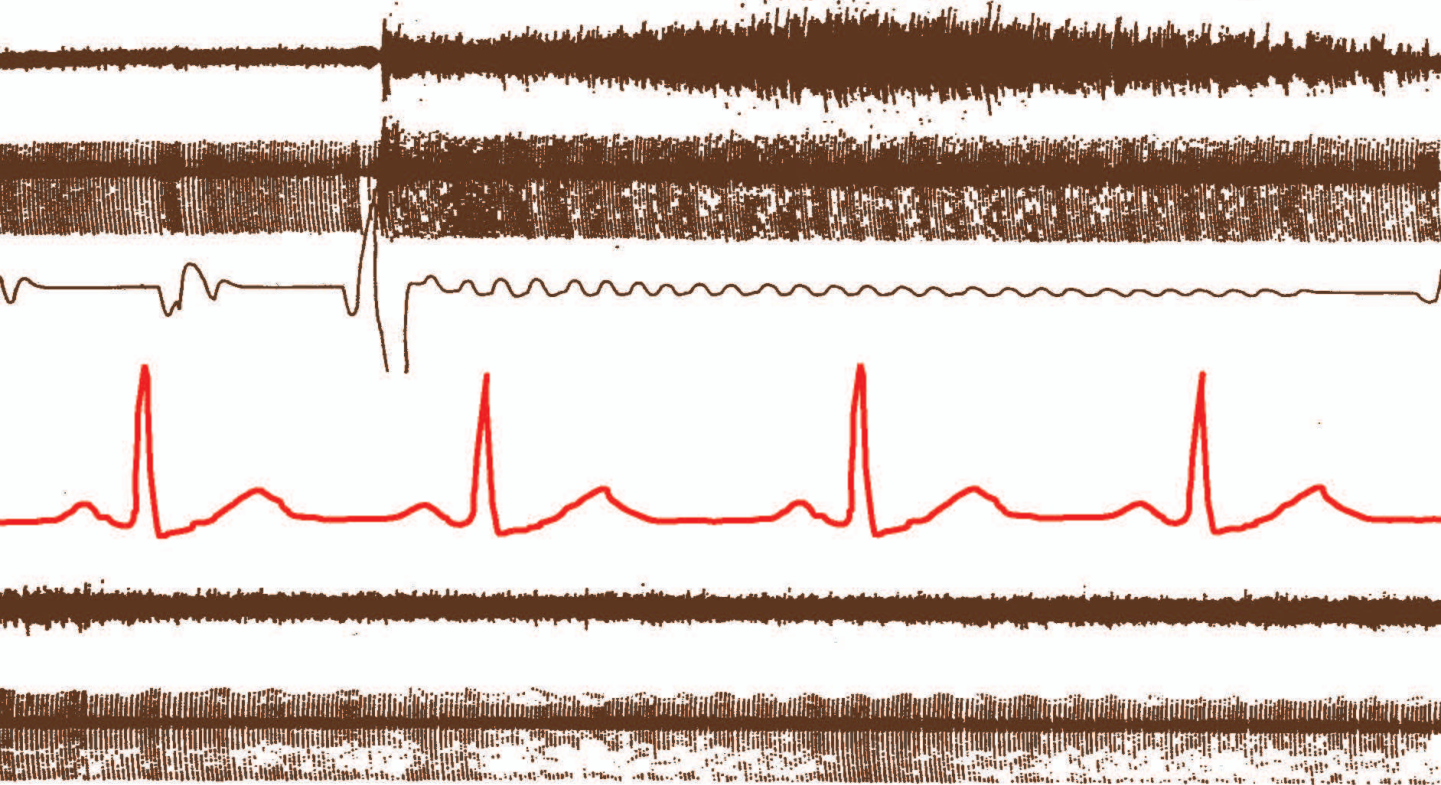




# 29

november 2008

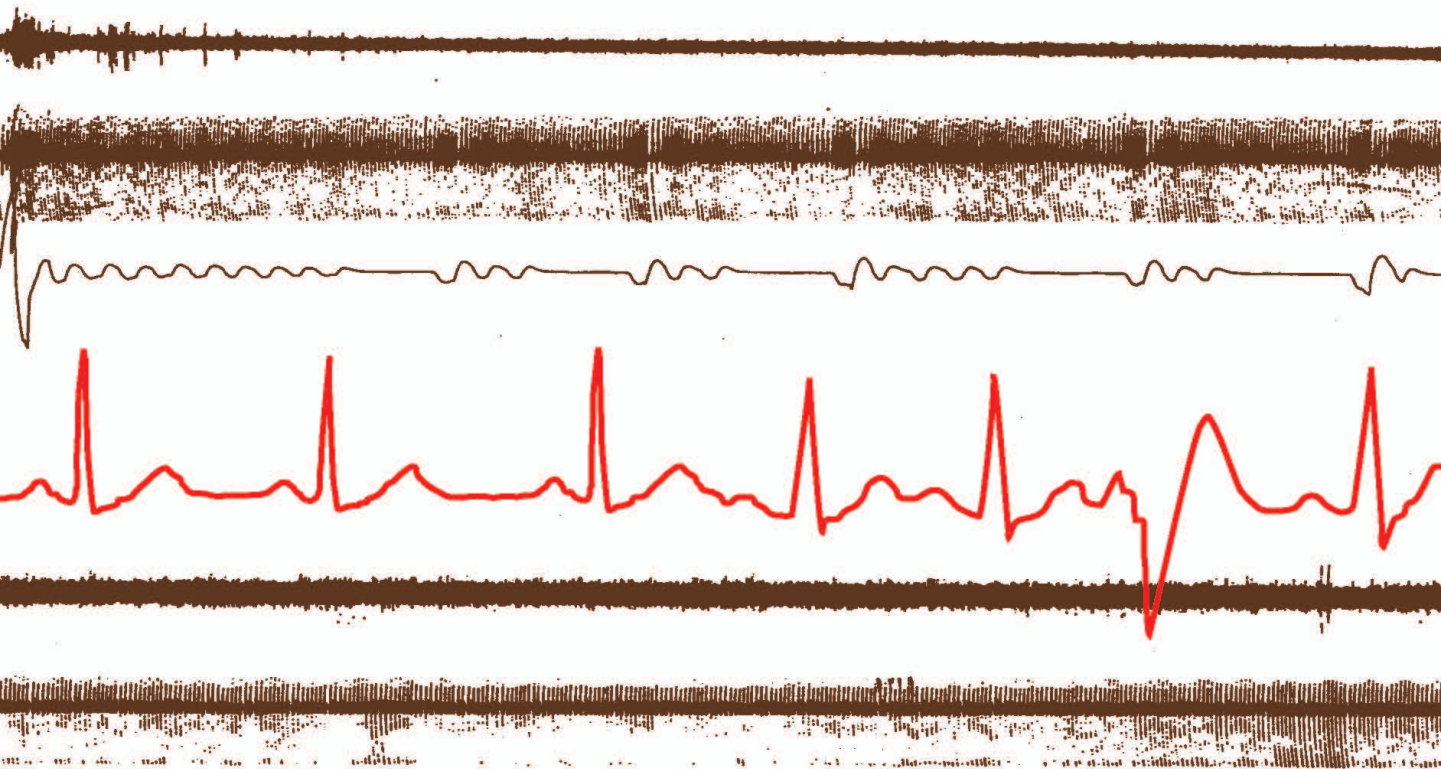
we go to a party full of straight, married couples.  
everyone is happy.  
he sits next to me but does not look at me all night.



30

november 2008

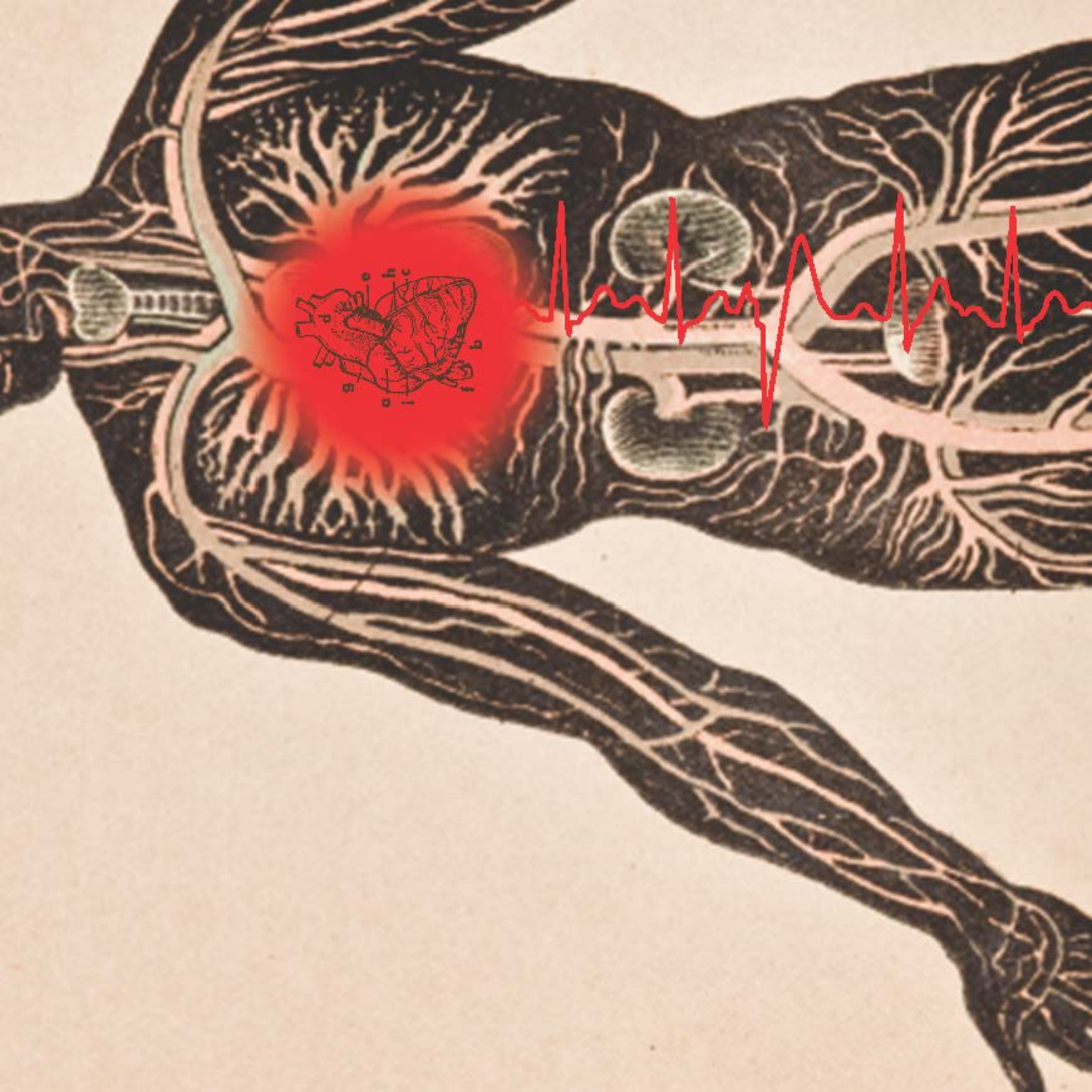
we wake up and decide, time's up.



















