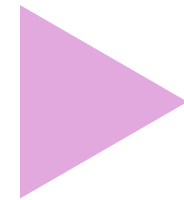
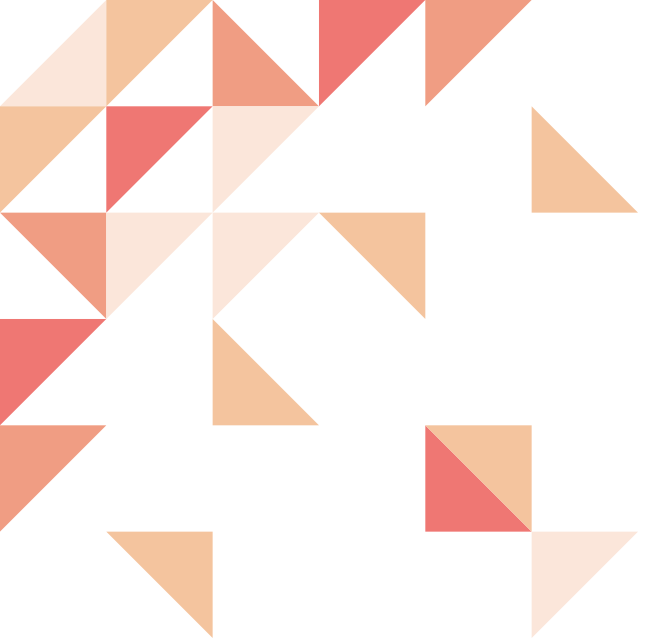




The Girl Changes Her Face: the
(De)Composition
of Eimear McBride's *Eily*

Karolina Ulloa, MA
FFyL, UNAM





McBridean *ars poetica*

If I could call her **corpus** that—a **body**—I would say that **self-awareness seeps through its pores**. In her fiction no universe ever closes—it opens and multiplies. None is like the other, and yet they are all part of the same conversation.





▶ (De)composition

▶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

▶ Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg

▶ Elaine Scarry

▶ Caty Caruth

▶ Kathleen Costello-Sullivan

▶ Denis Riley

▶ Elizabeth Grosz



I focus on the **(de)composition** of Eily, the protagonist of McBride's second and fourth novels, *The Lesser Bohemians* (2016) and *The City Changes Its Face* (2025). By analyzing Eily's performative selfhood as a form of **unfolding**, I explore how McBride's writing resists restrictive contentions of identity. I suggest that Eily's transformations showcase McBride's own interest as an author: an ongoing inquiry into what it means to be—or, rather, to *become*—a "girl."



(De)composition

An aesthetic grounded in a construction out of rupture. My use of parentheses evokes the impossibility of understanding the world through absolute and fixed concepts, while also emulating the hinge-like foundation of “becoming” in Deleuze and Guattari. At the same time, it prefigures a negotiation of intensities: since affect is a force that circulates between disintegration and plenitude, bodies undergo exchanges that take place between fracture and belonging in relation to other bodies.

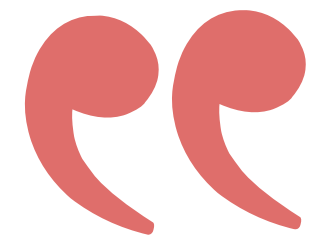
A narrative strategy that emulates depersonalization: “the splitting off from the body ... to endure the [traumatic] experience” (Probyn 80). In McBride’s work, protagonists navigate the wide spectrum between unbecoming and becoming without falling pray into a pursuit of an organicist identity, and the key to traverse from one side to the other—and, more importantly, all their in-betweens—is invention.

Unfolding

“I am busy in the smallest part of my life.”

(Bohemians 98)





Bollocks. Cup of tea. Pizza. Spliff. That's what you need so you're in luck, the Missus brought all the leftovers from her work. I'm tired. *Every part of me is broke.* You've been in this bed for a week and if you don't quit skiving they'll turf you out so come on, we're all in the sitting room. Blast of Withnail will do you good.

