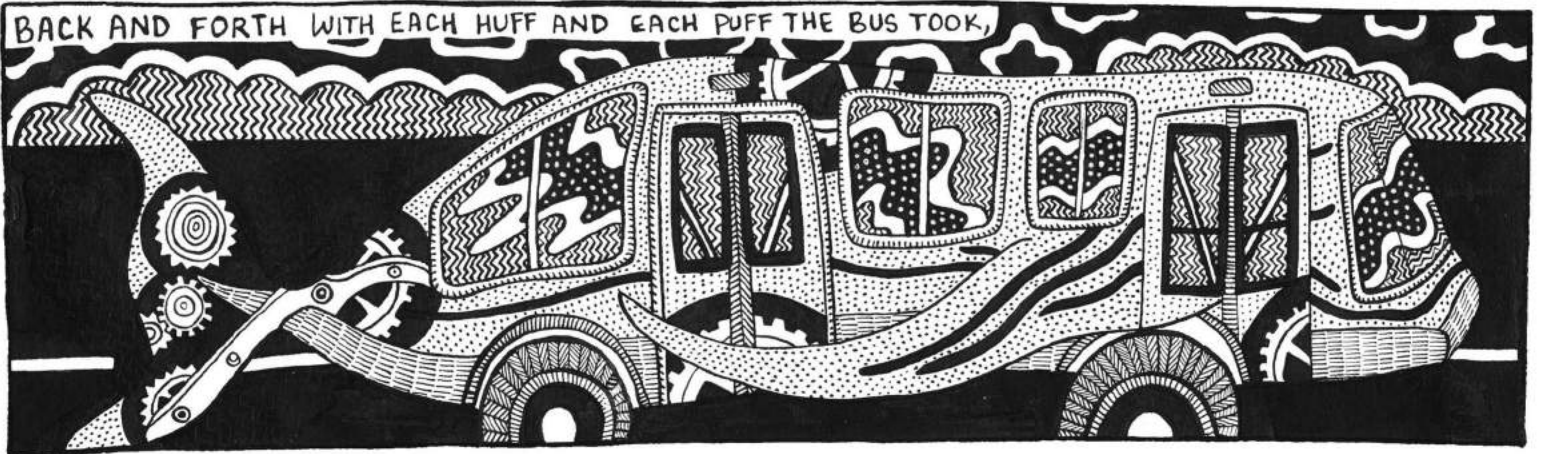
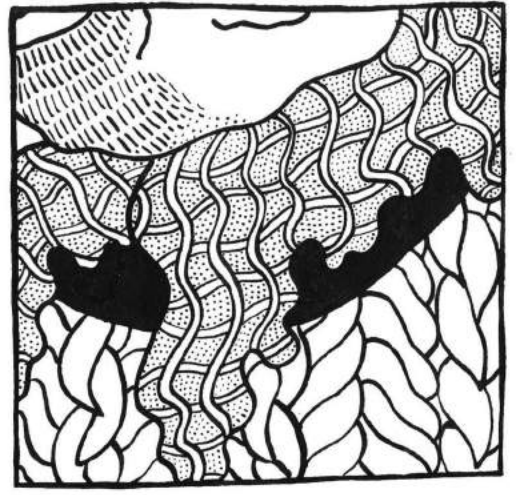
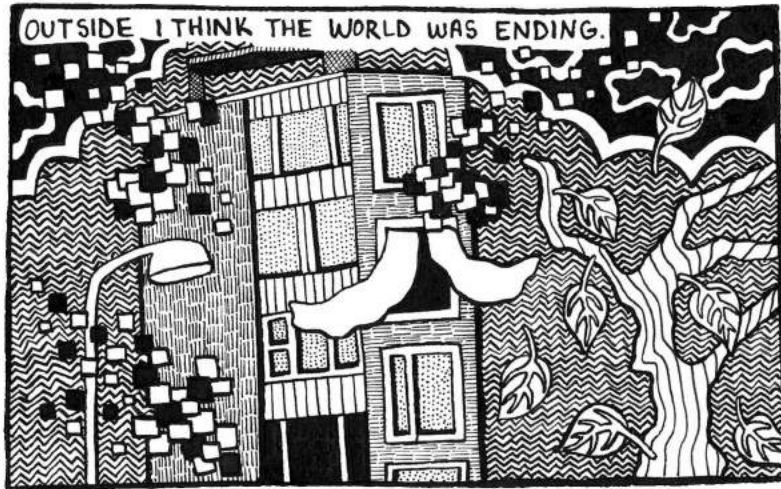
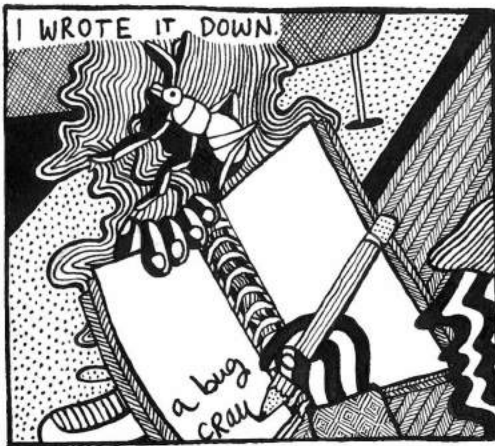


Meditations on First Philosophy



Koda Trakumaitē





SUDDENLY THE MAN STOPPED LOOKING AND I WAS LEFT ALONE IN MY REMOTE OBSERVATION.



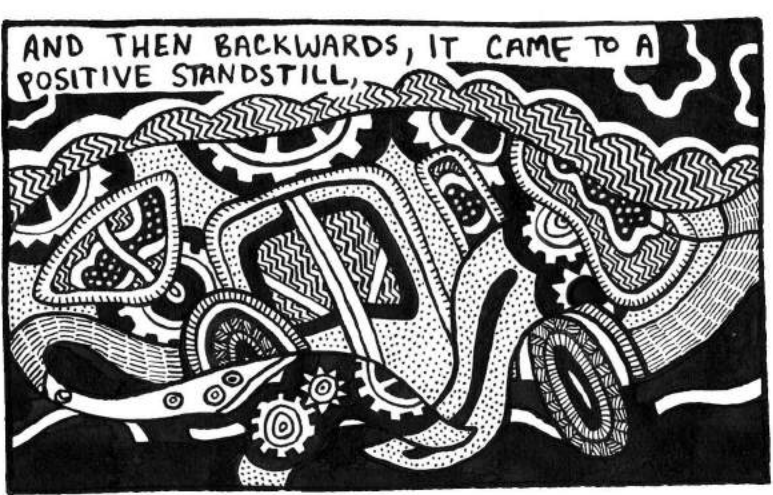
HE STOPPED SIMPLY LOOKING AND STARTED THE SINGLE GRACEFUL MOVEMENT WHICH I WROTE DOWN JUST AS HE EXECUTED IT.



Reached ahead and, waking up the old man sitting directly across from him from his half sleep, he picked the ant, ride, th

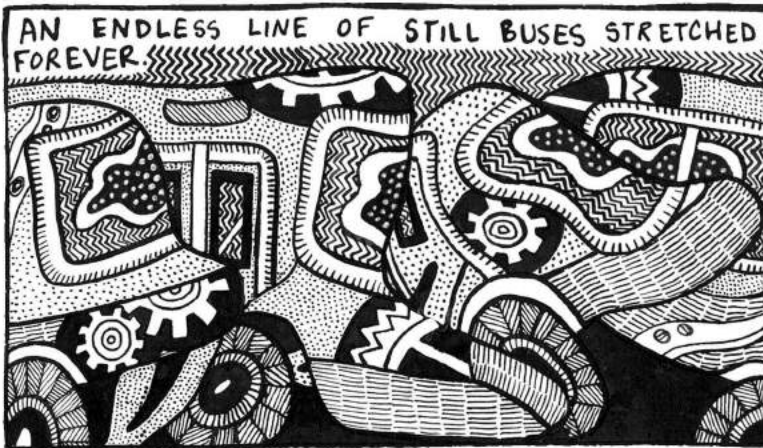
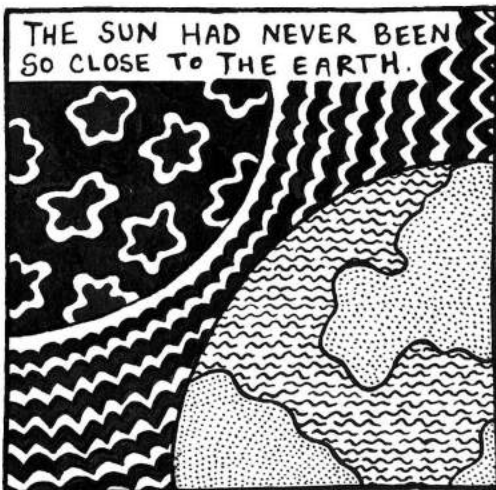


AND THEN EVERYTHING, WRITTEN DOWN IN MY SHAKING HAND, SUDDENLY STOPPED.

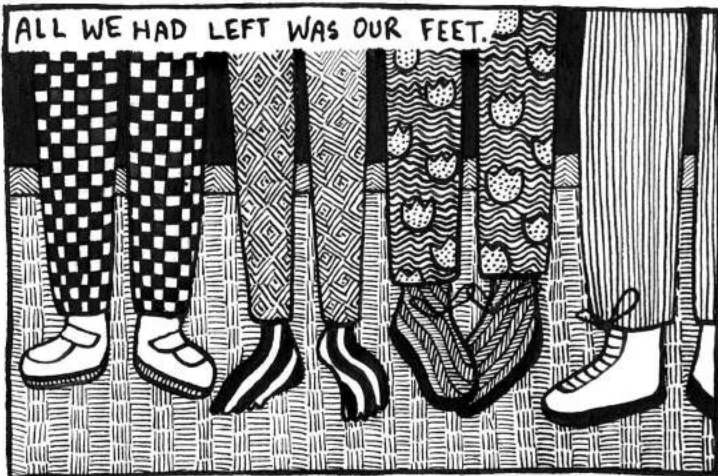


THE BUS STOPPED. JARRINGLY LURCHING FORWARDS

AND THEN BACKWARDS, IT CAME TO A POSITIVE STANDSTILL,



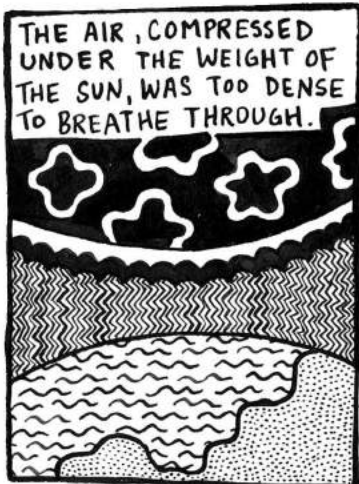
ALL WE HAD LEFT WAS OUR FEET.



