

**JUST LIKE THE
OTHER BOYS!**



Just Like the Other Boys

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WHEN I STARTED
MAKING ART IT WAS
ALL SUPERHEROES
AND MUSCLE-BOUND
MEN.

I KNEW THE RULES
I COULD DRAW
MUSCLEY MEN OR



GUNS...

KNIVES WERE OK TOO

BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE GUNS AT HOME. I
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY REALLY LOOKED
LIKE.

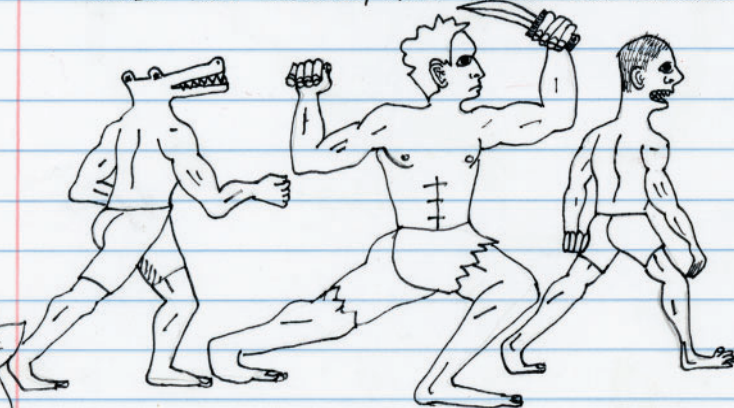


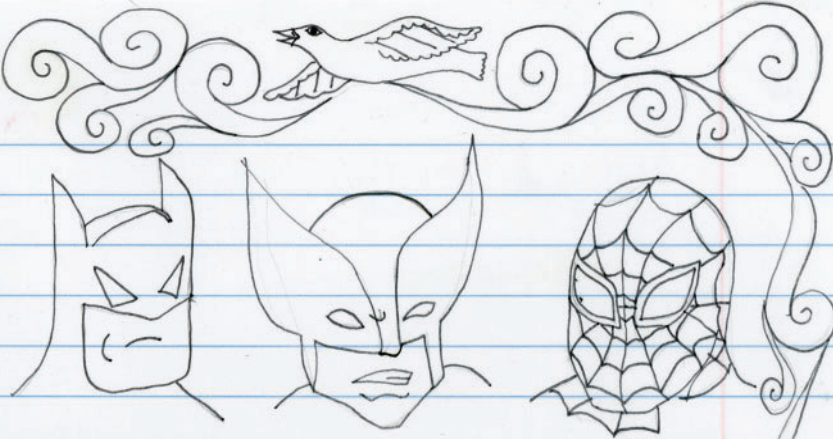
SO THE PARADE OF MUSCLE MEN CONTINUED

THERE WERE
OTHER RULES,
TOO.



WHEN I JOINED THE KNITTING CLUB IN
SECOND GRADE I MADE THE REST OF THE CLUB
(ALL GIRLS) PROMISE NOT TO TELL I WAS IN THE
CLUB. THEY AGREED; THEY ^{I THINK} KNEW THE STAKES.

