

Spring 2022

## Notes From the Pit & Various Examples of Tummy Time

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Notes From the Pit  
&  
Various Examples of Tummy Time

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts of Bard College

by  
Lily Goldman

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2022



## **Dedication**

To Gregory, I love u.



## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you a million times to my gorgeous cast for being so excited to wiggle around like microscopic little guys, I love you all kiss kiss. Thank you a million times to my parents who are beyond supportive and more creative than they give themselves credit for. Thank you a million times to my beloved peers, friends & collaborators for your care and commiseration. Thank you to Ali Kane and Callie Jacks for your big and bountiful brains. Thank you to Lindsey Liberatore for being just the voice I needed, just when I needed it. And, as always, thank you to the Divine Chaos.



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## Notes From the Pit

You. Yes you. Do you know the pit in your stomach? The damp and dark crawlspace of the body? I do too. Some people think that the mind is the storehouse of memory, and they wouldn't be entirely incorrect here, but it is not the whole truth. The deepest depths of our memories are housed in of the pits of our stomachs. When we can't hold something in the mind, it descends toward the abyss inside us all and begins to churn there. Right there, inside your belly, lies this cavern. It holds your sincerest desires, your core truths, your most base and feral creatures.

I have given mine a name. It is the name I give most things, Gregory. Gregory is a cage. Gregory is a dungeon. Gregory is the guardian of the creature that lives deep inside of me—deep inside us all. He is the place which holds the thoughts and hopes and feelings I push down into him. He holds, he pulverizes, he regurgitates. I have a chasmic fondness and fascination for him. Gregory has inspired me for as long as I can remember. Inspired me to run and chase and yearn and search. He whispers to me of my secret fears and longings, and he pushes me into their arms. This project, this play, is a love letter to Gregory. My oldest friend, my greatest protector, my speaker of truths. My agent of Divine Chaos.

Gregory often comes to me strongest in the space between wake and sleep. When I lie on my back and my brain and heart are level with that pit, it no longer has to push. Instead, the ideas just tend to leak and spread and seep. On one such night, Gregory planted a seed. There would be a stage, there would be a table laid for a feast, there would be a creature. A creature much like the one that roams through the Gregor(y)ian catacombs inside me. The creature would fall in love within the stomach in which Gregory himself makes his home. It would writhe with its lover and fight and shrink and grow. They would live inside a play called *Guttural Noises*.

On this such night, I had the good sense to write this idea down—this truly Gregoryian idea. Without knowing it at the time, we two entered the hypnagogic tradition. And so, my project was born. From the space between sleeping and waking, the groggy pits of the night, the deepest depths of my belly, *Guttural Noises* came sliding into the world. Months before it would become even the beginnings of a real plan, it graced the pixel pages of the google doc in which I collect all my wisps of creative plans and ideas (a good many of which are Gregoryian at their core). Here it sat, an idea that would, someday, follow the process of creation: ingestion, digestion, and excretion.

Almost six months after that first night, I returned to my google doc in the hopes of a thread to pull in the journey toward my senior thesis project. And there it was. A rough, but definitively crafted, baby. I had written:

*guttural noises* - “these are the creatures who live in your stomach, this is their love story”; a naked person lying on a table covered in charcuterie, two people crouch beneath the table, gorging themselves, this is their love story.

And from there I ran, I saw a conversation through movement, I saw a creeping, crawling, dancing ensemble body reminiscent of the flying monkeys in *Wizard of Oz*. The earth sign in me (Taurus Moon) that craves a solid decision I can plant my feet upon, whisked me toward following the path most defined. I had a perfectly good seed right in front of me, and a perfectly good opportunity to plant it, cultivate it, watch it grow, harvest it, chew it right up, and swallow. So why not?

I have now come to realize that this project may actually have been divine providence, a culmination of the mental space my stomach and digestive tract have occupied. I am a deeply embodied creature. But in 2019, when Gregory’s growlings attempted to surface, the creature

housed in his maze still lurked under a thin layer of fogged glass. It prowled, it paced, waiting to allow the essential truth of my own ferality and bodily occupation to be actively realized.

You see, I have come to know the extent of my fascination with the body—the core of which I believe is the digestive tract. Truly, I am completely occupied by the gastrointestinal maze. I see the mouth and esophagus as the site of investigation, but the stomach, my location of supreme intrigue, is the site of disintegration. And therefore, it is the site of internalization. The place of understanding and processing before one can excrete and transmit. It is the site where the breaking down has the potential to become something actionable. The intestines are the site of transmission. And so is the rectum. This entire process is also that of the artistic process. One researches, one attempts, one creates and then one offers.

I am but a creature. A creature writhing around in my own pain and fascination. A creature embodied by a soup of bodily fluids. A creature crying to run on all fours across rocks by the ocean and eat with my sharp sharp teeth and gorge myself full. The core of the creature is its stomach, the center of its yearning. I am a creature of yearning, and the yearning has always been to digest and be digested. To be intimately known and chosen and processed and absorbed. Wholly.

