Potidea, Halkidiki, Greece, 2001

I.

White centenarian whisps under jasmine shade

The garden of our veranda in haptic bloom

I am seven, running salty circles, running

Sea of striped petunias, basil, thyme, lavender bush

I am seven and Yiayiá Χριστίνα is 105

My great-grandmother, she calls me over to kill

The flies biting her skin

Red flyswatter hung on a nail in cracked cement

I am seven and childishly methodical

Undo neon thread, grasp neck of plastic handle

Pooling, fat flies tense with the scent of death

To dislodge fly from skin, swing the face of the swatter at careful distance

Allow flies to resettle nearby on glass rim, floral cloth, wooden armchair

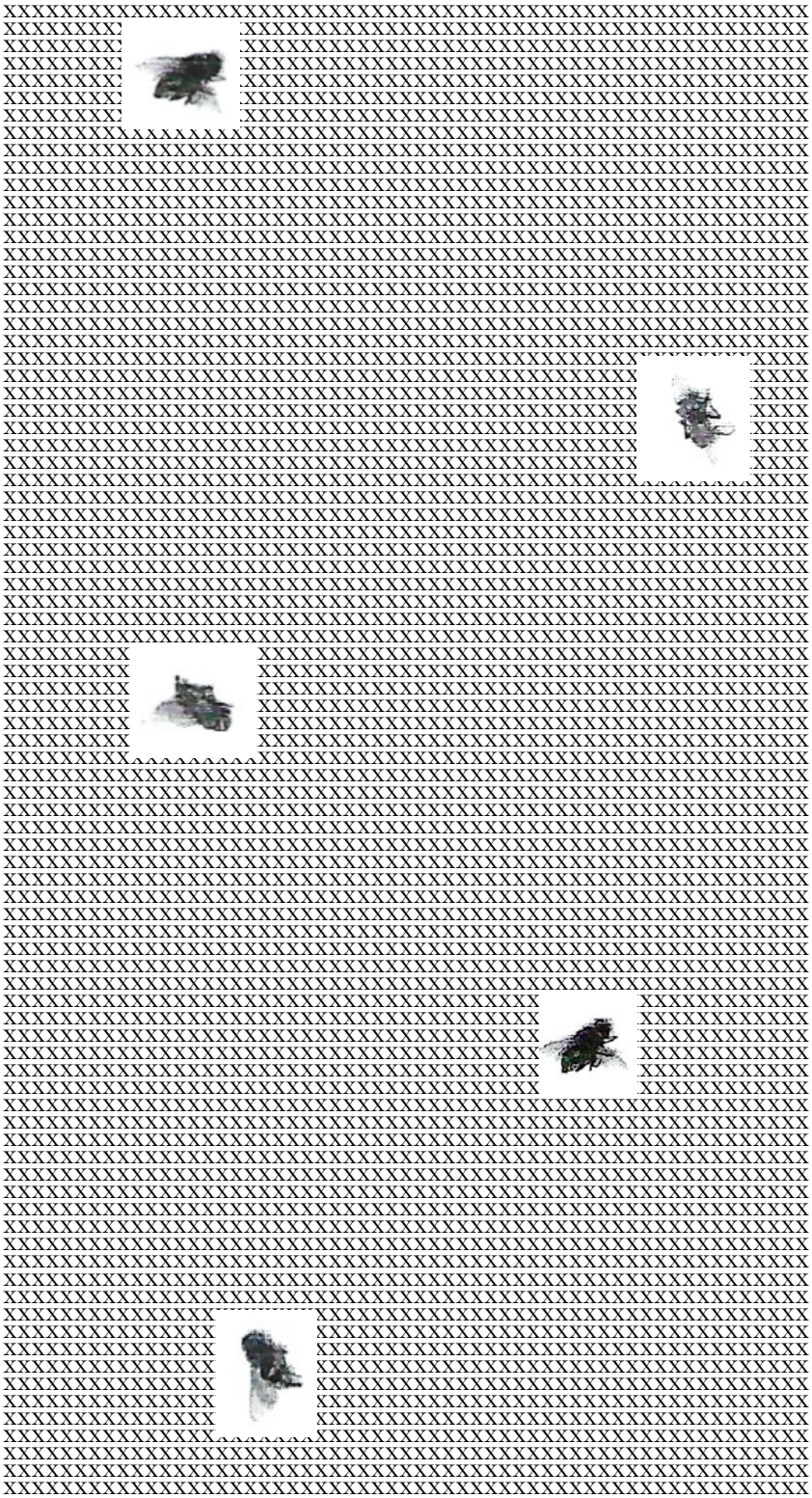
I am seven, summoned beyond timelines

Yiayiá X: ancestral variable for an infinite exiled matrilineal beloved

Now, with back crouched, inch toward proximal surfaces

Slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly, slow

II.



III.

Years later I am watching flies on a door screen

