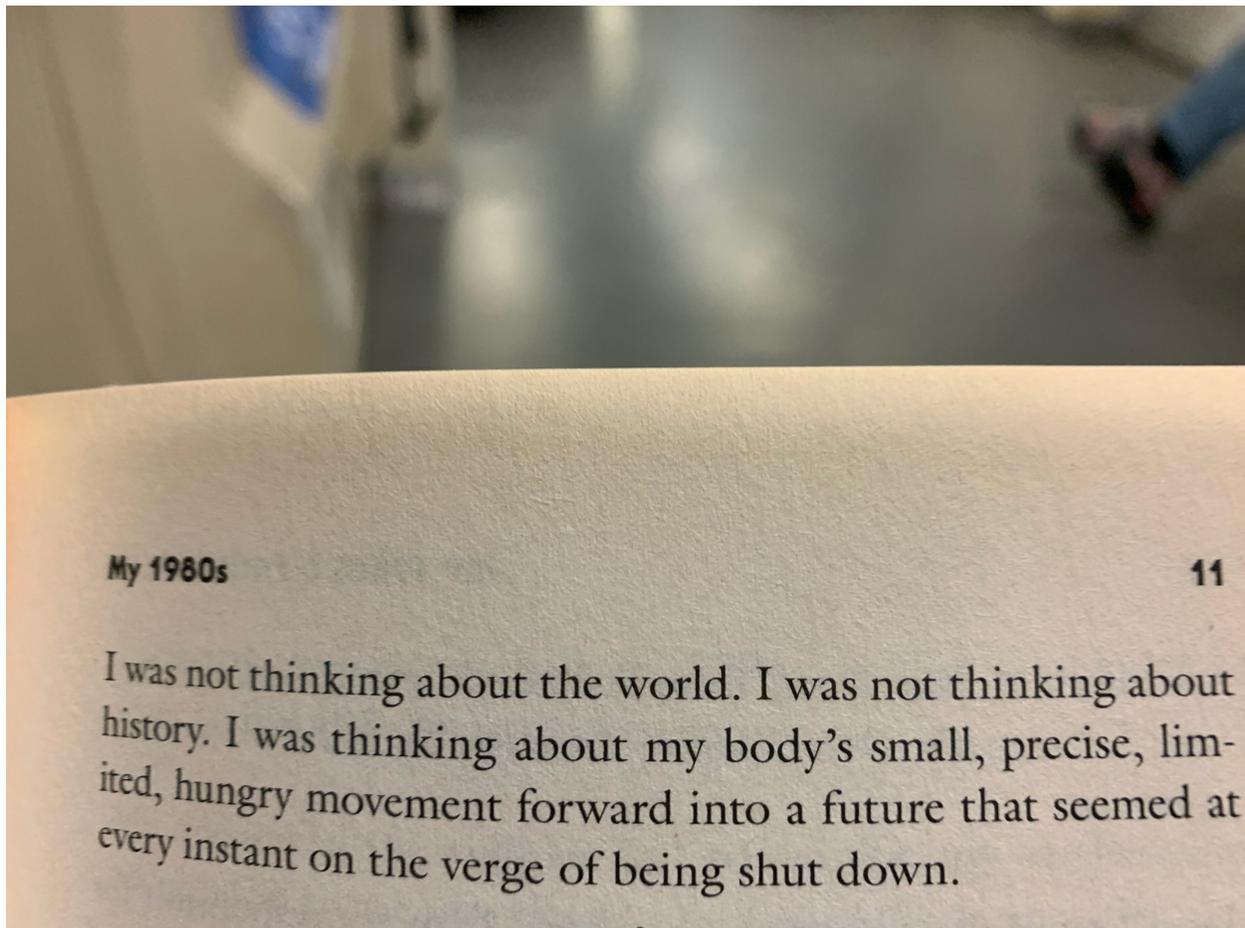


Moving Through
By Claudia La Rocco

What makes you love the way someone moves? Do you recognize something that feels like kin or is it the opposite, a foreign beautiful thing you can't quite contain/grasp? Or nothing so simple as either. I can't believe I used to do this for a living. Keith maintains a balance, Snowflake a lunge into hip out deep plie Ishmael with the ball disco walk Kevin with the bell rifle jose following all the movements. Feels preparatory, the easing into the thing how is the water this evening energies gathered, energies dispersed. The rifle is discharged in a shimmer of bells. Everything slooow, internal, shorts and tanks in this cold space, like tourists stranded, travelers not expecting to be here yet here we are. Everything shimmering a deep satisfying beat starts beneath the skittering atmospherics of the score the omnipresent glowing —

I emerge into the plaza at 16th Street and Mission, disoriented after a long stretch of quiet days spent largely in the immediate vicinity of my home. The escalator ascends into a slot of sky, and as I rise I have the image of a vertical spiral, things felt and then seen: people and traffic and noises and smells, telephone wires and buildings hemming in the sky and great swaths of pigeons traveling in swift, tilting arcs (the everyday miracle of not getting shat on). And finally a hawk, moving in serene circles high above our circles

A few days later I am back on BART, heading to the same stop. I can hardly remember two trips in one week into San Francisco in the last two years. Reading Wayne Koestenbaum's *My 1980s & Other Essays*, I am stopped by these lines in the titular work:



Writing as a time-traveling technology: these lines from another age, ghosted by another illness. All that is similar and all that is different. All the facile comparisons between the two eras. I take a picture, send it to several friends. *Exactly*, one writes back.

A few days later I think of "[Our Own AIDS Time](#)," the conversation Ishmael and Keith had for the 2017 Open Space series *Lost and Found: Bay Area Edition* in relation to Koestenbaum's words. Looking at it again, I am struck by these words from Ishmael, which were not said in the context of *TRY*, and relate to something that I have been thinking about, as a writer and a watcher:

It was interesting to see these younger, queer artists of color and how their work is different from mine: much more layered, much more complicated, both in terms of aesthetics and gender identity and racial identity, so many things that I personally wasn't dealing with when I was their age.

Although who am I to say this wasn't said in the context of *TRY*? As if context were a linear thing. A man behind me on the train is coughing, a deep, wet cough that builds at moments into what seems like laughter but is, I think, a strangled sort of choking, the body seeking what it cannot get.

— *remembering all the times I have seen Ishmael and Keith improvise, never till now in the same space. Contact improv meets ceremonial... the talkative body slow slow fast ... a little rise in the energy now dip back down Ishmael instructs Keith with bamboo sticks so many slender ankles so many strong toes jose and Kevin head-to-head Snowflake climbing the beam I am glad the lights are moving physically... the landscape always changing. Bells and rifles thus does history move and repeat —*

After a heavy rainfall such as we've had recently, I can really hear Temescal Creek, the unseen force moving swiftly below the grating in the twisting sliver of a park that meanders through several blocks in my Oakland neighborhood. What runs underneath. Now consigned to a culvert, the creek used to be full of salmon. In fact, according to the sign facing the entrance of the park I typically enter, it was "A River of Salmon":

"Like giant rivers of nutrition from the sea, millions of adult coho and chinook salmon once swam from the ocean far into Temescal Creek [returning] to the streams where they were born, then spawned and died."

Who is this sign intended for? How many revisions did it go through? During the first wave of protests in the spring of 2020 someone(s) spray painted signs on the park's concrete walkway, claiming the land for the Ohlone, for the Black Panthers. "Genocide happened here," read one. A few days after I first saw these words I walked through the park again: Someone(s) had scrubbed them out, writing instead "Play happens here." But the first intervention remained visible, the past pressuring the present.

There *is* a playground in this narrow park, and a dog run and a basketball half court, lined up as if in an extended railroad apartment. There are towering eucalyptus trees. "Salmon in the Trees?" the sign goes on to ask. "Yes!" Gone are the grizzlies and bald eagles the text alludes to. The only wild animals I have seen there are squirrels, and birds: most visibly California towhees and hummingbirds. Once a Steller's jay.