And so, rather unknowingly, I began the process of knowing myself so much deeper. In following this idea, I took the first step down the path of setting free my internal beast and becoming a whole all my own. The first step on my own tongue, into my own mouth, that would lead right down my own throat and to my own stomach...and all the way on down. I dove towards a blind trust in myself and embraced it entirely. In the resonant words of Clarice Lispector from *Água Viva*,

I don't like that section I just wrote—but I'm duty bound to accept the whole section because it happened to me. And I have so much respect for what happens to myself. My essence is unconscious of itself and that's why I obey myself blindly.<sup>1</sup>

## **Tummy Time**

Tummy time is the practice of making a baby stronger by placing it on its stomach and letting it attempt to flip over, or just generally hang out. Tummy time, however, doesn't necessarily end when babies are too old and strong to need this exercise anymore. Much of our lives are spent in tummy time. Considering eating, preparing food to eat, actually eating it, considering how to excrete it, actually excreting it. We are constantly attending to our tummies and the needs therein. We bow and bend to the desires of the belly and in doing so we strengthen ourselves. These are all facets of literal tummy time. And then there is the more transient version of tummy time. The time in which we all spend attempting to decipher (and ignore) the messages our tummies send us. The secrets we hear whispers of but try to push back down into the Gregories inside us all. The rumblings of prophecy and desire. We are led by fear, which finds itself in the stomach. But we are also, perhaps more intensely, led by want. Led by passion—both of which also live in the caverns of the belly.

Humans are driven by desire. Desire is hunger. Hunger is the want to eat, to digest, to excrete. To be alive is to be constantly devouring information. It is to know, to learn and then to reciprocate—regurgitate. It is to grow, to take another step in a new direction, another step in the same direction having been fueled by the passion that is desire that is hunger. It's a cyclical motion really. Just like the fact that the food comes into the mouth and doesn't stop until it leaves the body through the butthole, having been filtered of every possible nutrient that the body can

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<sup>1</sup> Clarice Lispector. *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, ed. Benjamin Moser. (New York, NY: New Directions Books, 2012), 22.

squeeze from it. The digestive tract is one long, unbroken tube that runs all the way through the body. Isn't that fun? The gaping opening of the mouth seeks to take in what it can, the taste buds soak up flavor—sensation. The intestines soak up nutrients. And then it's poop. The stomach, the throat, the intensities, the ribs, they are resonant shapes. They hold, mold, and transmit energy.

These vessels of self-realization and actualization housed in our bodies have fascinated me for quite some time now, and this play is my devotion incarnate. Now, if you will, follow me down the artistic/digestive path!

## **Ingestion**

In the summer of 2021, I began my research in earnest. I asked everyone I knew; what media should I ingest that has to do with the body? With the creatures therein? With dance? With food? With eating? As you can imagine, I amassed quite a list. Of this list I was deeply inspired by the film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*. A story about excess and gluttony and how it ruins us. About the comforts of the body and how overindulging in them can bring about one's downfall. I read Mona Awad's *Bunny* and it touched my own body in a visceral way. I am a tactile creature, so I am called to the works of art that find their ways inside more than just my heart and my mind, but also into all of the cavities in me that hold memory, that process information, that signal emotion. I realized that I wanted my performance to do the same thing these works of art do to me, to dig its claws into the stomachs of my audience members and churn up sensation.

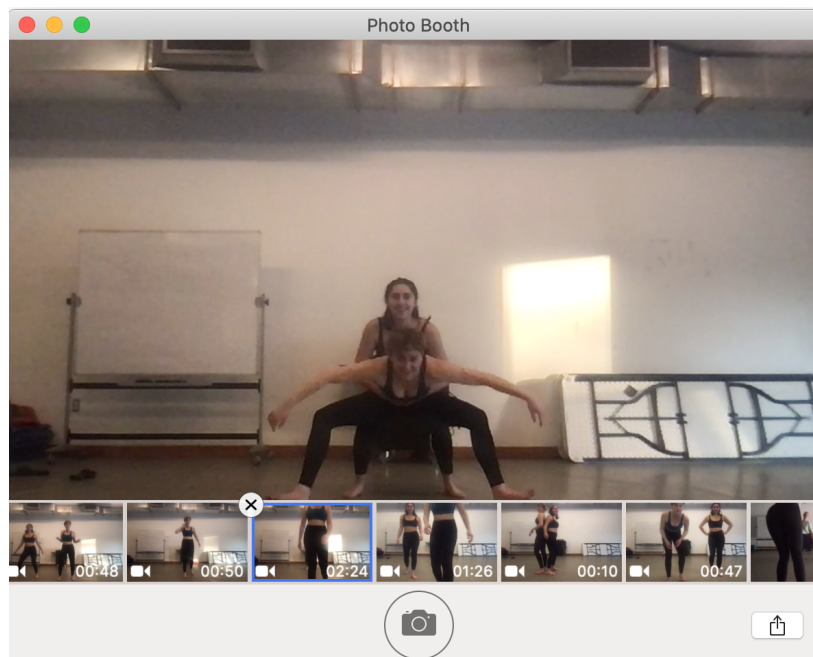
I access this desire in myself through artistic depictions of the body and the sensations that coarse through it. I seek portrayals of feral freedom that make my own legs twitch. In the cannon of my most informative works firmly sits Euripides' *The Bakkhai* and the figure of

Dionysus. Embodying the true capacity of the human body, the extent of indulging in one's most base instincts. The epic proportions of Greek storytelling with death, murder, lust, and divinity. I thought my play could probably use a murder. I am building a world of my own, so why not take it to the most dramatic ending possible. A world of high stakes, a world of complete submission to the bodily cues we humans spend so much time trying to fight.

