

# Remembering the River

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The **river** is memory.

Amnesia settles as sediment,  
trapping movements.

After torrential downpours,  
river water churns -  
excavating the forgotten.

My ancestors kept me afloat in the midst of these periodic turbulences.  
I tried to hold on - catching debris of murky memories for safekeeping.  
I used these fragmented pieces to re-tell stories about  
longing and not be longing.

A butterfly graced above me,  
accompanied me  
on my nomadic journey.

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Shifting currents  
from the melting mountain snow,  
summer monsoons,  
and earth's stillness ---  
transport my body to multiple plateaus  
landing at sites of isolation,  
sites of longing,  
sites of arrivals,  
sites of departures,  
and sites of becoming.

These cardinal directions become my artistic compass,  
used to navigate my presence here,  
bearing the weight of being othered.

My body occupies these sites,  
employing simple gestures of sewing,  
sitting, stitching,  
mending, walking, -----  
meditating on the labor  
of adapting to a new home,  
inviting passerby to conversations  
about resilience,  
memory,  
and personal history.

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As I move through these terrains,  
I hold an amulet close to my heart.

It's a memory of a hidden map  
created by unknown mark makers  
who made multiple travels long ago  
to the inner caves of the Gobi Desert.  
There, they spent unknown years to complete depictions of pilgrimages  
to Wutaishan (五台山), one of China's sacred mountains.

The map revealed pathways to five plateaus,  
corresponding to the north,  
east,  
south,  
west,  
and the center.

The thought of walking these paths  
lifts my spirit,  
fuels my strength to resist assimilation,  
to resist the pull  
towards  
the river's sediment of forgetting.

I stubbornly hold my ground with my gestures and words.

Simultaneous streams of my artistic compass points and  
the visualization of these sacred plateaus converge.

Together,  
they lead me on my own pilgrimage  
towards a letting go,  
towards a cleanse.

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Rituals are medicine.  
They suture past wounds.  
Often times, they take place in solitude  
with the land as an offering -  
to be with remembering,  
with wandering spirits,  
and with my ancestors.

Repetitions  
through my mark making,  
multiples, and stitchings  
become my mantra,  
a prayer,  
a meditation,  
a sutra.

Returning to contested sites,  
excavating spatial injustices  
by momentarily reclaiming that space  
with my body  
are medicinal herbs.  
They deliver a sense of potency  
about longing, place, and memory.

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*My art practice, living my life, and witnessing unfolding everyday moments are inseparable. Their alchemy has empowered me to speak and take actions in my authentic voice. My collection of thoughts and life experiences have travelled great distances from the mountain peak moving towards the river delta. I've merely distilled them in a capsule filled with prose.*

*I am humbly honored to be invited to expand upon these words, to dialogue and learn with members of the Milwaukee Artist Resource Network and the creative community in Milwaukee at large in the coming months. Thank you!*