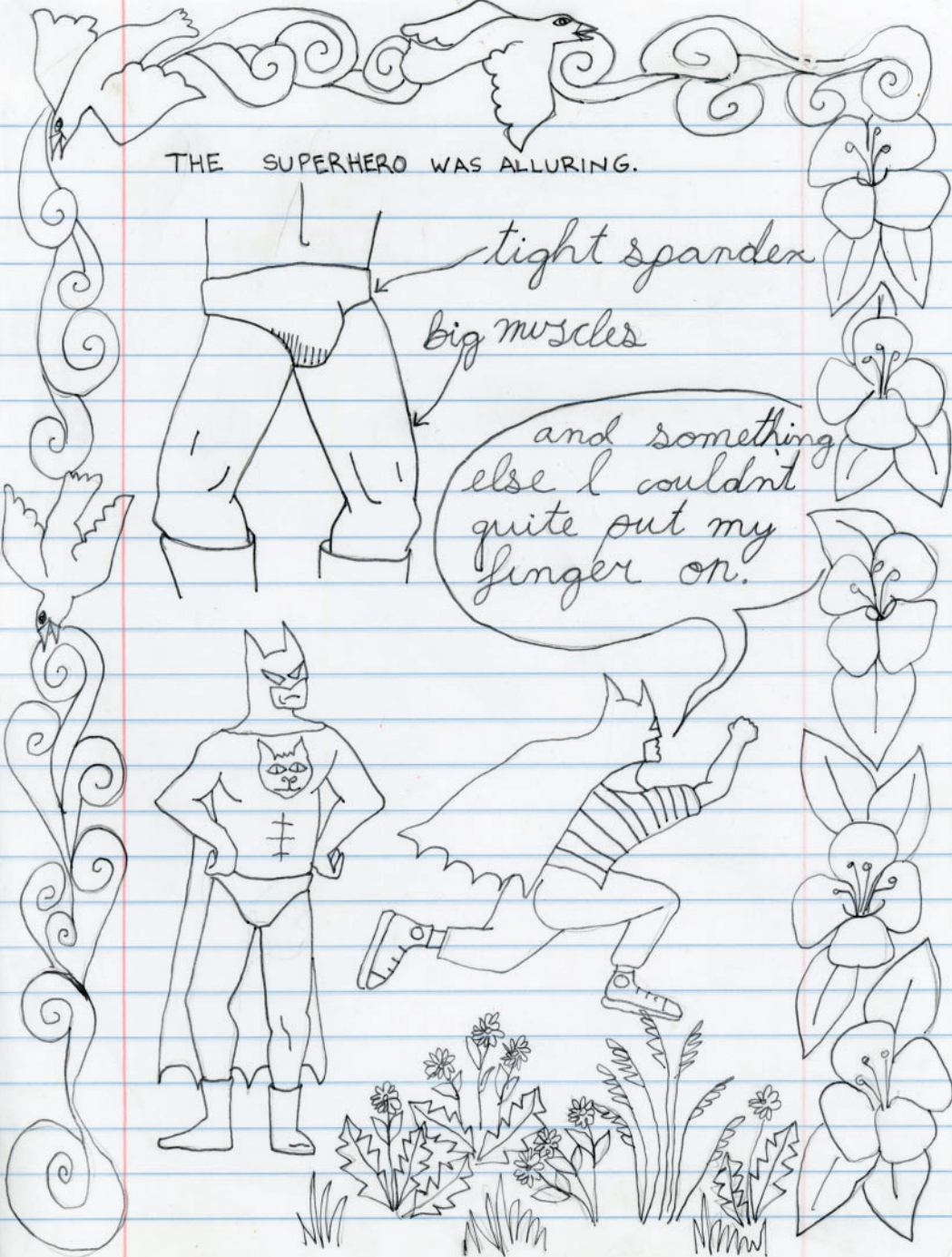




WHILE I WAS TRYING TO BE MASCULINE ENOUGH
TO FIT IN, THE 90s WERE ALSO AWASH IN
SUPERHERO CARTOONS. (AND I WATCHED THEM
ALL!) (AND THE SPOOFS)
SOON...



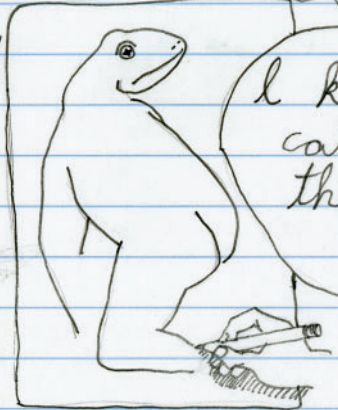
I STARTED BUYING BOXES
OF COMICS AT YARDSALES.



THE SUPERHERO WAS ALLURING.

tight spandex
big muscles

and something
else I couldn't
quite put my
finger on.



I kept making
cartoons but
they weren't as
muscly now

I FOUND OTHER
WAYS TO CHANNEL THE MASCULINITY
OF THE SUPERHERO.



Running
fast and
being strong
gave me
control over
my body

... THE FEELING OF
CONTROL AT LEAST.

AND SPORTS HELPED DEFLECT QUESTIONS
AROUND SEX AND GENDER



... MOSTLY



At least their
aim was bad

CONTORTING THE
BODY, FITTING IT,
SHAPING IT, DECONSTRUCTING AND REASSEMBLING
THE BODY INTO "ACCEPTABLE" SHAPES AND
APPEARANCES CAME TO DOMINATE MY ART.

Impulsively
I ran and
trained and
restricted
food.

Exercising
control
worked
I ran fast!



