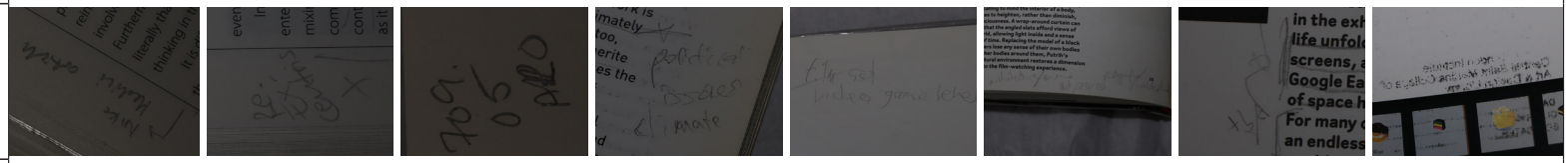
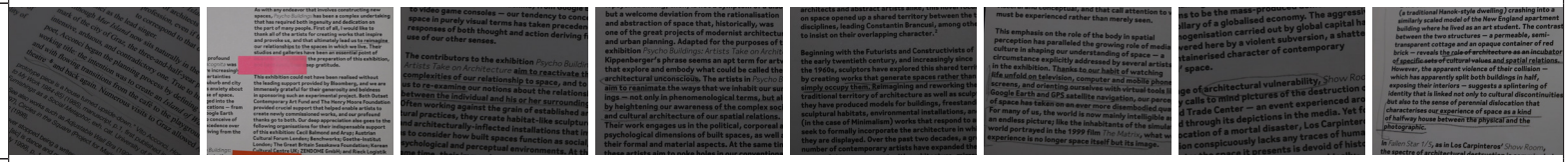
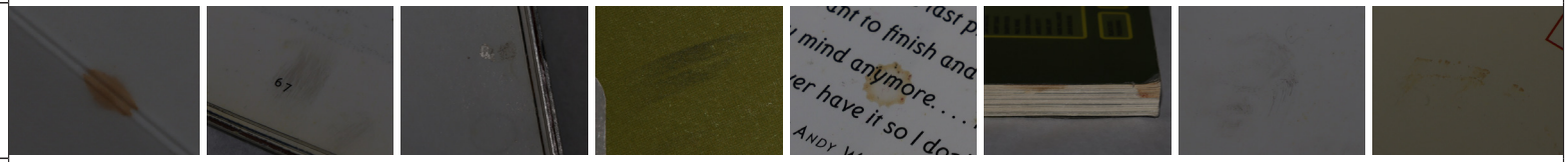
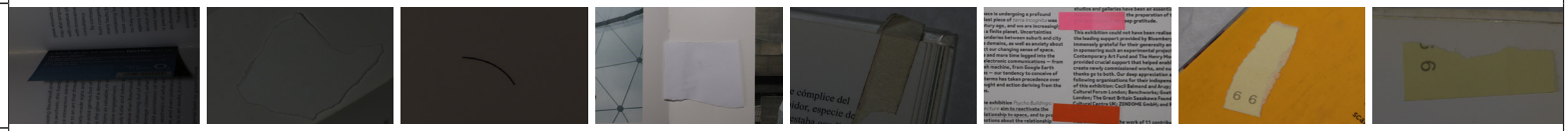
Ten consecutive books on any CSM Library shelf

Minhang Han

METHOD 1

| No. | Trace Type | Description | Reader's Action | Example |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fold | Page corner folded or bent along a line. | Indicates a pause, a moment of focus, or a personal bookmark left by the reader. |  |
| 2 | Annotation | Handwritten notes, comments, or question marks on margins or between lines. | Suggests intellectual engagement, interpretation, or emotional reaction. |  |
| 3 | Underline | Words or sentences marked with pen or pencil. | Highlights areas of importance or repeated attention – a reader's rhythm of emphasis. |  |
| 4 | Stain | Coffee mark, fingerprint, grease, or unknown discoloration on the page. | A trace of the reader's body or environment – evidence of everyday presence. |  |
| 5 | Inserted Object | Ticket, receipt, library card, or random paper left inside the book. | A time marker or memory fragment; extends the book's life beyond reading. |  |
| 6 | Damage | Torn pages, ripped corners, detached covers. | Physical exhaustion – a sign of aging, overuse, or neglect. |  |

Data collected from 10 consecutive library books at CSM Library.
Traces photographed and catalogued between Oct 2025.

After last tutorial, I shifted my focus from scanning the physical structure of books to exploring human traces inside them.
I decided to systematically photograph and document all visible marks within a set of ten consecutive library books – including folds, annotations, stains, dust, inserted papers, and even blank untouched pages.
I renamed and organised these images to create a clearer catalogue for comparison.