The screen a grid between worlds a testimony leans onto

A fly body touches the screen touching the body touching air

In a Word document, the negative space cupping each fly, a digital accident

Even as error, to be gifted a border's minor disintegrations against flesh

My olive arm snakes toward mitochondrial light

Whenever I tremble the grid: flies scatter, multiply in return

This is to witness an ancestor's posthumous re-spelling

What resuscitation for a lifetime unharvested?

A black lattice for the rot-struck to squat on

In a dictionary, the Pontic Greek word for pregnancy: βάριασμαν

Βάρος (weight), άσμενος (full of gladness or pleasure)

My great-grandmother's voice recoils inside a Sony tape recorder

In a second fuzzy eyes heavy aluminum mesh

Looped, an audio fragment lands on the surface of the grid

Flaps repeatedly till it pools like strands of saliva

I am trying to re-matter a wail that predates my body

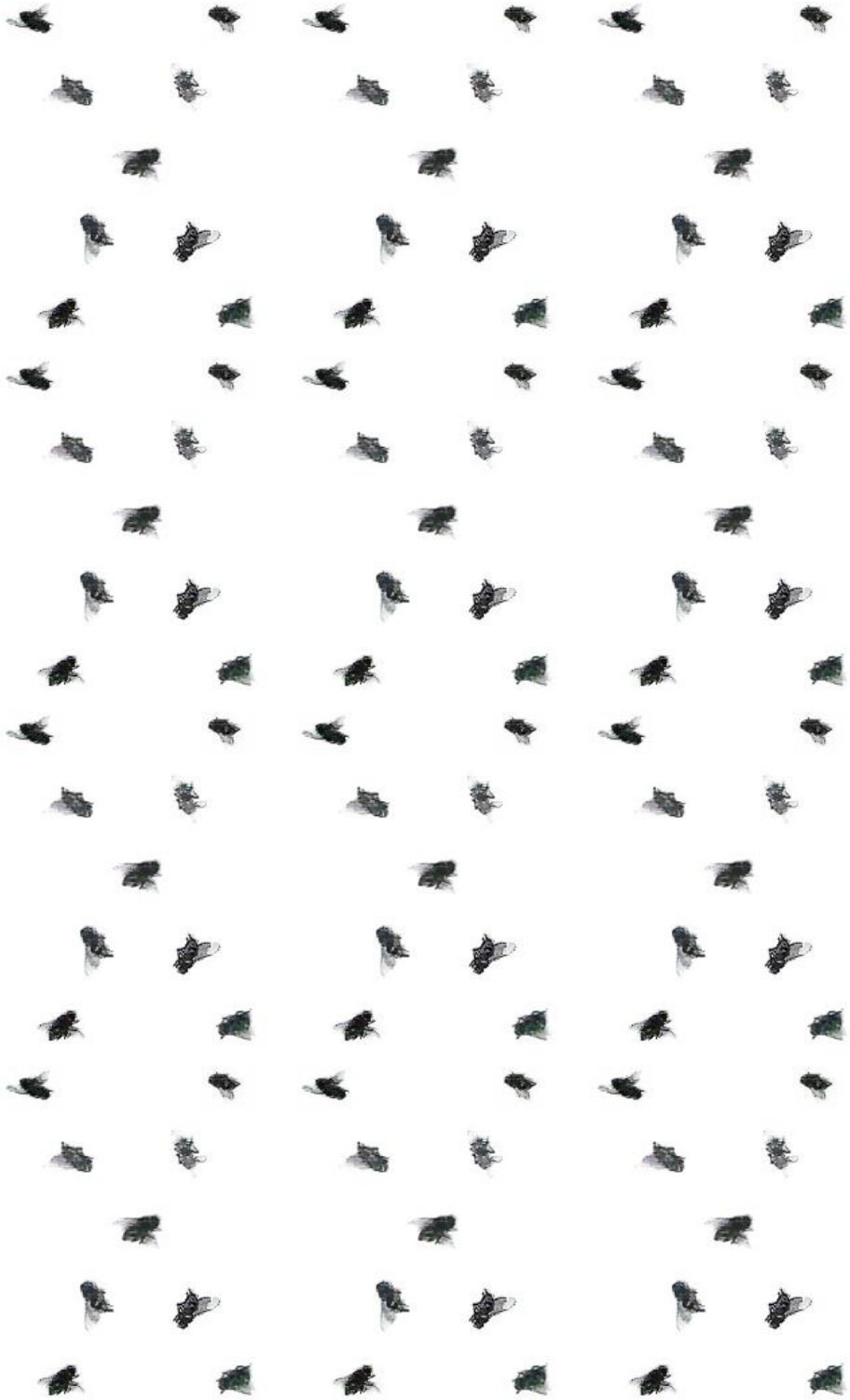
An illiterate refugee woman brushes her nail atop sour threads