hearted impatient  
trated exhausted  
nicked conflicted  
named vulnerable  
xious devastated  
still overwhelmed  
disappointed alert  
ired open worried  
onate relieved still





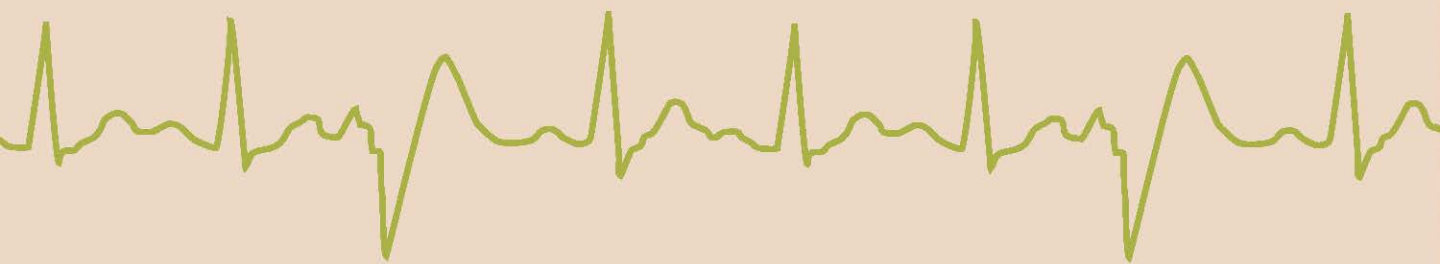


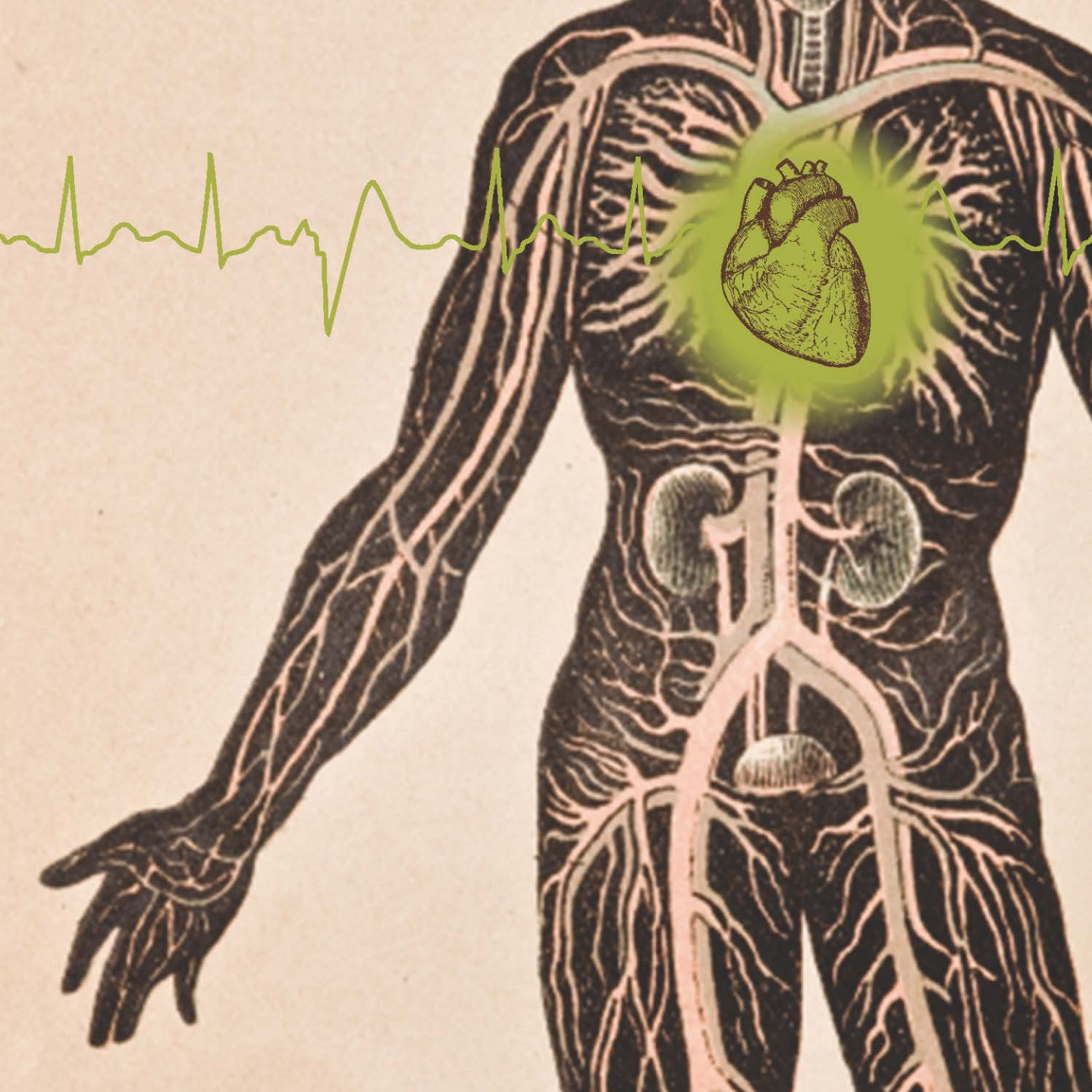


each other? wait a minute, was  
ted? did he make love to her and  
y long has this been going on?  
e? is this what he does when he  
o this to his last partner just be  
else knew about this? why didn't  
elied to me about smoking pot, was  
what else did he lie to me about?  
st anything he said? is that why  
he said he would never cheat on  
13 year marriage? does he love  
er than he likes me? who else  
is she beautiful? do they work  
e thought i was having an affair?  
ve asked? what made me ask? is  
w what do i do? who is going to  
pport? how could this happen?

a mind is a terrible place to get lost.







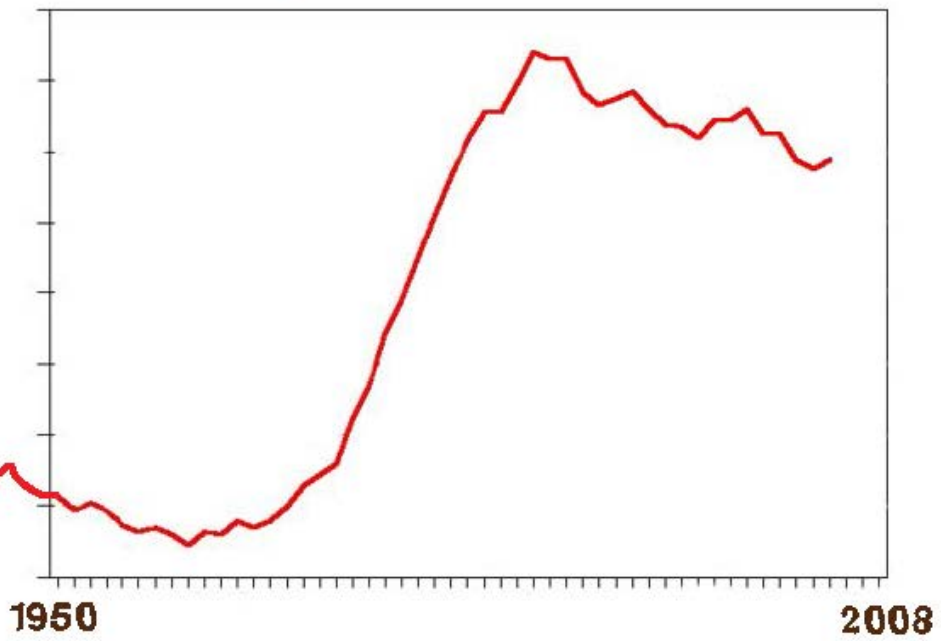
betrayed furious  
heart- bro  
angry mis  
lost nos  
wary old  
hurt an  
mad re  
mean m  
ugly curious confu



hurt melancholy  
broken outraged old  
dearable bitter irate  
nostalgic suspicious  
jealous lethargic  
anxious devastated  
restless distraught  
mistrustful fat and  
used vengeful still