I viewed choreography from Sonya Tayeh, Ryan Heffington, Alice Klock, Constanza Macras, 600 Highwaymen, and Sasha Waltz. I became excited and terrified. How could I place myself under the same title as these people I revere so deeply, knowing my body will not be able to move in the ways their bodies must have to generate such work? But I recognized that some of the fear I held was relating to my disbelief in my 'right' to call myself a choreographer. My fear that by calling myself a choreographer, claiming a title that so obviously did not fit me, I would mark myself a fraud and a liar. For so much of my life, I have put myself into an enclosure that never really fit quite right; that of 'girl,' of 'woman.' It was only when I found my way outside of the binary of gender, outside of the need to label myself inside of it, that I found myself and my peace. So why not apply the same logic here? Why continue to force myself into a binary, boundaried understanding of artmaking when I am functioning across boundaries, and inside of in-betweens? It is not easy to let go of these institutionally 'necessary' tools of defining, but it serves me in the long run. So, instead of letting my fear consume me, I forged ahead into it. I let it propel me, push me harder and deeper into myself and my future. I threw my terror over my shoulder and carried with me as I took step after step into the abyss.

Bite-sized, the information from these artworks traveled through my lips, into my mouth, and rolled around all over my tongue. Taste buds reacting and sending messages to my brain,

salivary glands activating and beginning the initial acidic process of breaking down. I mulled them over, chewed diligently. And swallowed.



A gesture in its initial moments. Performed by Lily Goldman & Ali Kane.

*Photobooth, January 27, 2022.*

## Digestion

As the 2021 school year began, the final year of my college experience, the (hilariously untrue) first ‘post-COVID’ year, I began to digest the research I had done from the safely removed vantage point of the mouth. The ideas descended toward my stomach, closer to the depths, to my Gregory. They began to break down in order to feed the body, to feed the process. I wrote a script. My creatures emerged. My friends read it and laughed. I made it silly. I wanted to make a play that would make myself chuckle. I wanted to enjoy the spaces of confusion and contrast. I wanted to enter a world that felt so new and so changed with a new lease on life, one that didn’t take itself too seriously. I craved the freedom therein. So, I wrote a script that made



me giggle and then I left it largely un-poked. I looked at it and said, I am proud to have created you and I respect who you are—even though I know the future me will perhaps, at times, wish things had been different. I know that person will respect you as I do, as something that will belie my insides in just the way I desire. Because that's what art does best. It opens you up and pours you out and still, you have no control over the impact it might have. You just have to trust and love that it will give what it needs to.

And so, you let the script be. And you begin to move. And you have auditions. And very few people come. But those who do move and play, and you smile and feel grateful in only the way you can when someone decides your work, your insides, are interesting enough to explore. And you hope you can help them explore their own insides along the ride. You cast your play. You keep moving. You finally allow yourself the title of choreographer. And even though it horrifies you to claim something you still feel no right to, you remember that the labeling is only a tool to push you deeper into your craft, it does not have to mean anything about the kind of maker you have to be. And your dancers tell you how excited they are about the movement, so you continue to fake the confidence with bravery. You trust and you respect. And inside the work you are. You are descending right into the abyss, just as you have been prophesied to do since that inciting hypnagogic moment.

Somewhere in January of 2022, the second semester working on this project with my actors, I felt something shift in our collective relationship. A crystallization of that elusive thing that happens when a cast becomes a company. I became excited about going to rehearsal. While I was feeling much more confident about my directing and my choreography abilities, it was really the environment we had created together that allowed me to flourish alongside my actors. I trusted them and they—I hope—trusted me. I almost saw my heart explode when a friend told

me how excited an actor of mine was about the show. They told me I must be running a great room because my team is still excited to come back, even when I ask the world from them. This is something I will take with me forever. Working with people who are excited about your work is game changing. Taking care of those people in return and respecting their time and energy and bodies and minds is therefore of absolute importance. My job as a director was never to become the all-knowing figure who stewarded the ship with stoic narcissism. Instead, I was simply a guide and a human, there to see as deeply as possible with my whole body. I am a vessel; I am a resonant shape. I see and I channel, I process and I regurgitate.

