

WRITING
RIOS
NARRATING
CITIES

ANALYSIS
THROUGH
WORDS

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Preface

This book is a collection of writings made over the course of my graduation project, investigating Narrative Inhabitation, Bogotá and the impact of streams on the people who live around them.

This collection starts with an essay explaining my method of Narrative Inhabitation, how I developed it and why it is a useful tool in understanding the people of the city.

Later sections are examples of Narrative Inhabitation, investigating elements of the city itself. These include positive elements, dysfunctional ones and the entirety of the Rio Arzobispo, the site of my architectural interventions.

Also included is a Site Writing of the Delkin, a stream running within the village of my youth. I reflect on the stream and its impact on my life. This writing helped me realise the importance of landscape as a mnemonic tool.

The collection ends with a narrative focused on a woman, walking along the Rio Arzobispo after my proposals have taken place. I hope you enjoy these writings.

Matthew Cook

USING
POLYVOCAL
NARRATIVES
IN
TRANSCULTURAL
ANALYSIS

RESEARCH
METHODS

Using Polyvocal Narratives in Transcultural Analysis

It is often hard to hear different voices in contemporary architectural research and design. A Euro-American viewpoint is globally hegemonic, and contexts outside Europe or North America are often analysed, by architects trained inside this area, in the same manner as they would analyse their local context. My research, based in Bogotá, seeks to decontextualise the European view so the city can be analysed on its own terms allowing these different voices to be heard.

Bogotá is one of the richest cities in South America, and is a threshold between Colombia and the rest of the world. As a result it can attract international architecture firms for projects. For instance both Le Corbusier and OMA have created masterplans for the city. These masterplans lack attention to the particular context of the city and as a result fail to create an architecture of Bogotá, instead using the same universal techniques that are used in their projects all around the rest of the world.

Our studio seeks to avoid this universal architecture, and to investigate the specific context of the city's public life, encompassed in the idea of the Commons, which is so often missing from 'western' lead projects. The Commons

are spaces that are free to use by the public, but are also resources that when shared and maintained between inhabitants are vital to the city's function and growth, To investigate the Commons is to investigate the life that goes on within them, and so it is vital that effective methods of analysis are developed to represent this life.

For my own research I have chosen to analyse the city's elements and how the public uses them, to create an image of public life. To create this analysis I have chosen to modify Kevin Lynch's theory of the city's image, using its classification of elements as a way of analysing public life. The modifications present the inhabitation of the city. This inhabitation is then investigated through the use of narrative practice as a way of widening the voices and considering more viewpoints in this analysis. In this essay I shall seek to explain these analytical methods, how I have used them, and how an American theory and a largely European field of research can be useful in the Colombian context.

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In Kevin Lynch's book, *The Image of the City* (1960), he lays out the five elements by which the public create a shared mental image of the city. These are the path, edge, district, node and landmark. The manner by which these elements are used in a city creates a "public image" of its physical form, by which the public understand the city, move about within it, and begin to attach meaning and significance to it. His choice of these elements was a result of interviews with residents in large cities of the north of the USA.

Lynch's theory came during a period where the architectural world was moving away from the Rationalist dogma of the International Style of Modernism. This move can be seen in multiple places across the architectural field and beyond. Team 10 had asserted control over CIAM, encouraging a more human, user focused mode of architecture, rejecting the universalising solutions that had come before it. The field of phenomenology was growing and it was beginning to influence architecture, proposing a "primacy of perception" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), where the way people experienced the world became a crucial method of understanding it. The Situationists were also building a discourse related to social relations as mediated by our everyday objects, and a mode of understanding cities based upon our own experience of them (Debord, 1967).

Lynch's concentration on the experience and perception of the city by its inhabitants introduces subjectivity as an important and useful tool in analysis. Instead of trying to force a rational system of understanding it appreciates the plasticity, complexity and intricacy of the city (Lynch, 1960). By focusing on the cognitive perception of the city, Lynch changed the way of analysing the city from a manner that was top down, sometimes literally in its reliance on maps created by urban authorities, to one that was focused on actual human experience, a viewpoint that had been neglected previously.

Lynch states that the relationship between subject and object works in two directions, but his analysis focuses on the subject to object. In my own work I decided to flip this focus, from object to subject, therefore creating

not a “public image of the city” (*ibid.* pp. 46) but a city’s image of the public. The image of the public is not a semiotic one, focused only on the visual impact of the city in the public’s imagination, but a praxeological one, as this image is formed through observations of the public’s behaviours and interactions with the elements. The reversal and focus on the image of the public life also strengthens the specific focus on the inhabitants of Bogotá, making this theory from the US applicable in the Colombian context. The means by which I investigated and presented the image of the public were crucial in ensuring a fair representation of the Bogotan experience. Because of this I chose to make a narrative investigation. In the next section I shall explain narrative practice’s position and why it is suited to this analysis.

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Narrative practice is a particularly useful method of working when focusing on subjective experience. Vivid literary descriptions of places that invoke the various senses can create a gestalt that is far stronger than that of merely visual illustrations. Narrative can also make particular concepts explicit, collapse temporalities, provoke different points of view and encourage experimentation in ways that traditional, well used and little considered modes of representation cannot. Narrative practitioners have a great many number of influences, seeking out those who encouraged the subjective position such as the Situationists and those in the field of Phenomenology.

Another important influence on narrative practice were the writers of the French Oulipo group. The group’s name was an acronym that loosely translates as ‘the workshop

Whether Armilla is like this because it is unfinished or because it has been demolished, whether the cause is some enchantment or only a whim, I do not know. The fact remains that it has no walls, no ceilings, no doors: it has nothing that makes it seem a city, except the water pipes that rise vertically where the houses should be and spread out horizontally where the doors should be: a forest of pipes that end in taps, showers, spouts, overflows. Against the sky a lavabo's white stands out, or a bathtub, or some other porcelain, like late fruit still hanging from the boughs. You would think the plumbers had finished their job and gone away before the bricklayers arrived; or else their hydraulic systems, indestructible, had survived a catastrophe, an earthquake, or the corrosion of termites.

*Extract from Thin Cities 3, Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino (1974),
Member of Oulipo*

for potential literature' (Havik, 2015), and they enjoyed the use of games and arbitrary restrictions in their writing to create new possibilities of description. Often members of the group would use these unusual writing techniques in the description of space, helping seed the ground for today's narrative practice. The innovation in description, both in literary techniques for describing spaces, and the wider sense of experimentation and pushing boundaries of a form have proved inspiration to more contemporary users of narrative practice.

As narrative practice has matured as a field, a critical eye has been cast over its influences, and efforts have been taken to widen the voices heard within it, critical of the universalising nature that can be attributed to situationism and phenomenology. The architectural writer Jane Rendell, who uses narrative in her writing and often focuses on the intersection of feminism and architecture in her work, takes the position of feminist philosopher, Rosi Braidotti, as a point of departure. Braidotti rejects both the "dualistic partitions of minds from bodies" (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012) that seeks to diminish the link between one's body, one's location and one's experience of the world. She states "universalism, best exemplified in the notion of "abstract masculinity" (Hartsock 1987) and triumphant whiteness (Ware 1992), is objectionable not only on epistemological, but also on ethical grounds." (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012) Rendell herself, takes Braidotti's rejection of universalism and states "Where I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know" [author's emphasis] (Rendell, Dorrian, Hill, & Fraser, 2007, pp.150) . Rendell proposes the use of different positions by an author, as "a 'voice' in criticism

This site is built from its natural topography – the precipice at one end, the pleasant slope towards the other. The light woods add to the drama by softly wrapping around the experiencing subject, separating her from the main path while walking up to the edge. There are many paths and they are vague. The fallen leaves smudge out the edges. The inclination seems to pull the feet upward. And then, when you get there, what is there to do? In the ‘ahh’ – the romantic sigh – we trace a repressed desire to drift on. Climbing over the edge we simply glide out and over – as much now as then.

Extract from Fluttering Butterflies, a Dusty Road, and a Muddy Stone, Katja Grillner, (2004)

can be objective and subjective, distant and intimate" [author's emphasis] (*ibid*). Rendall embraces subjectivity as it produces knowledge of relations, between "self to other, subject to object, inside to outside" (*ibid*). This use of different views and the embrace of subjectivity gives room for previously silent voices to be heard during the critique of space and recognises the effect location has upon a person.

Katja Grillner is another contemporary architectural writer using narrative practice. In her writing about Haga Park, a large urban park in her native Stockholm, she employs Walter Benjamin's thesis of "appropriation by use and by perception" (Rendell et al., 2007 pp.137) as a method of representation, using his technique of "distracted experience" (Benjamin, 1935) to produce a work of criticism of the park, by describing her own memory and experience of the park itself. By using Benjamin's distracted technique, where the occupation is described, with the physical reality glimpsed through the text, the useless mode of contemplation of the tourist is surpassed. Through describing her experience of being within the park she critiques its material qualities, and in combination with description of its occupation fully describes its appropriation as defined by Benjamin. Without the distractedness of the critique and the description of the habits of occupation, the portrayal of the space's occupation would fail. By using this technique Grillner produces an effective analysis of the space and its impact on the city and its occupants. Benjamin describes how the ease of reproduction reduced the importance of ritual in the production of art, but in its place leaves a politicization of the art through its distracted interpretation. Whilst not

explicitly political in its text, Grillner's work becomes so, due to the use of the distracted critique.

Grillner emphasises the value of narrative practice as a tool for advancing spatial analysis, allowing a writer "to develop a critical position towards an architectural design [...] and as a means through which to carefully explore and or design spatial conditions" (Grillner, K; Hughes, R, 2006, pp.58). In conversation between Grillner and Klaske Havik, Havik points out that architectural design proposes speculative futures as a matter of course, and proposed that architectural research could absorb the speculative component to provoke dialogues, leading to research that is "more stratified, evocative and challenging" (Havik, Oliveira, Schfer., & Proosten, 2017). Fundamental to the idea of proposing these speculative futures is Paul Ricoeur's theory of the reproductive and productive imagination. His theory is that the reproductive imagination is a completely truthful copy of what is being represented, whilst the "productive imagination [...] shifts the reference from copy to fiction - 'image as a production of a new world' - a world that did not exist prior to its realisation" (*ibid.* pp.163). To Ricoeur the use of the productive imagination through research of the speculative future creates a powerful method of investigating the potentials for change in a society.