UNTIL IT SUDDENLY
STOPPED WORKING



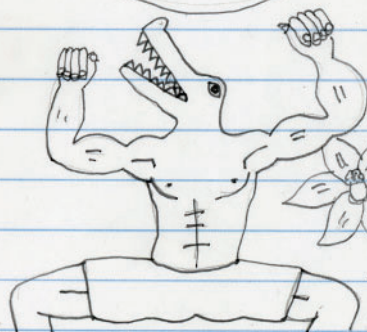
Looking back as
an adult, I know
the little kid
in my memory is
bisexual and
nonbinary

"WOMEN'S" CLOTHING WAS INTERESTING, MOST
CLOTHING FOR MEN
SEEMED REPETITIVE
AND BORING

But I knew
I wasn't a
woman



I thought
about
being a
woman
but mostly
because
I only
knew man
or woman
as options



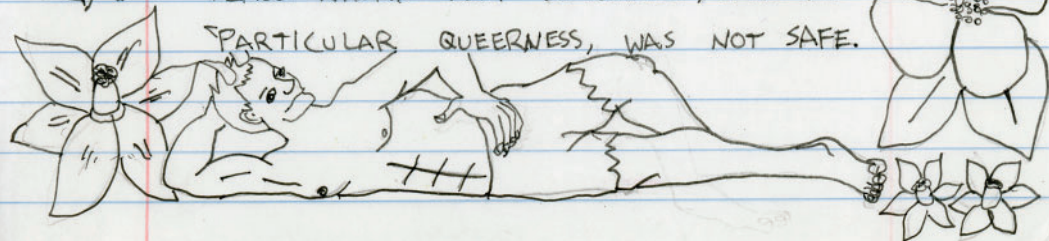
WITHOUT REALIZING IT, I WAS CONSUMED
BY MY OWN SECRET IDENTITY

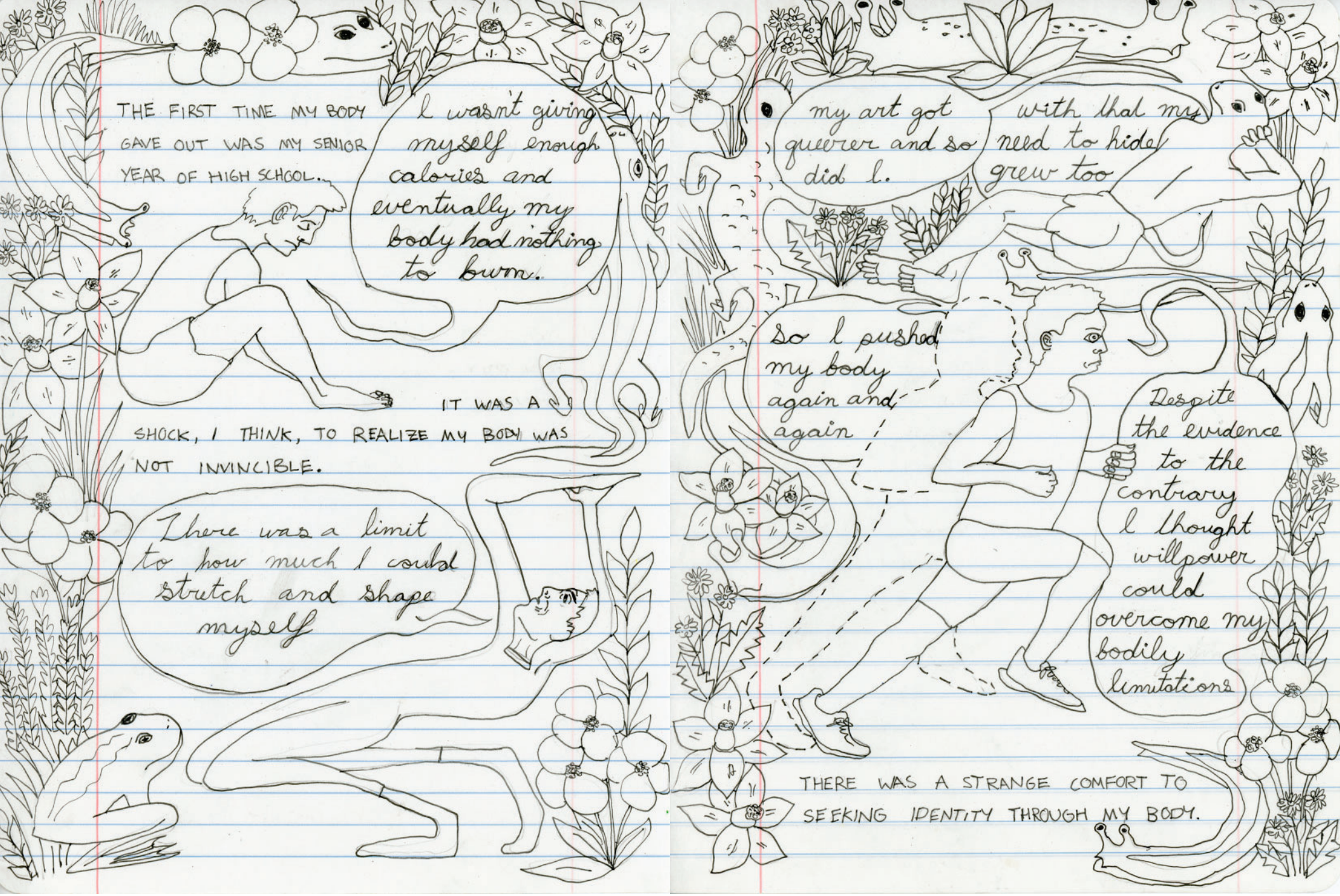


I'm just
like the other
boys!

And someone
told me boys
can't be