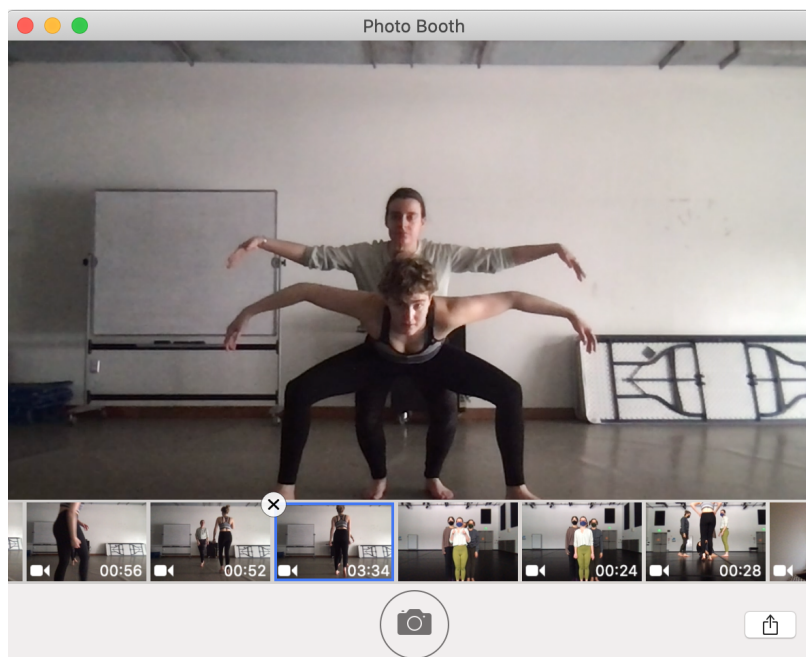
I am struggling to figure out exactly how to discuss the process of movement creation. It was so internal, so improvisationally oriented, so of the body, so from the inherent depths of myself that are an amalgam of everything I've ever seen, danced, or experienced. I knew I needed the movement of this play to be decidedly 'of the world of the stomach.' So, in my research, I became very excited about watching these horrifying 3D renderings used in science classes that follow the digestive process through the body. They were a great way to familiarize myself with the digestive system and how it actually works, but also offered me a whole host of new vocabulary and textures to explore in movement. I learned about how the villi in the intestines soak up water and nutrients, I learned about the different acids in the stomach, I learned about epithelial cells, the ileum and jejunum, and microbial dysbiosis. I heard the esophagus described as a long tube and was struck by the emphasis on the fact that the digestive process is really one of musculature, of pressure and pulverization. I brought these things with me into my movement work and found an entire language of my own. We experimented with feeling the weight and pressure of the stomach around us, jostling and compressing us down and together. We enacted this pressure on each other, but we also offered each other tenderness in the

midst of it all. We made lightbulb hands to connect the organisms into a culture and we chewed each other's mouths. We utilized shuffling of knees and feet when walking was too human to stand. We became gooey, embodied, freaky little creatures. And Gregory's grin widened.

Over the winter recess of 2021, I occupied myself with creating an image that would become a projected backdrop for the piece. A two-dimensional visual habitat to encase this stomach world of mine. I wanted an approximation, a not-quite-stomach. Something dreamlike in nature, an homage to the origins of my hypnagogic child. One drawn directly from the groggy, half formed land of semi-consciousness. I decided I wanted to make this projection using an AI image generator. Do I know anything about AI? No. Can I code? No. Am I generally inept when it comes to technology? You betcha. But when I set my mind on something, I will not be deterred by setbacks such as "skill level." Thankfully, I am lucky enough to have a very smart and tech savvy father, so we spent weeks together over the break attempting to learn a software called VQGAN+CLIP. It is a program where you can feed a text and image input to an AI and then it will generate an image output that it thinks matches the inputs correctly. It was a long process of trial and error—of system crashes and CPU storage limit overdrafts—but after a few weeks of messing around quite blindly, we were learning more and more and getting closer to my vision. I whittled down our 35+ output attempts to the very best three and was able to enter Luma tech week armed with options.

This entire process is one I am happy to say I entered with gratitude. With fear, but with absolute trust. Trust in the goodness of my team, trust in the inevitability of finality and success. Trust in the Divine Chaos that is life and art and theater. In trust, I found peace; I found a way forward through the setbacks and frustrations. I relied on my faith in myself and the universe. It

was always going to happen; it was always going to be the best it could have been. And it was. And it did. And it is.



A gesture in its rehearsal phase. Performed by Lily Goldman & Callie Jacks.  
*Photobooth, January 28, 2022.*

## Excretion

There are few words that can possibly describe the feeling of watching a vision come to life. Of seeing a dream realized. On Tuesday February 22nd, 2022, I sat in the dark seats of the Luma theater while my actors crawled and careened across the stage. They were at last accompanied by the set, the props, the costumes, the projections, the sound, and the music. With my face a glow in the reflected stage lights, I was exhausted, and I was exalted. I was so incredibly and deeply proud. We had been laboring together for months, and I had been crafting for even longer, and here it all was. Functioning like a well-oiled machine. The Gregoryian vision I had in my head multiple years before was now right in front of me. My offspring, my beast, my heart, stared right back at me, teeth bared and beaming.

