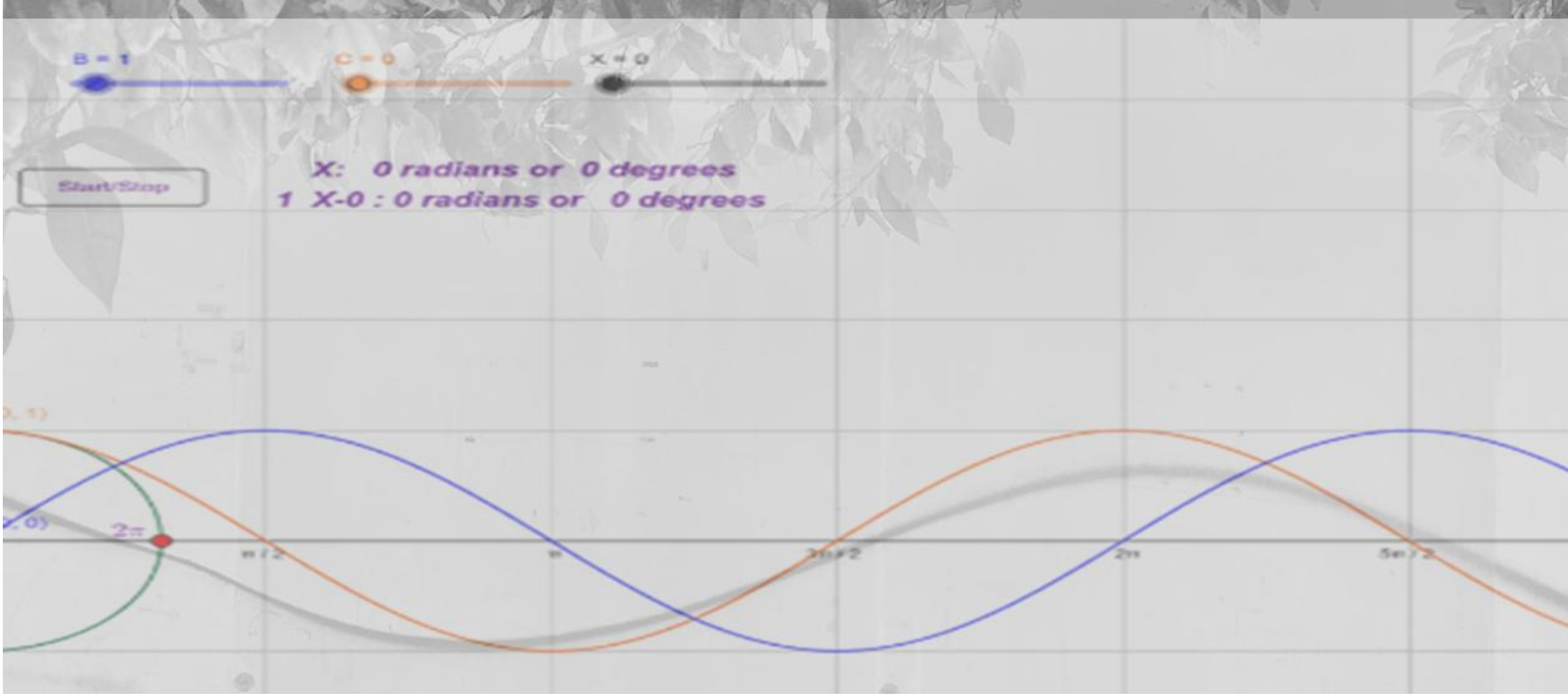

Figure 18: … a body of water, running down a mountain; & then, because I desired it…