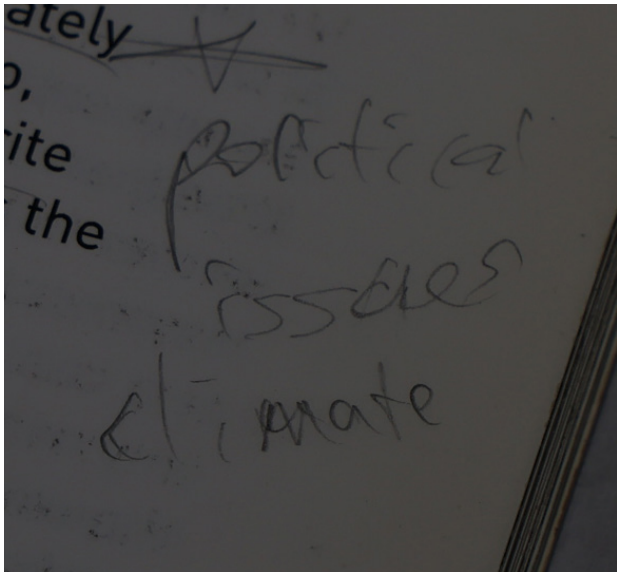
I realised that each mark carries evidence of interaction – a gesture, a pause, or a trace of time.
By documenting these traces across multiple books, I can compare how human use transforms the material surface of knowledge.
It's not about the content of the books anymore, but about how books record presence and absence.
This method allows me to translate reading, touching, and forgetting into visual data – a form of "poetic archiving."

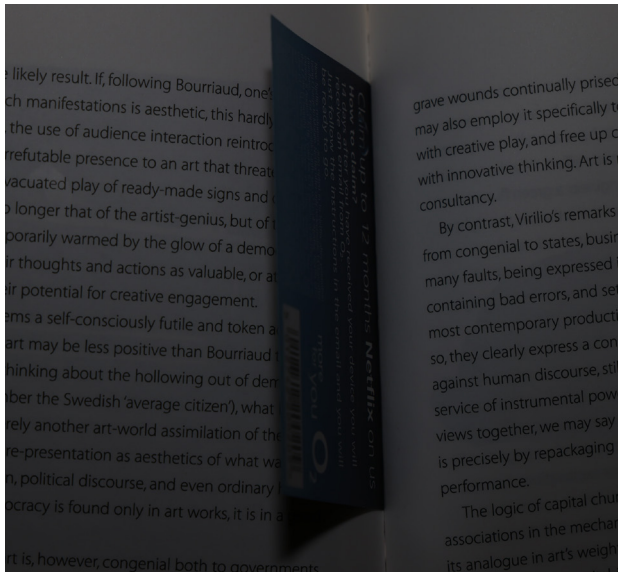
I classified all the traces found in ten library books by their physical type —folds, stains, annotations, inserted papers, and blank pages.
This method builds a clear structure and system, turning random human marks into organised visual data.

METHOD 2

I selected representative traces and paired each image with a short text —imagining the gestures, emotions, or stories behind each mark.
This method transforms classification into human narratives,allowing the traces to speak about reading, touch, and memory.