I was blessed to have some of my most beloved peers in the room with me and watching and hearing their reactions to the piece for the very first time is something I will never forget. I had built a world that dragged them right in and held them there. And in this, I became held. Held so tight in the loving sensation that is sharing something generated right out of my own little body. To me, that is success. To have built a room where my collaborators are happy and excited, and to have built a play that touches the people I care about most.

It was also incredible to see how the design elements and the energy of performing in front of an audience kicked my performers into a whole new realm. Each day of our final week, they somehow found more depth, more ferocity, and more strangeness. I was blown away by their commitment and the way all of the work we had done in the rehearsal room helped to carry them through the material—I watched them follow a thread they could all see so clearly. From their resonant bodies, the vessels they command, a whole world collidescoped outwards and collided with our audience.

On opening night, I sat alone in the dark. From the top row of the theater, side by side with my own experience, the music rose, and my rib cage cracked wide open. My throat expanded, my stomach rose and fell, my chest and abdominal cavity became resonant shapes. The perfect repository to hold the experience of art and audience, action and reaction. Transient, ephemeral, magical reality. I spent most of the following twenty-five minutes with my hand pressed to my chest. Feeling the beat of my own heart, the pulse of my own blood, the rhythm of my breathing. I consumed this love letter right through my own site of fascination. I stomached the emotions, I swelled right to bursting. I became the full extent of the molecules making up my being. I sat there, a colony of bacteria falling in love with myself and everything and everyone around me.

And Gregory, dear Gregory. He reached his little hands out towards his brethren, his reflection. His gaping, drooling mouth was a wide and gleaming half-moon smile. And above it, he wept.



A gesture in its final form. Performed by Callie Jacks & Zara Boss.

*Photo by Chris Kayden, February 24, 2022.*

### **Notes From the Other Side**

Art has given me everything and more. It has taken (and will take) from me all I have to give and so much more. I will follow it to the ends of the earth, teeth gnashing and on all fours.

In reflecting on this project, I see so many parts of myself that began as little sprouts in the beginning and ended as a tangled garden. If I could have smacked past me across the face and given them some advice, I would have said GET SUPPORT AND GET IT NOW. Find a dancer, a mover, a choreographer, and build a working practice and relationship with them. Find people you trust and love and have them engage with the work often in order to give you feedback and critique. When seeking support, you do not have to be bound by anything. Think of the people whose opinions you actually respect and who you know respect you and seek their

guidance when you are lost. You can be aided by those outside of your immediate circle, outside of your department. All you have to do is ask. Just be sure to hold yourself highly in your own regard. Do not take shit from people who do not have your best interests at heart. But also, as I have always told you, do not close yourself off in the face of critique or heartbreak. The universe has you back. If critique is coming from a well-intentioned source, you must do everything in your power to keep your heart soft, open, and receptive. When you shut down and shut people out, you close down the parts of yourself that are most essential to creating the communities and collectives that fuel you most. The parts of you most essential to being the artist and person you want to be. You are more than capable of being a fierce and unfettered mind and heart, I believe in you.

In my reflections, I feel very grateful and lucky to say that I wouldn't have changed much about the process. I approached the roadblocks that came my way—cast members ghosting me, COVID concerns, production team breakdowns, heartache, fatigue—with as much grace as I could. I took them in stride as one would take a bout of acid reflux, diarrhea, vomiting. I ate my saltines, drank my ginger ale and Pepto Bismol, and proceeded to eat my next meal. No sense in starving over a temporary upset! In their wake, I took care of myself and then continued ingesting and digesting and excreting. This was, after all, an opportunity to learn. I now possess so much more information about myself and my abilities, strengths, shortcomings, areas for growth, passion, fascinations—all of which I will take with me in a backpack into my next projects.

As I have said, I am easily able to look back on this journey with pride and joy, but I do wonder what it would have been to fail. To really fail at some point along the way. And I can't say I'm not scared of what it might mean or look like to fail out there in the “real world.”

However, I know that when that moment comes (and then when it inevitably comes again), I will have nothing but good tools in my backpack to help me face it. I hope that the way I am learning to carry myself as a deeply receptive leader will allow me to hear and learn and grow from my mistakes. And I trust that I will gather people along the way, just as I have done here, who will encounter my mistakes with grace and love. I cannot make myself a perfect director, choreographer, artist, or person, and nor do I want to. I just hope—and trust—that I will set myself up for success, even in my failure.

As I move forward, I will hold the creature inside me in my mind's eye and follow its passion fervently. Through this creature, I have identified that my artistic journey will lie with all things related to the honesty, the deep reality and clarity of the body. I will follow my heart and what lies below it in the Gregory, and I will reach my arms outstretched towards others and the pits inside of them. I am, and will continue to be, consumed entirely by how our bodies communicate. How they communicate with themselves and with each other. How they hold and work through and massage our experience—both internal and external.

A few weeks ago in his Dancing Migrations class, Professor Yebel Gallegos said something along the lines of:

The body is the site of convergence, and the main instrument of dance is the body, so of course when dancing, the body will be able to interpret and understand and process and communicate differently. In new realms, and with more clarity.