OUR FEET, AND THE SWEAT DRIPPING DOWN OUR NECKS AND OUR BACKS.



THE AIR, COMPRESSED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE SUN, WAS TOO DENSE TO BREATHE THROUGH.



WITH EVERY ATTEMPT TO INHALE, MY THROAT WHEEZED,



MY LUNGS BURNED,



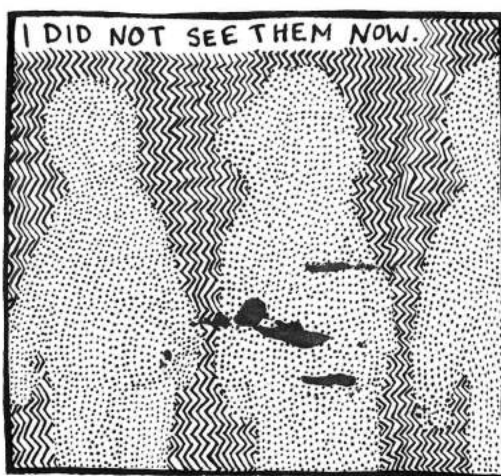
AND MY EYES TEARED WITH SWEAT.



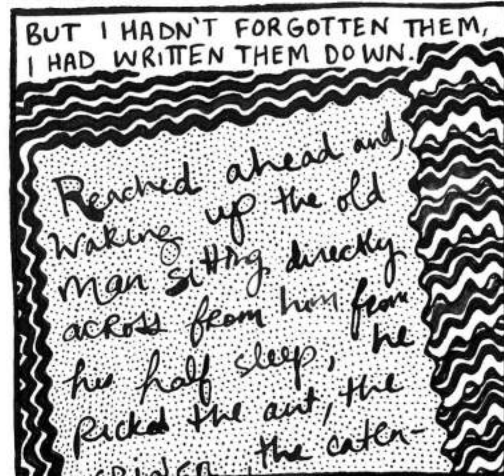
I LOOKED FOR THE TWO MEN I HAD SEEN ON THE BUS.



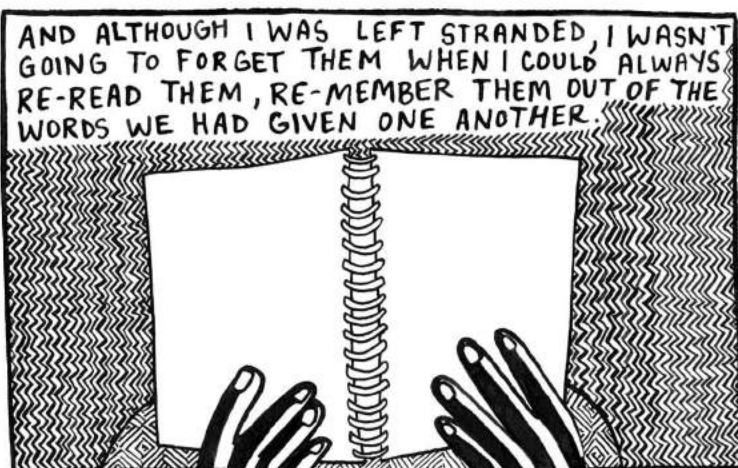
I DID NOT SEE THEM NOW.



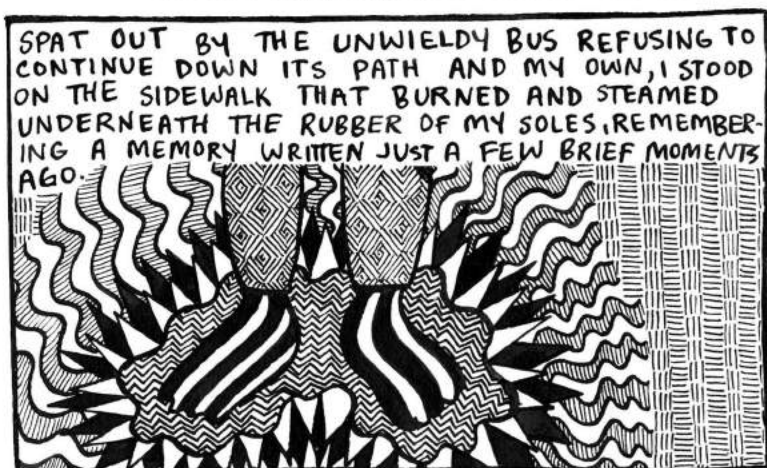
BUT I HADN'T FORGOTTEN THEM, I HAD WRITTEN THEM DOWN.



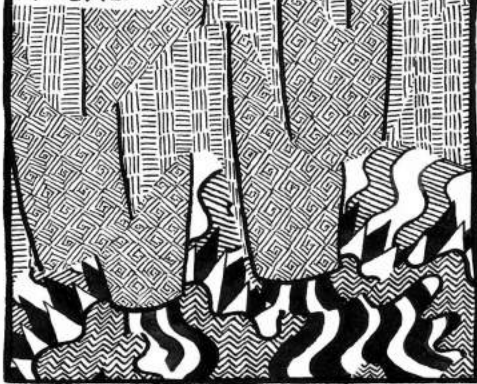
AND ALTHOUGH I WAS LEFT STRANDED, I WASN'T GOING TO FORGET THEM WHEN I COULD ALWAYS RE-READ THEM, RE-MEMBER THEM OUT OF THE WORDS WE HAD GIVEN ONE ANOTHER.



SPAT OUT BY THE UNWIELDY BUS REFUSING TO CONTINUE DOWN ITS PATH AND MY OWN, I STOOD ON THE SIDEWALK THAT BURNED AND STEAMED UNDERNEATH THE RUBBER OF MY SOLES, REMEMBERING A MEMORY WRITTEN JUST A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS AGO.



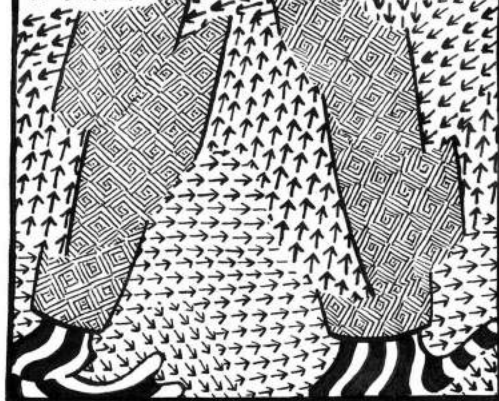
STANDING STILL WAS NOT THE
IDEAL POSITION FOR FORWARD
MOVEMENT.



I LET TIME, STANDING STILL WITH
ME BUT ITCHING TO GAIN ITS
INEVITABLE LEAD,



WASTE BY ME AS I FINALLY BEGAN
TO WALK.



PASSING EVERY ONE OF THE DEAD EMPTY BUSES THAT
STOOD IN MY TEMPORAL IF NOT SPATIAL WAY,



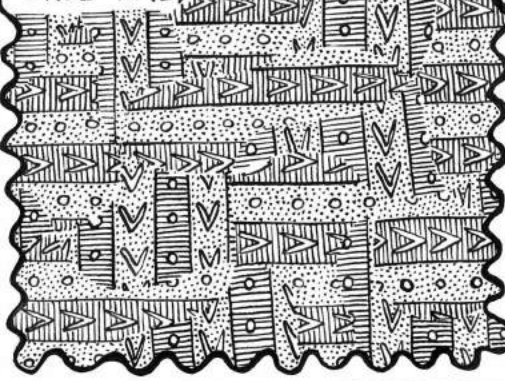
I MOVED, MUCH SLOWER THAN ANTICIPATED, TOWARD
HOME.



TOWARDS MY FIRE AND MY
DRESSING GOWN.



TOWARDS THE CLEAR STRETCH OF
FREE TIME,



WHICH I HAD INTENDED TO
DEVOTE TO THE GENERAL
DEMOLITION OF MY OPINIONS.



BUT THIS TIME HAD ALREADY GAINED A STRETCH OF
ADVANCE,



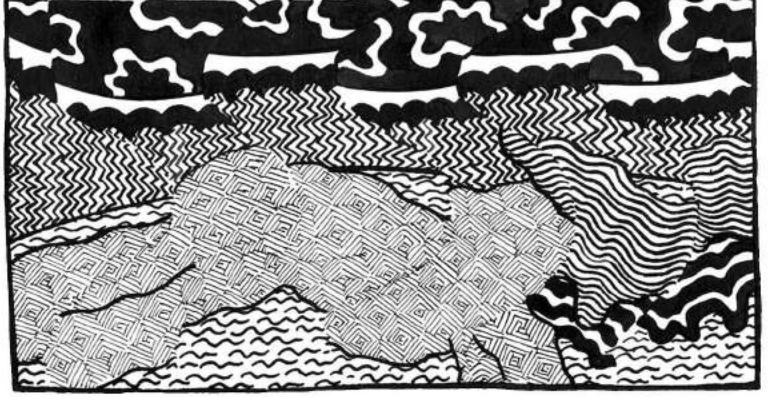
A CLEAR ADVANTAGE.