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In my project I have combined my method of the city's image of the public, with a narrative approach to describing the situation. During my investigations of the research area I looked at the elements of the city, cataloguing their presence in the area. Certain elements were particularly

interesting due to their appropriation. These sites were locations of moments, places of “concentrated social experiences”. The elements in these sites were being used in ways that were not part of their conceived use, the elements had undergone a “detournement” (Debord, 1967), reconfiguration that changes the power relationships that object would regularly enforce. I chose these reconfigured elements as the focus of my narrative investigation.

In my narrative description of these elements I decided to use monologues, written from the point of view of a fantastically animated element, describing the life of the city around it and their judgements of it. The characteristics of these elements were drawn from their physical location, the communities they were based in and the type of inhabitants that were using the elements. The behaviour written about was based upon real behaviour witnessed at these sites over the course of several visits, and conversations with inhabitants of the area and users of these elements about how they use the space or see other people using it. By choosing a variety of different elements in different locations this ensured that I was capturing a broad selection of the community, representing different voices. The embodiment of different locations was evident in the resulting monologues, and this reflects the theories of Braidotti and Rendell. By giving the element a subjective voice, the criticism of the space helped produce knowledge of the power relations between the subject and object, in this case the inhabitant and the element.

I gave my elements a regular voice, rather than one of architectural expertise. These elements described the appropriation of the spaces, and the atmosphere of the

I stand guard here, made from brick and brass,
watching over the citizenry. I am their leader
and their protector. Befitting of my centuries of
service I now have a role that is somewhat more
relaxed compared to my naval adventures. I
stand here tall above the parkland, the rolling
waves of wind passing through the trees about
me. The light shimmers through the foliage as
though on water's surface. I feel the rain on my
face and am reminded of the spray from the
Caribbean Sea. Hordes of horseless carriages
pass along the roads either side of me, they
make the air foul and I feel as if I am covered
in a black filth in a way that even the longest
of voyages did not leave me. As I stand here
I watch the citizens of this great Colombian
nation go about their business in the verdant
parklands below me.

Extract from Path/Statue, Matthew Cook, (2017)

location, rather than an architectural reality. By describing them in this way I am using the same distracted technique as Grillner identifies as crucial in her analysis of Haga Park. This allows the monologues to have a political relevance, which will be important in the future conception of these elements when designing.

My use of monologues also allowed me to collapse the temporalities of the spaces, portraying various connected events in the same space at the same time. This allowed me to investigate the different uses of the site throughout the day, and the embodied effects that different times of day had upon its users. By collapsing the temporalities I could then extrapolate into the future, using the behaviour I had described to envisage the results that small changes to the elements would have on the behaviour exhibited, resulting in an increased awareness of the importance of the element's particular nature on the appropriation of the site, in a way that would not have been possible if using a non-distracted technique of analysis.

Once I had written these first monologues I drew the scenes, with location and behaviour present together. This parallel representation of the space and the occupation, visual and non visual, working together to fully describe the space, created a representation that was neither logocentric in its reliance on text, nor overly reliant on traditional architectural drawing, encompassing the entire temporal spread of the monologues.

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The purpose of this essay was to demonstrate how I, as a European educated architecture student, could approach

the context of Bogotá without returning to eurocentric mode of analysis of the city. My use of Lynch's elements, useful for its emphasis on experience of inhabitants, gave me a framework to analyse the city. I modified the theory by concentrating on the relationship of object to subject, rather than subject to object, repurposing the theory, making it more effective in understanding the appropriation of space by Bogotá's inhabitants.

By then using monologues to describe the appropriation of elements by the community I was then able to access different voices of inhabitation. By focusing on different sites at different times, and by witnessing appropriation or hearing of it from local people the scope of investigation was made much larger, avoiding a universalist analysis of behaviour. It also allowed me to be incredibly specific in analysing the elements and gaining an understanding of these elements' architectural characteristics. This specific analysis was available to me due to my use of the distracted critique, if the elements had been investigated through an analytical dissection, the mode by which these spaces worked would have not been revealed to me.

Even though the theories surrounding my analysis of elements and my use of narrative practice are not specifically written for Colombia, in combination they have given me a detailed grasp of the elements, their appropriation, and the relationships between element and subject. With this knowledge I can begin to design for this community, using the elements as they work in Bogotá in encouraging specific uses and consequences. As a result of this work I believe that my efforts to analyse Bogotá on its own terms to be a success.

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THE
CITY'S
IMAGE
BY
ITS
ELEMENTS

MONOLOGUES
BY
TEUSAQUILLO

Introduction

According to Lynch, in the *Image of the City* (1960), the public understand a city through five elements: the path, boundary, district, node and the landmark. These five categories are all that is needed to form a mental understanding of a city and its layout.

Through my explorations of Teusaquillo, Bogota, I discovered locations of 'moments', places of intensified social relations (Lefebvre, 1991). These locations have formed the basis of my study into the area so far. They corresponded with the categories of Lynch.

I raised the question, what if Lynch's understanding could be reversed, and by imagining how the five elements of the city would view its populace, could an understanding of the area's life be formed?

This document is a trial of this method, a series of monologues, one for each element. If successful an image of the area and its inhabitants should form during the reading.

Path/Bridge

It's a strange group that I live with. The six of us, all here, in the same place, but all leading very different existences. We all have different routines, and have different motivations, but basically we are all the same, all here to get a job done. We all get people from one place to another, it's as simple as that.

You won't find a more interesting group of people than the ones I carry though. They must be the smartest collection of people in the city, maybe even in the country. They know everything. Most of them don't yet know one crucial thing though, what they will do with their lives, what they will turn into. I don't get many celebrities, politicians or famous people crossing me. Mark my words though, if you follow the people crossing right now, for the next 20 years, you are going to get to some pretty cool places. I'm certain of it.

I'm not saying the others don't have interesting people travelling along them. Look who I'm crossing over, the road down there. Almost every person in the entire city has to go through it first. It knows everyone, as long as they can afford a car. From the bin men to the taxi drivers, to probably the Mayor himself. They all know it.



That route next to the road, the parallel partner, it knows everyone too, but in more of a working class hero kind of way. The route knows the street traders, the 9-5ers, the ones with two jobs, three kids and a leaking roof. They come from miles away, roaring through, crammed in, getting to know each other in silence, riding the bumps and holding tight for the corners. They don't call those two the spine of the city for nothing, everyone needs those two.

I feel a bit sorry for the bridge next to me, crossing that lot below. It's like the road, knows loads of people too, all the drivers, in their cars, their vans, their taxis. They don't care about the bridge though, they just use him to get to the road. Just a stepping stone to something else.

My favourite two are that pair down there, although maybe don't mention that to the others. That duo take the cyclists and the pedestrians. They are quieter about it and don't know as many people as the others, but that's where all the interesting stuff happens. People come from all over the city just to place themselves next to those two. They come just to be close to the people walking and cycling by, to have a chance to interact, to distract them for

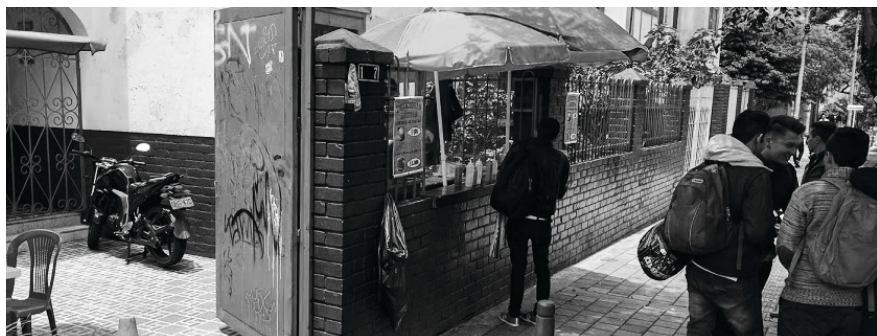
a moment, to swap their money for food, drinks, goods, services. Warhol had his Factory, the place to be if you wanted to see or be seen, I like to think we have ours right here. Less glamorous, but maybe more important. I'm kind of part of it too actually, slightly on the periphery, but crucial, at least I like to think so. They use me as a sheltered spot, a place to build a permanent shop, a bit of shade, a location to meet at.

The most interesting thing to do is to watch how the different groups interact. A while back, my people, the students, they were getting sick of things. The roofs sheltering them whilst they learnt were failing, they were leaking, there was even a collapse. Their education was suffering. They decided they would take their grievances right to the people who could do something about it. So where did they go? City hall? Congress? No, they came here, to the road below me, the road that carries everyone. The stood in the road and it was shut down. The people in their cars were furious, honking, shouting, swearing, gesturing. They had things to do, important places to be and decisions to make. They also knew what the problem was and what the students wanted: 'No Más Goteros'. Maybe they would think about that next time city budgets came up. I played my part too, I held the banners, I was the stage. You can see me there in the photos, standing my ground. I may not look like much, just carrying people across a road, so they can continue on their route, but it's important. I can feel it.

Boundary/Wall

Originally I and all like me were nothing lines, known only to our inventors and the people around them. We are arbitrary, but to be without us is to be without an inside, perpetually external. We gained definition slowly, just a change in materials at first, marking the edge of control. You could step over me at any point and there was nothing I could do to stop it. For the most part it would be fine when I was stepped over, transgressions by strangers would be fleeting, and friends were not transgressing at all. There was still a potential though, a risk.

Some of us started to grow, I grew. I grew into a small wall. You could still step over me, I wasn't stopping anything. You knew you were stepping over me though, it was inescapable. You were crossing a line and you couldn't pretend otherwise. Beyond me was a space that was not yours. Some people were upset about the division and didn't think it was very neighborly. If you ask me though all it meant was you weren't allowed to cut that corner, you could no longer walk four abreast, and you couldn't 'accidentally' look through the window. If you wanted to do that you had to be brazen about it. A low wall wasn't enough though, because of course some people



are brazen. If you had taken the time to create yourself an interior, the last type of people you wanted to be coming in were the brazen ones.

As a result I got taller. I'm about 2 meters tall now. I'm made of brown brick, and I have white railings. You aren't crossing me without some serious effort, you better be good at climbing. You're staying out unless you are let in. I'm still pretty open though, you can still enjoy the view of the garden inside, you just can't pick the flowers. I'm pretty happy with my place in the city, I don't see any point in complaining. I think some of the others have taken it a bit far though. I was surprised when I heard about barbed wire topping off the wall, and even a little worried when the first electric fence was put in. It's really not that bad around here is it? These days sometimes going up isn't even enough. The fence will get a roof, caging the garden, or more likely the car, like a diver in shark infested waters. Teusaquillo doesn't have that many sharks, right?