**divorce rate for women**



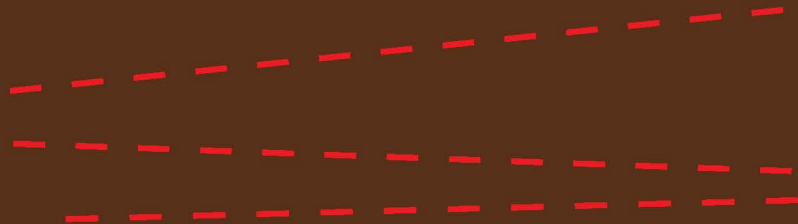


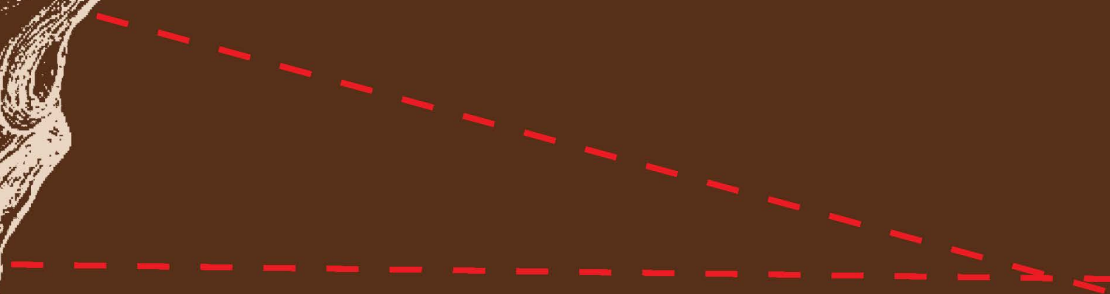


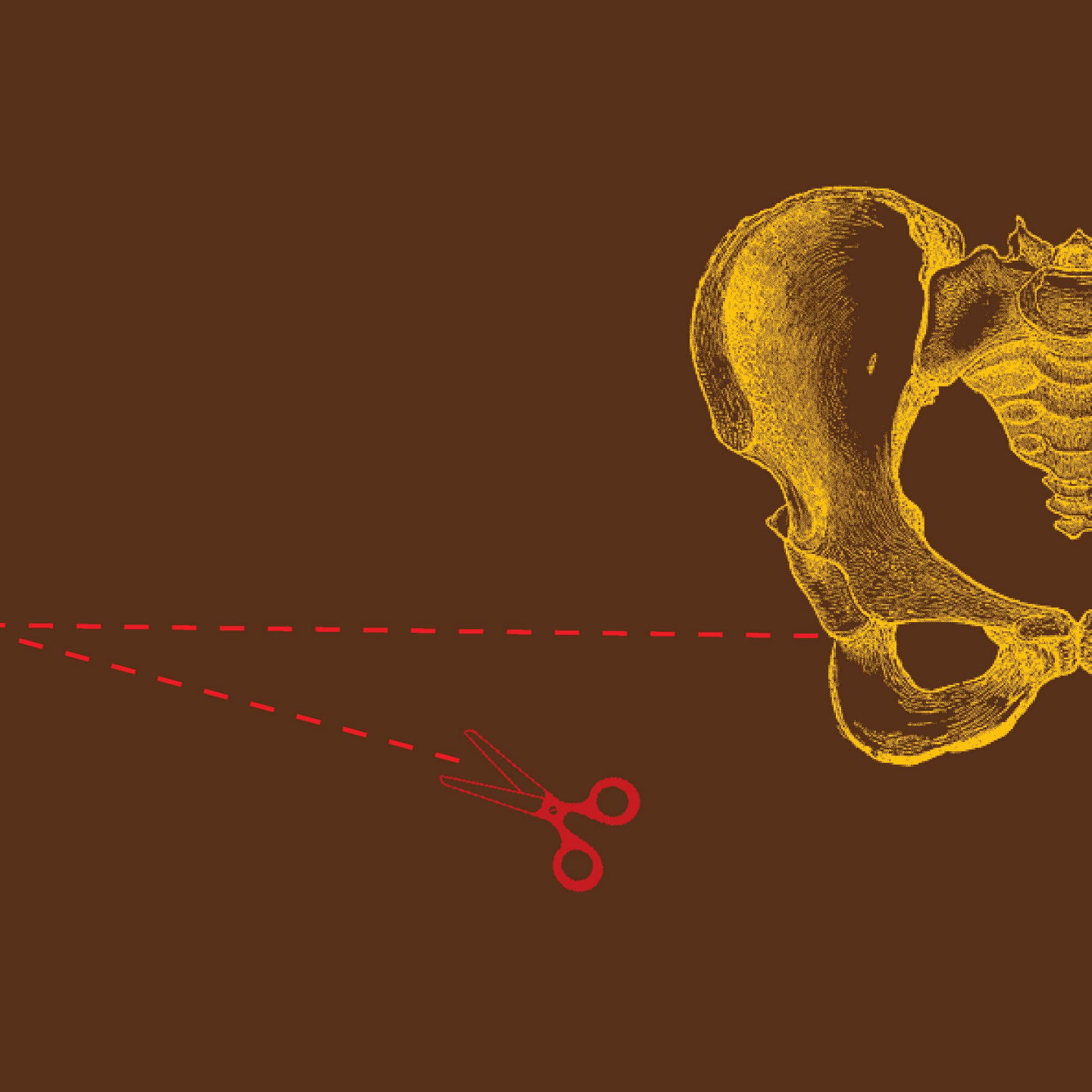
## mediation: session

marriage  
is  
a  
business  
relationship.  
everything  
is  
a  
marital  
asset.  
all  
assets  
must  
be  
divided  
equally.

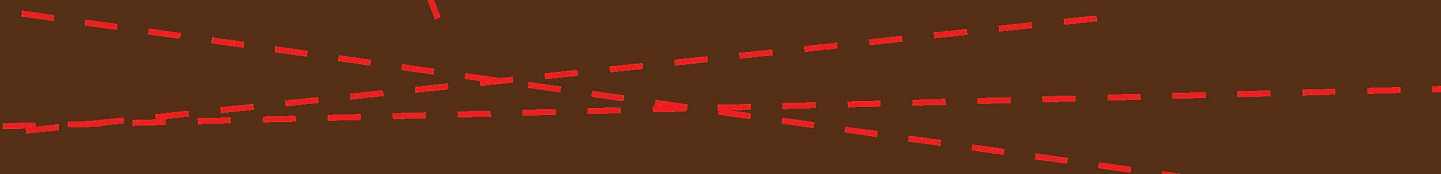
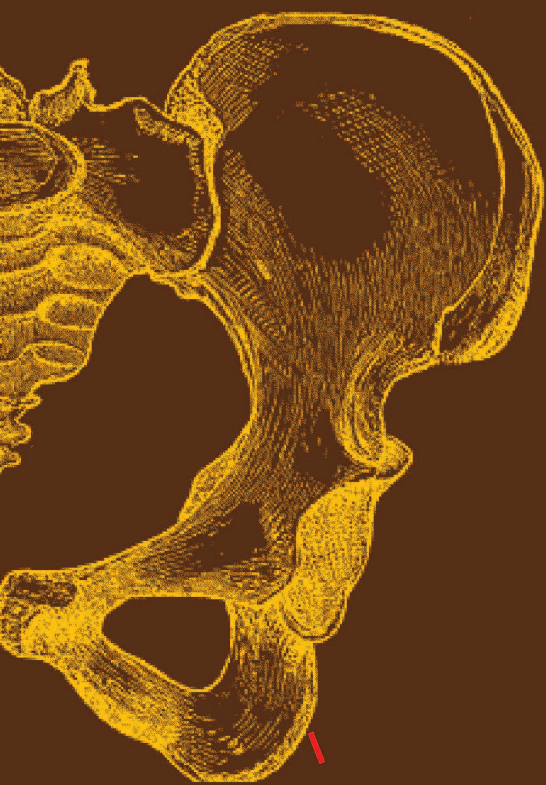