The flies twist their hands in mutual agreement

All at once choreograph an undulating sequence

Some shapes are a grave's, prophetic

IV.



V.

Haunting me, one minute into Yiayiá X's audio testimony, a fragment begins to leak into itself:

Εγώ ήθελα να μάθω ήθελα να μάθω γράμματα ήθελα

I wanted to learn I wanted to learn letters I wanted

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VI.

The mouth of a muted Pontic Greek refugee woman

In the way of ululo, the dis/re/memberment of a fragment is a wail re-sounded

Hold the sharp dips of the lips bowed earthward

A half-resemblance to swallow or swift, a migrating lineage

Hold the secret strip where lower lip melts with upper

When I look at the image, a feral urge to submerge myself in water

Something mitotic awake in the grain

At a writer's residency in Vermont, I scan my ancestor on expensive paper

Split the artifact of my great-grandmother in two like a desperate egg

Hold the cupid's bow, glacial devastation

A laser bounces off the frequency of her blood

The shut mouth is still a portal

Reciprocity is to witness a face birthing itself a new face again

VII.

VIII.

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The total sums due on the basis of these declarations shall constitute a Government debt from the country where the liquidation takes place to the Government of the country to which the emigrant belongs. The emigrant shall in principle be entitled to receive in the country to which he emigrates,

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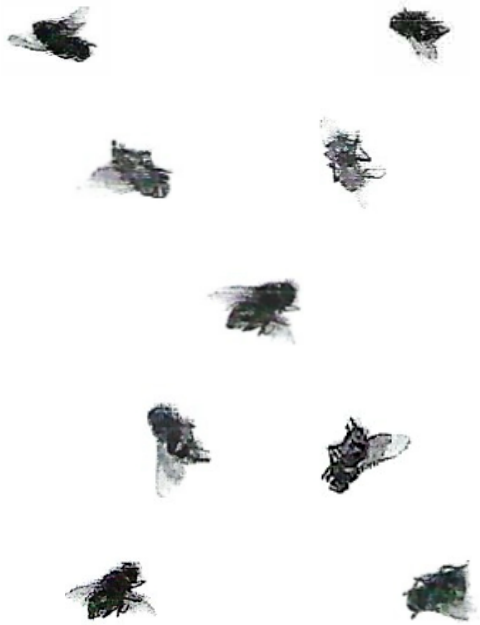

Note: The language for this erasure portion was lifted from "Section VI. Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations" in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne via the Republic of Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, a "peace" treaty that ratified the systematic genocidal expulsion of 1.5 million Greek Orthodox Christians from Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, the Pontic Alps, and Caucuses to Greece, and respectively, the forced displacement and deportation of five hundred thousand Muslims from Greece to Turkey, mutually displaced in an internationally administered act of ethnic cleansing.