bisexual
so I'm going
to believe
that for ten
years!

AND JUST LIKE A SUPERHERO
MY SECRET IDENTITY KEPT ME SAFE IN A
PLACE WHERE ANY DIFFERENCE, AND IN
PARTICULAR QUEERNESS, WAS NOT SAFE.





THE FIRST TIME MY BODY
GAVE OUT WAS MY SENIOR
YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

I wasn't giving
myself enough
calories and
eventually my
body had nothing
to burn.

IT WAS A
SHOCK, I THINK, TO REALIZE MY BODY WAS
NOT INVINCIBLE.

There was a limit
to how much I could
stretch and shape
myself

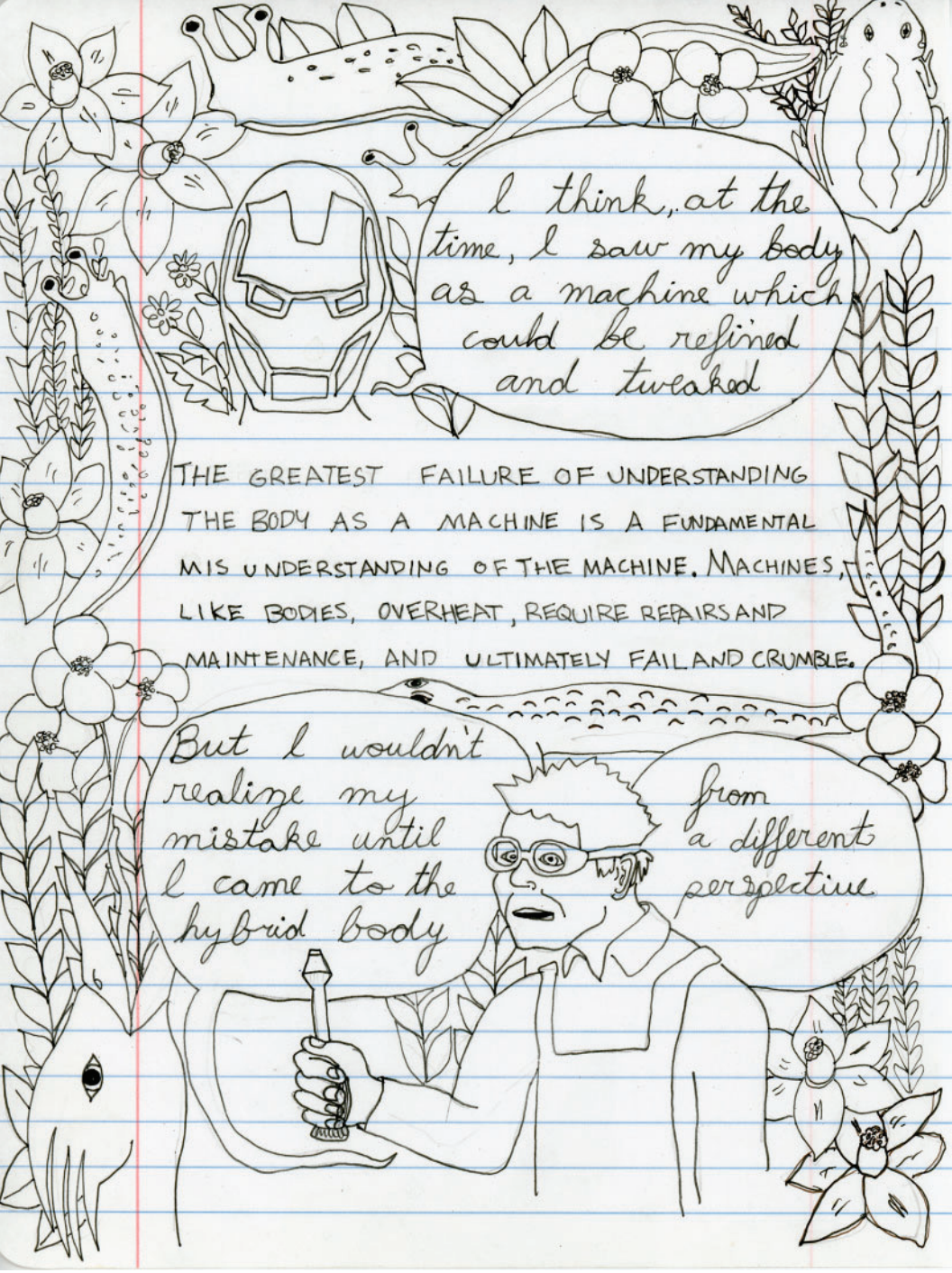
my art got
queerer and so
did I.