I'm a bit unusual actually. My fence opens. I don't mean the gate, that's as standard. The fence topping off the

wall. That lot inside, they open it up in the middle of the morning and serve food through it, like it's a counter in a shop. They even have a their umbrella over the top. They sell the usual, perro caliente, arepas, con gaseosa if you like. Restaurante Teusaquillo, at least that's what they call it. It causes quite the sensation, everybody comes. We have the university buildings up the road so there are quite a lot of students about, cheap food is always going to be popular here. Some of the woman who come by are, rather good looking. Our clientele are something to behold, and people do. I'm pretty sure some of the male students who eat here come for the view, not the cuisine. Their mouths hang so far open I'm surprised the hot dogs don't need sweeping off the street at the end of the day. I'm not sure how many of the women notice. I guess some do. Maybe they don't mind, or maybe they are just resigned to it. You see the odd person roll her eyes when she thinks no one's looking. If you ask me it's bad for business, we want these women to come back, and they are hardly going to if they have to put up with that kind of behaviour. They shouldn't have to.

It might all be moot anyway, what with Mayor Peñalosa. He's got it in his head that all these stalls are unsightly. He wants to do away with them all. Another wall, in another part of town, had "Mayor Peñalosa H.P." written on it. Hijo de puta. You wouldn't get that type of crudeness round here, but they have a point. He just wants things to be like some boring European city, clean, ordered, tax paying. I suppose it makes a certain sense. Still, what about the little guys, the entrepreneurs, where does that leave them if they can't sell on the street? He was good at first, but lately, I guess all politicians go stale in the end.

I'm not actually sure it would be enforceable though, to ban the stalls. Who's going to shut them down? The police? At the moment they are buying their food off us. Its quick, cheap, and the officers are still out on the street, so it suits them. They aren't going to want to shut us down, where are they going to get food otherwise? I guess stalls like ours will be tolerated to an extent, although that will just leave the whole enterprise open to abuse. One officer taking a disliking to us could shut us down, and it's hardly going to do anything to reduce police corruption. Well if the worst comes to the worst I guess I'll just have to go back to being a simple wall, I'll keep them out. Maybe if them in the house get a dog, then I can keep it in too. You don't get many walls as interesting as me, and I guess nothing lasts forever so I should count myself lucky. I'm great at my first job so I'll just concentrate on that. I'm still standing, after all this time, and that's what counts.

District/Teusaquillo

I have several names: Teusaquillo, la Soledad, Home. Depending on who you ask, my boundaries shift and vary, but I know who I am. A lot goes on inside my limits. I am large, I, as they say, contain multitudes.

At my heart is Parkway, it runs through me, gives me a structure and a centre. It's an important place. It's where all the life of the area pumps through. Eating, drinking, buying, sitting, watching, playing, walking, this is where it is happening. It may be a complete cliché, but it's also a very romantic place, my heart. The couples come and they promenade. If you have the hots for someone, and you want to be with them, outside, then you come to the parkway.

I breath, I fill my lungs, and I exhale. People enter, they come to work, then they go home. They come to the theatre, and then return to relive the babysitter. They come to study, and then they go back to their small shared flats. These breaths become daily cycles, rhythms of the city. 9am, busy, 11am, quiet, 1pm, busy, 3pm quiet, 5pm busy, then overnight before the new day, quiet again.



A river runs through me, Canal Arzobispo, the archbishop's himself. It is not holy though, it is a place of effluence. The fresh water comes off the Andes, and immediately filth, rubbish and sewage is added to it. The river is then full of substances ejected from the homes and businesses nearby. It has also become a space of a different kind of ejection. The community of those without homes lives there, rejected from the rest of the city. This is the place they are made to call home, the place of things people don't want to deal with.

Through my roads flow people, on foot, bicycles, in motor vehicles. They give Teusaquillo its life, they carry with them the goods and the ideas to keep the area prosperous and active. The wires above the roads flash with information and power. They direct the activities below, and make the remote local through instantaneous connection.

As I feel my extremities, the Avenidas, I brush passed countless other lives like the long grass flowing through your fingers. My definition as an area is given by the routes that others use to bypass me. They skim my

external surface, only seeing paper deep. The relationship is fleeting, and forgotten moments later.

For the most part I am quiet, away from the Parkway my streets are not full. The activities here, as in most places, happen inside the buildings. Each structure acting as the container for lives, different from all others, with unique problems, goals, needs or desires. It is the collection of these quanta of humanity that give me my character. My personality is formed by my glut of academics, my abundance of students, my plentitude of actors, writers and chefs. And when all of these people materialise its usually with pet dogs in tow. It these extra characteristics that make me what I am to the rest of the city.

Other zones close to me have more than their share of various other things. To the South the have businesses, headquarters, tourists, museums and shops. North is yet more tourists, yet more students, the wealthy, with their restaurants and bright lights. To my East they have far more homes built on land that does not strictly belong to them than is normal. They also hold a near monopoly on trees and hills. Northwest brings ideas, revolutionary discourse, youth, and intensely focused disordered activity. Southwest they have more than their fair share of difficulties, problems and a chronic shortage of solutions or help.

Here though, in Teusaquillo, the rhythms, activities and events continue on. The people will change, as will the buildings over a greater length of time. Each iota will shift, and I with it. We won't know what it will look like until we get there though, and at that point it will shift again.

Node/Park

We are a local institution. Everyone nearby knows us, most of them have visited and many of them visit regularly. If a visitor to the area is trying to narrow down exactly where they are going, there is an excellent chance it would be our name that is invoked.

We like to think we offer a lot to the local community, and we know that they contribute a great deal to ourselves as well. We try to keep a wide range of opportunities open to make sure everybody feels welcome when they visit us. You can see our positive affect on the local community by looking towards our neighbors' buildings. They get a rather nice price boost from our being here. You can see why though.

We're generally at our busiest at the weekends. Weekdays are quieter but only just. On a typical weekday you can expect the local boys to be playing basketball and working out. They sit right in the centre of the park next to the ball court. Sometimes people like to sit and watch them, the boys can also be a bit intimidating though. I'm sure they are nice enough but a big group of testosterone filled lads can get out of hand sometimes. Trust me.



We make a good place to meet, so at midday it's not unusual to see our visitors enjoying lunch with each other. We aren't that close to the area where most of the offices are so we are quite flattered that people make the effort to come up. They are often the ones who like to watch the basketball and all of those young men working up a sweat. Its nice to have some moving wallpaper during a chat.

We have lovely mature trees here with us. We feel lucky to have them, they cast such a nice light underneath. One of our regular visitors is a taxi driver, he'll park just outside on the street, underneath one of our trees. He'll then have his lunch break, he'll eat his sandwiches, he'll even clean the car out and give it a polish. He seems awfully proud of his car but then I suppose you have to be if you want to keep a taxi spick and span, especially with all those people climbing in and out all day.

At the weekend, when things get a bit busier, you'll be able to see all the neighbours here. They generally come in the hope of tiring out their dogs, or children. All the mothers will find one of the benches near the play

equipment and underneath the trees. That way they can keep an eye on their little darlings, and also have the first conversation all day that does not involve Dora the Explorer. This concentrating of the mothers, and their little ones, quickly brings the ice cream sellers. They will walk along, ringing their bells and the children will come flocking. Quite often the sales people have been on their feet all day by that point, we see them relaxing the in park just like everyone else. They must make a pretty penny because of us, all part of the benefits of our being here. All in all I would say we are quite the attraction. A local institution. Irreplaceable. I don't know what people would do without us.

Landmark/Statue

I am Admiral Jose Prudencio Padilla Lopez, leader of the Colombian fleet, liberator of Santa Marta and Cartagena, scourge of the Spanish admiralty. I have sailed the seas West and East, enforcing the freedom of all men of the Americas. I am now the protector of Teusaquillo in this city of Bogota.

I stand guard here, made from brick and brass, watching over the citizenry. I am their leader and their protector. Befitting of my centuries of service I now have a role that is somewhat more relaxed compared to my naval adventures. I stand here tall above the parkland, the rolling waves of wind passing through the trees about me. The light shimmers through the foliage as though on water's surface. I feel the rain on my face and am reminded of the spray from the Caribbean Sea. Hordes of horseless carriages pass along the roads either side of me, they make the air foul and I feel as if I am covered in a black filth in a way that even the longest of voyages did not leave me. As I stand here I watch the citizens of this great Colombian nation go about their business in the verdant parklands below me.



Much life occurs in this park, for it belongs to all men, not just the wealthy aristocrats and merchants. Not long after dawn, men and women will dance upon my stage. I do not know their dance, but it reminds me of stories of the natives from the Western Orient told to me by the merchants who had sailed there. They move like the trees in the wind and appear to have no interest in making couples or of dancing together. I do not understand their practise but it fascinates me.

As the sun climbs the local inhabitants will walk with their great hounds. They stride towards me, yet do not look up at me. They approach, climbing my stairs, they walk around my feet, and then they return to where the came. Occasionally a foul beast will take relief against me. I am enraged by this impertinence. If this was one of my men I would have the hound shot and the owner keelhauled for this indignity. The local officers of the law pass by but seem ambivalent to these insults.

When the sun reaches its zenith I am accompanied by a host of different characters. I believe they are local merchants. They sit by my feet to consume their midday

meal. Previously I have been visited by a girl who will lean against me and watch the park as I do. I believed her to be my ally but I am presently concerned as to her motives. I suspect her of a plot to usurp me, to fell my body and tear apart my bricks.

In the afternoon couples will promenade through the park. Men and women will walk unchaperoned in full view of the world. Women will show bare legs and naked arms that I have not seen outside of the brothels of Kingston. Men will walk with their colleagues discussing important topics of the day. By the closeness of some of their conversations you could confuse them for the lovers walking together.

As my watch draws on and the sun sets, groups will appear beneath me. Sometimes they speak of topics important to the nation, standing with signs and making a great clamour. Sometimes they whisper revolutionary thoughts and I glower at their treacherous speeches. They never ask for my wiseness and I am too much of a gentlemen to interject. Sometimes these groups will come with mechanical contraptions. They will gather and listen to a strange music made without musician or instrument. I suspect witchcraft, as the music reminds me of songs sung by the Haitian slaves that I and the great El Libertador, Simon Bolivar, encountered on our campaigns there. The men will mount their mechanical steeds and disappear into the night, like a shoal of fish catching the moonlight as they dart across the bow. I would give chase, as you would to a deer, so I could further understand their odd behaviour. However my place is here, standing firm.