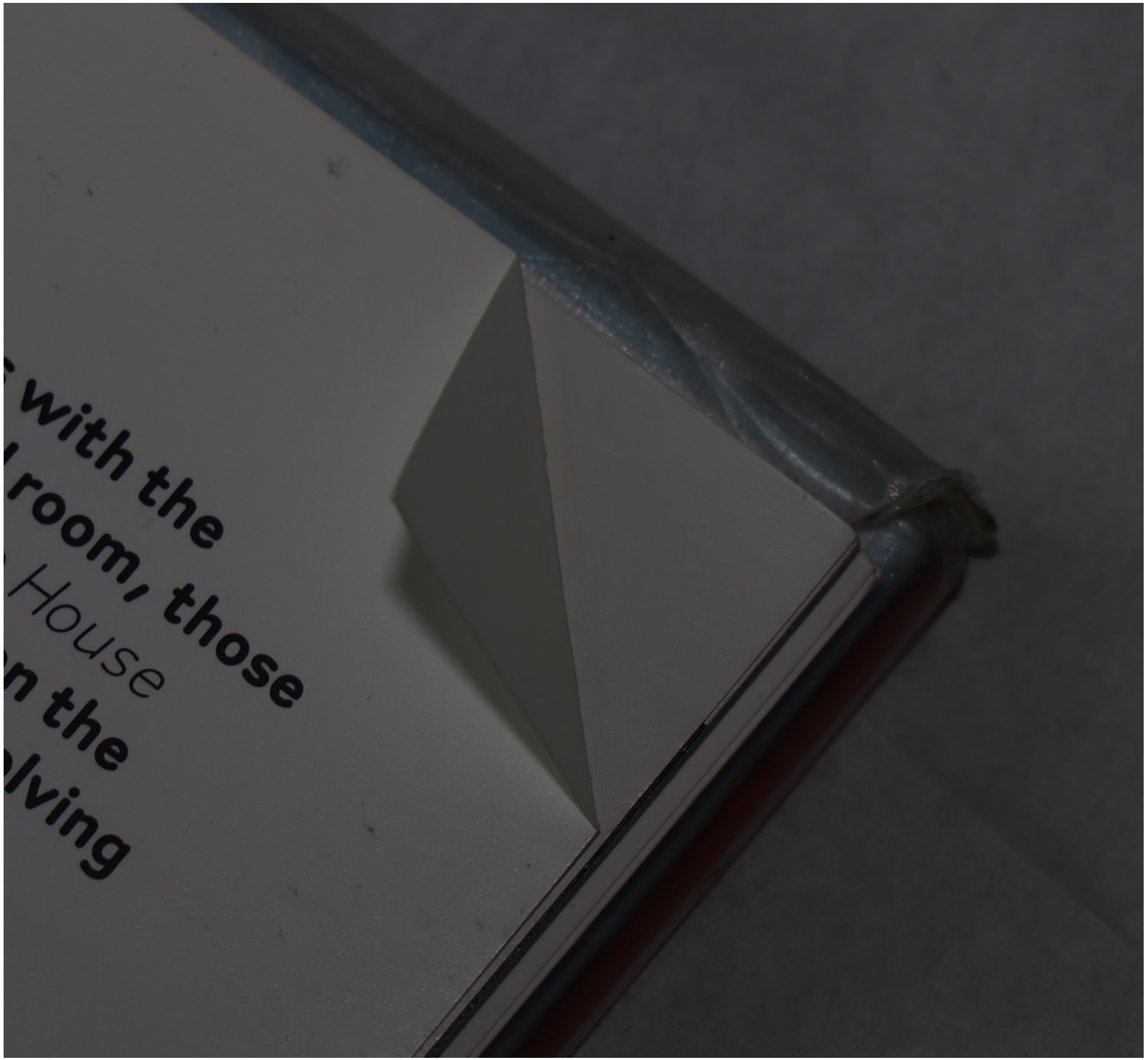





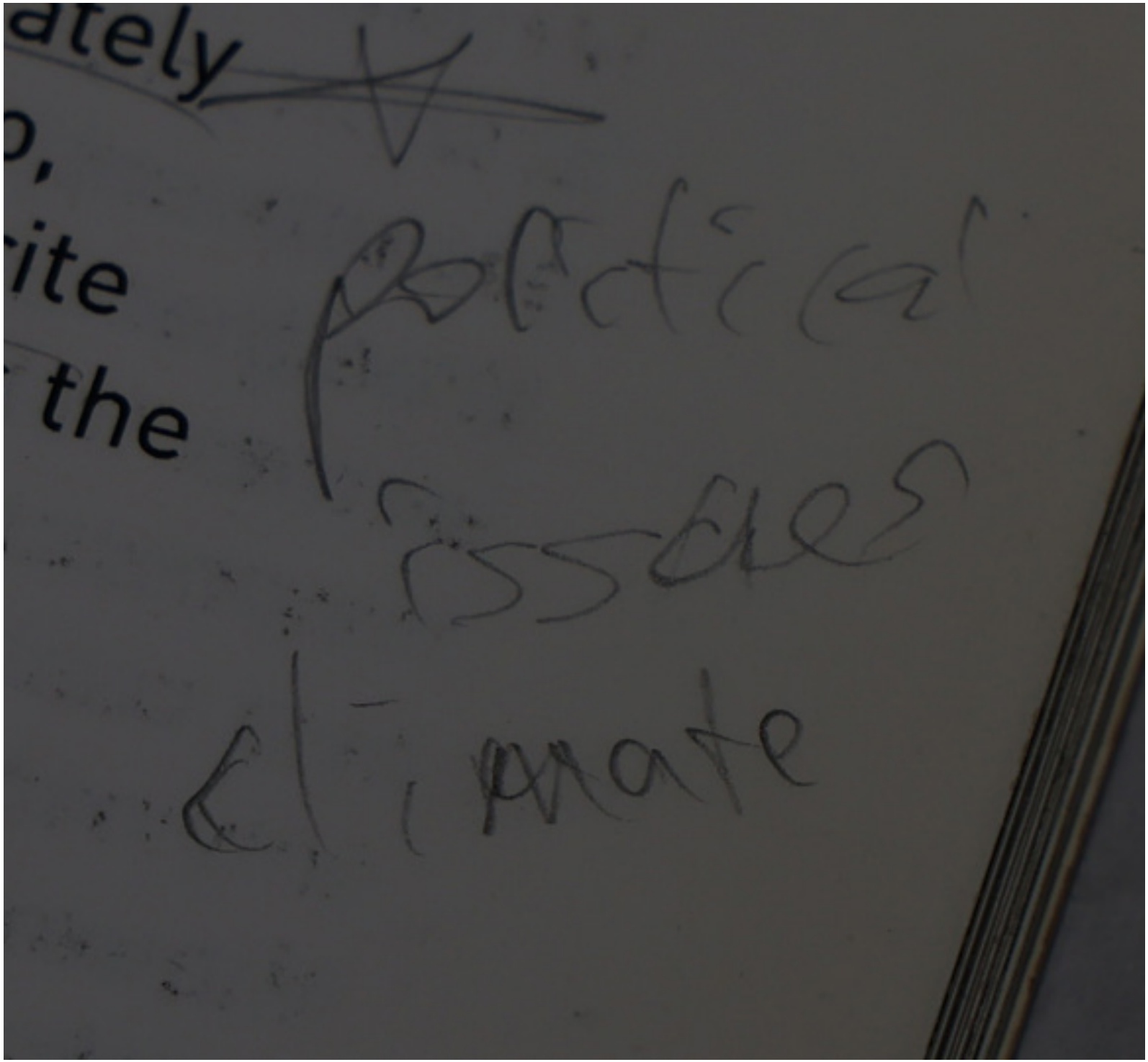