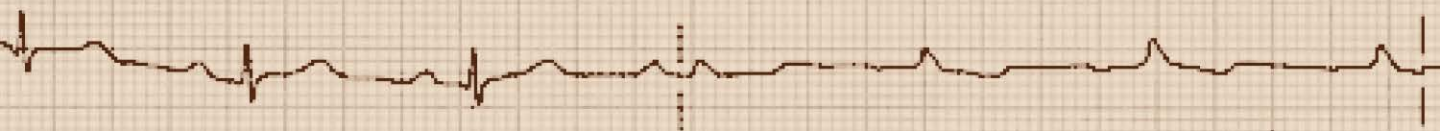




aVR

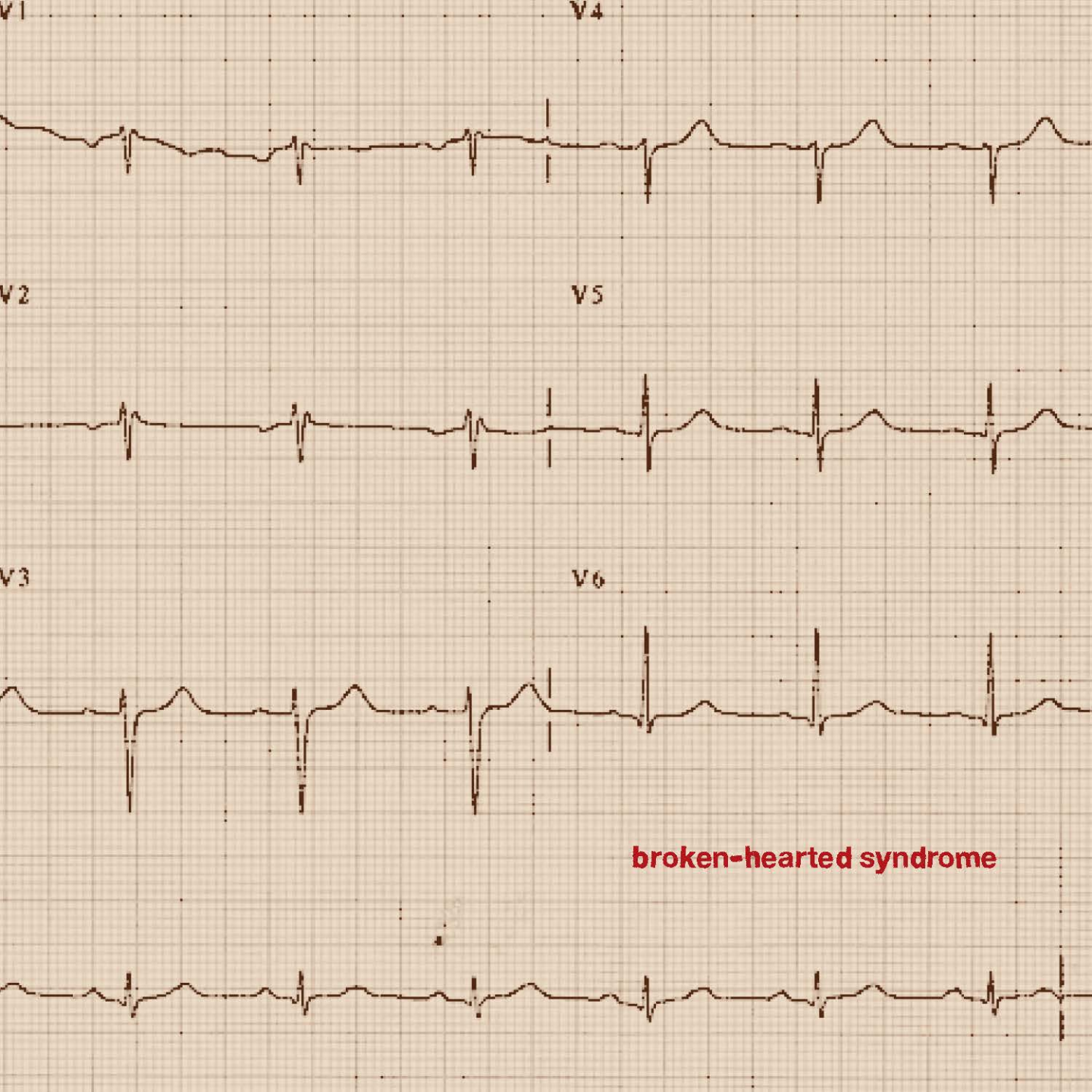


aVL



aVF



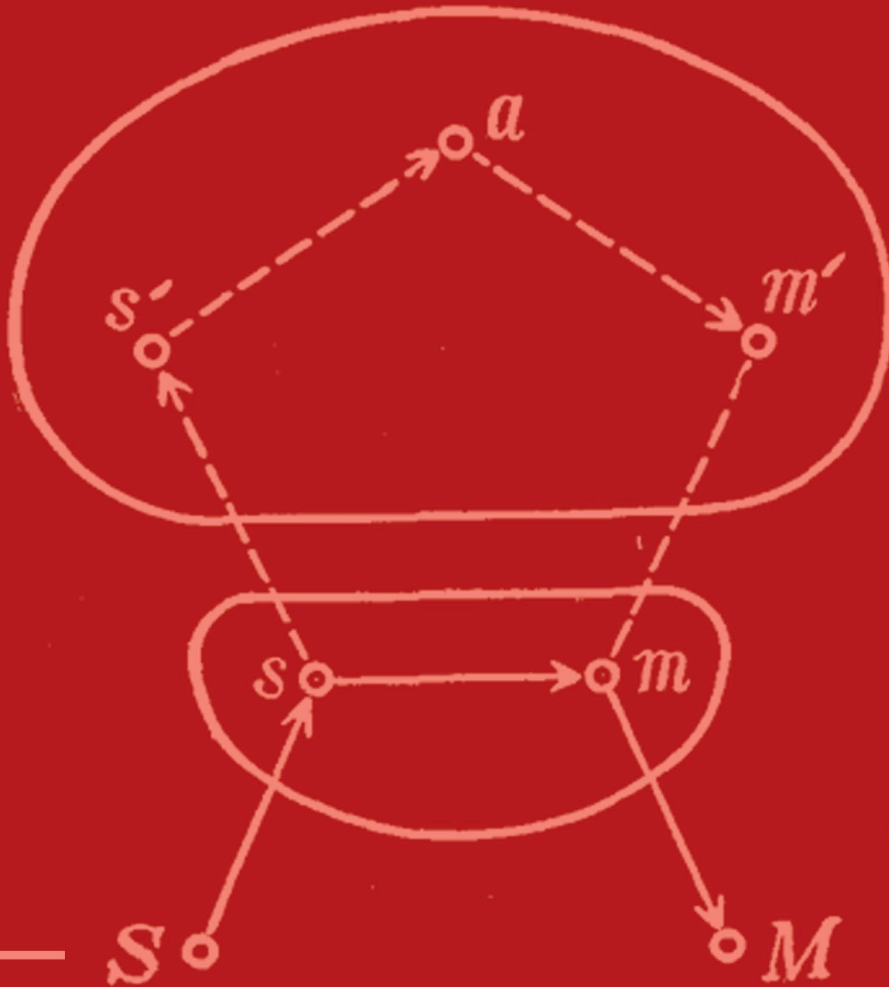


**broken-hearted syndrome**

**sensory input**

**pain**  
**grief**  
**fear**



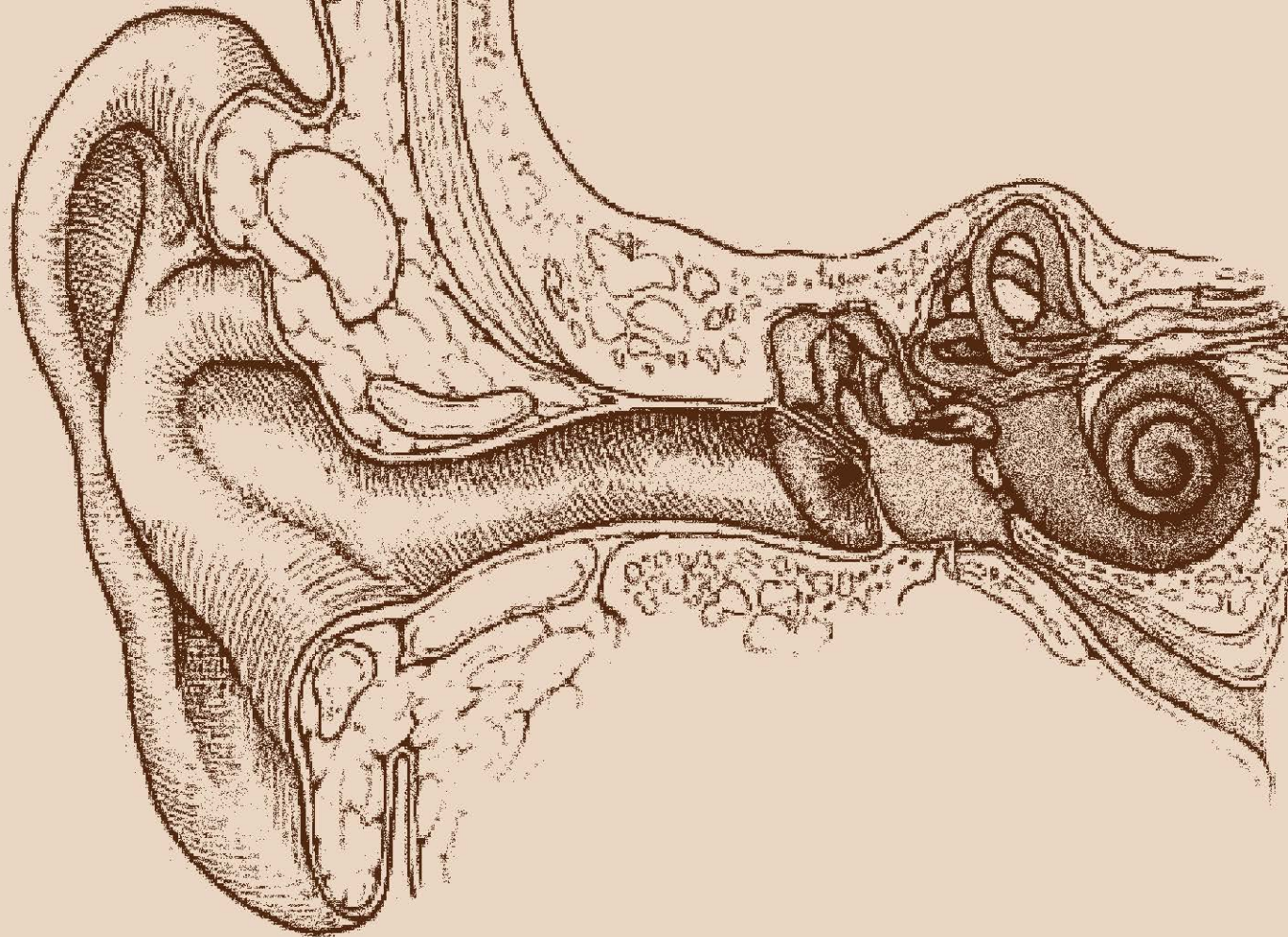


motor response

fight or flight

***i go to his house and say things that i know will hurt him.***











## mediation: session

**marriage is a business relationship.  
all debts are marital debts and must be divided equally.  
his debt is now half mine.  
he wants half my house.**