EVEN IF I WERE TO RUN, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE SINCE THERE WAS NEITHER SPACE NOR AIR FOR RUNNING,



I KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO LOSE SOME, AND LIKELY A LOT, OF TIME.



IT WOULD ESCAPE FROM ME AND TEASE ME FROM TOMORROW, AS I WALKED IN THE DOOR AN HOUR OR TWO OR THREE AFTER I HAD BEEN EXPECTED AFTER I HAD EXPECTED.



AN OBLIGATION WILL BE WAITING THERE FOR ME IMPATIENTLY.



EVERYBODY WILL BE WAITING FOR MY EXPLANATION IMPATIENTLY.



I WILL IMPATIENTLY GIVE ONE,



AND RUDELY SHUT MYSELF AWAY WITH TIME,



TO DO BATTLE AND REASON OUT MY LOSSES.



THINKING REASONABLY, NEITHER MY FIRE NOR MY WARM DRESSING GOWN WOULD BE WAITING FOR ME ON A DAY LIKE THIS.



TODAY THE FIRE WAS QUICKLY DESCENDING FROM THE SKY AND IT WAS NOT MINE.



THIS FOREIGN FIRE WOULD BURN ON THE INSIDES OF MY DRESSING GOWN, SCORCHING MY SKIN INSTEAD OF KEEPING OUT THE ELEMENTS.



I KEPT WALKING,



HALF THINKING OF WHAT DID AND DIDN'T AWAIT ME,



RESIGNED TO MY INEVITABLE LOSS TO TIME,



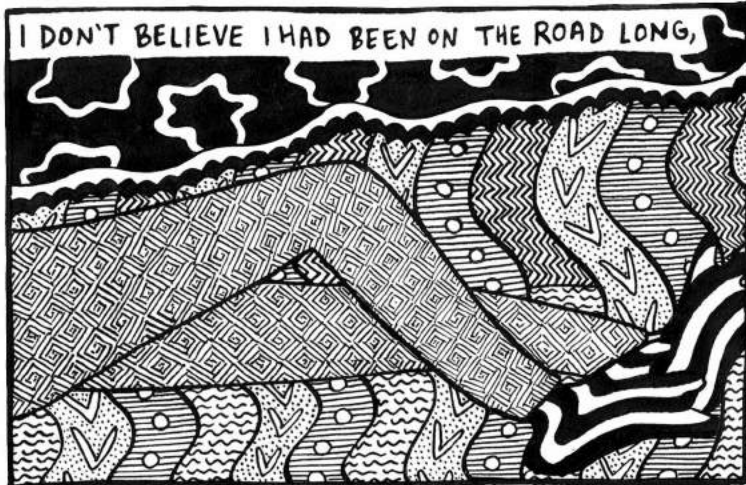
AT AS COMFORTABLE A PACE AS COULD BE MANAGED,



UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE SUN.



I DON'T BELIEVE I HAD BEEN ON THE ROAD LONG,



WHEN AN UNFAMILIAR PEN WAS
THRUST INTO MY HAND!



THINK!
HAS ANYONE
GIVEN
YOU ANYTHING
TO
CARRY?



I SMILED AND SCRIBBLED "NO",
REALIZING AT THAT VERY
MOMENT THAT I WAS LYING.



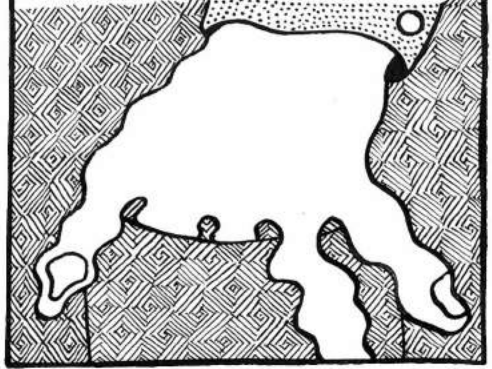
SOMETHING IN MY COUNTENANCE OR EXPRESSION MUST HAVE BETRAYED THIS REALIZATION.



WITH GLUTTONOUS SATISFACTION, HE BEGAN RUNNING HIS HANDS, DRIPPING WITH SWEAT, UP AND DOWN MY SIDES, MY FRONT AND MY BACK.



STICKING HIS LONG STIFF FINGERS INTO MY POCKETS, SEARCHING FOR WHAT AN INSTANT AGO I HADN'T KNOWN I HAD.



PRESSING THAT WHICH I HAD BEEN GIVEN TO CARRY CLOSER TO MY HEART WITH MY ELBOW, I DID MY BEST NOT TO REVEAL ANY MORE THAN I ALREADY HAD.



FEARING THE OFFICIAL'S APPARENT ABILITY TO READ MY MIND, I DID NOT THINK.



I DID NOT THINK OF WHAT AN HOUR AGO HAD BEEN FORGOTTEN, OF WHAT WAS NOW REMEMBERED.



I VERY PURPOSEFULLY DID NOT THINK OF THE OLD WOMAN I HAD SCRIBBLED DOWN IN THE MUCH MORE REASONABLE WARMTH OF THAT SAME EARLY MORNING.



BACK THEN, ONLY A MILLION MOMENTS AGO, THERE HAD BEEN A LIGHT BREEZE.

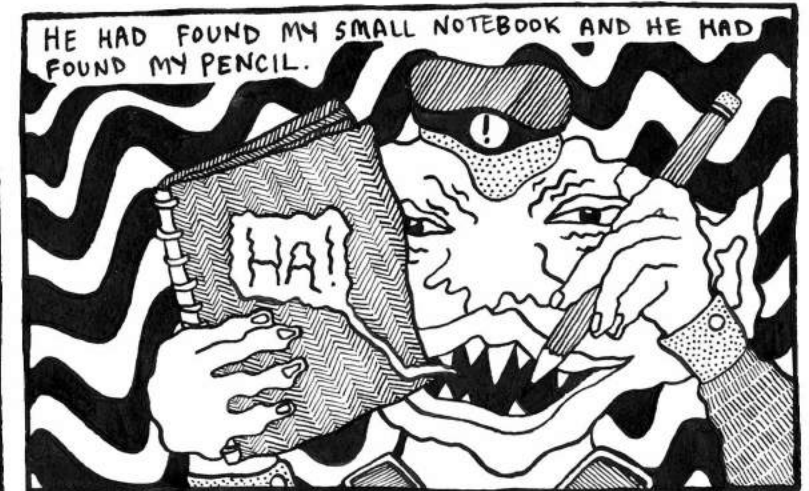
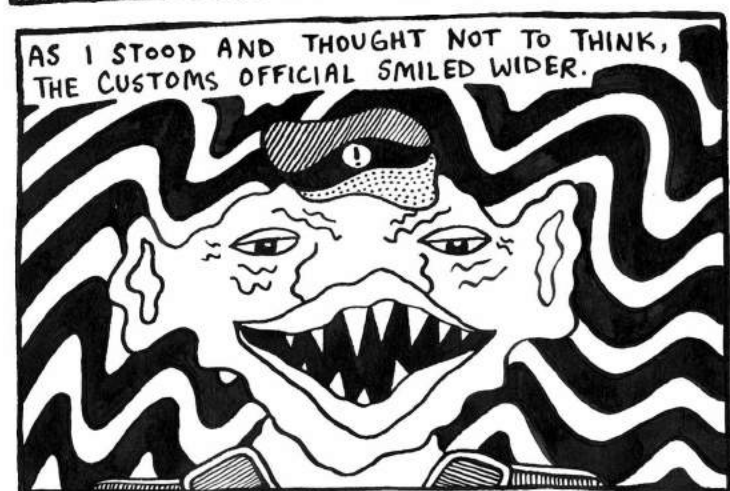
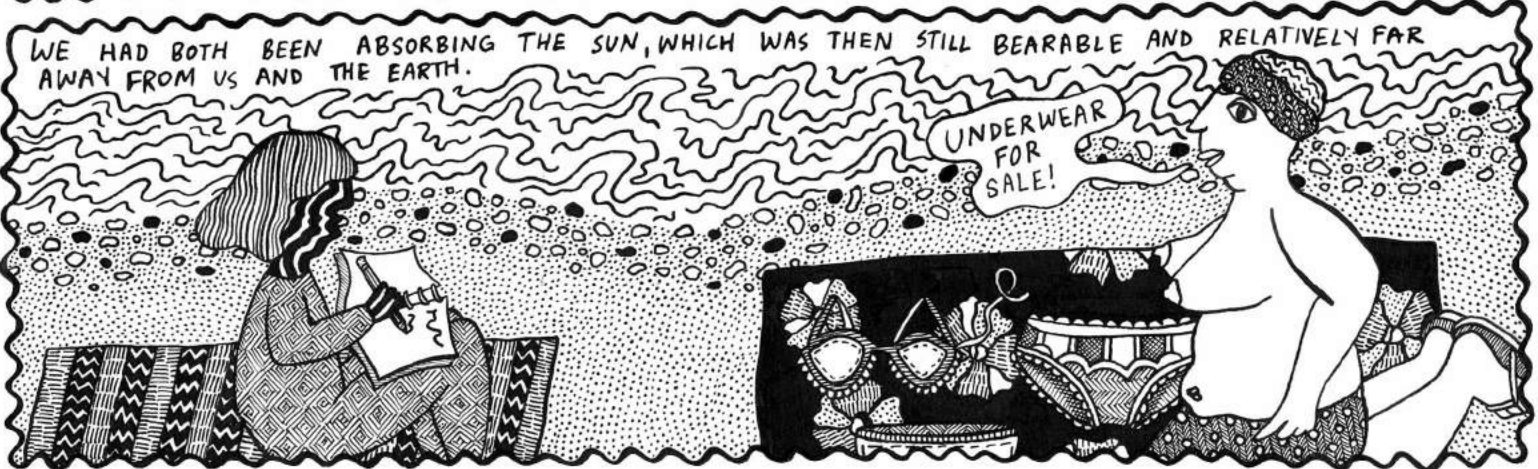


BARELY DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE STILLNESS OF THE AIR.