with that my
need to hide
grew too

So I pushed
my body
again and
again

Despite
the evidence
to the
contrary
I thought
willpower
could
overcome my
bodily
limitations

THERE WAS A STRANGE COMFORT TO
SEEKING IDENTITY THROUGH MY BODY.

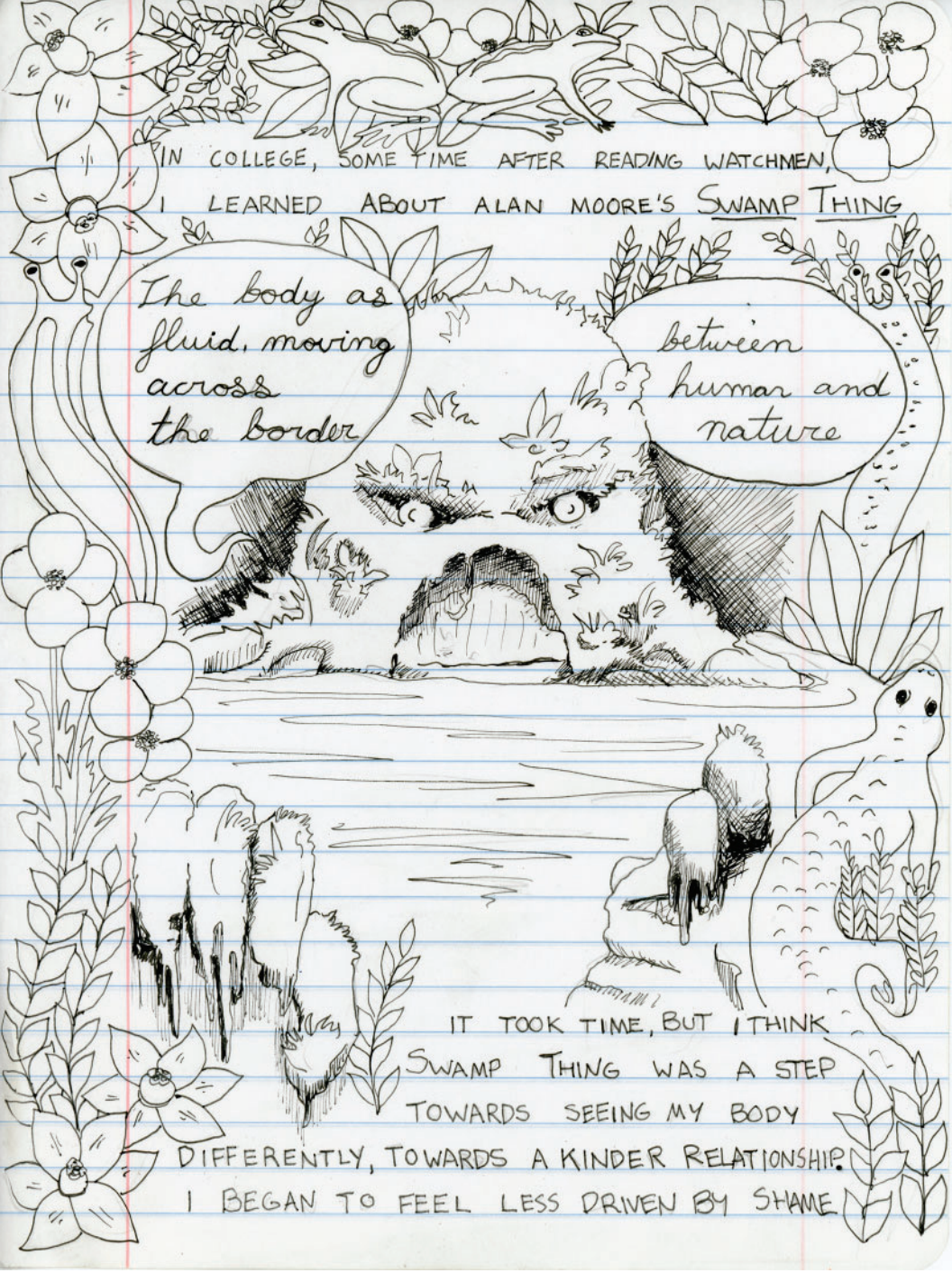


I think, at the time, I saw my body as a machine which could be refined and tweaked

THE GREATEST FAILURE OF UNDERSTANDING THE BODY AS A MACHINE IS A FUNDAMENTAL MIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE MACHINE. MACHINES, LIKE BODIES, OVERHEAT, REQUIRE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE, AND ULTIMATELY FAIL AND CRUMBLE.