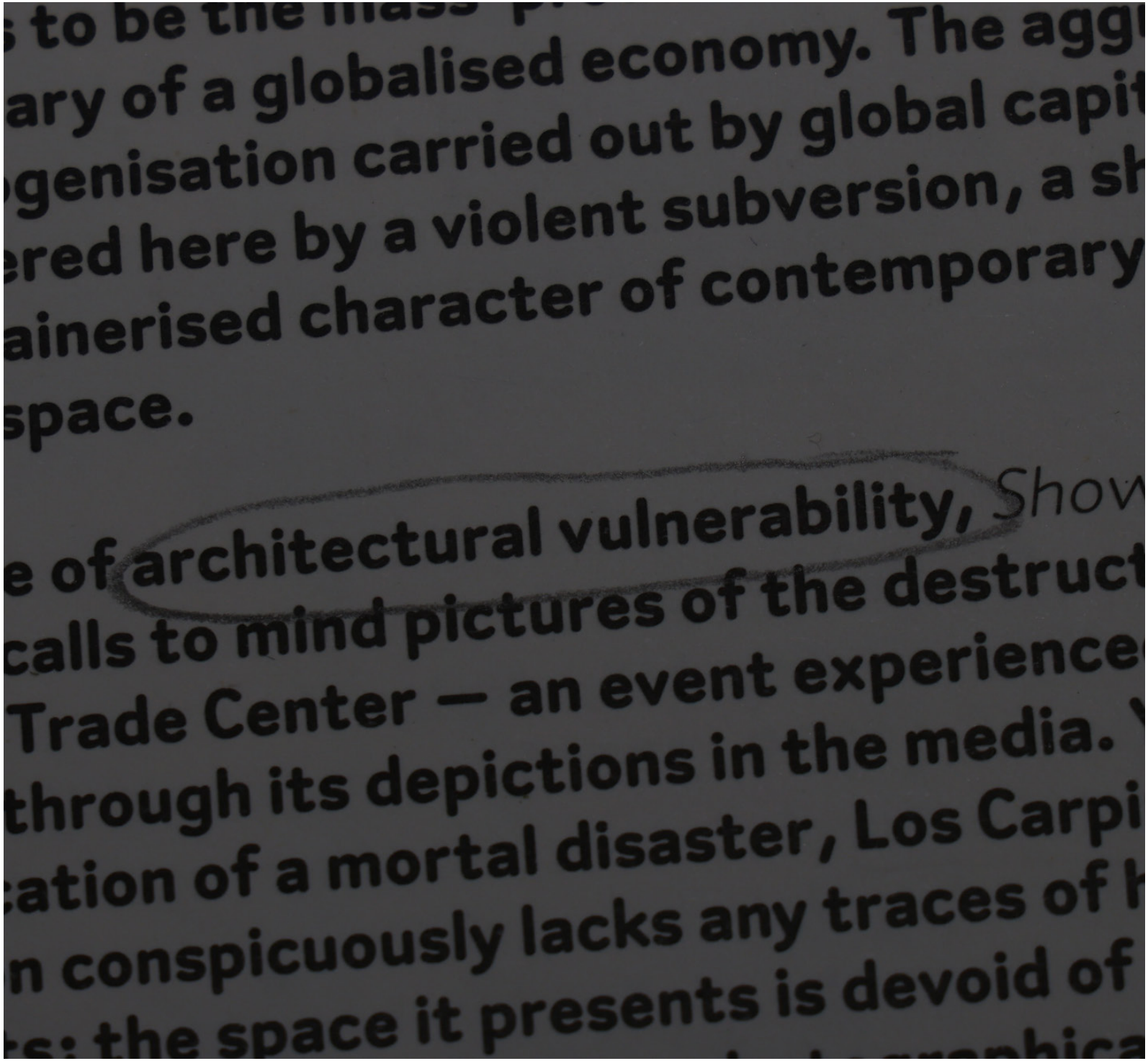




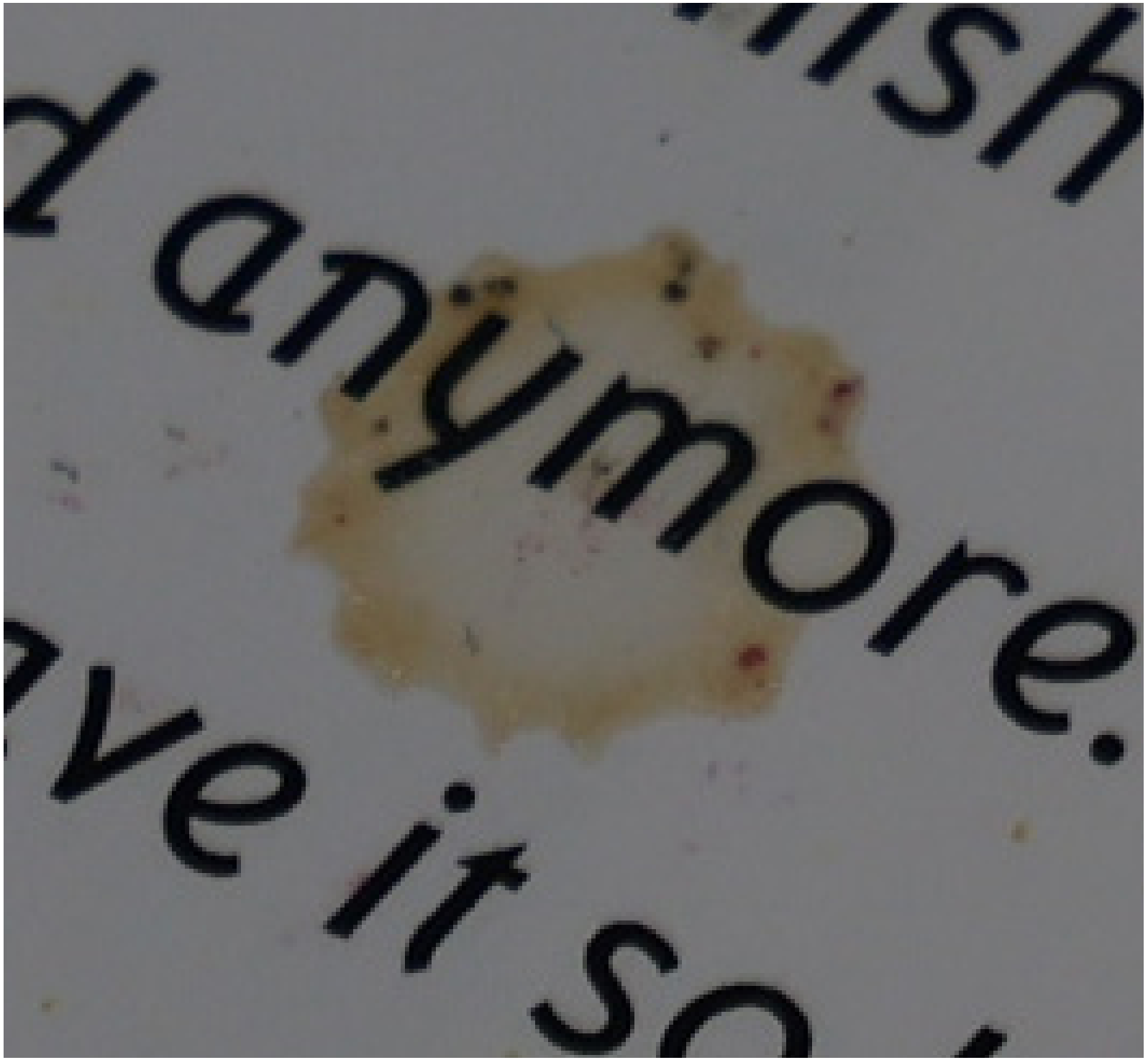

Trace 01 – Fold
Page 32 – A small corner folded down.
Someone paused here, marking a private rhythm of reading.
The paper still remembers their hand.