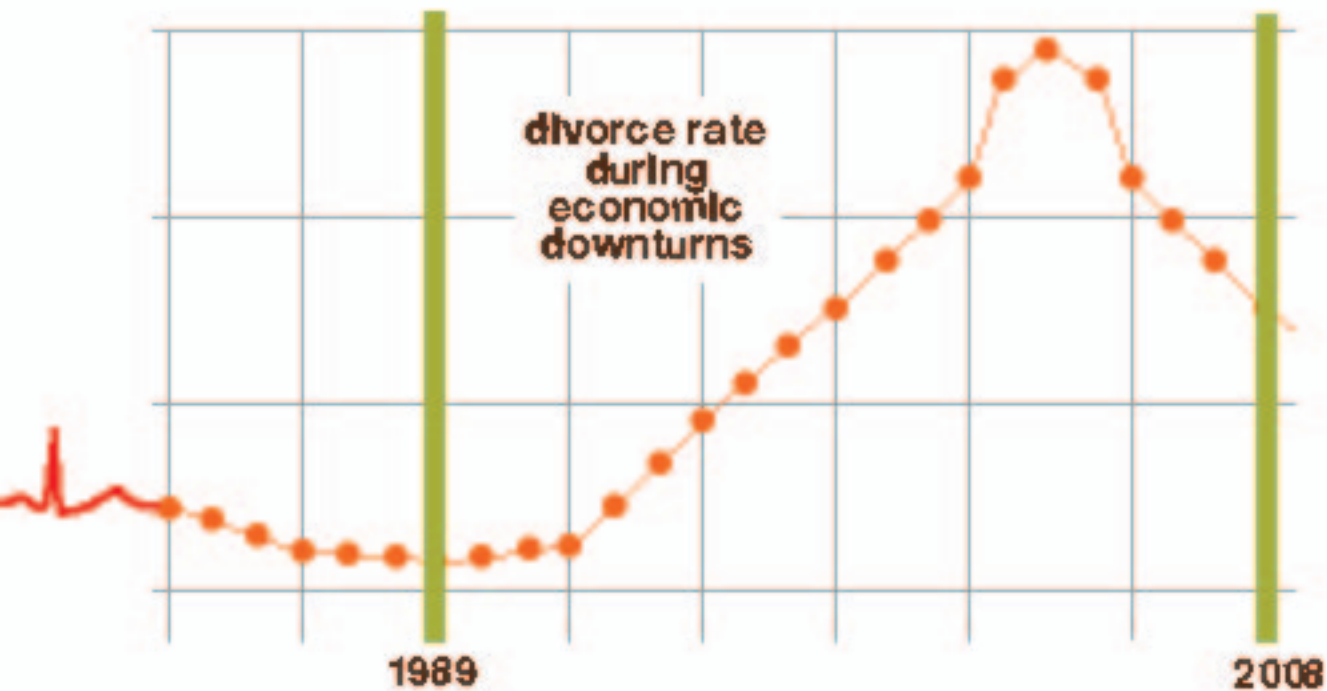




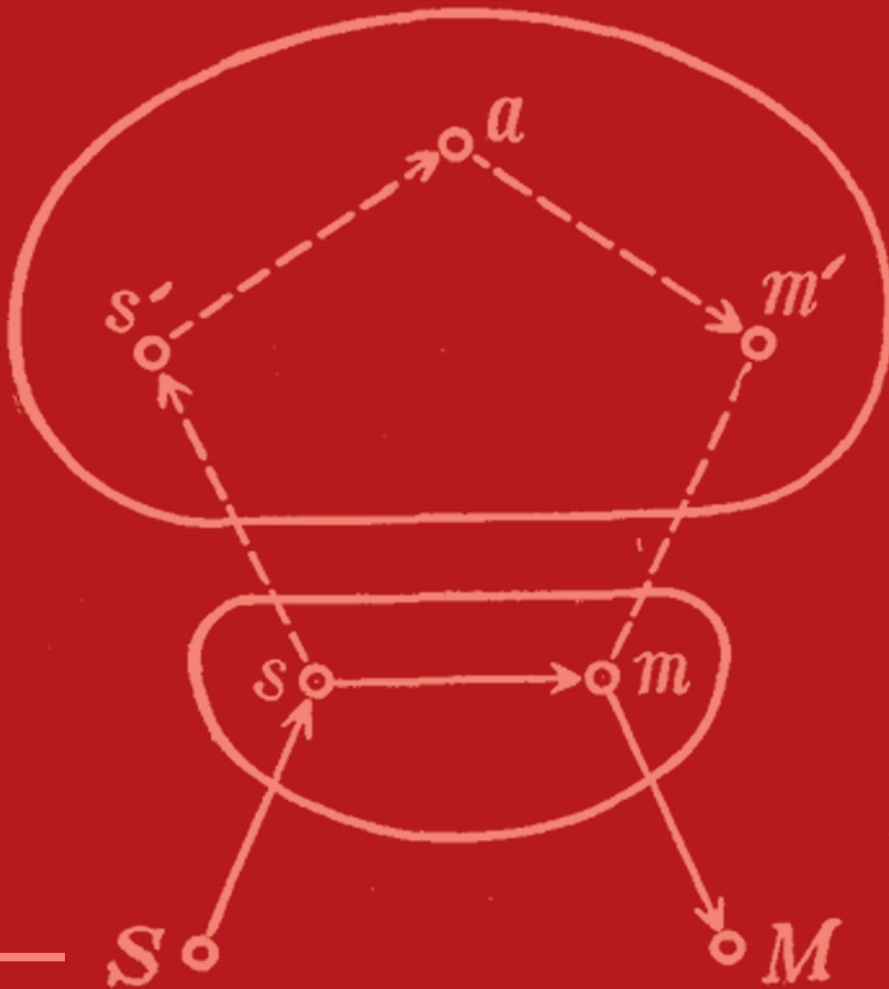
**i have nothing left to give.**







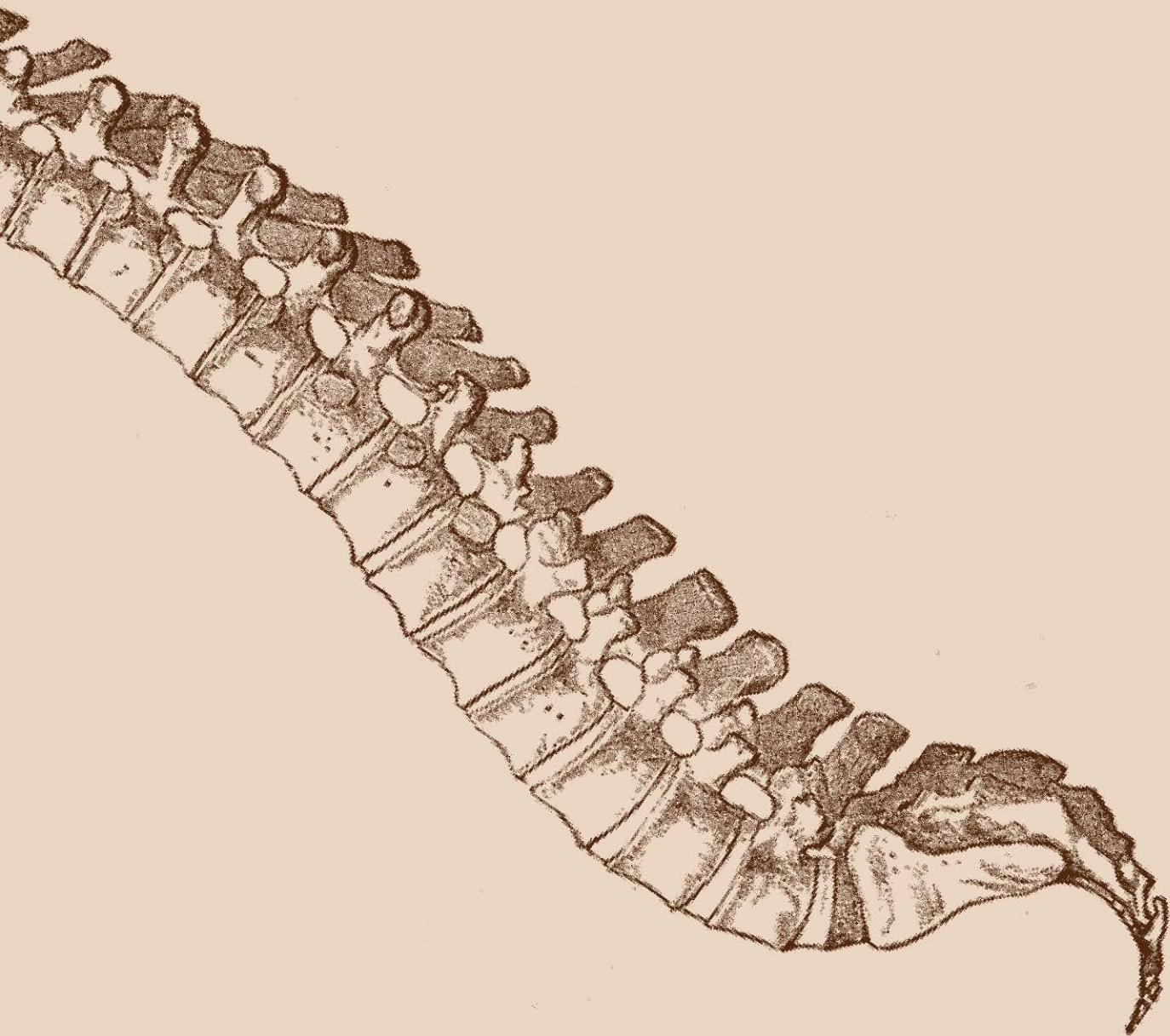




motor response

fight or flight













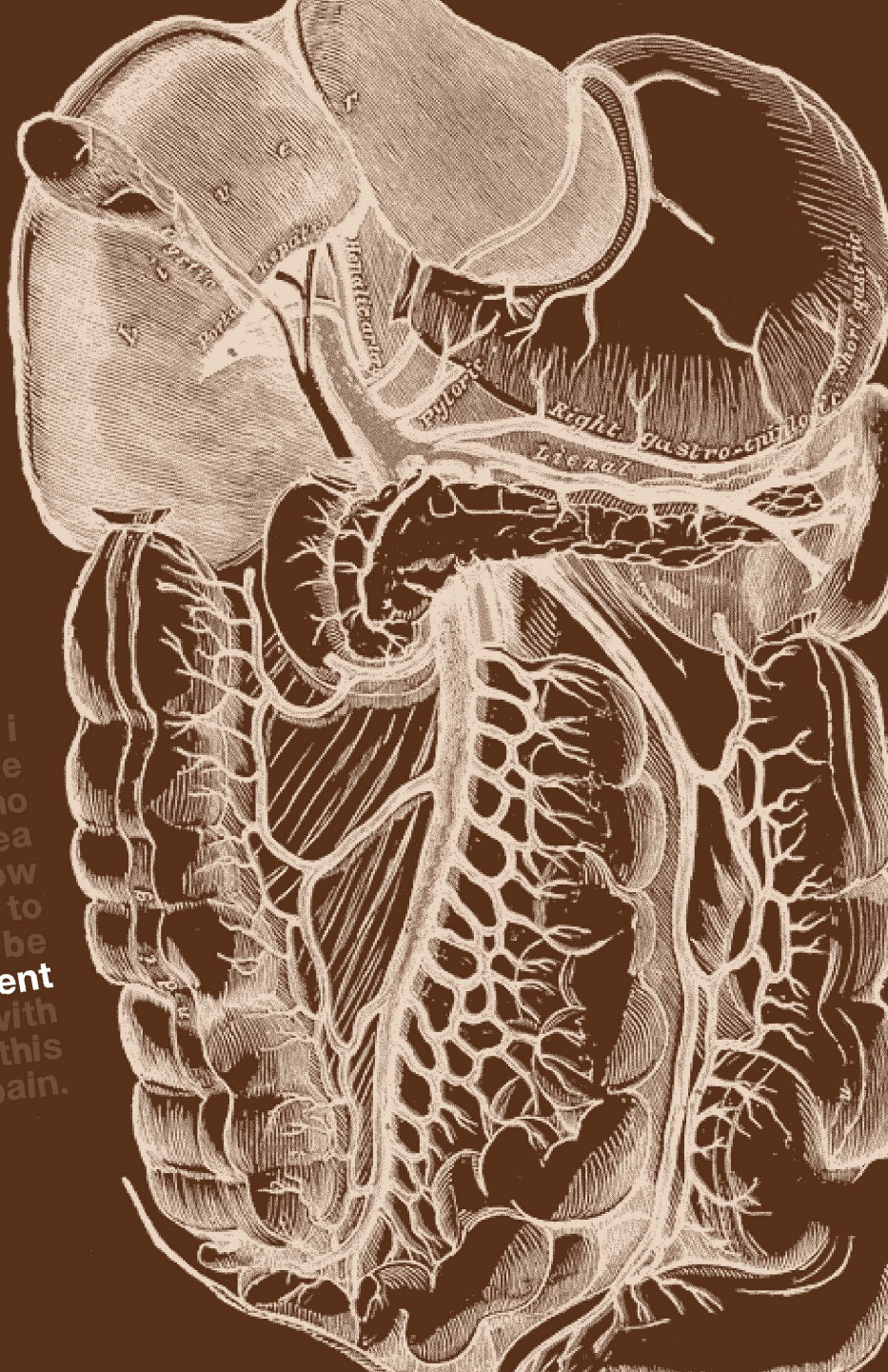
**the state defines marriage as a business relationship. yet a marriage is anything but that. the state views income, investments, possessions and property as marital assets; all debt as shared debt. it is your job to figure out how to divide the marital assets and debts with some measure of love and compassion; a division that will stand up in court as a fair and equitable redistribution of those assets, at a time when you are least capable of thinking this way. the process requires an extraordinary presence of being.**

**mediation: session**





i  
have  
no  
idea  
how  
to  
be  
present  
with  
this  
pain.







him. i miss him. i'm lonely. maybe  
ble to be together again. elizabeth  
and divorced each other multiple  