But I wouldn't realize my mistake until I came to the hybrid body

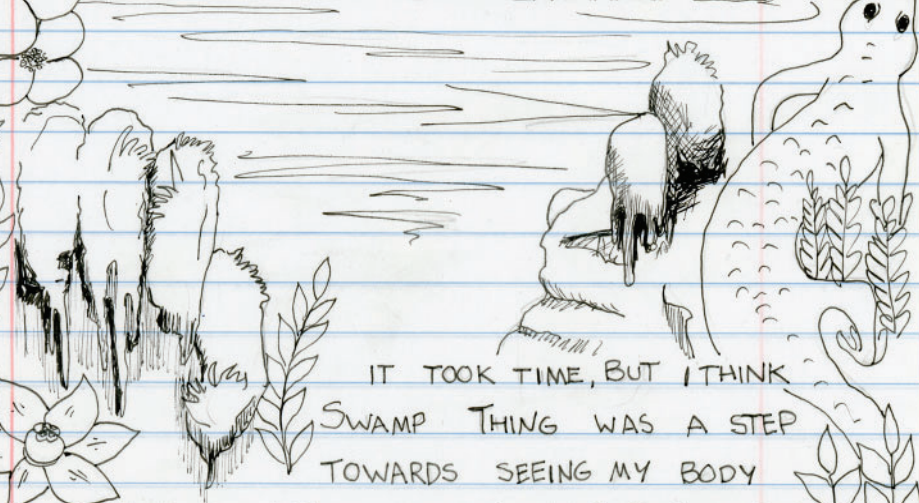
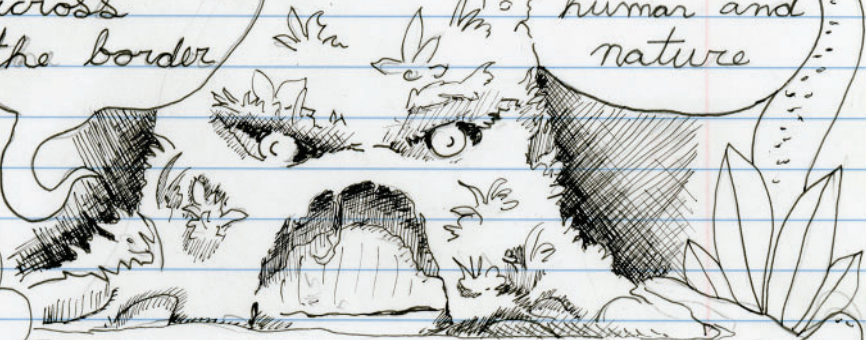
from a different perspective



IN COLLEGE, SOME TIME AFTER READING WATCHMEN, I LEARNED ABOUT ALAN MOORE'S SWAMP THING

The body as fluid, moving across the border

between human and nature



IT TOOK TIME, BUT I THINK SWAMP THING WAS A STEP TOWARDS SEEING MY BODY DIFFERENTLY, TOWARDS A KINDER RELATIONSHIP. I BEGAN TO FEEL LESS DRIVEN BY SHAME