SITTING ON A BENCH, I HAD SCRIBBLED, TRYING TO WRITE DOWN PERFECTLY THE BREEZE AND ITS MOTION.

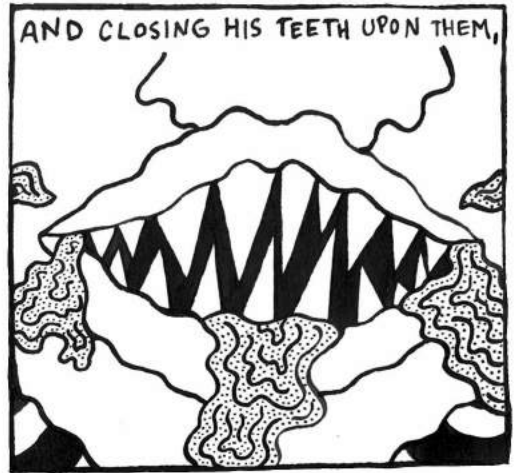




THROWING THEM INTO HIS MOUTH,



AND CLOSING HIS TEETH UPON THEM,



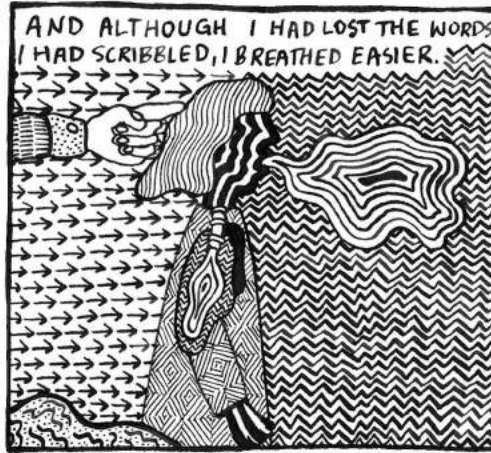
GOBBLING AND SALIVATING,



HE LET ME PASS. → → → → →



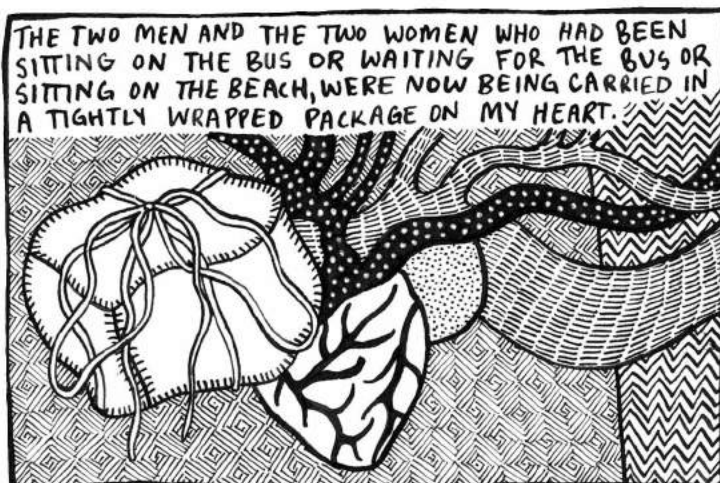
AND ALTHOUGH I HAD LOST THE WORDS
I HAD SCRIBBLED, I BREATHED EASIER. ~ ~ ~



I SIGNED. ~ ~ ~

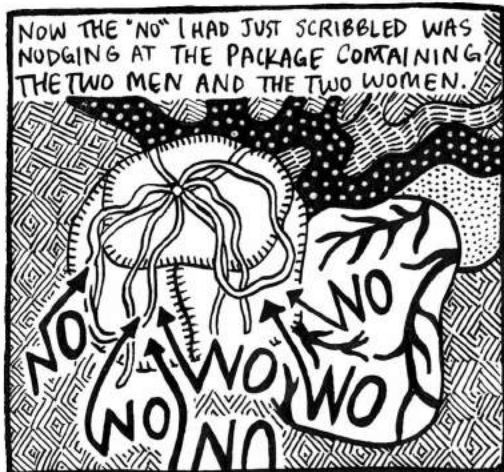
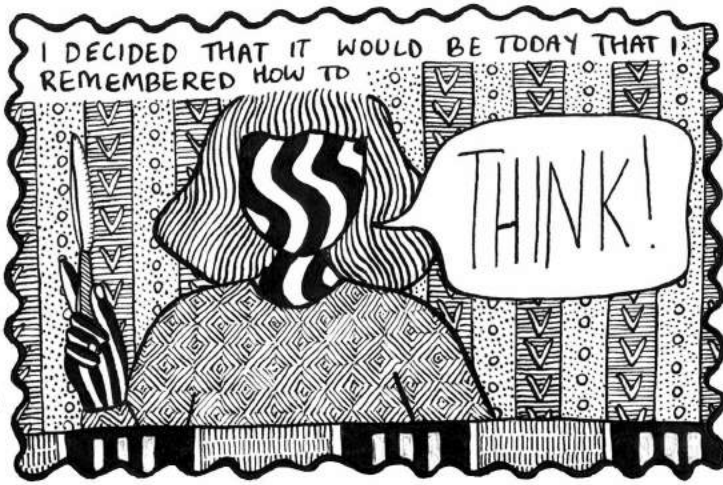
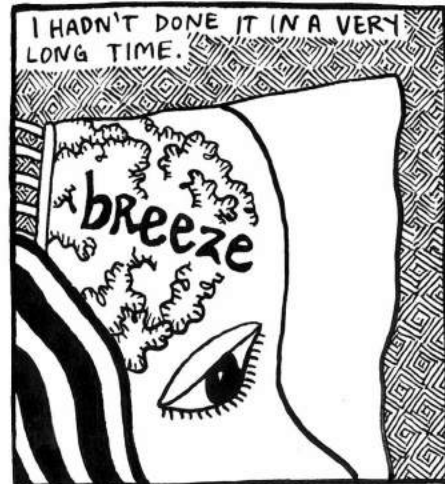
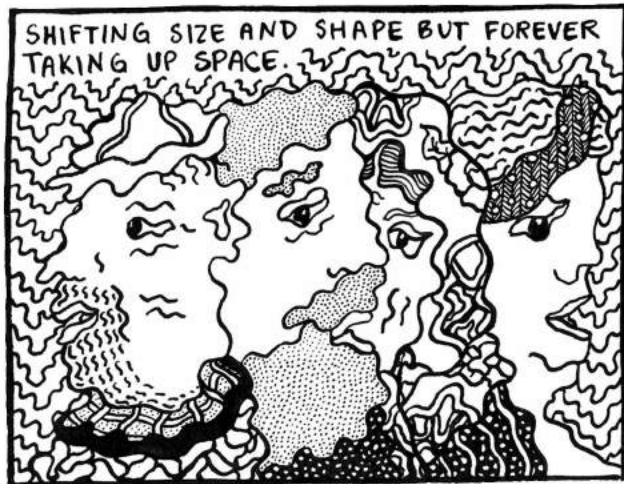
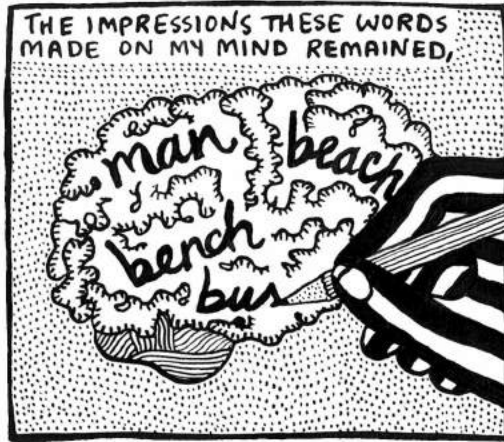


THE TWO MEN AND THE TWO WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN
SITTING ON THE BUS OR WAITING FOR THE BUS OR
SITTING ON THE BEACH, WERE NOW BEING CARRIED IN
A TIGHTLY WRAPPED PACKAGE ON MY HEART. ~ ~ ~



THEY ALL, ALL FOUR, SIGNED ALONG. ~ ~ ~

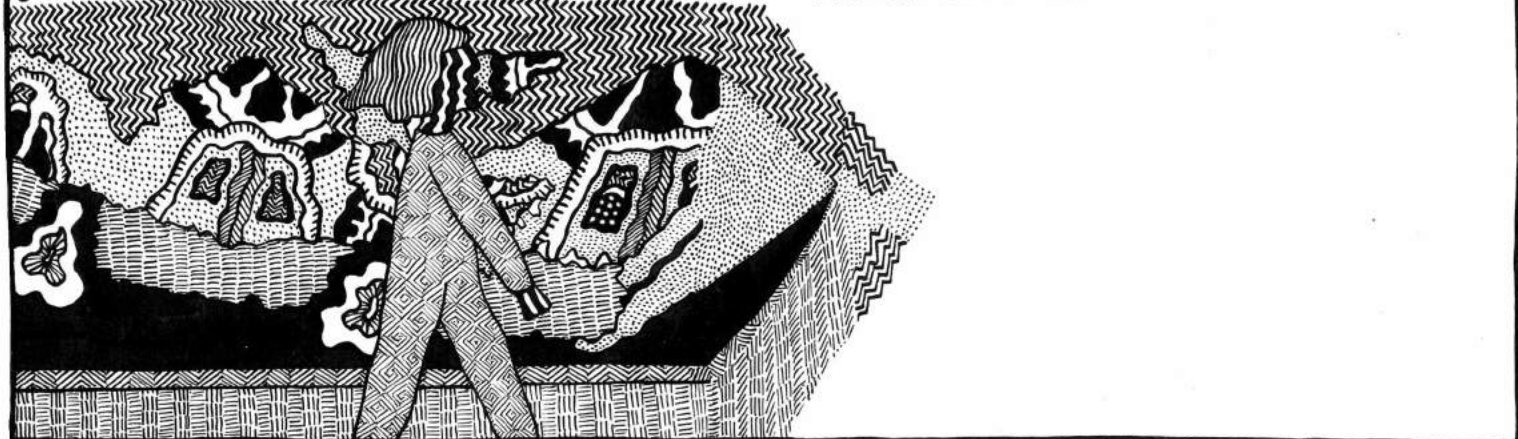




FOR A WHILE, BECAUSE OF THE RELIEF THAT FOLLOWED MY RUN-IN WITH THE OFFICIAL, THERE WAS NOTHING. ONLY THE ROW OF BUSES AND THE HEAT.