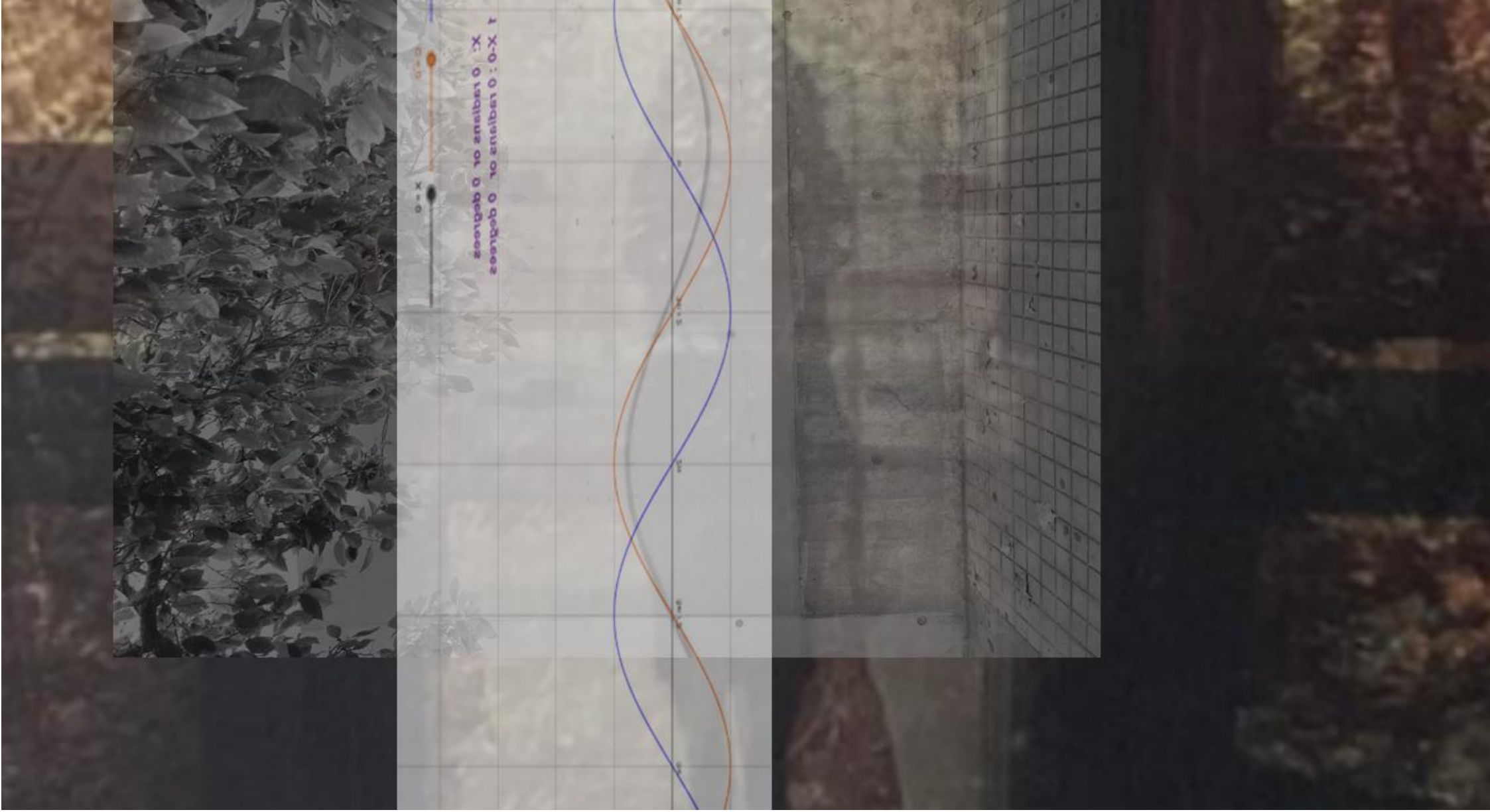

Figure 19: …I enacted my own translation – a rotation of 90 degrees, from horizontal to vertical plane; and there it is again – the body, a thing among things, in full flesh –

Part 4: O, I want you eye want you I want you…

These reversals, these antinomies, are different ways of saying that vision is caught or is made in the middle of things, where something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible for itself and through the vision of all things, where the indivision of the sensing and the sensed persists, like the original fluid within…. – Maurice Merleau-Ponty