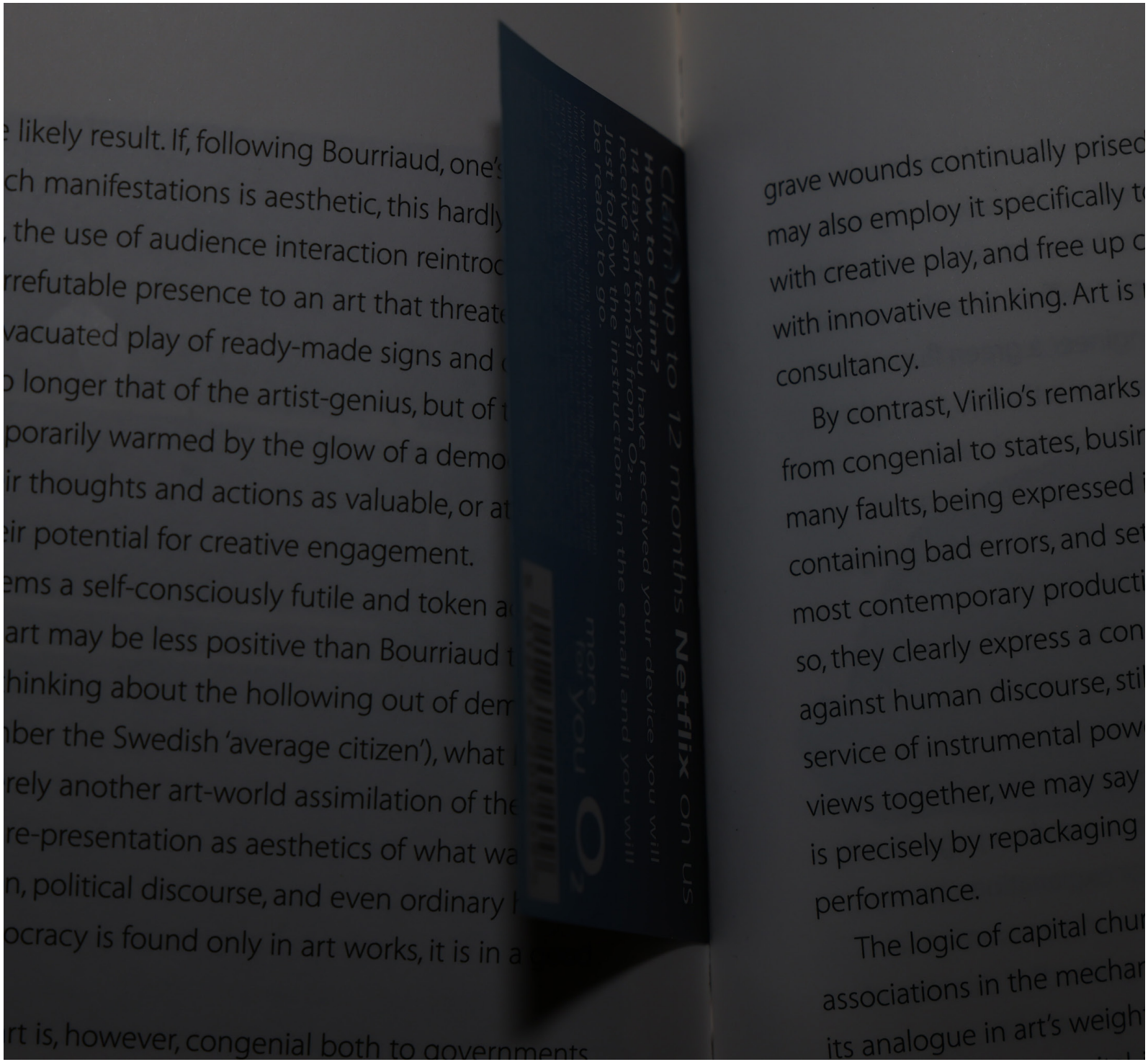

Trace 02 – Annotation
I can't read what they wrote.
But I can still feel the pressure of their hand.
Reading what cannot be read becomes part of the catalogue.