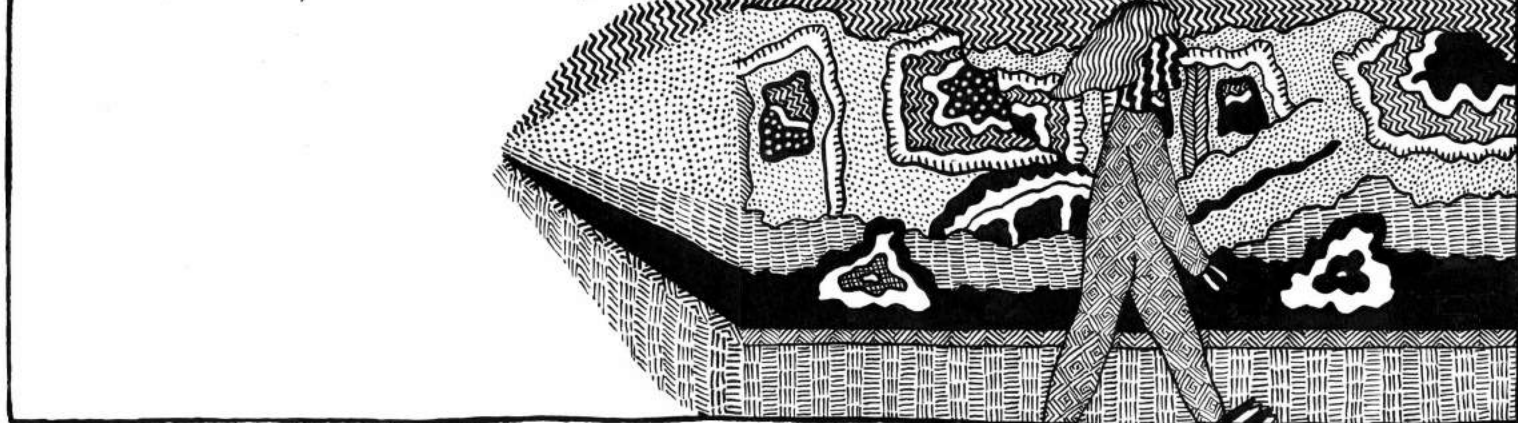
BUT SOON THEY TOO DISAPPEARED AND I WALKED THROUGH ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

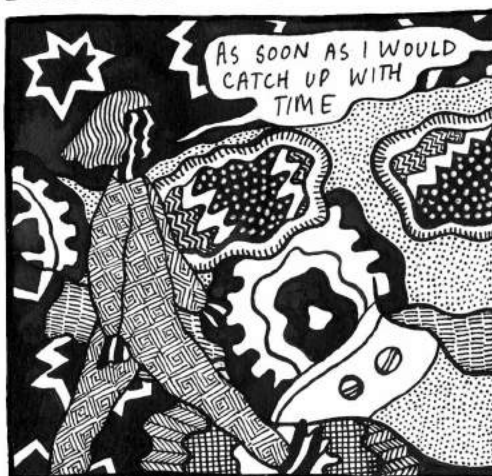
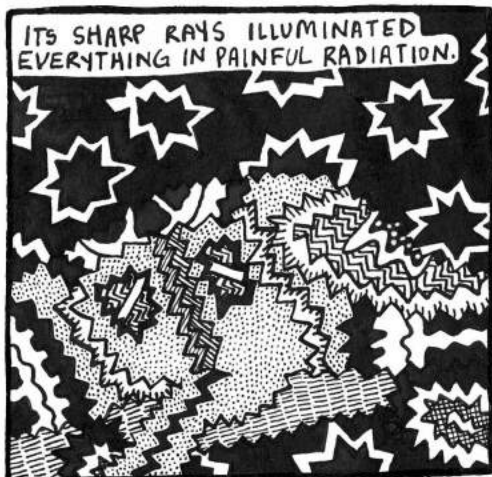
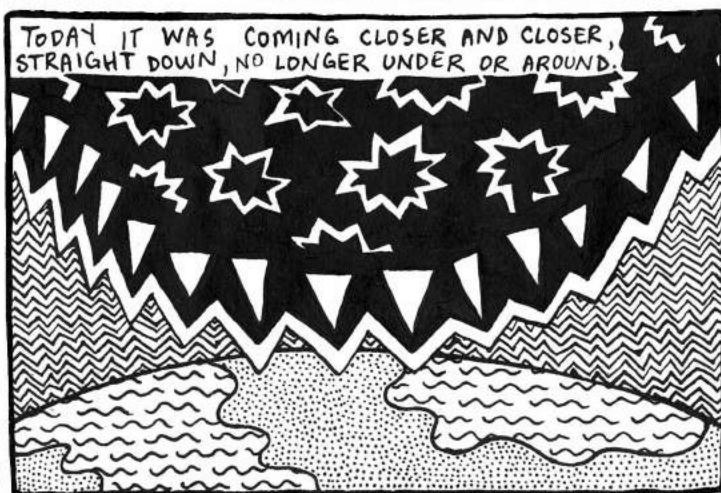


I LET EVERYTHING I HAD STRUGGLED TO KEEP IN MY RUN-IN WITH THE OFFICIAL DISAPPEAR.



BUT THEN, "THINK!", I REMINDED MYSELF, AND EVERYTHING AROUND ME SLOWLY TURNED BACK INTO SOMETHING.





THE OLD MEN AND WOMEN IN THE PACKAGE ON MY HEART REMINDED ME OF THEIR PRESENCE.



I THINK THEY GROANED A LITTLE BUT I PROCEEDED.



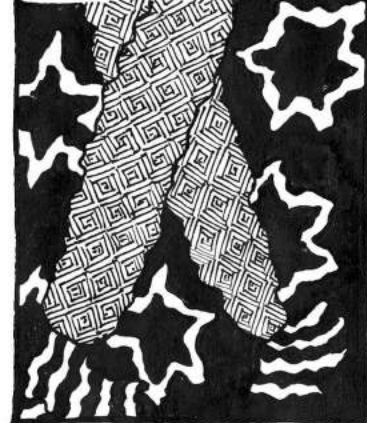
STILL PASSING THE FROZEN BUSES ON MY LEFT, I PROCEEDED.



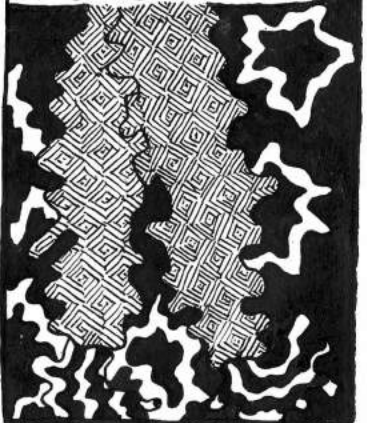
I PUT ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER IN A FAIRLY SLOW, BUT FAIRLY STEADY DETERMINATION.



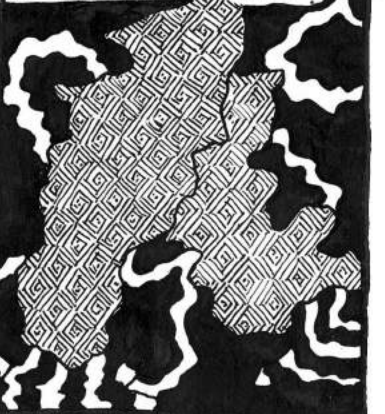
OF COURSE I WILL.

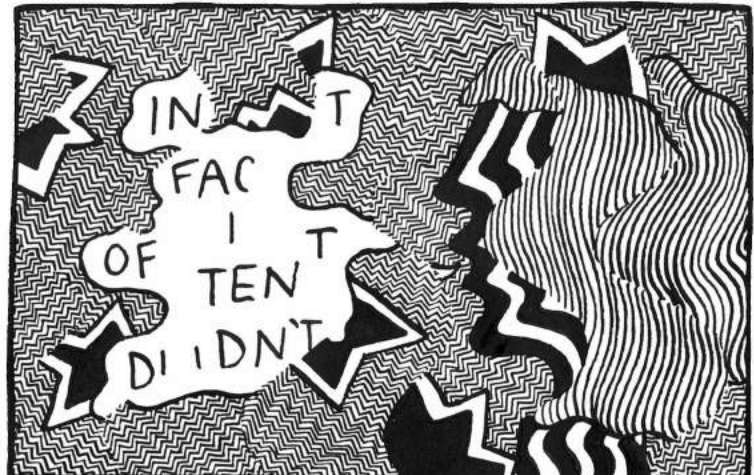
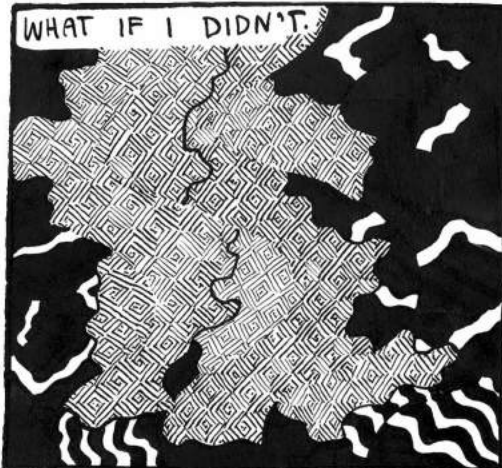