(Bohemians 96)



“Morning. Light. Him asleep on my hair, legs
patterned to mine”

(Bohemians 53)



“Recreating a memory from the inside out.
Every detail. Sound. Every smell. As though
you were back there again.”

(Bohemians 229)



Have I missed anywhere? And I point down. Point down where? Between my legs. Why? Because I'm still damp there. And what does she do? She looks cross. Why? Because I don't know yet. Alright, what does she say? She says she I I can't. ... Make a sound. Abhhhhhh. To a hundred people. Abhhhhhh. Now – and remembering precisely – tell us what she says. She says Don't you ever let anyone touch you there. Make a sound. Abhhhhhh. To a thousand people, Eily, trying not to hurt your voice. Abhhhhhhh. Again. Abhhhhhhhhhh. What's affecting you? I'm I'm ashamed. Why? Because someone already has. Make a sound. Abhhhhhhhhhhhhhh and it goes through the Church, to the balcony, beyond, back to the girl in nineteen-eighty who, for the first time, knows she is alone with something she should not know at all.





I have no faith in the night or the morning either and cannot believe how this day dares glow all up to Kentish Town. Past Kwik Save. The steps off Patshull to where I live. To where I live. I live there and know that now. **Every bit of you lives here.** No bit of you lives anywhere else.

(Bohemians 96)



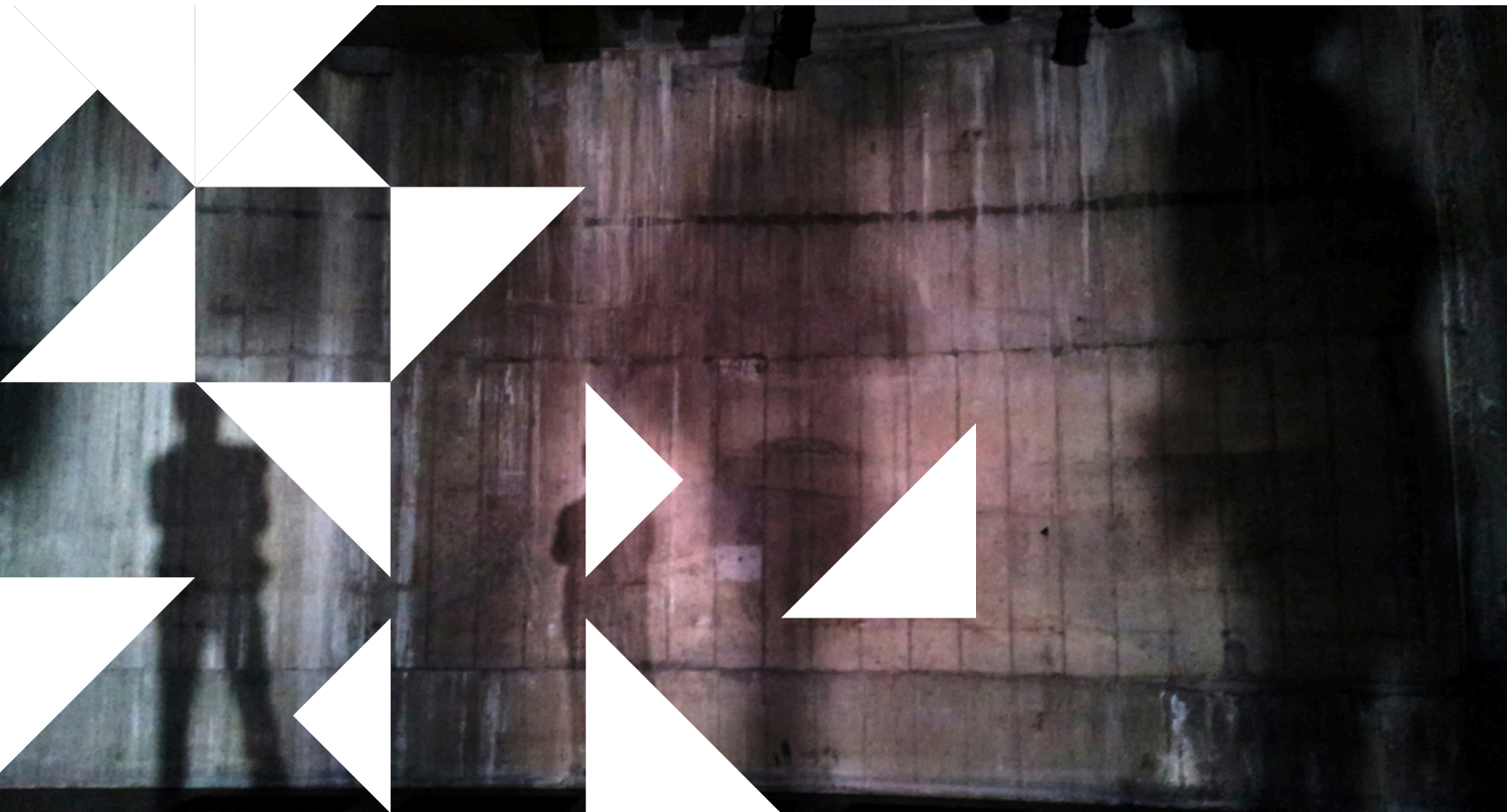
“Acting just seemed to offer me another life
for free.”