back to each other. i have always  
will be. maybe i should wait. hope.  
cannot do this. i miss the good times  
the seals on the beach in truro, like  
the parking lot and laughed, like the  
our honeymoon before we we got  
at the little white chapel in las ve-  
be, it will be. each time the phone  
calling to tell me that he made a  
without me and that he wants me  
s the dog. i cannot bear the pain. i  
re will i go? where will i live? what  
nn is getting a divorce too. he's my  
tter and see if there's a possibilit

magical thinking begins to take hold of me.

29

July 2009

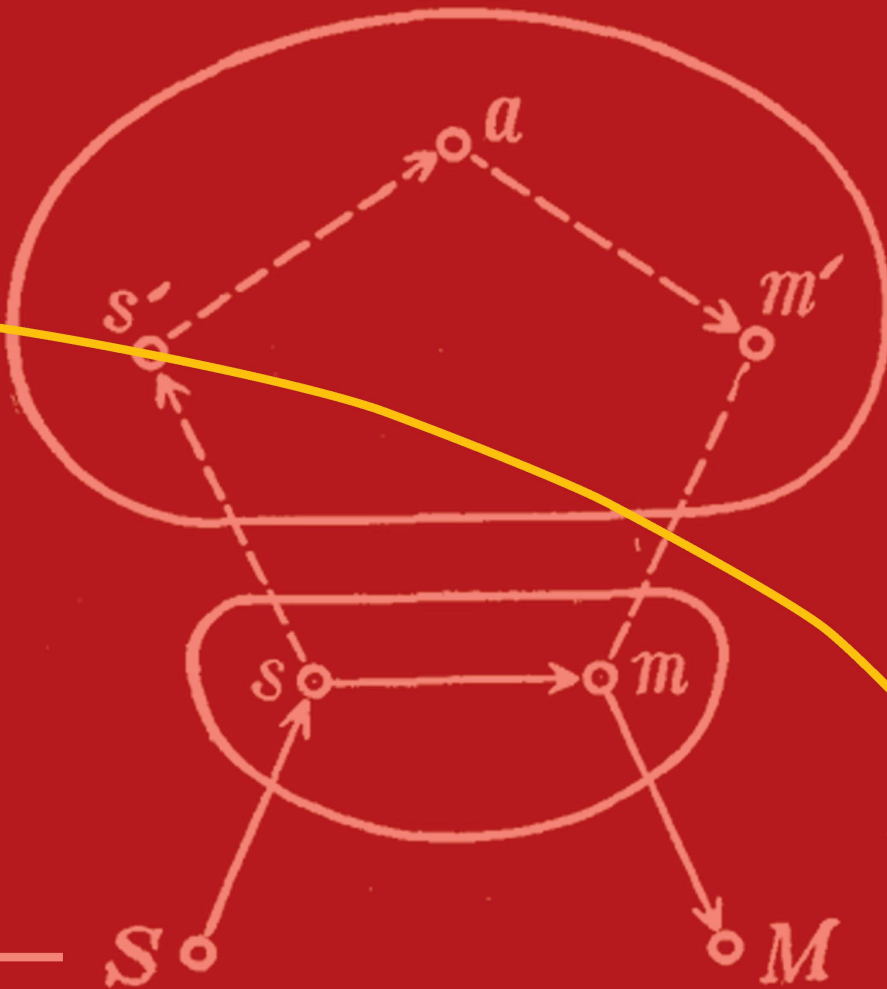
**we meet in probate court and petition a Judge for a divorce.**

30

our 13th anniversary July 2009







motor response  
fight or flight

the most  
loving thing  
you can do  
for another  
is to be true  
to your self.



curious hurt open-  
lonely inse  
old heav  
tired vul  
lost er  
hurt  
tired n  
loving  
relieved open trus