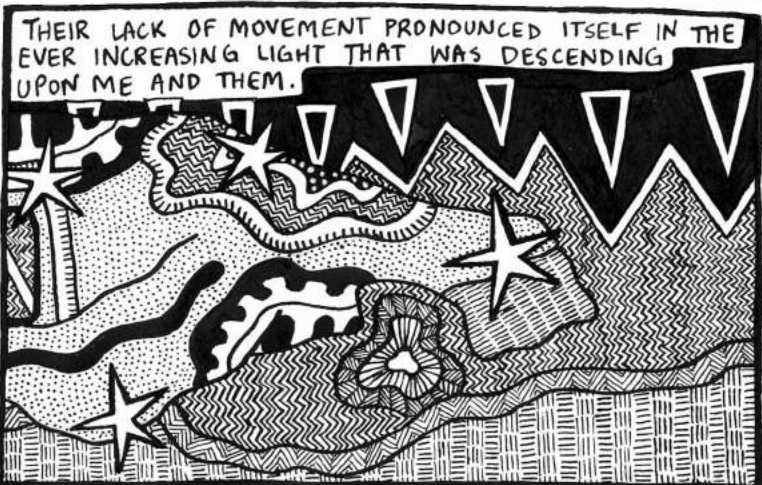
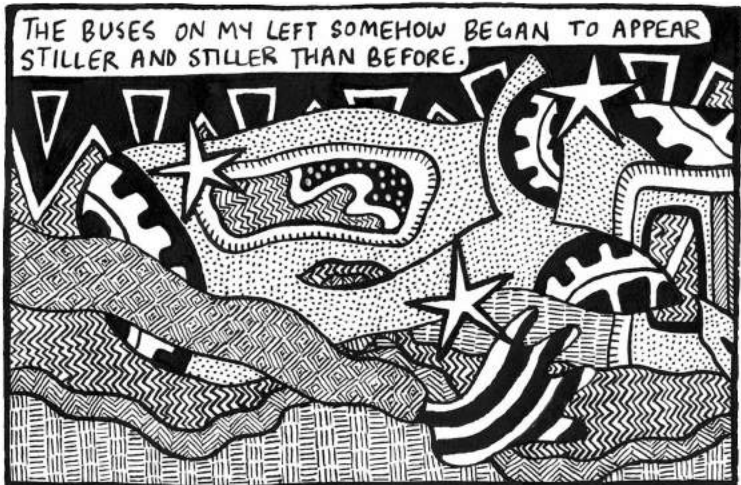
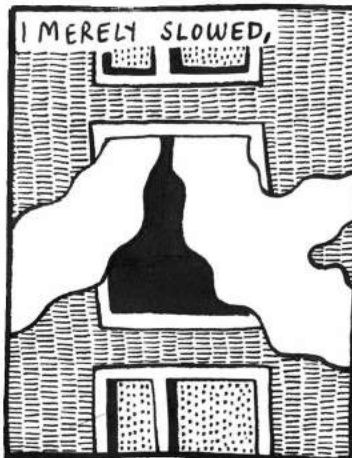
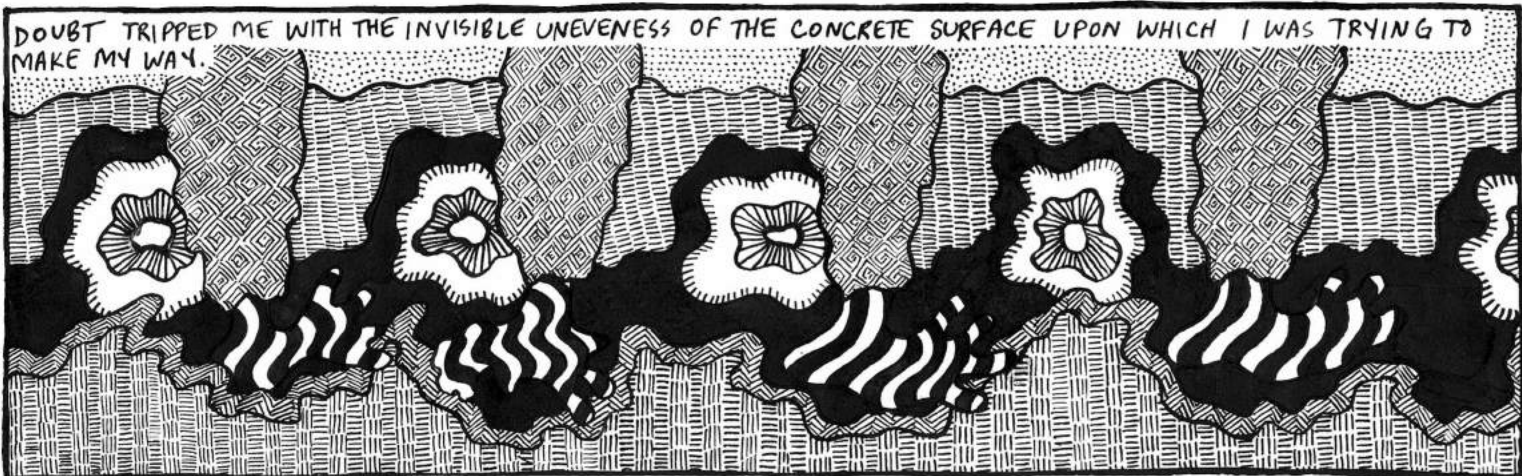
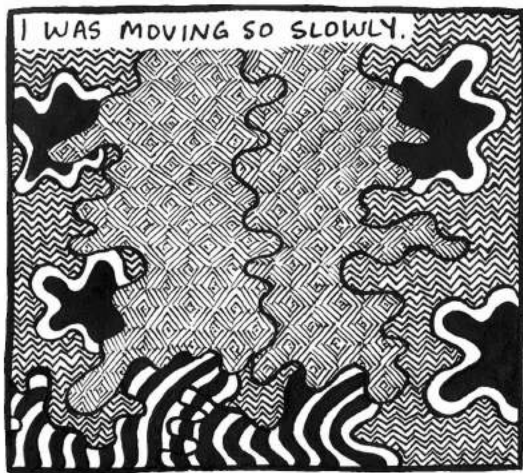
OF COURSE I WOULD.

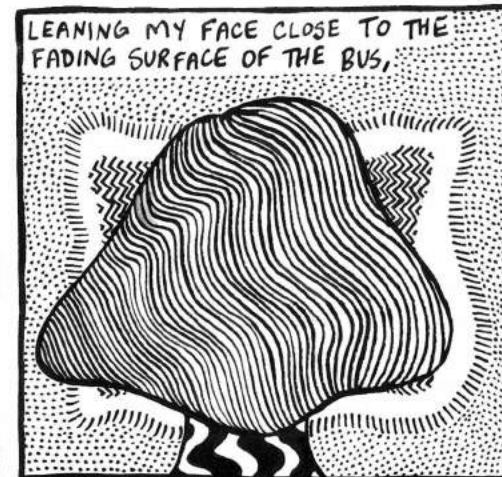
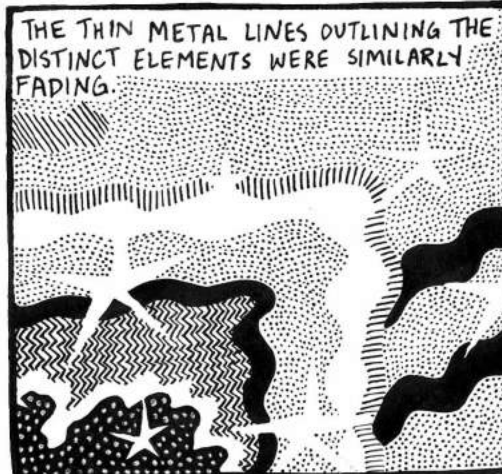
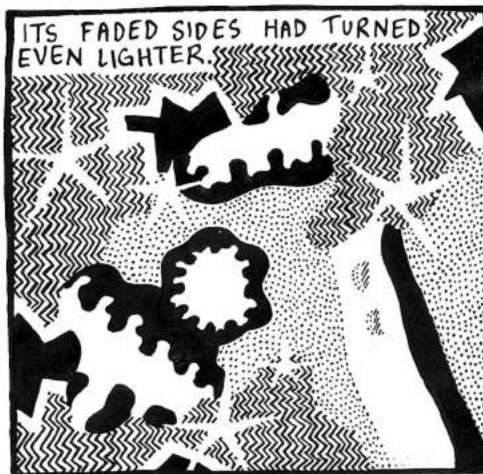
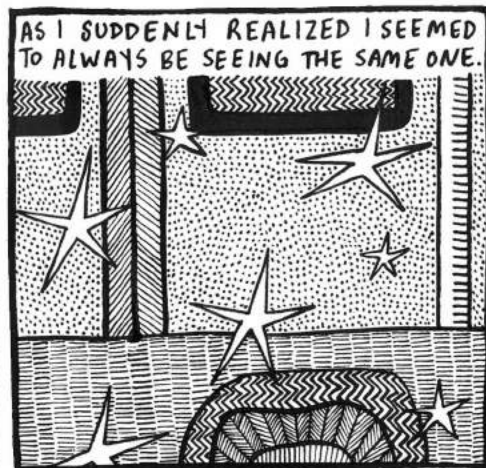


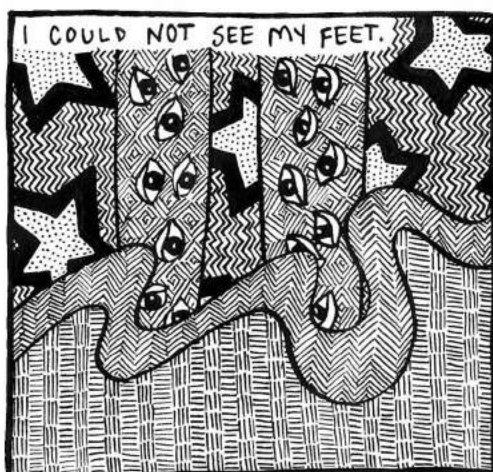
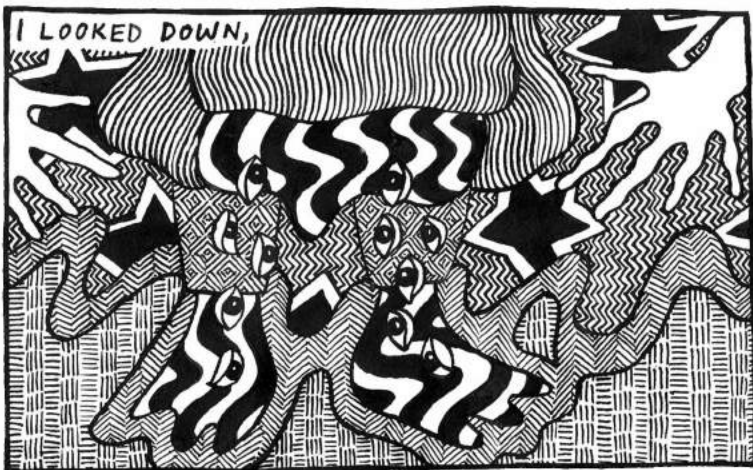
BUT WHAT IF I WOULDN'T?