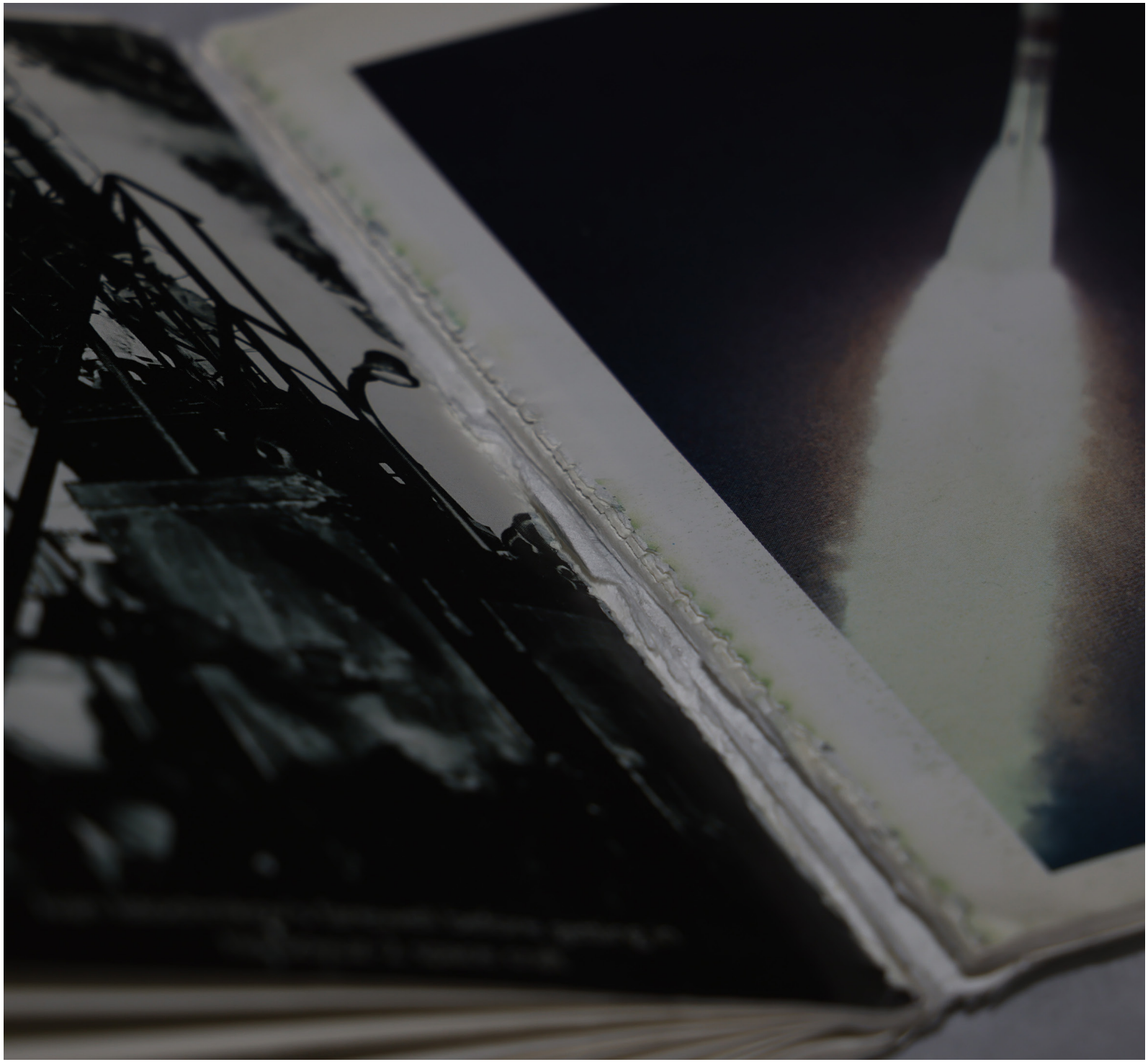

Trace 03 – Underline
A thin pencil line underlines two words.
A silent agreement between two minds.
Reading becomes dialogue.




Trace 04 – Stain
A half-circle of coffee dried on page 78.
A morning rush, a small accident.
Life spilled gently onto knowledge.



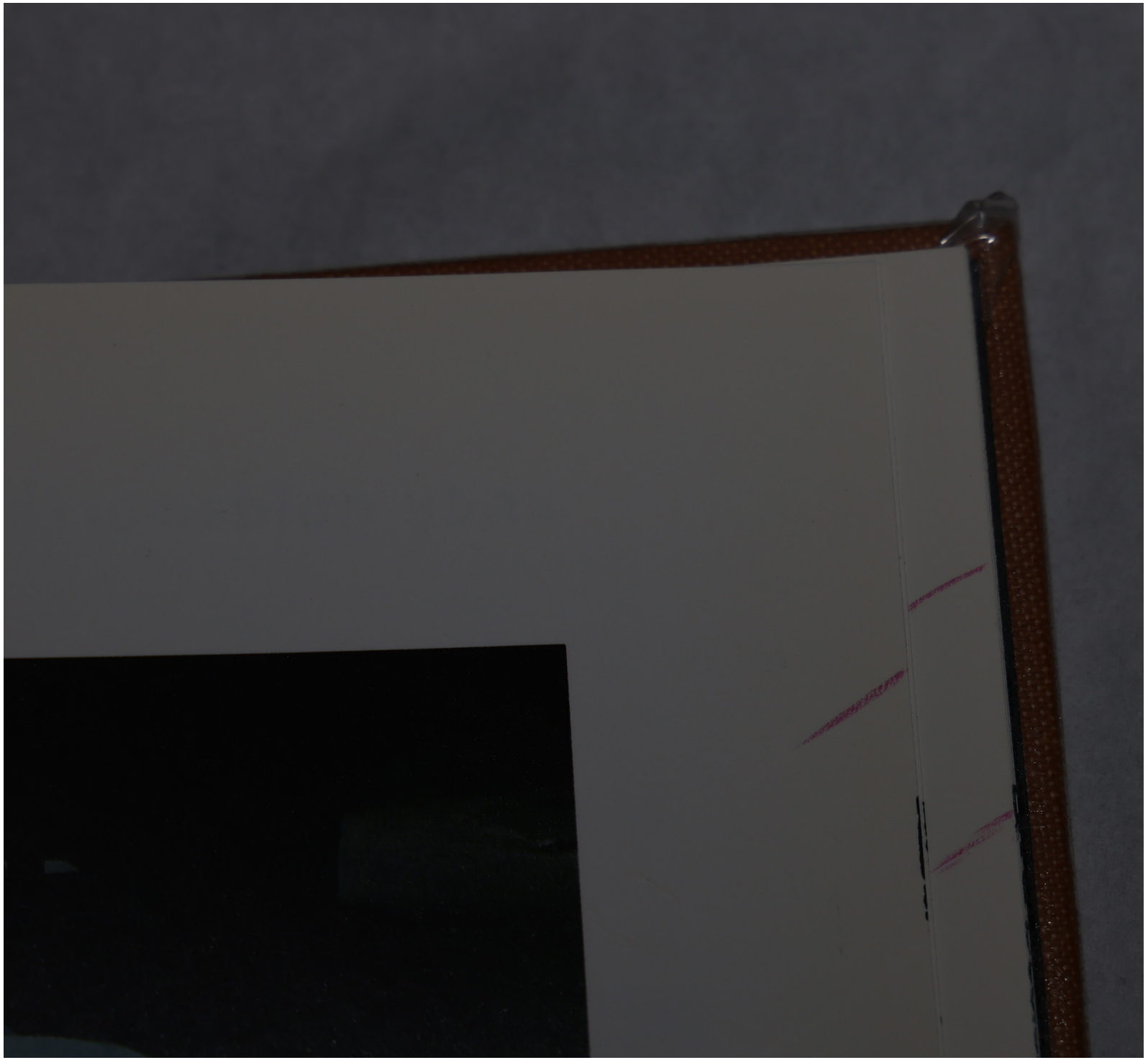

Trace 05 – Inserted Object
A ticket hides between two pages.
Someone tried to remember something, then forgot.
Now the paper remembers them instead.