Perhaps it's magic, perhaps it's science, perhaps it's just a logical truth, but dance and movement offers us all new ways to understand each other and the realms we inhabit. We understand ourselves and our emotions differently through movement because the body holds more than we give it credit for. The mind and the heart are not the only sites of



processing, of holding, of memory. I have spoken extensively about my belief in the role the stomach plays, but I am so excited to explore the other sites of speaking and receiving that inhabit me.

As I continue to investigate these things, I will be interested to see how the artistic process of creating a play or story finds itself in my body. In this iteration of creation, I began with an idea and then wrote a script and then formed a movement vocabulary. I wonder what it might be like to enter the process in a different order. Because of the order I followed with *Guttural Noises*, I often found myself trying to make movement that told a story. I felt a pressure to make sure the dances would fit into the emotional realm of the dialogue and continue at the point where spoken word left off. I was not as comfortable then as I am now with the idea that the body is a vessel of communication in its own rite. It might be the case that I can approach movement differently and allow it to breathe and speak in the way I now understand it to be able to. I might not need to map narrative on top of it. Perhaps, I can allow it to hold narrative in a way that truly works outside of the structure I am used to in playwriting. I am endlessly excited about that possibility and the doors it opens and the ways I will be able to blend language and movement in a more complete way. Gosh, I can't wait to play. I really can't.

### **If You Want to Visit Me, I Will Be Here**

You can find me in the woods. In a cave, digging in the dirt, communing with the earth and all its bugs and worms. You can find me outside of processes of labeling and inside of bodily experience. Inside of sensation, inside of hedonism. You can find me opening my chest cavity to the people who press their hands to my sternum. You can find me deeply trusting the path that lies ahead. You can find me in bacchanal revelry, and you can find me in rapture. You can find

me pushing up against the tender parts of myself and seeing what pushes back. I will be here—Gregory will too—and you are always welcome to come for a visit.

***GUTTURAL NOISES***

by Lily Goldman

**SCENE 1 - The Beginning**

*We see all the organisms dancing, moving, working together, everything is going how it should. The dance ends. Two of the organisms GARL AND KESTER move under the table and munch on scraps.*

Garl?  
KESTER

Hm.  
GARL

KESTER  
Do you ever maybe feel like there should be something more than all of this?

*Garl looks confused.*

Don't get me wrong, I love the pulsing and the pushing and the breaking down...I just feel like there's something missing. There's this new squirming - somewhere above here.

*Kester touches the place above their abdomen.  
Garl's eyes widen in recognition, they are working up the nerve to say something.*

I don't know, it's probably nothing.  
KESTER

*Garl changes their mind about saying something.*

Oh - yeah, yeah. Uh huh.  
GARL

*Garl eats bread.*

Yeah.  
KESTER

*Garl tries again to start saying something, but is interrupted by Kester who gets up to leave.*

I'm gonna go catch up with everyone.

GARL

Oh, oh yeah okay.

*As Kester moves away.*

*(too loud)* Catch ya on the flip!!!

*Kester makes a goodbye gesture over their shoulder, making a face because Garl is dumb-dumb. Garl stands abruptly, grabs bread.*

GARL

Wait!! I think you're right.

KESTER

Really? What do you mean?

GARL

I feel that thing you were talking about, that thing that's wiggling somewhere around here (*Same gesture Kester made*). And I feel it when we hang out.

KESTER

With me?

GARL

Yeah...It's like, all warm and stuff. And wriggly and it's nice. I just thought I should tell you that.

*Garl offers the bread.*

Do you, maybe... feel something like that?

KESTER

Um, I'm not sure.

*They look at the bread, they are really trying to figure out if they feel it.*

I - I think I could.

*They approach Garl and the two begin timidly to exchange energies with each other.*

**SCENE 2 - The Confusion**

*Garl and Kester move back under the table. They laugh and poke each other. Garl sits up.*

GARL

Hey, um, I have something to tell you.

KESTER

Yeah?

GARL

Well. I just wanted you to know how good I feel. Before, I thought the world was just all pink and gray and wet and pulsing, but now *(beat)* You know how it feels when you jump up and down really hard and all the inside parts get sort of unglued and you are a little scared because you don't know if they will be able to hold on? Or even stay inside? *(beat)* But ya know what? Whenever I do do that? They never actually come out.

KESTER

The insides?

GARL

Yeah. And they're always still pumping when I stop jumping.

KESTER

And that's good...right?

GARL

Yes, yes, it's very good. That's why I'm not so scared. I'm just enjoying the motions.

KESTER

Are you implying I am scared?

GARL

Oh no! No, no no! *(Beat)* Are you scared?

KESTER

I'm not! I'm not!

GARL

Even when your insides are sloshing all around?

KESTER

Well...I think it's maybe just that I'm not feeling it like that. I don't think I'm jumping all that much.

*Kester is not at all as stoked as Garl.*

GARL

Oh - oh yeah, I mean, of course. Of course we are going to feel different stuff. *(beat)* Ya know, you're really weird.