As my night watch continues the miscreants emerge from their hovels. They drink noxious juices on my steps, and allow themselves into a state of drunkenness and disorder that would see them locked up on a ship of mine. Not so many moons ago a figure approached me in the darkness. It was the girl who sits at my feet at noon. I was shocked that such a girl as her would dare come out at this dark hour, especially without a chaperone. To my horror she began to smear posters onto my plinth. I could not read these posters but I know them to be sedition. I stood there, in humiliation, for days, until a young man tore the paper from me. I had previously thought the boy a scoundrel having seen him making crude remarks to the women on their afternoon promenades. I now suspect these woman to be part of a radical female infiltration by the Spanish and the boy to be a good patriot.

There is only so much one man, one statue, even one as great and as decorated as myself can do to keep a city safe. It is up to the living men of this area to keep it secure from infiltration and to ensure the great nation of Colombia lives long as the jewel of the Americas. As God is my witness I will do all I can, and together, bricks and mortar, flesh and blood, we shall succeed in maintaining the security of the city and of this nation.

THE
HYPER
AND
THE
ANTI

EXERCISES
IN
EXTREMES

Introduction

Previously I have used narratives to describe the present condition of Bogotá's public space, taking on the voice of a city's element as a way of describing its inhabitants. To try and gain deeper understanding of the interaction between element and citizen I have now imagined different futures for these elements. These futures follow two different modes, the hyper and the anti.

The hyper pushes the elements, accelerating their function until breaking point. The anti follows the opposite path, taking away the element's function and imagining the effect this has on its surroundings.

Whilst there are positive outcomes in these stories, they are for the most part not desirable outcomes. They are, in some respects, horror stories. However, they illuminate the delicacy of the element's use, how a simple change can unbalance the existing equilibrium and end the positive effects of the space.

These narratives have also helped in furthering my understanding of exactly why these elements work, and what needs to be taken into account if they are to be translated elsewhere. This will be the next stage in the project.

Path/Bridge

HYPER

Who could have seen it coming? Universidad Nacional, in the list of the world's top 50 universities. We all knew that they were good but this was a bit of a surprise, that's Ivy League numbers. It obviously did the trick though, because suddenly every Spanish speaking kid from the Estadios Unidos who wanted the top education for cheap was here. You might wonder how that could affect me, just a bit of the urban fabric, but it's surprising.

The first thing I ever heard about any of this was the chatter from the students just after it was announced. They couldn't believe it, one of the world's best universities, and they were studying at it. I should have seen what was coming, because six months later in August it suddenly hit me. Thousands of footsteps on my back appeared overnight. It felt like the time I was hit by a truck. I'm strong so I could carry them all, but that wasn't the main problem. The issue I was having was how to fit everyone onboard. There were queues in the morning and evening, dense crowds crossed over me, I groaned. I was packed to my gunnels, it was lucky that nobody fell into the road. It was that busy.

They came up with a solution though, they repeated me, they built another bridge just like me, right by my side. Actually I have to admit I felt quite jealous. Suddenly there was plenty of room and we didn't have to worry about accidents so much.



It was funny, watching the people pick between me and my clone. Some stayed loyal, some abandoned me. Some would vary from day to day. People would spot friends across the gap, attempting a conversation through the noise of the cars below. It was just too wide, and just too loud for a chat.

Life underneath us took a slightly peculiar turn though, I think it was the lack of light that did it. Nobody wanted to walk underneath anymore, and the stalls moved away from the underpass. The shelter they once depended on for their stalls was now threatening. The stalls line up along the street, safe in the light but exposed to the harshness of the sun and the rain. The huge crowds keep them from moving away permanently though.

In the middle of the road on the central reservation, the local homeless population have found that the permanent gloom is useful for them, taking residence in the space as a place to sleep. The local government is not too keen on this, they installed lighting to try and discourage it and to bring back more publicly acceptable uses, but it made no difference.

Things have changed, somewhat for the better, somewhat for the worse. It's ok right now, but I don't know what will happen if the crowds go. Right now, things may be no worse, just quite different, but they are certainly less balanced.

Path/Bridge

ANTI

Youth is a fleeting thing, one minute you are a young, hanging out with students, freshly painted, gleaming, the next thing you know you are grey, water stained, and crumbling. My crumbling happened all of a sudden, when my stairs gave way. Suddenly I could not do what I live for, I could not help people cross between the city and the university. My stairs, where they met the city after spanning the road were dangerous.

As I came face to face with my own mortality, the students started to face the new spatial situation. In terms of transport, it was easy, they just walked a hundred metres up the road to cross at the Transmilenio station. There was more to it than a simple diversion though. The police closed my entrances, to try and stop people climbing me, but that wasn't much of a barrier to anyone. The students took no time in claiming me back, not as a path, but as a platform, a place to remain and a place for activity. I had aided their transport every day, but now they could not walk across me, my true potentials became clear. They had come to see me as one of theirs over the years, and this did not change. They made use of me, I was a place to meet, visible to the whole city. They began to meet on top of me, just socially at first, later they would talk about the issues that were troubling them. After that they started to plot.

They realised with the city passing below they could make their claims, and they protested, chanting from my sides,



turning me into a billboard, communicating the student's troubles straight to the city. The authorities were not happy about this new development and sent the police to bring it to an end. They came, heavy handed as could be expected, and ordered the protesters to come down. The students refused, having sensed the air of confrontation. The police prepared to take the bridge back by force, but the students climbed onto my sides, hanging off the barriers above the highway below. Any physical action now could send my friends falling off me down onto the tarmac below, probably not fatal but undoubtedly dangerous and definitely not what you want to happen in front of the TV news that had quickly appeared to document the scene. The confrontation lasted for hours, they had to close the road all day, the city ground to a halt, it was on TV all over the country, people were furious. Eventually after some time, negotiations and promises, the students came down.

The city fixed me up very swiftly after that, to get everything back to normal as quickly as possible, but I think it's too late. Some academics crossing the other day said something about me becoming a liminal node in the city, whatever that means. All I know is that everyone in this city has seen what can be done with a bridge over an avenida, how it can be used by the people. And seeing as every avenue in the city has bridges like me, well, that makes an interesting proposition.

Boundary/Wall

HYPER

We grew. We all did. I had hoped it would never happen but then it did. Fear of the other and desire for some strange idea of order drove us skywards. Now we all sit here, roughly four metres tall, opaque, separating a few from the rest. Reinforced concrete that cannot be climbed, broken, or even looked through, defines the edges of all lives now. Private oases are inside, with views of only the sky, the mountains and just a few of the tallest towers in the city.

Life outside my gates has changed. People stopped walking, the men who once served food across me to the local students no longer unfold their umbrellas or set out their chars. People rush along the roads, driving everywhere, the traffic is awful. If something untoward were to happen to somebody in the street no one would come out of their fortresses to help. All the cafés have died, the parks are basically unused. Men race about on scooters, delivering groceries and restaurant food, they deliver to the gate and carry no cash. If you want to come in you better ring ahead, nobody appreciates surprise visits anymore. Once you're here you can ring the speaker phone and you'll be let in, if that's what they want to do.

My blocking of sight lines has encouraged the use of other senses in experiencing the city. Sometimes passers by can hear the life inside, the sounds of children playing or arguments between miserable couples. Occasionally a sweet smell of



flowers will pass through a gate, or the sour stench of forgotten sacks of rubbish left in the sun. People look up more, spying branches that have escaped over my head, or looking at the mountains high above. There is no view down here now.

There used to be mixing in the city, you might not be able to know exactly what someone's life was like, but you could guess. People thought this nose, but now the idea that someone else might live differently to you seems to have disappeared. All your friends come from the same school, work at the same office, exercise at the same gym. Bogotá doesn't understand the rom-com at the cinema anymore. The meet-cutes, stolen glances across a bus or conversations with a stranger in a coffee shop about that book you are reading. They just don't make sense here anymore.

Not everyone has lost their sympathetic curiosity though. Go up Monserrate, the mountain towering over Bogotá, and you'll find crowds looking down onto the city, to us, eager to see from afar that which is invisible when they are close. Outside my gates, when their parents dare to take them out onto the street you'll occasionally hear young children, they ask their mothers what happens behind that wall. Their mother never knows, they stop asking soon. The city has lost something, these structures are not helping us, they are constraining us. We need to tear these walls down.

Boundary/Wall

ANTI

The walls came down! The whole city agreed that it was time to open up, to lower our boundaries and to share our spaces, so they outlawed the humble garden wall. Now if a space is closed off so only you can use it, you'll have the planning department round telling you to change your tune. There was opposition of course, but it happened anyway, the cries in favour were too loud to ignore. Now wherever you look the front gardens are open and the grass goes right to the edge of the street.

The layout of the street changed at the same time, its borderless now. There is no set lane for driving, cycling, parking, it's all the same. It can be a pain to weave through the streets, around the parked cars, but at least everyone drives a bit slower, takes a bit more care. There is no such thing as right or wrong when you are driving now, just good behaviour and bad behaviour.

Just because you can't build a wall anymore it doesn't mean separation has completely disappeared. You'll see plant pots, garden benches, bicycles, all sorts of things parked outside front doors. These things tell you where you are, whose house this is. You can tell who your neighbours are by these little slivers of personality, the kids bike, the delicate plants, the collapsing bench, the big car. The territories are still marked.



Although people are more open and conversation comes easier, there is still suspicion. Just because the boundary came down it doesn't mean the threshold was abolished. Immediately the bars on the windows became stronger. The burglar alarms got a bit more prominent. Other changes happened too, whilst once anyone might walk by, it's a bit tighter now. If you stray onto the wrong street you'll start to get funny looks. Everybody keeps an eye out now, and you stay where you are supposed to. The neighbours are all closer now, but the city as a whole remains a place of separation, where the rich will never understand the poor, and vice versa. It wasn't as simple as everyone imagined to solve our problems. In fact it showed us how serious the problems really were, maybe now we will actually do something about them.