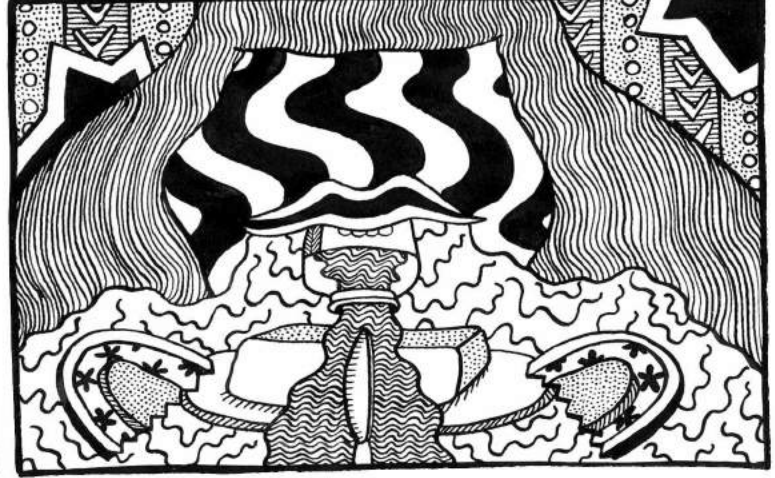
IT WAS PUSHING MY BUTTER AND MY BREAD AND MY RASPBERRY JAM BREAKFAST UP TOWARD MY MOUTH.



I FLAILED MY ARMS WILDLY, WITH NO DIRECTION OR PURPOSE, STUPIDLY HOPING TO REGAIN SOME SENSE OF CONTROL AND AGENCY THROUGH THE LIMITED RANGE OF MOTION STILL AVAILABLE TO ME.



BUT IN THIS DESPERATE EXERTION, I EXERTED TOO MUCH.



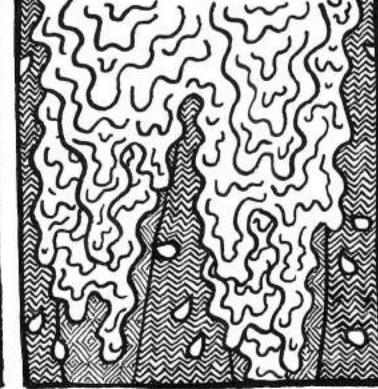
THE SWEAT THAT HAD BEEN DRIPPING DOWN MY NECK,



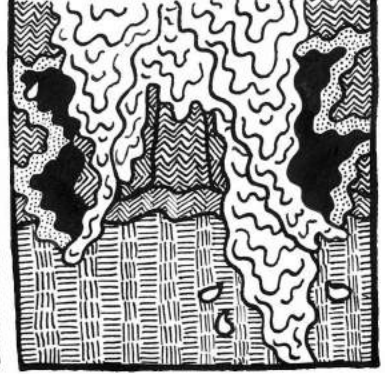
AND MY BACK,



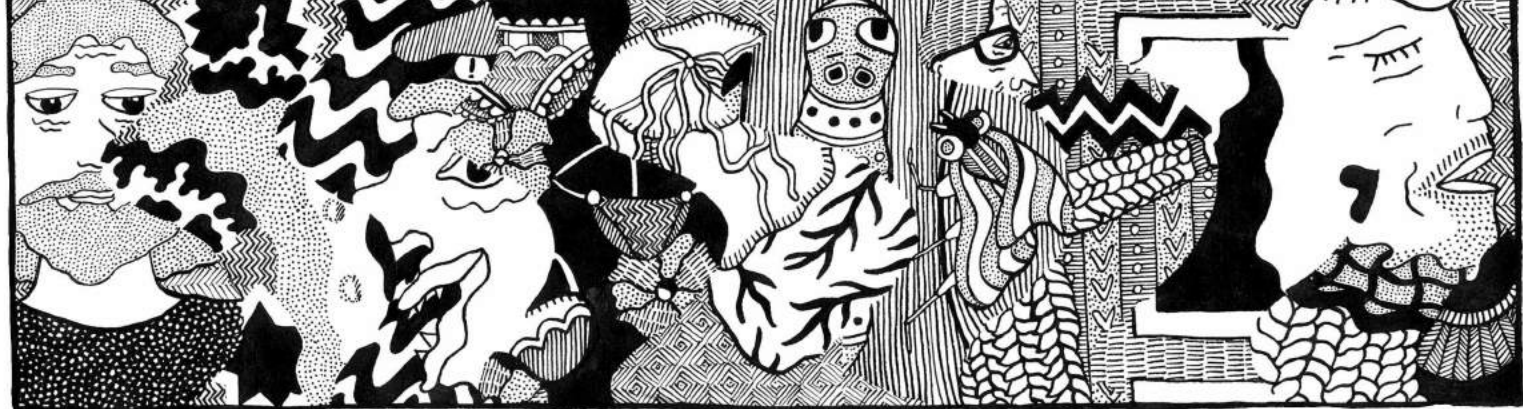
AND THE BACKS OF MY LEGS, NOW FELL IN CASCADES.



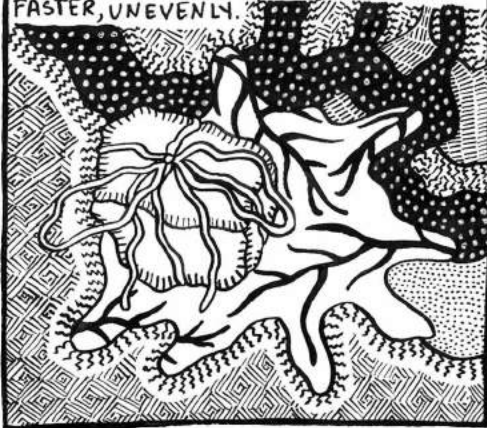
BUT THE LACK OF ANY BREEZE MADE IT SCALD RATHER THAN COOL ME.



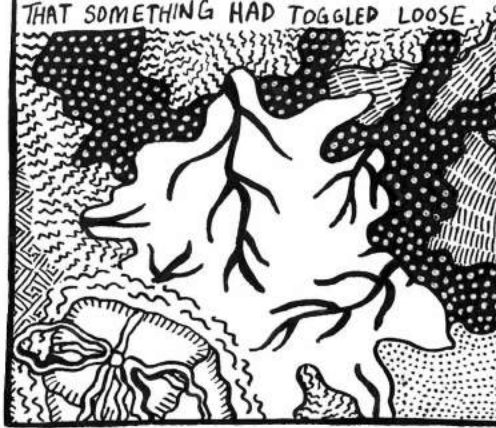
THE TIME THAT HAD STOPPED RUNNING NOW THAT IT HAD BEATEN ME, WAS SAVORING ITS VICTORY BY EXTENDING EACH SINGLE INSTANT INTO SEEMING ETERNITY.



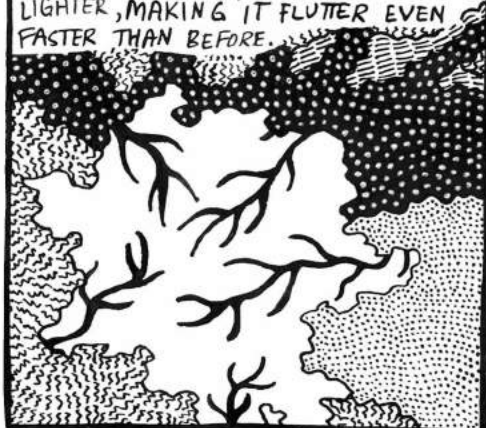
MY HEART WAS BEATING FASTER AND FASTER, UNEVENLY.



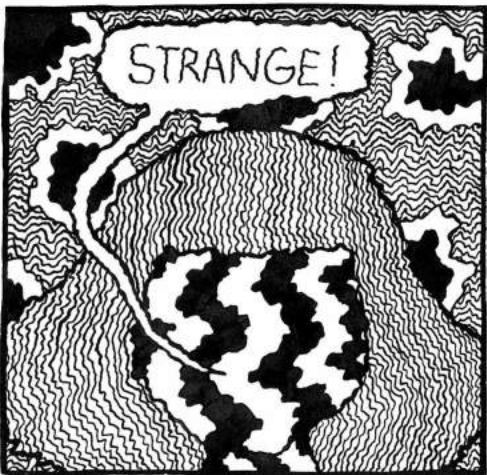
I BARELY FELT THE STRANGE SENSATION THAT SOMETHING HAD TOGGLED LOOSE.