compassion



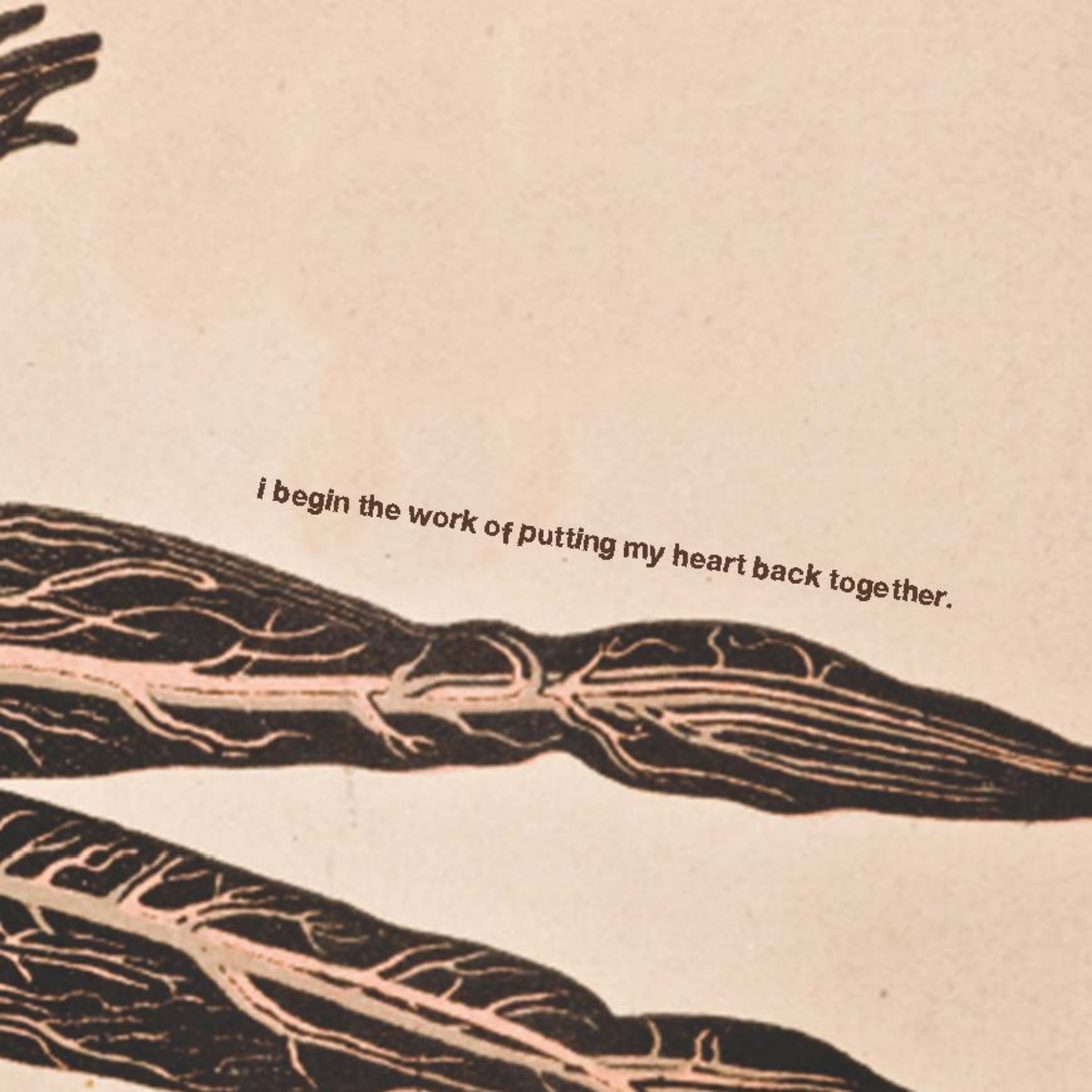
**29**  
august 2009

30

august 2009

our petition for a divorce has been approved.  
we wait for 90 days.

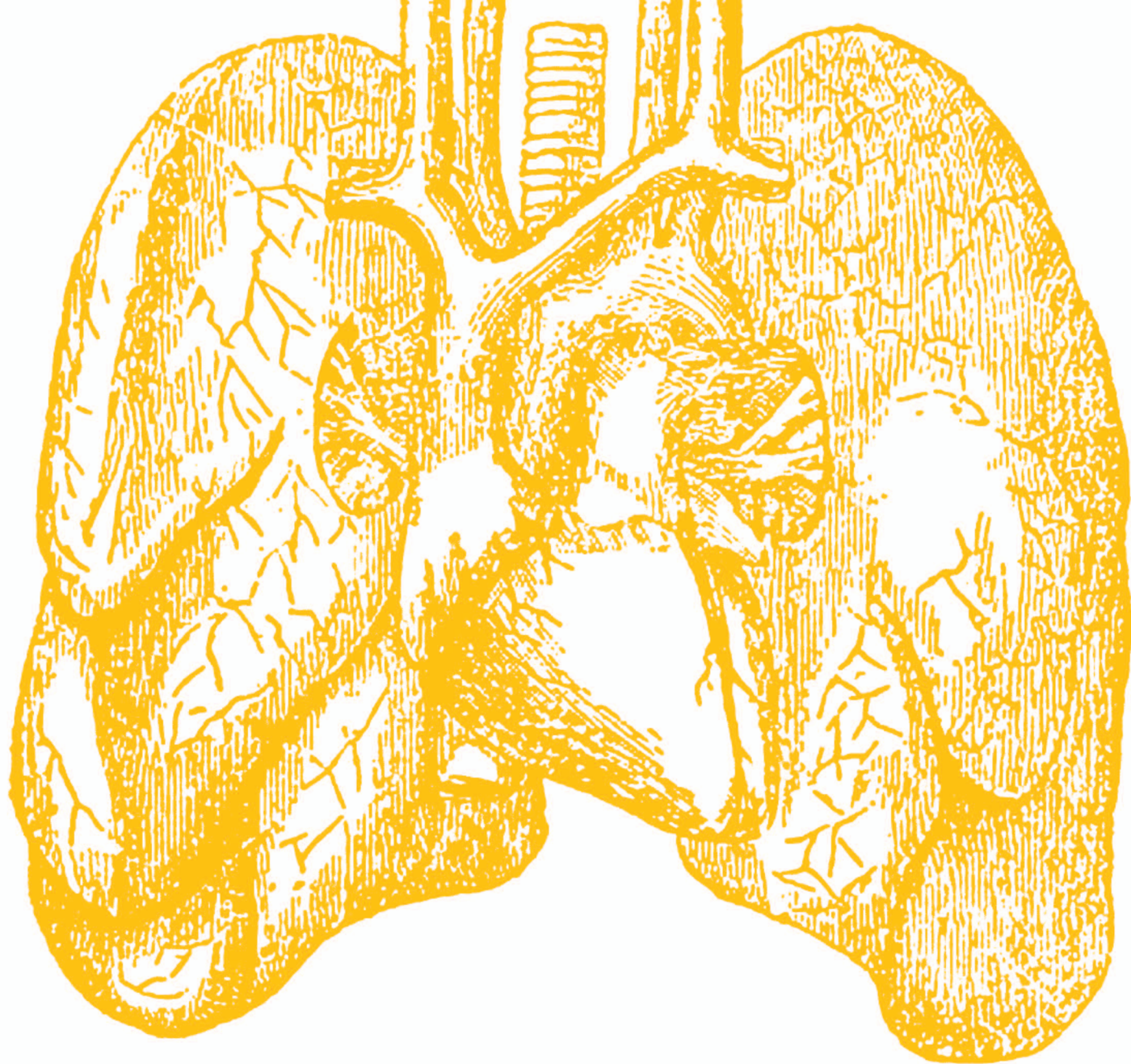




*i begin the work of putting my heart back together.*

**breath makes space.**









healing  
lies  
deep.





may i forgive myself.



**29**  
november 2009

30

november 2009

we no longer exist.



it is better  
to have loved  
and lost than  
never to have  
loved at all.





may I be safe.

may I have mental happiness.



may I have *physical* happiness.

may I live with ease.



may you be safe.

may you have mental happiness.

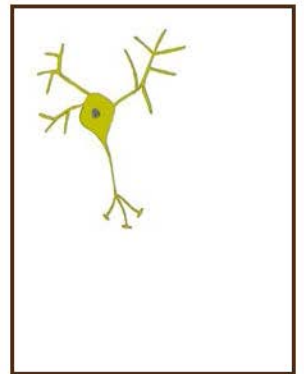
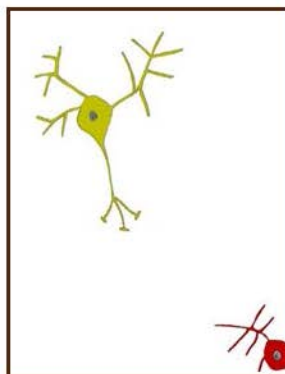
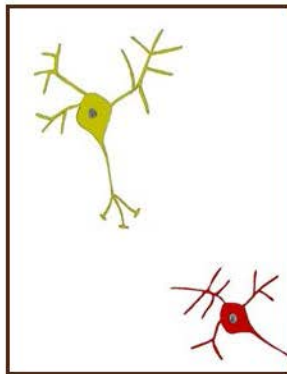
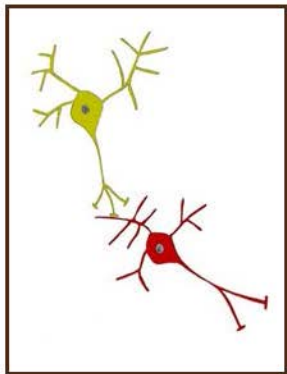


may you have physical happiness.

may you live with ease.



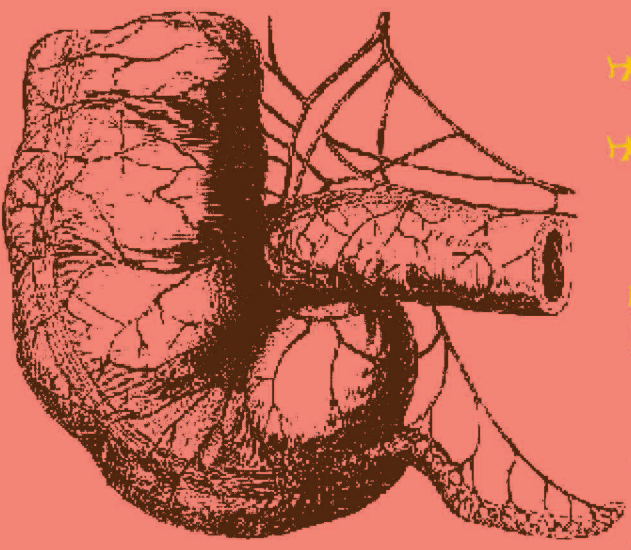
**the story in 4 panels**







# appendix



# lessons learned

● life happens. we might as well be conscious participants in it. ● contrary to what we see all around us, we are responsible for our own happiness. our partners cannot provide anything for us that we cannot provide for ourselves. ● what our relationships do provide, are opportunities for deep, personal growth. each time something comes up for us, and we respond by blaming our partner, it is really a missed opportunity, to explore what it is stirring, pushing up against, or hurting in us. focusing on our own responses, not on the response of our partner, is the work. and, if or when we find ourselves alone again, without distractions (no one to blame, to compare ourselves to, to focus our attention on), we have another chance to figure this out. ● there are times when we can say anything we want—in our head—times when it is best to keep our mouth shut. this is difficult to practice when we believe we are right. ● divorce is the death of a dream, of the future we thought we were creating, of our life as we knew it. grieving is a natural response to this death. ● feelings are energies; our task is to feel the energy and to let it move through us. identifying with a feeling keeps it attached to us. that is why some people, years after a divorce, still feel bitter or wounded. ● for some, the pain of loneliness that accompanies a break-up, separation or a divorce, is so great that they go from the end of that relationship immediately into the beginning of another relationship. for those who are willing to stay the course, a transformation is possible. when we are willing to be with the pain of the loss and willing to feel the pain of loneliness, we can come to a place where we find wholeness: where loneliness becomes aloneness, a place where we are strengthened. ● becoming truly intimate with our own self is a profound act of love. ●