"Imagine you are a Muwekma Ohlone Tribal member living near this creek. How would salmon benefit you and your community?"

The audience, then, does not include Ohlone people: They only exist in the sign's past.

Underneath the white text boxes the salmon swim, jaws open, eyes startled. I imagine them swimming underneath the concrete, but I don't get very far. Easier to imagine giant crocodiles, one-time pets flushed down the toilet, the stuff of campy horror flicks.



— thinking of how old friends improvise the difference of knowing each other's licks, what is possible and not possible in that situation and in the other. Run don't move the arms Ishmael puts on a little smile that doesn't reach his eyes funny this run with palms out flopping or held why is running so satisfying Ishmael's look of not knowing that is so... honed, for lack of better word. The beat makes itself more insistent, Kevin and Jose share the wall ... into one's head all the things pass ... there's been another flurry of "dance writing is dead" as if it were ever alive except when it was when it is, that's no linear thing. Rifle as ceremonial object perhaps it always is ... the level of specificity an improviser can have, to be within and without ... beat gets weird gets echoey Snowflake's shadow thrown against the wall which is white now pink now green the shadow oscillates says its own quiet things ... I think I might have been expecting language to be more present expectations are always dumb bird calls electronic birds overgrown rattle end of the night club feel one too many laughing at memory of cocaine fueling choreographic disagreement no that's too polite the beat now not so polite I see —

Is it useful or alienating to be told that these italicized passages are notes I took while watching *TRY* earlier this month at The Lab? "Does any of this information matter?" Koestenbaum asks on the next page, and then, in the next essay, "Heidegger's Mistress": "I'm trying to figure out sequence: how

paragraphs connect; how generations overlap; how ideas bleed into one another. [...] My drift concerns the romance of uncompleted projects." *Waiting and waiting for it to begin and then it begins and then it's over. Studio time the same everywhere, god... instantly familiar... time bagging out and a million details that matter and don't matter. The set slowly coheres, if an explosion of fabrics and glitters and sequins and and and can be said to cohere, which of course yes.*

The second time I take the train to 16th and Mission it is to see Dewey Crumpler's show at Cushion Works. *The Complete Hoodie Works: 1993-Present*. Jordan Stein, who runs Cushion Works and organized the show with Sampada Aranke, who lived in the Bay when I moved here and now does not, walks me around the two quiet rooms improbably tucked away (thanks to a generous landlord) down the street from The Lab, which is still, improbably, hanging on (no thanks to a generous landlord). Two spaces that give a lie to the tedious SF-is-dead narrative, which now is making me think of Sarah Cargill's *Lucid Dreams of the Apocalypse*, and of these words in particular, which [she spoke last spring](#):

When apocalypse narratives are written from the perspective of the White male gaze, the collective fantasy and the collective imagination around apocalypse tends to zero in on the fantasy of leaving, of abandoning a place that is no longer viable for life, or at least life determined by the voracious appetite of empire. But for me, and I think for a lot of folks of color, that kind of abandonment is not an option. It certainly isn't for me. And so, I wanted to return to a question of, OK, how do we get in right relationship with the world around us? How do we get in right relationship with each other, and how do we get in right relationship with our environment in such a way where we don't have to leave? Because that fantasy around leaving — around doing all this damage, and then just leaving — feels very colonial. It's something that we see happen over and over again, and it's a kind of post-colonial violence that I don't want to be a part of. I would rather ask, OK, what is the relationship here and what needs repair? And how do we find our way to transformation through that kind of relational repair?