(Bohemians 96)



“the fucked-up body getting fucked”

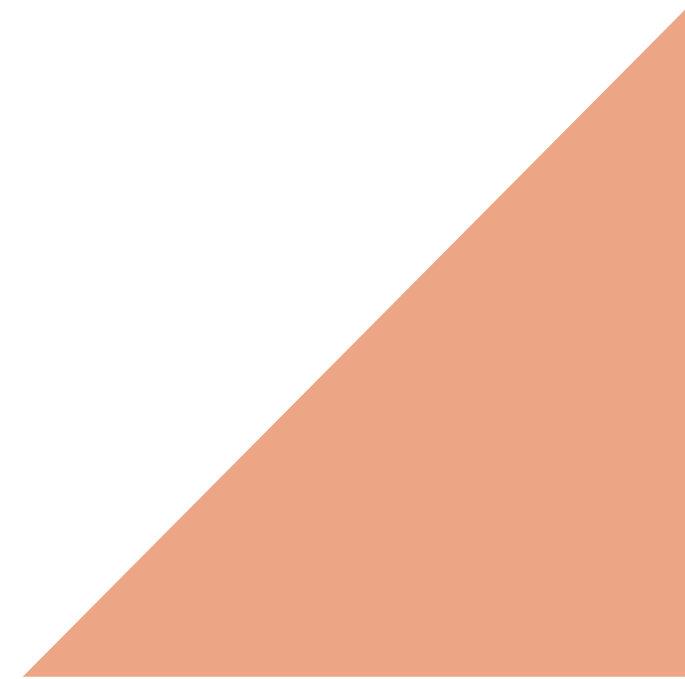
(Bohemians 164)





“I love you, Eily.”

(Bohemians 214)



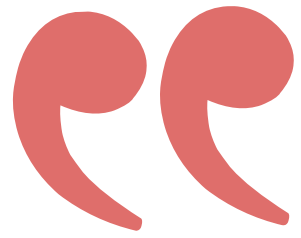
“I am her.”

(Bohemians 215)



“a form of thing”


(Bohemians 105)



“Two months, Eily, he says, Or two years or twenty,
whatever you’ll give me, I’ll take.”

(Bohemians 303)





Eily must confront a “secret want” (*City* 302) triggered by “That first, never finished, version of [herself] that haunts the old haunts of was” (38).