District/Teusaquillo

HYPER

I have always held myself to a high standard. I valued my maturity, my establishment in the city, my culture and my popularity. When people spoke of those areas, the ones that did not work, the ones with unfortunate reputations, I was always proud that it wasn't me that they spoke of. My particular dislike, which I admit is snobbish of me, were the crass areas, nouveau riche places, full of flash and sparkle. I had roots. You can imagine the surprise when I looked upon myself and saw how my image was changing.

I became popular, in demand. The university was attracting students from around the world, my parks were full, the theatres were putting on the best plays in the city. Tourism changed, Chapinero was at capacity, the city hotels were soulless and people wanted to imagine they were living like a true Bogotano, a Rolo. The landlords worked out that they could charge ten times the rent if they were letting out their homes to middle class American tourists rather than to middle class Colombian teachers. My people started to struggle to find a new places to live, whilst the number of tourists steadily increased. My internal rhythms changed, the regular beat turned to fibrillation, irregular, unpredictable, and dangerous.

The shops, those of regular daily rhythms, the grocer, the barber, the baker, they started to struggle. The new residents and guests were more interested in places for the more occasional



visit, souvenir shops, cafes. The baker sold less bread, as the people wanted cake. The cost to run a shop increased, rents rose. There was friction between the established residents and the new, the heat began to rise. My heart, Parkway, became a place of contention, not leisure. On the statue of Admiral Padilla graffiti appeared, 'If it's tourist season why can't we shoot them', conspicuous in its use of English. The boil was quickly lanced with paint stripping solvents, but the stench of division remained. Eventually there were protests, marches along Parkway with signs, shouting, and smoke. It was mainly peaceful, but at one point things got out of hand. A shop that had been selling arepas and empanadas, but at triple the price of those in your normal shop, became a target. A small group of radicals, not part of the regular flow, peeled away. They beat on the glass, threw paint at the shop, terrified the people eating inside. It was shameful.

The changes that are happening within are tumultuous, my normality shifted. Diets have become richer and lives more fun, but they have also been ungrounded. As restraint turns to excess I risk damage. Anxiety creeps, the flow of people away from me increases, my solid foundations began to feel shaky. I do not want to become ill.

District/Teusaquillo

ANTI

I was identified by my names, they made me who I was. If I was named, then I was known, a place in people's minds. Being struck by tragedy is painful, but to fade, in slow motion, to irrelevance, is tortuous. That was my fate. My definition was given to me by my abundances, more students, more culture, more food, more parks. Without these abundances all you are is city, formless and indistinguishable.

I lost my abundances, I lost my identity, I was forgotten. My name faded, in the memories of my residents and the painted signs on my streets. I was still here, yet referred to in the past tense. The first thing that happened was that the students left, they wanted cheaper housing and moved to the other side of the university. They no longer visited the photocopy shops, the bars, the cheap restaurants, and these places struggled because of it. The students were replaced by working people, with more money but less time. They enjoyed being close to the Transmilenio, and not a lot else besides.

The second thing that happened was the arrival of business, keen to avoid the expense of the city centre, and looking to absorb some of my cultural capital by osmosis. First they occupied former homes near the avenidas, but when they outgrew these domestic buildings they started to demolish and rebuild. In their place came blocks, stumpy cousins of those downtown. Every morning I would take a great breath,



filling with people ready to work, and at 5pm I would exhale, deeply, emptying myself. There would be no cool nocturnal breath, the next one would come with the rush hour smog of the morning. Without the oxygen of activity the restaurants and theatres suffered, some closed, some reduced their ambition. The area's reputation started to fade.

The last straw was the movement of the academics. They didn't want to walk into a restaurant and be the only person not wearing a suit, they wanted to be able to wander of an evening and hear music played on the streets. They could not see that life within me anymore and they went. The bookshop owners retired, and their children didn't take over the shop, because who would come? The places for discourse, where you could take time to sit and argue with a coffee or a beer became more efficient, intravenously providing caffeinated stimulation, or alcoholic loosening. There was no debate anymore, beyond where to get dinner or the next drink.

My name faded, people didn't call me la Soledad, I was home for few. Those working in real estate came up with collections of letters that described me without emotion, NoelDo, north of el Dorado. Nobody really called me that. I just became another place to pass through, another place to ignore. I was not spoken off, I was just there. Seamless, part of the rest of the city, no boundaries, no distinction.

Node/Park

HYPER

We were thrilled! Recognition at last. We welcomed the crowds that appeared to be the fruits of our labour. We were safer than Parque La Esmerelda, quieter than Parkway, and bigger than El Publico up the road. It helps that the stars from that show on the TV moved in nearby too, but it was mostly us. We were soon full, ice cream was being sold hand over fist and we barely had enough room.

I'm not going to say there haven't been problems, of course when the popularity goes up the quality can't always stay the same. What with all the people, all needing a bit of space, all wanting to do something different, and not necessarily complementary to each others' plans, a couple of arguments were understandable. We used to be rather relaxed about what goes on here, too relaxed maybe. Anyway, once we had all these guests to please, the rules needed to be tightened up somewhat. We believe they are fair, some complain, but frankly, we need it.

We didn't even have to do that much really, all we did was make some of the boundaries a bit clearer. Ball sports were kept to the basketball court, picnics were allowed but we couldn't have any more barbeques, we roped off certain bits of grass which were going bald, what with the traffic of all those feet. We had to ask certain groups if they wouldn't mind sharing a bit more, we couldn't have those boys sitting there



all day taking up the ball court space when there were others hoping to use it too.

We even went as far as installing lights, now the park can be used well into the evening. Some might say it's preferable, no chance of sunburn or overheating. Fine, the lights don't have quite the same feeling on your face but they are very popular, thank you. Some people didn't like to be in the park at night, even with the lights, but I think they are overreacting. We don't even have that many problems at night, most of them actually occur during the day, when the crowds are biggest. Sometimes tempers flare, or people's stuff goes walkabout, that's what happens when you get so many people in one place.

Some might say our standards are not as high as they were, that there are too many rules and that it isn't as nice as it used to be, but that is life. We got more popular, we can't just allow anarchy. If you don't like it you can always go to one of the other parks. We do things our way, and that is fine.

Node/Park

ANTI

There's no point blaming us, we tried to stay open but it just couldn't happen. It was not our decision, rest assured we would not have dealt with things as they have been dealt with. We even tried to warn them but it was to no avail, we were a problem and apparently, we had to go. Typical government, pushing into the lives of normal people who just want to get on with things. Well, our reputation is in tatters now, and they are to blame for it. I won't dwell on what happened, that is passed now, but the effects of it today are just horrifying.

The situation, as it currently stands, is this: we were shut down, a fence was put up around us and nobody was allowed in. The reasons, frankly, were spurious. I think looking back, that was the moment this neighbourhood lost its charm. The effects on the neighbouring houses weren't immediate, but it surely happened. Once we shut down, much of the passing traffic went with it, people walking nearby used to come our way especially, just to walk through the trees. Now they avoided the area, depressed by the closed gate, worried by the absence of activity.

Once the street life died, the local residents started to feel more worried about their property. With nobody using the park all day, keeping an eye on the houses whilst the residents were out at work, the fear of crime went up. I can't say I blame them. The grilles went up though, the fences grew and the bars got

thicker. People stopped parking their cars on the street and put them behind gates topped with barbed wire. The atmosphere of the place went badly downhill with all these ghastly additions. It won't surprise you to hear that house prices went down, families moved out of the area. Private landlords bought the houses and divided them into flats, they rent them out now. Tenants come and go, the community feeling just isn't the same, you don't know who your neighbours are from day to day.

The security for the park is awful, at first there were homeless there, we couldn't do anything about it. We phoned and phoned and the city government just didn't want to know. Eventually when the complaints got too much they agreed to provide a security guard. It may have moved the bums along, but it has also given the local youths a new jolly. They are fascinated by our park, most of them are too young to remember it as it was. For the older ones it's been years anyway. So they try to break in, they want to fool the guards and explore. It's probably just the high spirits of youth but I do wonder if it will lead to worse criminality. Nothing would surprise me these days. Surprisingly we have become slightly mythologised with the adults as well, you would think they know better. You should hear the stories that are spread about us, why we were closed down, what used to go on inside. It's all nonsense of course but that doesn't stop the chatter. I would have thought nobody would be interested in something so silly, so long after, but then you forget how much people like to have a good gossip.

Hopefully we will reopen one day, but I have no idea when that could be. There's talk occasionally of finding a new use, but it never comes to anything. Budget problems they always say. Typical. I hope I'll live to see this place open again, but I'm not holding my breath. To be frank I'm starting to give up hope that it ever will open again.

Landmark/Statue

HYPER

I stand here, my purpose to protect Teusaquillo. I stand here, witness to an awful crime and to an incredible reaction. I stand here, a failure. I stood here that night and I watched the young woman paste her posters upon me. I declared sedition, but now I see my grave error. A local hooligan had been accosting her and she had had enough, she made her protest in the form of pasted paper. The hooligan ripped them down, but this motivated her more. The fateful occasion occurred one night as she was replacing her posters, putting them back up after they had been ripped from my base. The hooligan was waiting for her. I have seen many things in my life on the seas and my lifetimes spent standing here, I am a hardened man. Still, I cannot bring myself to speak of what happened. All I will say is the thought will haunt me until I am dust.

She was found the next morning, hours too late, a small distance from where I stand. The shock and outcry spread around the district like fire in dried brush. As soon as people heard, they came to me. She was a member of a community of similar women, they came with posters and soon I was covered, the paper wrapped thick around my plinth, binding me in the messages of the woman who I would never see again. Others brought flowers and lay them on my plinth. Not at my feet, but at her memorial's. They came from miles around and soon I was standing upon the crest of a wave of posters, amid



a sea of flowers. The crowd remained there for days, through the night that had been the end for the woman. The crowd was angry and upset, they demanded that this would never happen again, they were insistent that this would be the last time.

I do not know if the people's rebellion against the status quo succeeded, but I feel a difference. My stillness means that people act unguarded around me, as if I was not here watching, but I have noticed an improvement in certain behaviours. The women pass me by, and no harassment occurs. Perhaps there is a resonance just to the location, or perhaps the whole population acts the same. I know people have not forgotten what happened though, as every year at the same time I find myself standing before a crowd of women, and men. They are not there to be addressed by me, but by people representing the memory of the woman who I could not save. Years later it continues, my site has become a place of pilgrimage and protest by those who demand equality. I begin to think, even though it is I who is standing here, in the minds of the people it is that very woman, whose life was stolen from her, that this place represents. It is her who stands upon my plinth and occupies the minds of those who visit and sit at my feet. It is her that occupies my mind. This is her place now.