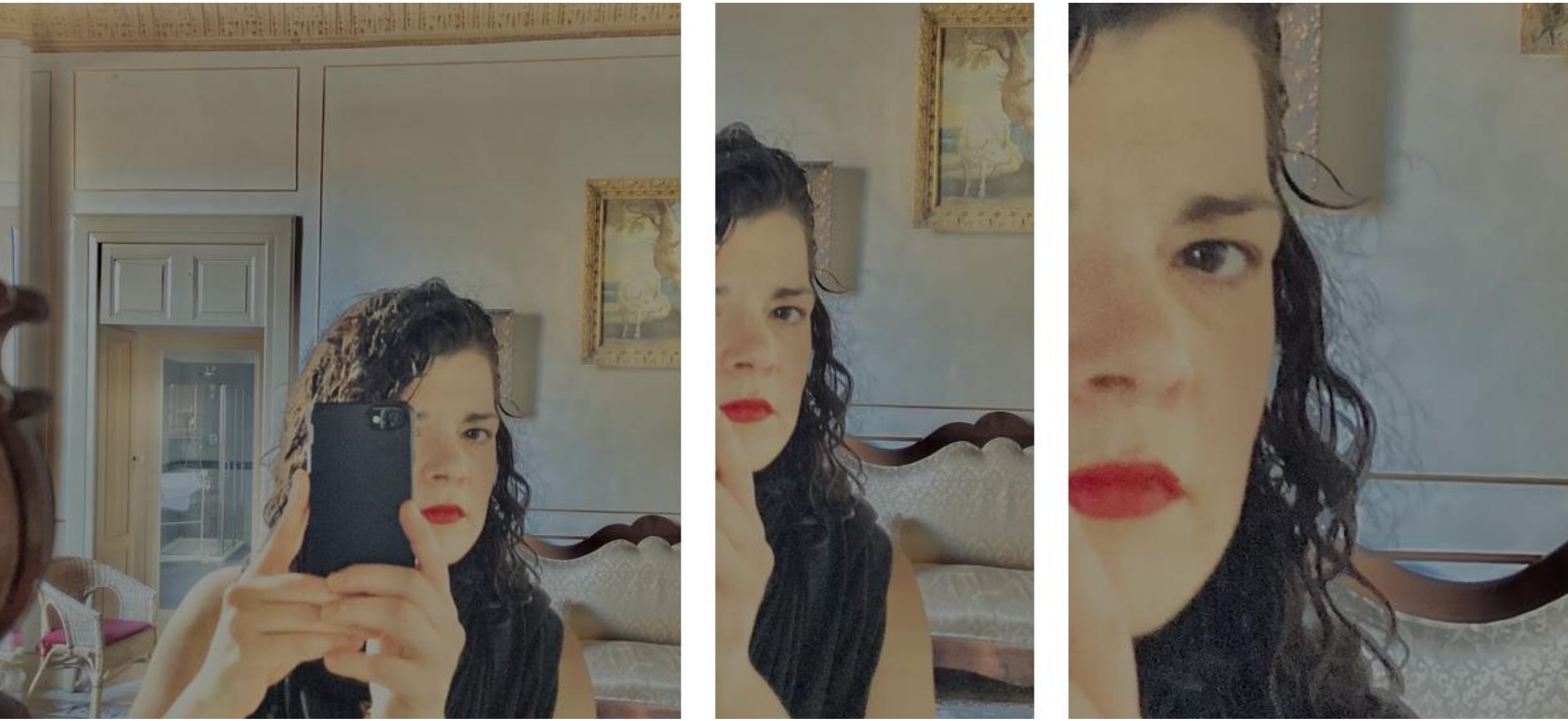

Figure 20: The eye goes looking for ways to touch (the look, as caress)

The eye goes looking for ways to touch what it cannot see (**Figure 20**). Continuing the desired line of inquiry that unfurled from (S)worn State(s), in this work, in progress, I have made poems that stand as (mathematical) proofs. The poetic proofs in 'a ghost, an animal, or a dead body' all centre from 'the eye' – and here, I draw on the work of Luce Irigaray, and her thinking around the 'look as tactile' and 'the look as caress'. The relationship to the poetic gaze touches me, beyond; in correspondence with the female gaze, I break the fourth wall. After everything – every big & little thing among things that has come before or ever will, I turn to Emerson: [t]he eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; & throughout nature this primary picture is repeated without end (**Figure 21**).