*Garl uses their body to envelope Kester. They are oblivious to the fact that Kester has begun to feel weird. To Kester, the playfulness is something else, something they need to escape from. They crawl out from under Garl.*

KESTER

*(a little too loud)* I have to go now.

GARL

Did I do something?

KESTER

No, no you're fine. Bye Garl.

GARL

Okay, bye

***SCENE 3 - The Arrival, The Awakening***

*Kester is running onto the stage, implied right from the last scene. There is someone new. They stop abruptly and stare.*

GUMMY

Hello Kester.

KESTER

Oh - um, hi. Sorry, who are you?

GUMMY

I'm new around here. I've heard so much about you.

*They approach Kester and immediately swoop them up into a dance. The dance is wild, like nothing Kester has done before. Gummy is forceful, suffocating. They end up next to each other, collapsed.*

KESTER

Where did you learn that?

GUMMY

You could say I've been around.

KESTER

Like, not here?

GUMMY

*(they laugh like this is an absurd question)* Oh yeah - all over.

*Kester sits up, this is everything they want to know.*

KESTER

Wait really? What's it like out there?

GUMMY

Like nothing you could ever imagine.

*Kester is quiet, expectant. Gummy doesn't add to this.*

KESTER

I have always wanted more than this.



GUMMY

Well you seem smart enough, why haven't you gotten more yet.

KESTER

I tried! Garl said they could show me, but I don't feel it like how I'm supposed to.

GUMMY (*knowing*)

Ah, Garl. Seems a bit...dense.

*Kester doesn't know if they want to share this, but they want to connect to Gummy.*

KESTER

Yeah, they aren't so sharp. But they've been nice to me.

GUMMY

Oh Kester, can I offer you some advice? From out there?

KESTER

Yes! Yes, please.

*Gummy approaches Kester and takes their hands.*

GUMMY

Out there, no one will protect you. No one will make your life what you want it to be. They will take from you and take until you have nothing. You have to be the one to do the taking. You are going to die alone, we all are, so you might as well craft what you want from what you can get your hands on.

KESTER

I don't want to hurt anyone.

GUMMY

*(grabbing Kester's face, looking into their eyes)* Sweet Kester, you are going to have to. Unless you want them to hurt you. I'm sure you'll pick it up in no time.

***SCENE 4 - The Experiment***

*Organism dance returns!!! It is disjointed and wild, obvious frustration. It ends when Garl refuses to move and just stands, staring at Kester - who is in their own world, doing a totally*

*different dance than everyone else. The rest of the organisms get completely fed up and leave. Kester notices that Garl is staring.*

KESTER

Hello, Garl?

GARL

*(sort of snapping out of it)* Shit, sorry, you are just so cool. I love watching how you move. How you just fall all into place.

KESTER

Oh - thanks.

GARL

How does it feel? To be so ... complete? To be so much yourself and so exquisite?

KESTER

It feels pretty good. *(beat)* Garl, would you do anything for me?

GARL

Oh, Kester, I would do anything.

KESTER

Literally anything I asked? You would just do it?

GARL

Of course I would.

KESTER

Well that's kind of fucking weird.

GARL

What? *(beat)* Why is that weird? You're mesmerizing.

KESTER

Yeah well it's fucking weird. No one's supposed to feel like that. You're doing something wrong.

GARL

No, Kester, I need you.

*They begin approaching Kester.*

KESTER

But like, you don't. You don't need anyone.

GARL

Yes, yes, I NEED YOU.

*They dive toward Kester, obviously hungry to touch them. They try to tackle them, the two fall.*

KESTER

YOU'RE CRUSHING ME! GO AWAY!

GARL

I'm sorry, Kester, I'm sorry. I just need you.

KESTER

I'm serious, GO. AWAY.

*Garl tries to carefully touch Kester, Kester screams like a banshee. Garl hightails it off stage. Kester holds their head in their hands, and they laugh. Gummy walks onstage to find them like this.*

### ***SCENE 5 - The Violence***

GUMMY

Hello there.

*Kester snaps their head up to look at Gummy. They look like an angry little animal.*

Are you having fun?

KESTER

Yes.

GUMMY

Would you like to have more fun?

KESTER

Yes.

GUMMY

Okay. Throw this at me.

*They hand Kester a piece of bread.*

KESTER

Why?

GUMMY

Because I said so. You want to have fun, right? You want to be the kind of thing that gets out of this place, right? Away from Garl and the rest of them.

KESTER

Yes.

GUMMY

So throw it at me.

*Kester sort of lightly throws the bread at Gummy. Gummy laughs but in a mean way.*

I know you can do better than that. Do it again.

*Kester throws bread again, this time harder.*

That was much better. Again.

*Kester really screams and throws bread like they want it to take Gummy's skin right off. Kester approaches Gummy with anger and they move together violently, but this time Kester is the one instigating and controlling the violence.*

I am so proud of you.

KESTER

So now what?

GUMMY

I think you know. You want to get yourself free of this place. So do it.

KESTER

I have to get out.

GUMMY

Exactly.