Landmark/Statue

ANTI

I remain Admiral Jose Prudencio Padilla Lopez. I remain the first leader of the Colombian Fleet, that beat the Spanish back and helped birth Colombia. I remain this figure in the lives of the people around me, yet they do not recognise me as he. It is simply an impertinence and I am deeply disturbed by it. The people do not know their history, and my place within it. The spot on which I stand has become meaningless, it is graffitied by criminals, fouled upon by beasts, drunks sit at my feet and the groups who do meet here pay me no attention.

Luckily there are still good men in this nation. In the government I helped build, powerful citizens have become disturbed by Colombia's lack of knowledge about their own origins.

They took steps to fix the rot. Gone were the scoundrels and the loafers and the vandals and the vermin. With them they brought giant parchments, as stiff as wooden boards, with marvellous scenes painted upon them. I recognised some as they were places I had spied with my own very eyes on my voyages across the seas! I was pleased to see the illustrations so all could understand these teachings about my life. Just as they stain the glass windows in church for the impoverished who do not know their Latin, they illustrate my story for those who do not read.



The occupation of the space in front of me ended the inhabitation by vagrants and wastrels. Only those who want to learn their origins come. I am not too proud to admit there are fewer here now than there had been previously, but these were men and women of good heart and character. If God wills it then I hope everyone will know the story of how Colombia came to be, its birth aided by my command.

There was of course some disquiet when the changes were made. There was protest at the removal of those undesirables. Apparently what these loafers were doing was of use, not that I could ever tell. I still spy the people who once sat at my feet. Their lives appear unimpeded. I have come to believe that they are still free to think the same things. I can still see posters proclaiming their causes on the walls. They even remain stuck to the walls now, nobody rips them down out of anger, people walk straight by. The people should be pleased yet they complain nobody pays their causes any attention. To me, if they are being paid less attention now they are receiving their just desserts, that's what happens when you steal the valour of a great leader to illuminate your own deeds. The people can only blame themselves.

TRACING
THE
RIVER
THROUGH
THE
CITY

INHABITING
RÍO
ARZOBISPO

Tracing the river though the city

I fell down, I don't know how long it was, falling and falling, one of many, part of a group, hurtling through the air. Suddenly, through the murky grey, a dark green mass appeared, within a second I had hit it. The flat round green shape bounced as I burst upon its skin, it was a leaf! Slipping off it I hit another, and another, and another, rolling off one onto the next. Eventually I stopped my tumble and I lay upon the soft floor. I was joined by more of my kind, becoming larger, until together we started to flow as one, only a small trickle but making progress. "Where am I?" I asked. In the creaking groans and whispering rustles I heard a reply, "this is the rainforest, we are trees, just a few of millions, and we stretch for thousands of miles across the land." Around me I could hear a cacophony of wind through the foliage, my comrades slapping against the forest canopy, the drips from the leaves, and the shrieks of birds swooping between the tall trees.

As we flowed slowly down the slope we were joined by others. We grew, turning from trickle to rivulet, from a flow into a stream. We grew, we gained definition, we became a feature, as much a part of this forest as the

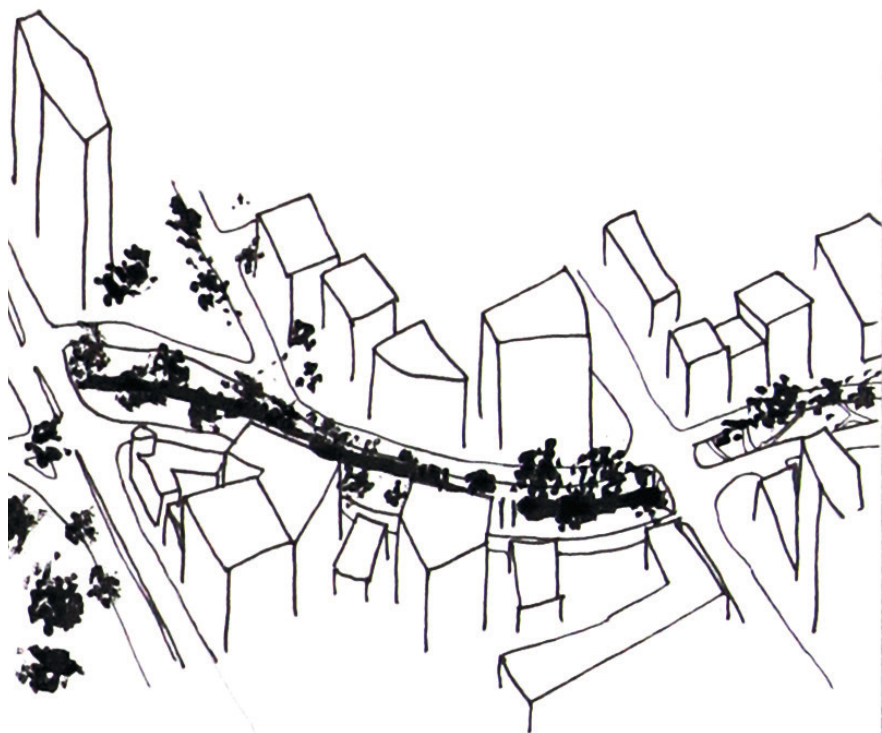


trees. Darkness fell, the dense leaves blocking out the moonlight. My friends had stopped falling from the sky and it was quiet. We gently burbled and spluttered, the trees whispered and sighed, the occasional snap of a twig or brush of foliage would reveal the location of a careless animal. The steep ground propelled us downwards with an urgent tug. A grey light started to push back the velvet darkness. Yellow swords punctured the canopy, leaving glowing lacunae in the gloom. We glinted and reflected, the leaves' light playing across our surface, and our own light doubling its play across the heavy branches. We skipped over rocks and through fallen trees, gaining speed with our descent. The rocks along our edges suddenly gained a regularity, a dark earth red colour, a straightness as yet unseen in the boulders and stones worn round by our flow. These walls propelled us faster, surging us forward. The sun was visible now, we ripped the fabric of the canopy open to reveal ourselves to the sky. And suddenly, with no warning apart from a faint burnt smell came darkness, pitch black and echoing against hard walls.

We burst back into the light, blinded and shocked. I exclaimed, "What happened? What is this?" "A road. The first of many." was my reply from the tree, standing tall and alone. Other trees watched my disbelief, all standing apart from each other, gulfs between them filled with grass and light. I could see hundreds of meters. Huge square shapes, rock like and mountainous sat between the trees. I carried on flowing, I could not stop, I could not go back. I ran alongside a dark flat strip. Bright, loud monsters roared along it, spraying their bitter taste behind them. No animal would catch them, they were too big,



too fast, their taste too acrid. No beast could feed upon that. Other animals wandered, docile, some alone, some in packs. They lounged in the sunny spots, climbed over the terrain, they ate food produced from hidden pouches. After my ejection from the dense woods I had slowed. I took the time to try and regain an understanding of my position. I asked where's the rainforest, to be pointed back up the hill by long branches. I asked what this place was, if it were not rainforest. It was apparently a park, an important place for reverence of the trees and nature, yet nothing like the rainforest I had awoken in just hours ago. These docile beasts, humans, had apparently carved this park into the mountainside, to create a sense of the sublime, presenting themselves to the wild, but also their power over it. My pace stalled suddenly, as I had come to a pool, a moment of stillness I had not yet experienced. I eddied and span, making no particular progress. The heavy dusk came again, but night never truly appeared, the sun's orange glow never fully leaving, only becoming part of the clouds, illuminating everything in a dirty, unnatural, gloom. The docile animals, the humans, were mostly gone, but a few remained sleeping. Other animals roamed, brazen with their visibility, scavenging for food. Foxes and raccoons stole by. But for the most part, the park was empty, it was sleeping. There was a dull roar that had been present since the arrival in the pool, as the light began to re-emerge it grew louder, rising with the sun. It was at this point that the flow of the pool finally released me, I was spat back into the stream to move with my friends again. Once more there was a shock of black, darkness enveloped and smothered, only to release seconds. The enormous square shapes I had spotted through the trees revealed themselves to me. Humans entered and left these



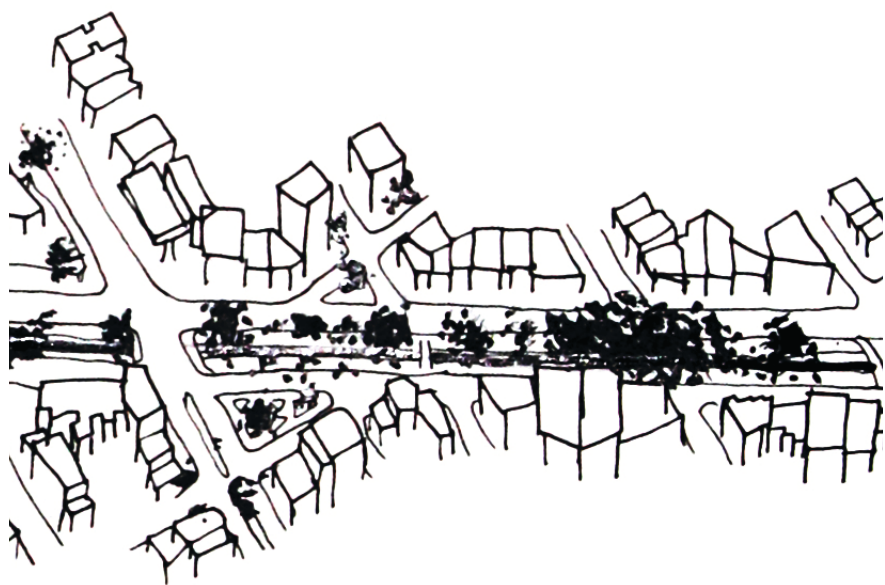
mountains, obviously hollow with caves. The bitter taste had grown, the air was thick. I spoke out, curious as to who would respond. To my shock the mountainous shapes responded, I asked what the humans were, to be told this was work. Was this activity responsibly for the emptying of the park the previous dusk? Apparently not, this was the first of the great, twice daily, migrations that filled an area left vacant in the night, with thousands of humans toiling during the day. This was a city, called Bogotá, and millions of humans were moving in huge flows like starlings coming down to roost. I was feeling particularly unsteady and disoriented, unsure of everything down to my own identity. I asked what on earth was going on. To my surprise I received an answer. "Don't worry, you are the Río Arzobispo". What was Arzobispo? I did not know and I asked. Apparently it is very important, one of the most crucial humans in this city, with clean robes of white and supernatural powers, and we shared our name. This put me at ease, surely if I shared my name with this master of humans I must share some traits too, otherwise why would I receive this name. My new found position calmed me, and I continued along my route, further into the Bogotá.