# love after love

the time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. eat.  
you will love again the stranger who was your self.  
give wine. give bread. give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

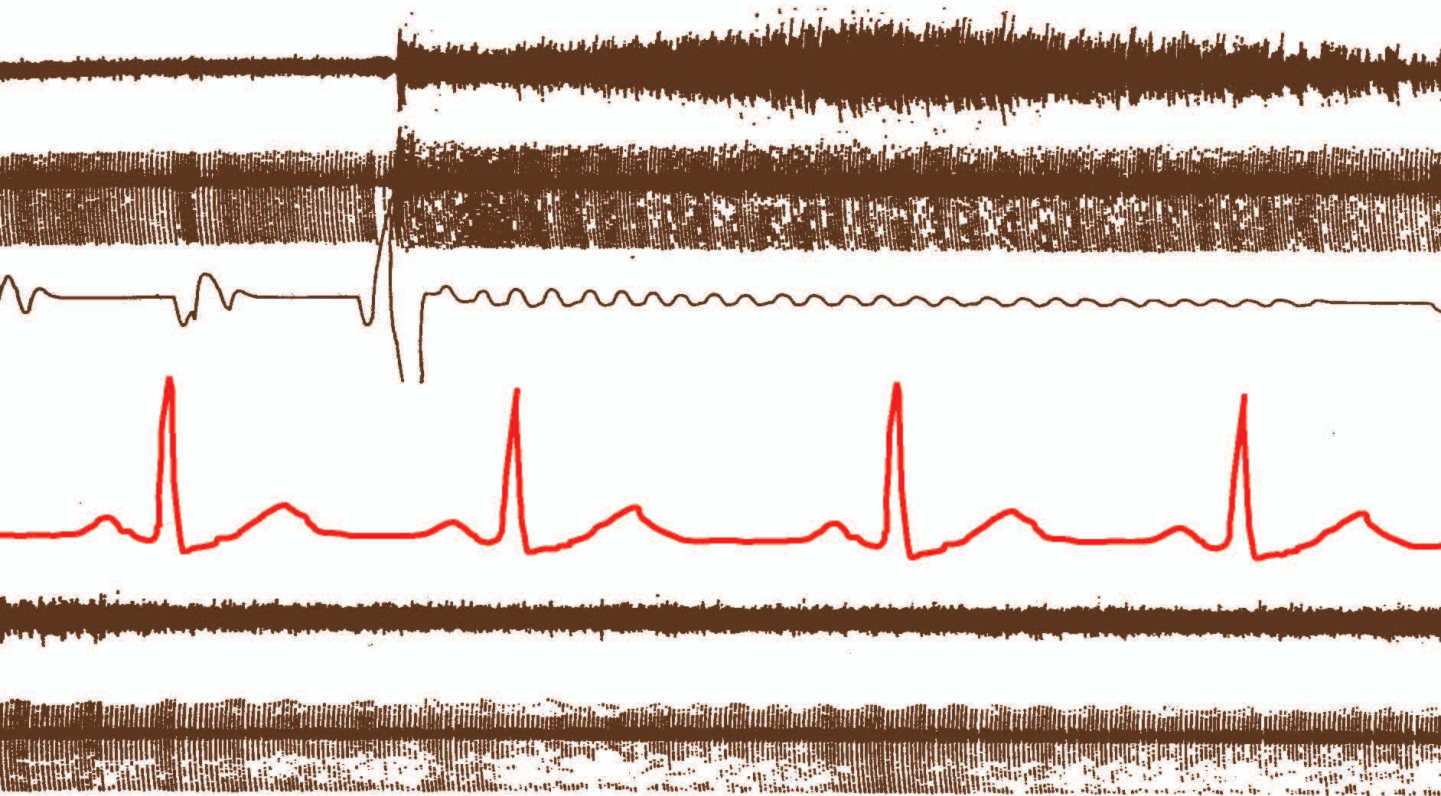
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart,  
take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
sit. feast on your life.

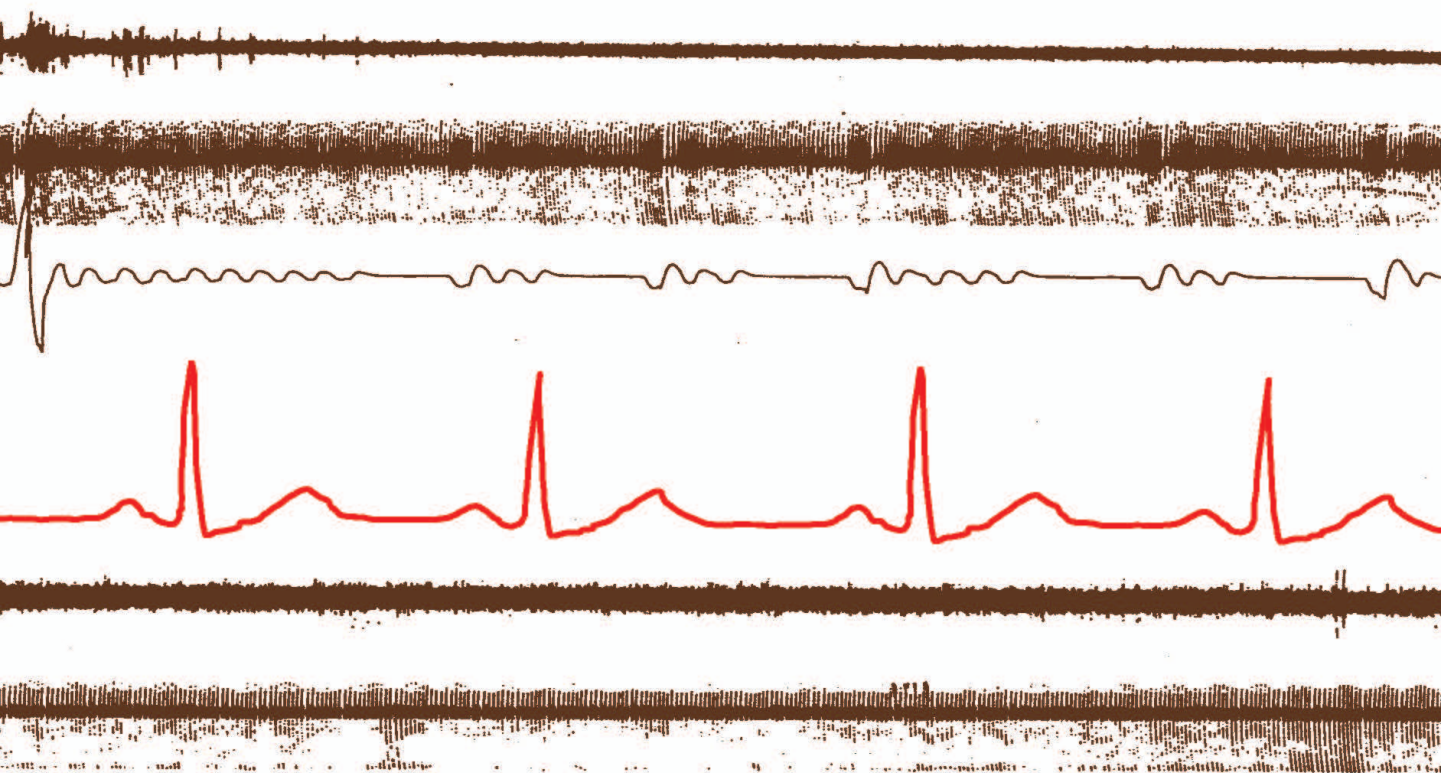
derek walcott



● mom ● linda enghagen (legal coach and loyal friend) ● val caro ● pamela freeman ● paula coyle ● pattra chiravara ● kimberly bissell (my best friend from high school who i reconnected with after many years because she was going through the process at the exact same time) ● heidi and jackie given ● mistingnette smith ● rick baruc ● deb habib ● margie singer ● michael howes (you will never know how grateful i was when you came to help me stack four cords of wood for the winter) ● kathy castania and peter debes (oh the importance of being with you that 1st new years) ● keri donlan ● chantal zakari (amazing graphic artist and teacher who taught me how to do this) ● christina kramer ● carol hetrick ● bruce coulombe ● sharon weizenbaum ● the sweet and easy circle sisters ● stephanie cantillo ● and my grandson, sebastian José (born in the middle of all this).

thank you











# about the artist

**i passed through the eye of the needle. i still live in western massachusetts with my dog (that i share with my ex), and in boston where i am a diploma student at the school of the museum of fine arts. i have taken to the hula hoop, which is no surprise since i was born in 1958, the year the wham-o company popularized it. i continue to work as an activist and am emerging from my divorce as an artist. in case you are wondering, i am available.**

**[phyllislabanowski@comcast.net](mailto:phyllislabanowski@comcast.net)**