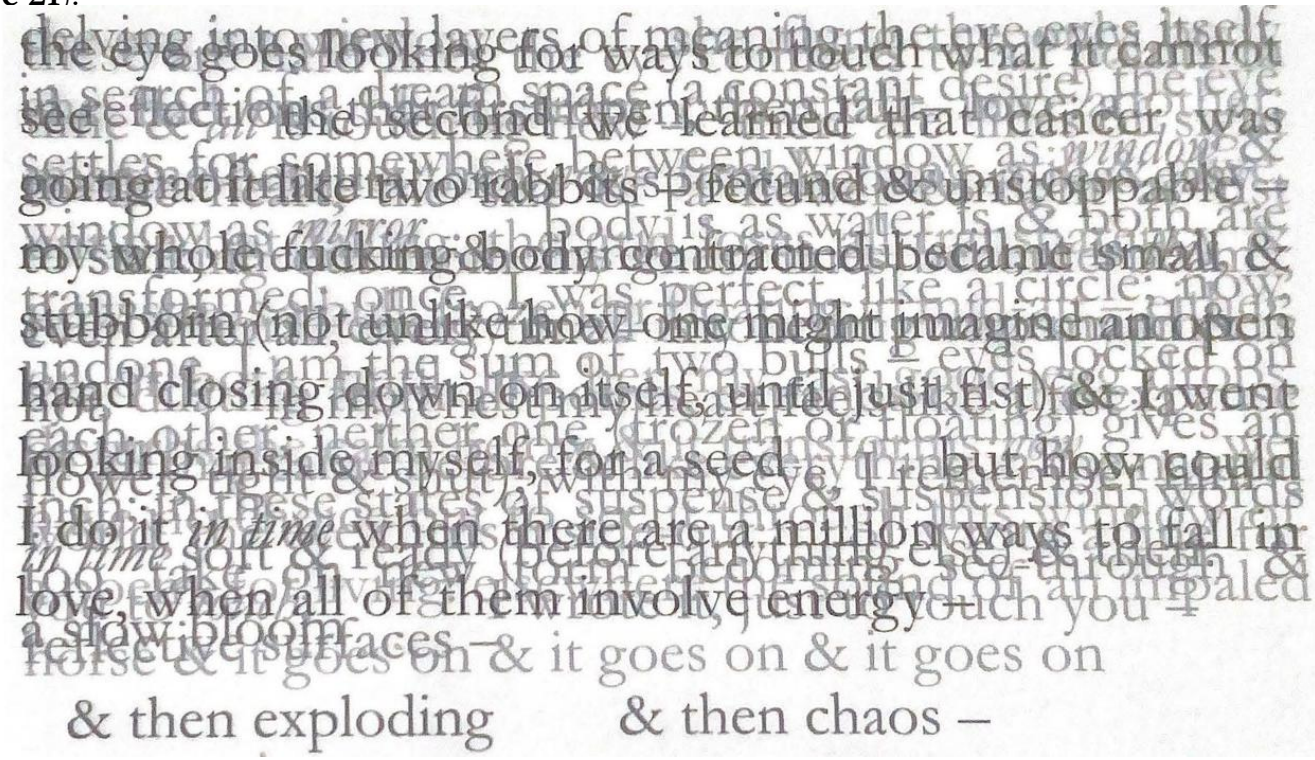

Figure 21: delving into new layers of meaning, the eye eyes itself / in search of dream-space / between window as window / I was perfect like a circle / body is as water is (without end)….

Without end –

it goes on & on & on

& then exploding & then chaos:

Figure 22: I wrote a line for you to touch; I wrote it just to touch you.