Another road, bam, black, roaring thunder above me, the air is thick with soot. This road is wider, I am cut off for longer. I don't understand. The walls of this tunnel tell me that this is the spine of the city, and the thunder is from a thing called Transmilenio. As I appear out the other side I glimpse groups of people, by the side of this road, watching the red thunder monsters, trying to figure out a way to cross their path. They are stuck, it is a sad sight to behold.



I look up, it's darker than before, the trees have returned. The mountains, these buildings as they are apparently called, are smaller here. There are less people, it is quieter. I ask one of the buildings what this place is like. It tells me this is a place of education, powerful people used to live here but now it is home to things called universities. The building, it calls itself a house, says a very important person used to live here, not an arzobispo like me but a mayor, and that his death meant thousands more died. There is a huge building made just to remember him, just behind the house. I am told its very important. I can't see it though, it's blocked from view. I can hear a noise, shouting and screaming. I am concerned, what is happening? Is this a violent place? Apparently my concerns are unfounded, it is juvenile humans, they are playing, running and shouting. I can't see them either, but they are there, locked into a giant building, to be taught about the ways of the world. More humans walk past, not juveniles, but still young, they interact, talking, sitting together, occasionally disagreeing or arguing, but mostly just keen to impress each other. They are also here to learn, but they are not forced, they are older and more mature, they want to discover and investigate the land around them.

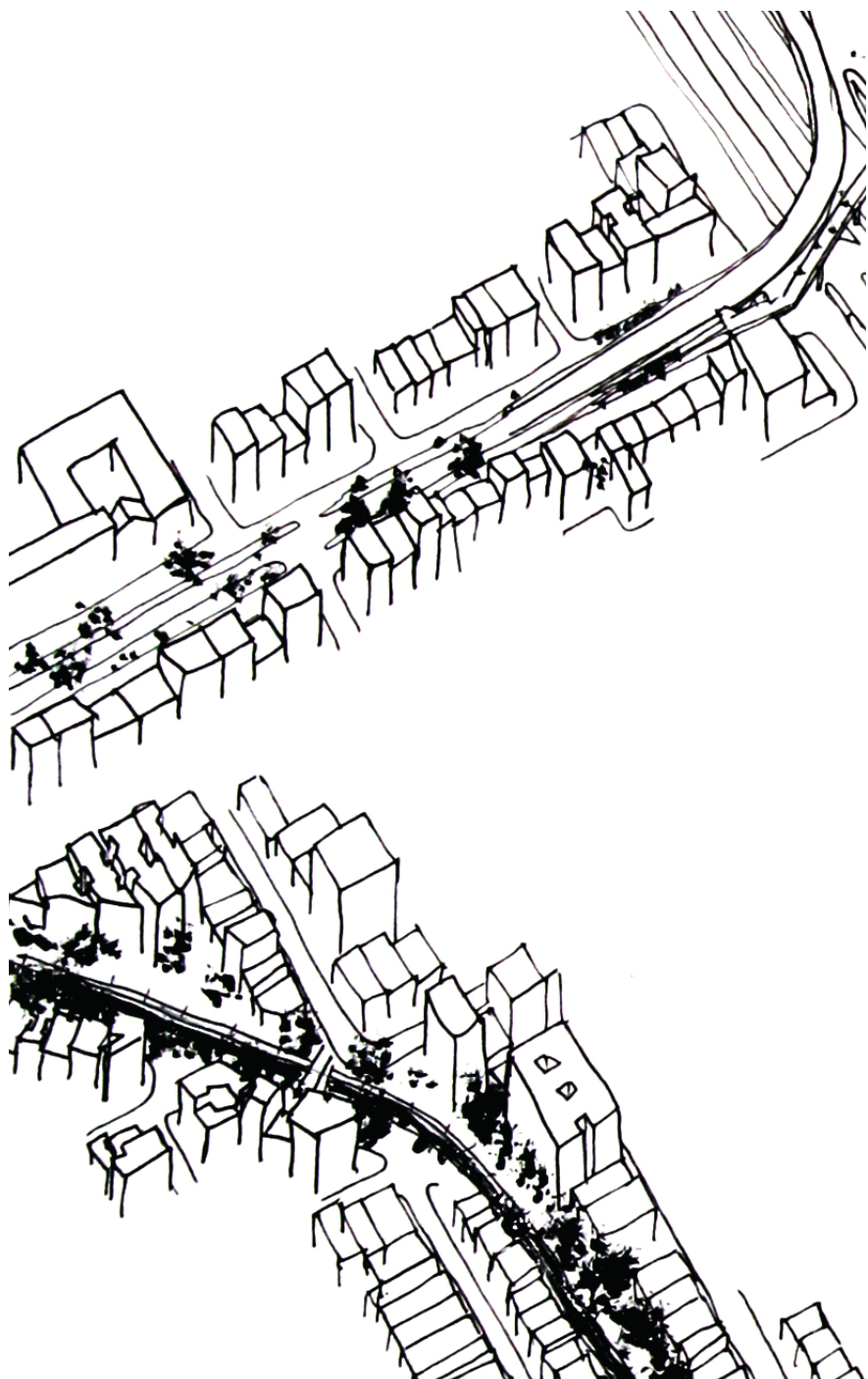
This part of the river has more bridges, but they aren't the tunnels of before, quick flashes of shadow rather than long stretches of black, glimpses of faces looking into the water. Under one of the bridges I was suddenly lifted away from my friends, I was in some kind of plastic container, trapped, looking out at the rest rushing by. I looked around, a small collection of objects sat there, all this human's possessions. My plastic prison is being used



to wash them, filthy water washing even filthier pieces of fabric. I stay within the container. The human finishes the washing and I sit there, on the concrete. The night falls once more. The cries of the children are long gone, the students have left. All I can hear now is the sound of the cars, rushing by, and the sound of the humans underneath the bridges, although they don't make much of that. Nobody walks by, up on the hard paths, the night belongs to the people down with me, but they cannot take any advantage of it. With the dawn, the human next to me stirs, a siren rousing him from his hard stone bed. During this interruption of his rest I was knocked, sent toppling over, draining back into the river. I rejoined the flow, back in my element.

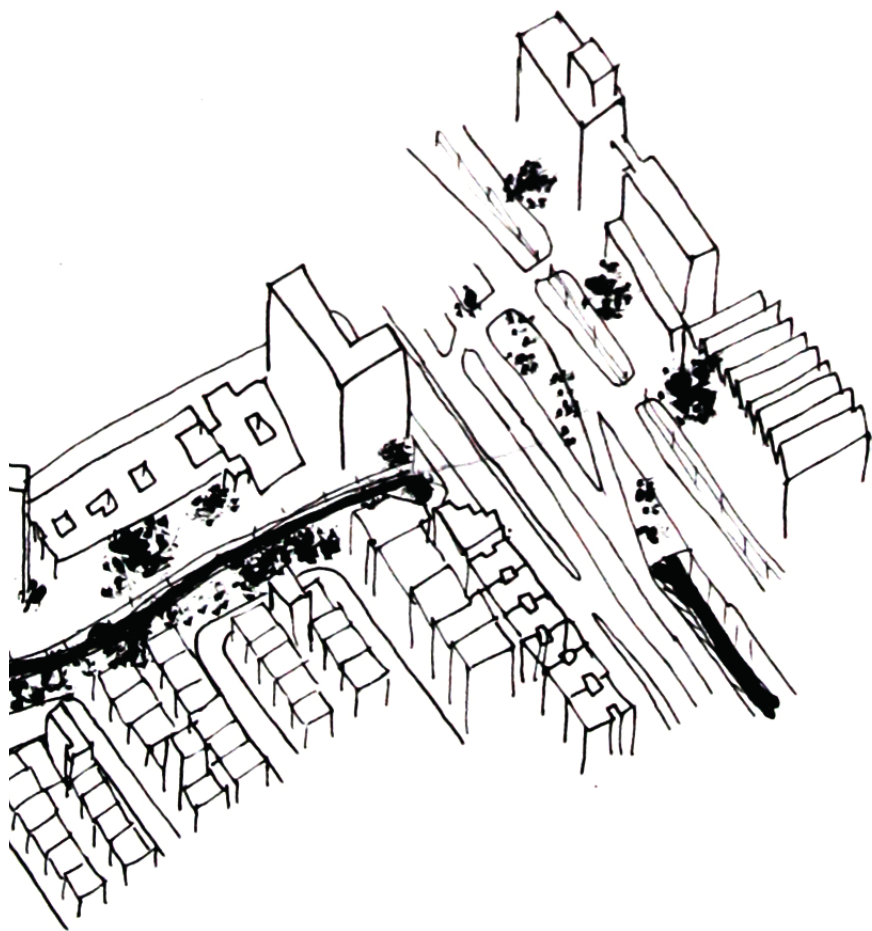
As I flowed and slipped along my own hard bed I could hear a peculiar birdsong, it had rhythm, and many tones. I looked about for the bird singing its song, but all I could see were a group of humans, inside one of their buildings, all moving with each other. As the song's beat continued their motions coincided, the flow of limbs was beautiful. I realised the music was coming from the room, this was their music, not the birds.

I swept along, beyond the humans' song. I had noticed all the people that walked near me were walking my length, not crossing over. Why was this? Were they afraid of me? I am no torrent, they have no reason to fear. I myself grew concerned, perhaps I was as bad as the dark roads I had encountered before? Maybe I was stopping these humans from moving from one side to another. What am I? An arzobispo? A blockage? A barrier? I was beginning to stink, pipes full of foul liquid were emptying into me.