Trace 06 – Tear
A torn edge exposes fine fibres of paper.
The book's body has been opened too many times.
Memory wears thin like skin.

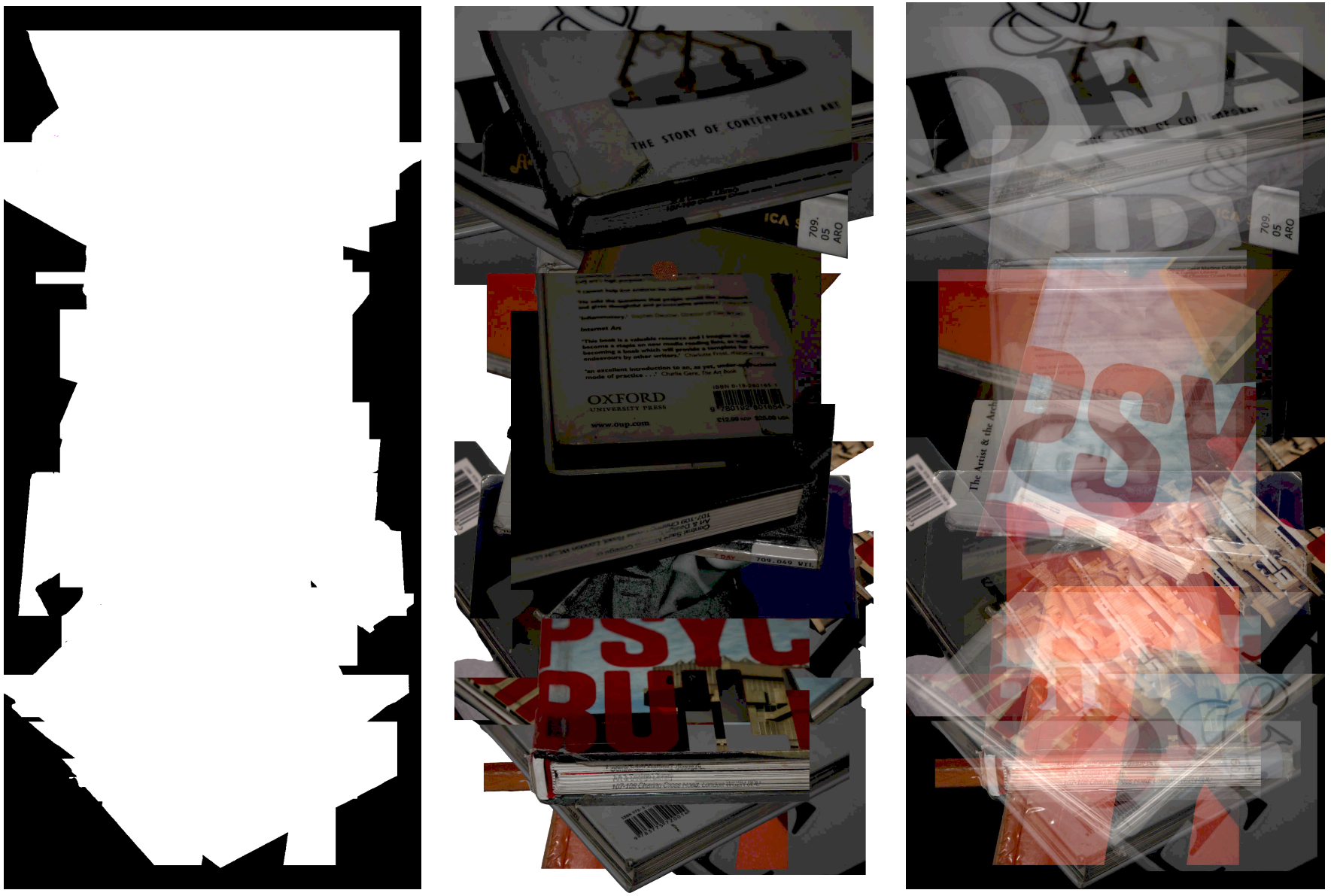



Trace 07 — Edge Wear
The cover softens where fingers once held it.
Every reader pressed their time into the surface.
The edge becomes a shared memory.



Trace 08 — Discoloration
The colour of the page shifts from white to amber.
Light has been reading slowly for years.
Age itself is the longest reader.

METHOD 3




I overlapped all the scanned traces into layered compositions,so individual marks merge into a collective rhythm of reading.
This method focuses on time, rhythm, and the idea of shared memory –a poetic archive where all readers' traces coexist.

My three methods move from order to meaning to time —from classifying traces, to narrating them, to merging them into a collective rhythm.