The Hoodie paintings, which contain sculptural and video elements (not to mention glitter) are extraordinary, as are Crumpler's words about them in the fighting trim catalog produced by Cushion Works. They aren't the sort of thing you can summarize. They are, like all art that holds you (me, us, them), a universe — for one, for many, moving through time and space:

I draw cosmologies from a lot of different places to come up with my own, and therefore it's imperative that the work that I make is really at the heart about time and space and its manifestation in change. Change is the dynamic. I'm serious about that because we all change. Change is what makes it possible for human beings to interact. This linear bullshit to "make it new" is proselytized within the arts as a fucking fiction to help sell shit. That doesn't have shit to do with making. Making is about weird, unexpected shit, and about contradiction. Art's role is to create conditions of instability, and contradiction is a part of art's complexity. Change always, and always contradiction.

— there are momentary communities, agreements... but a lot of solitude a lot of being in one's space and the room for that... Ishmael remarking on having 29 people in the space last night, how big that feels right now. Should someone be on roller skates? Maybe always... oh hi subconscious thanks for making yourself known. Everyone grasps an edge of the reed like a cat's cradle and then... a moment in which the body falls away. Kevin running disrupts the moment goes Snowflake jousts jose lays her down to rest yeah... great wells of solitude, perhaps this is the perceiver projecting... and the energy of something happening with so few audience members, really I am the only total audience member right now and maybe that isn't even true... that darn rifle someone is chanting wordless singing not chanting calling singing Keith organizes the space his fast no-nonsense brisk walk and then stillness I know that curve of the arch toes curling up "I grew up along the..." unintelligible now it seems Snowflake's legs have decided against working for the moment she pulls herself from one landmark to another the soundscore is coughing the tarp is coming out ahhh what's this a bubble machine? People have settled into something ... Ishmael on his back calling grimacing Gabriel processes menacing changes the landscape Kevin over him shaking Keith a pile of silver Snowflake entranced by bubbles the beat returns shake out the hands jose joining the music gorgeous hand vibrations from Snowflake presentational forms Kevin the spirit is taking him something is building will it be built Snowflake tumbles some bubbles we can be cooperative we can be alone we can compete yellow tanz tee the torso shutters open, shut Kevin slow-mo rolls Ishmael away from the throne of blankets goddd these bubbles are spectacular they almost want to float —

Now it is a Sunday, mid- shading into late afternoon. Someone is blasting music down the block, the bass felt as much as heard. Earlier today I went for a walk with a friend, we sat in a park, not Temescal Creek Park, and talked about difficult things in the hot sun.

I return home to the news that Etel Adnan has died, the news reaching me as such news often does these days, over social media networks full of broken heart emojis and heartfelt testimonials. I look up Deena Chalabi's writing on Adnan for Open Space, find her 2019 essay "[Baghdad by the Bay](#)," and these words:

While in San Francisco Boulus edited and published a poetry magazine called *Tigris*, after the river that runs the length of Iraq, and through Baghdad. The cover art is by local artist Homero Herrera, and the cornerstone of this first (perhaps only) issue was a long poem by Etel Adnan. Her writing often contains references to the cultural legacies of Iraq. The first page of her much more well-known *Journey to Mount Tamalpais* imagines a connection: "Like a chorus, the warm breeze had come all the way from Athens and Baghdad, to the Bay, by the Pacific Route, its longest journey."

Shortly before the US and coalition forces invaded Baghdad in 2003, Adnan began writing the incredible prose poem *To Be In A Time of War*.

What a life Adnan had. I never met her. I've had the pleasure of meeting Dewey Crumpler once, if I'm lucky I'll meet him again. I am already lucky. To know so many people, a richness of friendships, collaborations, chance encounters —

— do you want to know intention, do you want to get lost? Bass in the sternum. I am looking forward to a big glass of red wine. The bubbles are shedding the emergency in the score is lessening dismantle dissolve and then and then and then shadows against the pink jose the person apart the line slowly advances does he join does he stay himself I will remain I will join can I do both the line advances the line retreats there is a housing emergency there is debt and excess and everything is ending so you can begin. What a duet this long slow duet with soap as it slowly disintegrates lessens and the others kneel as if to hold space to worship and yet something threatening the siren continues the siren diminishes jose holds water in his hand a whole world spreads it over skin suddenly it's done so many lights and yet so much darkness. Constellations spin —