*Gummy exits, Kester sinks to the floor as the other organisms arrive onstage, seemingly not noticing Kester.*

***SCENE 6 - The Plot***

*The organisms (Ileum, Jejenum, and Kirk) creep onto the stage, they look at each other. In the first few lines of the scene, they crawl and scoot into the center of the stage.*

JEJENUM

God, what is up with Garl and Kester?

ILEUM

Ugh, I know right? Like can they get their shit together?

KIRK

And Kester has been like, double weird too—

ILEUM

Yeah! I was noticing, like what is up with that?

KIRK

I wish I fucking knew, it's ruining my flow.

JEJENUM

Maybe we should talk to them about it?

ILEUM

Yeah, that could maybe help. But honestly, they both give me such weird vibes—

KIRK

Me too! Such weird vibes. And the way Garl has been with Kester?

*Kester stood up behind the group. They all laugh and laugh hard. They notice Kester.*

JEJUNUM

Oh! Hi Kester!!

KESTER

Hello everyone.

*They join the group.*

So what are y'all talking about?

ORGANISMS

Oh um, nothing!

KESTER

Cut the shit, I heard you.

ILEUM

Well - like, are we wrong?

KIRK

You two have been pretty...distant lately.

ILEUM

And if we're being honest, it's gumming up the works.

KESTER

Oh - I totally agree.

JEJUNUM

Oh really?

ILEUM

Yeah?

KESTER

Oh yeah, totally. I just want to get back to work. To the way things were.

ILEUM

I was just saying that!

JEJUNUM

That's so great!

KIRK

So then, why are you both still being so...weird.

KESTER

Can I be honest?

*Gossip. The other organisms cluster closer to Kester.*

JEJUNUM

Oh my god of course—

KIRK

You can tell us anything, Kest

ILEUM

Yeah!

KESTER

Okay, well the truth is, Garl is like smothering me. I didn't even want this...any of this. It's like...freaking me out, actually.

ILEUM

Woah, really?

JEJUNUM

That's so sad.

KESTER

Yeah and (*conspiratorial*) it's kind of scary. I've tried to tell them to get back to work and stop, but they just won't.

ILEUM  
No - really?

KESTER  
Really. Like I've tried.

KIRK  
Well...What are you going to do?

KESTER  
Actually - I think you all can help me with that one.

ILEUM  
We'd love to!

JEJUNUM  
Yeah, anything you need.

*All exit.*

***SCENE 7 - The Confrontation***

*Garl is on the edge of the table; they are practicing what they will say to Kester.*

GARL  
Kester, I know things have gotten weird. I'm really, really sorry. I never meant to make you feel like this. I care for you and I thought maybe you felt the same way. Ugh, no that sounds bad. I just care for you and I *(beat)* I - I just love you. No, god, I can't say that.

*Kester enters, backed by the other organisms. They move in a mean hive.*

Oh um, Hi.

KESTER  
Hello Garl.

GARL  
I was actually going to come find you, I have something I want to talk about.



ORGANISMS

Tell us, Garl.

GARL

Oh, um, I was actually hoping to just talk to Kester.

KESTER

You can tell them.

ORGANISMS

Tell us.

GARL

*(stealing herself)* Well, um, Kester. I - I just wanted to apologize. I wanted you to know that I never meant to make you feel like this.

ORGANISMS

Like what Garl?

KESTER

Yes, Garl, how do I feel?

GARL

Oh - um, I think just like, not good?

*Kester and the organisms have an evil laugh.*

I mean, am I wrong though? I know you aren't happy.

KESTER

Well, you would be right about that.

GARL

Yeah, so I just wanted you to know that I know.

KESTER

How kind of you, I feel a million times better now!

GARL

Look dude, I just wanted to say sorry.

*The mass approaches Garl angrily. A swarm.*

KESTER

*(organisms echo underlined words)* Sorry? Sorry? Sorry for what. For being the problem? For bringing something into my life that I did not ask for? For suffocating me? For being a waste of space? For being a wrench in the system? For causing the degradation of our livelihood? For what Garl? For what, exactly, are you apologizing?

GARL

I - I just thought!

KESTER

Well, you thought wrong. Went and fucked it all up, didn't you Garl? *(Beat)* Nothing left to say for yourself?

GARL

*(so sincere it hurts)* I'm sorry.

KESTER

Too. Fucking. Late.

*The swarm descends on Garl. Garl is suffocated. The clump leaves them, lying peacefully on the ground - dead. Kester falls from the group, breathless as if leaving a trance. They hide their face from what they have done.*

Gummy? GUMMY? GUMMY! WHERE ARE YOU?

*Gummy has been watching the whole time. They slowly stroll to Kester.*

KESTER

I - I did something bad - Garl - I don't know what to do. *(beat)* What happens now? Am I ready to leave? Please.

*Kester pulls away sharply.*

KESTER

You said this would let me leave.

GUMMY

Oh Kester. I lied.

*Gummy joins the organisms as Kester crawls to Garl and lies with them. The organisms begin to do their phrase around Kester and Garl while Kester does their own dance. This happens until it doesn't.*

**END ;) LOL**