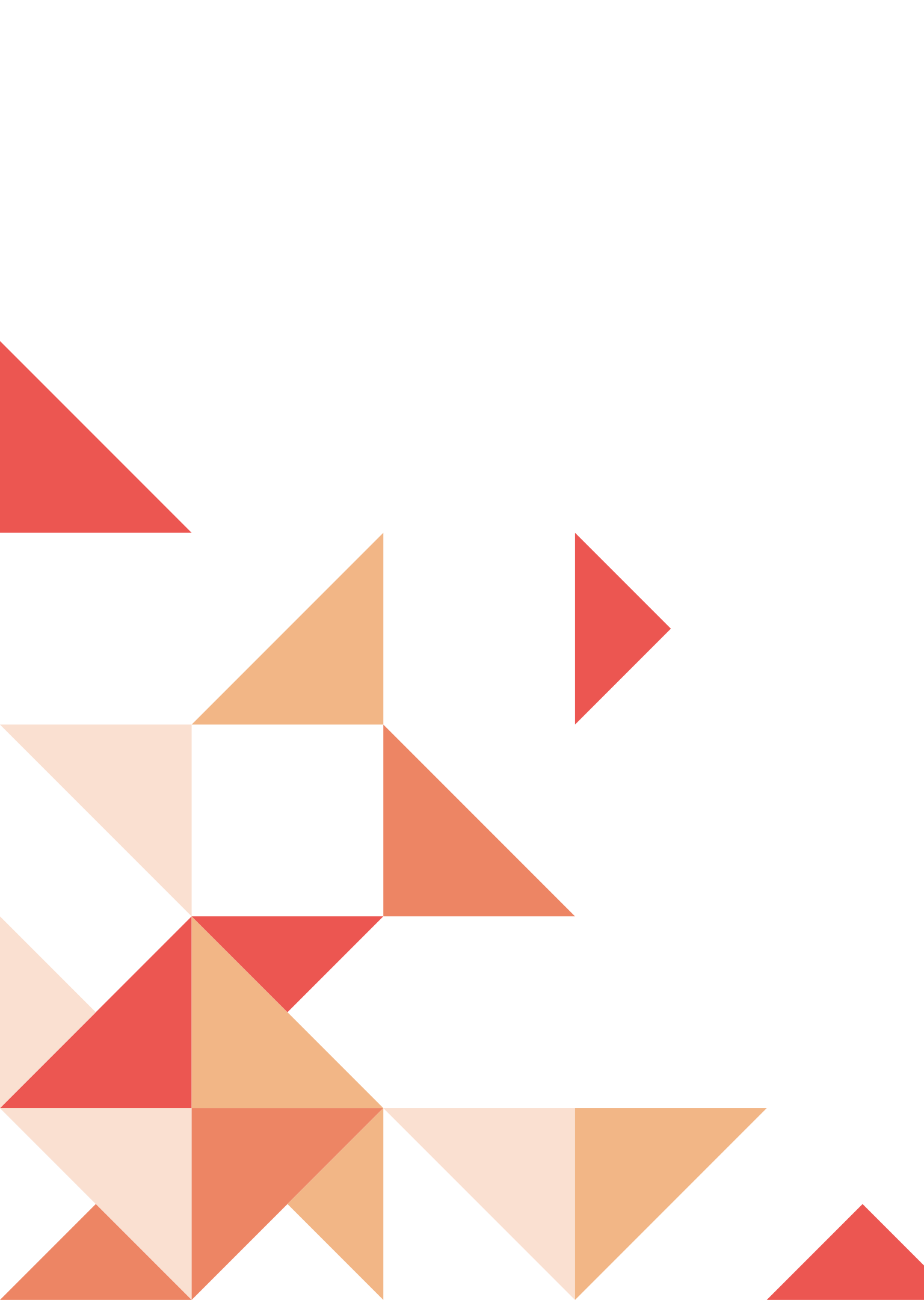




“all those far sadder **(de)compositions**
of mutual in-compossibilities”