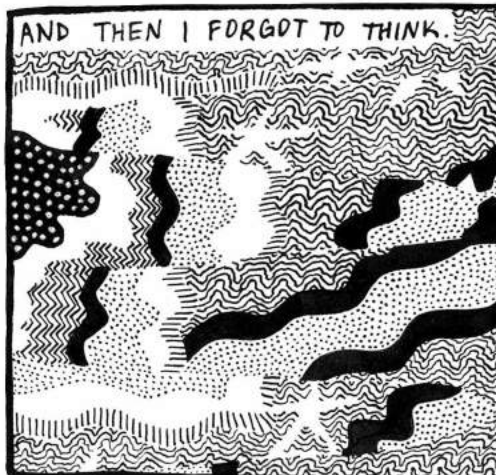
SOMETHING FELL OFF, MAKING MY HEART LIGHTER, MAKING IT FLUTTER EVEN FASTER THAN BEFORE.



STRANGE!



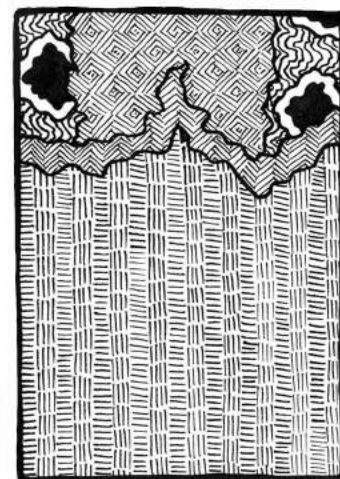
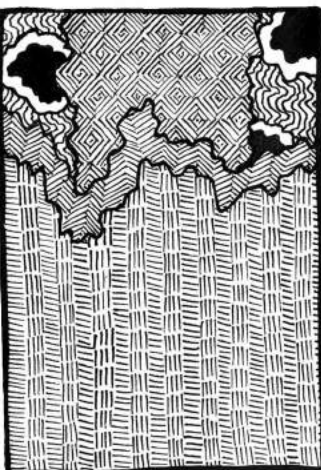
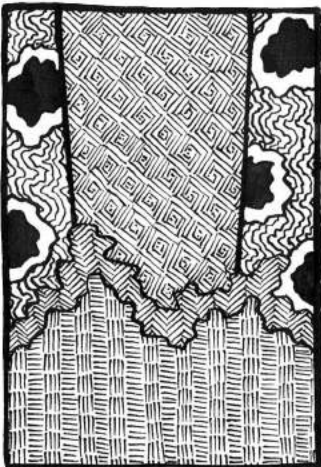
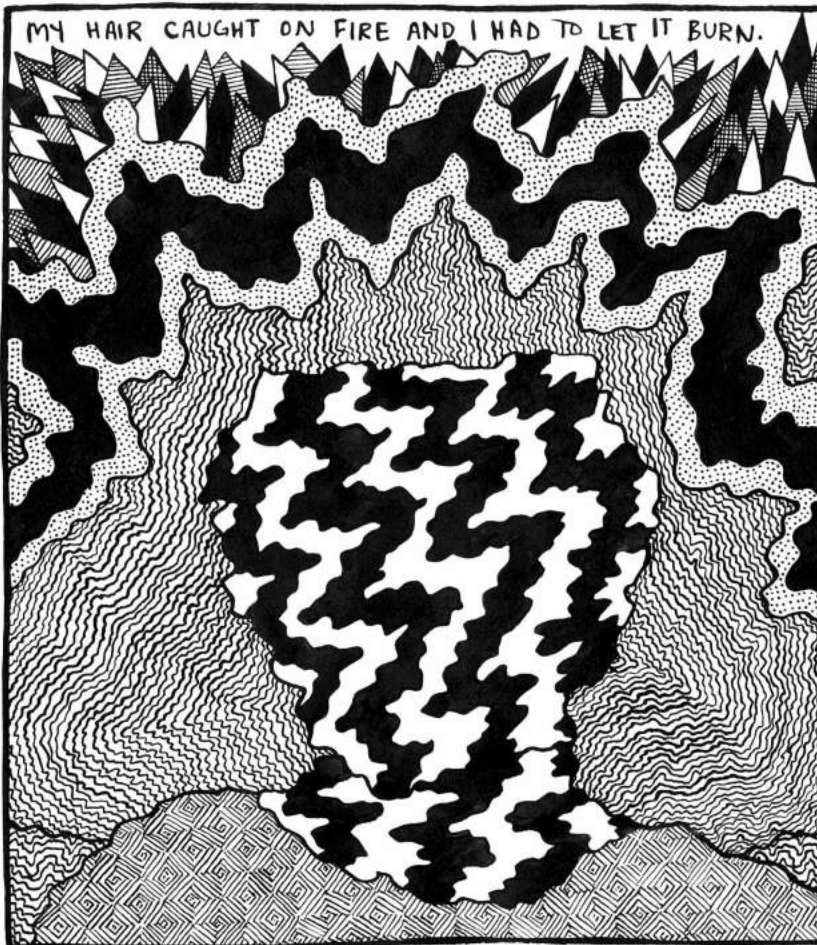
AND THEN I FORGOT TO THINK.



I COULD FEEL THE TOP OF THE BIG SHARP BURNING SUN TOUCH THE TOP OF MY HEAD.



MY HAIR CAUGHT ON FIRE AND I HAD TO LET IT BURN.



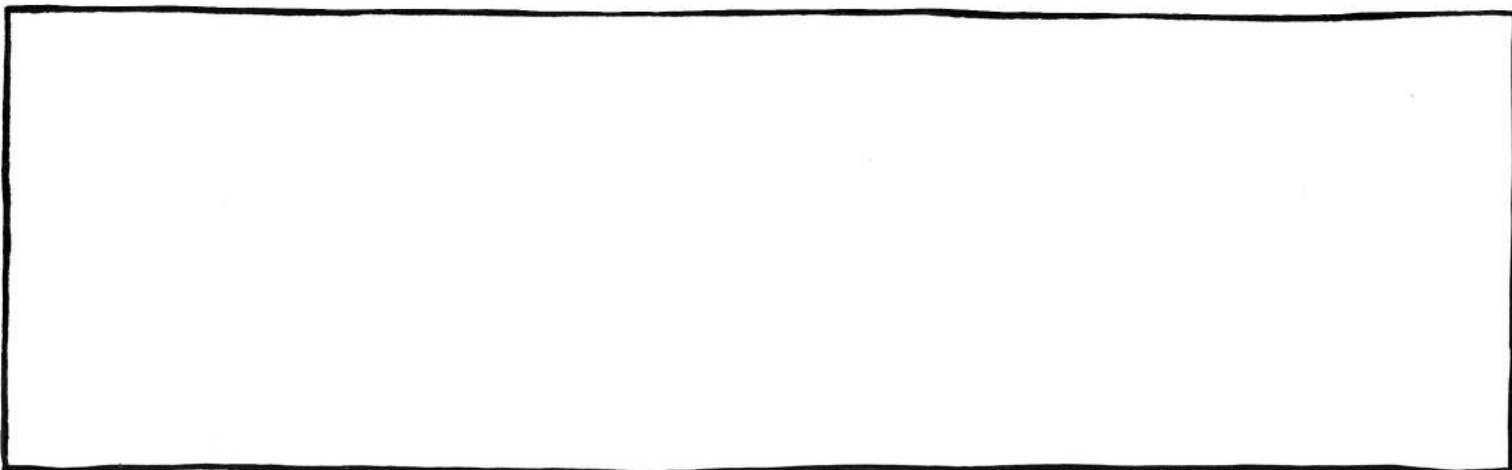
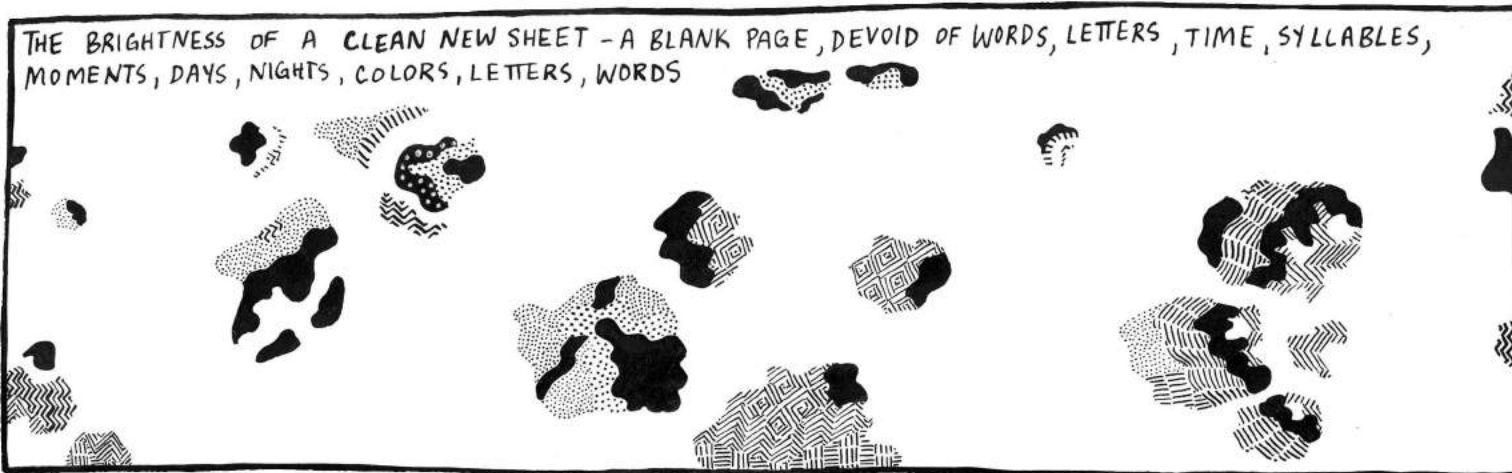
EVERYTHING AROUND ME WAS GLARING INTO NOTHING.



THIS NOTHINGNESS WAS BURNING SCORCHING BRIGHT,



THE BRIGHTNESS OF A CLEAN NEW SHEET - A BLANK PAGE, DEVOID OF WORDS, LETTERS, TIME, SYLLABLES, MOMENTS, DAYS, NIGHTS, COLORS, LETTERS, WORDS





written in 2010
drawn in 2013
printed in 2022