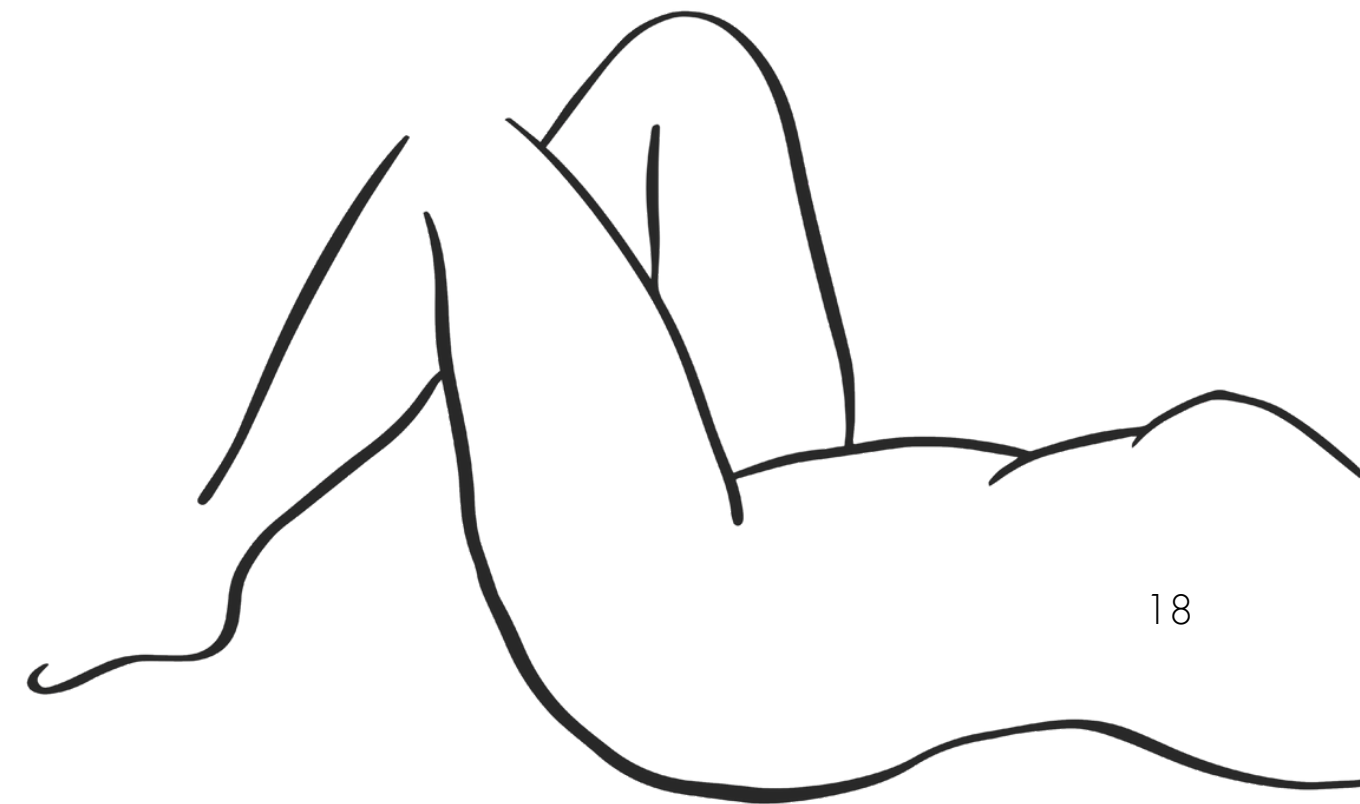
(Seigworth and Gregg 2)






“As you progress through life you realise you survive. Bad things happen and you survive. ... And that is less celebrated in our culture than it should be.”

(McBride, *Women Writers*)





Re-forming

Thank you!



carolinaulloah@filos.unam.mx



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