The acrid taste that had left me began to reappear, the sound of the automobiles grew and grew. I called out to the passing trees, where was I going? They told me there was a place where many large roads met up ahead, the meeting of seven. I shuddered, who would use such a place. I thought nobody could, but I was apparently mistaken. One road was the parkway, a place of great activity for humans, two schools sat right by, full of children learning and playing, and a great number of places for food, for drinks, and for amusements were located there, popular with the humans who resided locally, and the ones who visited, for their work and their studies. Down the largest of these roads I could see the steady flow of people, lots of those young students, but also some older. What is down there? I hear from the birds that there is a grand place of education, much bigger than any I have passed previously, the biggest in all of the land. There are also more of the screaming red transmilenios, apparently they are very important to the dwellers of this city. Everything goes black once again as I pass underneath the junction, I expect it this time, although I am in the dark for much longer than before. I am relieved to see the sun, for a fear of never seeing it again set in once I realised this was no road's considerable girth.

I am struck by the sudden wildness of my passage compared to before, suddenly the grass is greener, there are less hard paths, the trees grow bigger and their crowns are grander. I am comforted by this new balance between the wilds of the woods and the city around me. The humans seem much happier walking by. The people sleeping under the bridges have moved away from my edge, setting up a kind of camp in the greenery, I hope it

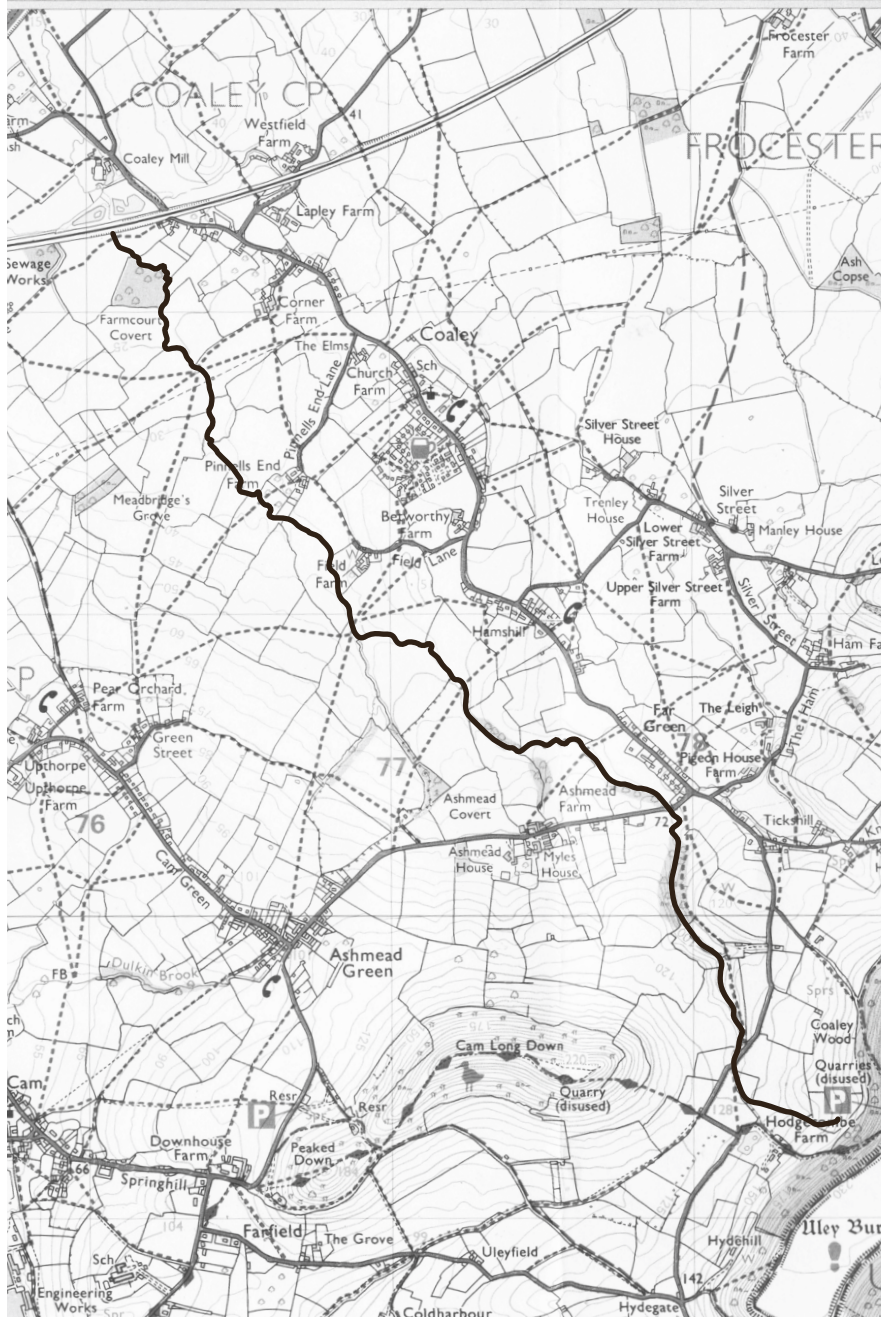


is more comfortable than my hard banks. This place has a calmness, a quietness that I have not yet experienced in this part of the city, it is a haven from the sound and the fury of the roads before, no metal monsters roam these banks. I hope that this is representative of my future path. A small market takes place by my side, with people trading for food, the fruits of the wilderness. Older humans walk with heavy sacks full of these fruits. I hear the screaming of children once again, but this time I can see them play. They climb structures and run around, I see no purpose to their activity but I can see the joy it brings them. It is confusing but comforting at the same time.

I continued my trajectory, through the pleasant green, but still surrounded by the city. Approaching me I spied another period of darkness. Although used to them I was apprehensive. Would we see light again? Would it be as pleasant as the area I was leaving? I pondered these thoughts as the light slipped away. I could hear the thunder above once more, louder than any road I had seen so far. The taste of the traffic was strong, and other smell, of water, but terribly polluted was growing stronger. All of a sudden, in the dark the temperature changed, the flow got stronger, we had joined. We were now one with a much bigger body, we had been subsumed. We appeared back into the light, in a huge channel in the middle of the road I had heard thundering above me. The air was foul, we ourselves suddenly more full of filth. I was no longer an Arzobispo, now we were Canal Salitre. Apparently we have a long journey ahead of us, which will take us for thousands of kilometres, and we will see many things. I hope one day I am an archbishop once more.

EXPERIMENTS
IN
SITE
WRITING

TRACING
THE
DELKIN



Tracing the Delkin

A Coaley Crow is the name given to those who have lived in my village of Coaley all their life. I was not born here, I arrived ten months old from the city as an incomer. The village is long considering less than 800 live here. If a Coaley Crow was to take wing it would be five and a half kilometres as they fly from the top of the Cotswold Edge towards the River Severn to find Coaley's bottom, 200 meters lower than its top.

Trains run along the Wessex Main Line near the bottom of the village, everything beyond is the bottom of the village, somewhat less Coaley. I walk alongside the railway over a meadow towards a line of trees. A train flashes passed, an explosion of air on its way to Edinburgh or Penzance, not stopping here. I reach the line of trees and find what I am looking for, the final meters of the Delkin, a stream, unknown to those outside the village and unforgettable for anyone within. It disappears into a small hole beneath the railway embankment, to flow into the River Cam immediately upon its re emergence into the light. It joins the River Severn not long after, near the end of the nation's longest river.



I turn left, face the limestone hills and start to follow the stream towards them. The fields either side of the river gently undulate, due to ancient ridge and furrow ploughing. The stream is wide and muddy, cows have churned the banks whilst drinking from the stream. Tree roots have been exposed, the earth washed from around them to reveal the structure, normally subterranean. I walk along the stream's meanders, the water occasionally hidden within the trees, thorns and nettles. A willow has fallen over the Delkin, the wood, popular for its strength and flex, used for cricket bats and balloon baskets, not snapped, broken at the joint. I clamber across it, pulling myself between its branches. On the opposite bank I pick my way through brambles and thistles. Nature is not made to human scale, and crossing its boundaries or following its path is often a challenge.

A buzzard eating carrion spots me, and flies off crying. Wood pigeons coo and crows caw from the copse across the field. Dragonflies flit past, and sheep baa from the nearby. A background of white noise traffic comes from the motorway, a kilometer behind me, a noise ever present but rarely considered. The sound of Farmer Cook's quad bike comes over the hedge. I share my name with him, but he is of no relation to me, I hope to avoid him, I have left the footpath, I have no right of way. I come to the edge of the field, a tributary of the Delkin in front of me. I clamber through its dry bed, avoiding stings and needles with mixed success. I emerge into the next field. A white mound lies in front of me, a sheep. It is not moving. A local farmer will tell you a sheep's favourite pastime is dropping dead. Luckily this one here's me, rouses, and stumbles off bleating.



I cross the stream via the farmer's concrete bridge, climbing over the galvanized steel gate. The field is full of cattle, no longer calves, but still in their adolescence. The herd spots me and begins to run, circling, they turn towards approaching quickly. I stand my ground, 95% sure they will come to a halt before they come to me. I am still, tense; then as if there is a signal they stop dead before me and we stand, inspecting each other. I turn, towards the field's exit, then clumsily stalking me, forcing me to walk backwards to keep them in check. At the end of the field I climb the gate, and jump down the other side, maintaining my watch over the cows. I land in an unnoticed puddle, a mixture of mud and cows' shit sprays up my legs. Occasional close contact with animal's poo a day to day danger of rural life. I wash my legs in a trough of water in the following field.

I look to my right and can see my grandparents' house several fields away. They followed us to the village a decade after we arrived. My grandmother will probably be up there now, and could see me if she were to look out her window. Before my grandfather's death he used to walk these fields picking blackberries, he would come back with purple fingers and kilos of wild fruit. The blackberries are visible now, they will soon be ripe, but now they hang firm on the bramble. Mushrooms grow in the fields, I'm not sure if they are edible or not. Sloe berries are growing in the hedgerows, sour to eat, but good for jam, or in gin. Elderberries can be used for the same, and the cordial syrups from the elderflower will be in cupboards across the village already. The stinging nettles that have stung my legs can be used for soup and wine, not that I have tried. I walk through an open gate,



and stop the farmer coming towards me on his quadbike. I stop and wait for him to drive to me, he asks if I am lost, about as polite a way to be told you are in the wrong place as you will receive in the fields. The way back to the footpath is explained to me.

I walk on, crossing into the Wilcox's land. There is no sign, just the knowledge of who owns what. I see their farmhouse over the stream at the top of the field, in the family since the Doomsday book. I can hear the tractor in the yard. As a child in school we were all shown a video before we left for the summer holidays, a ghost story set on a farm. The children in it meet grisly deaths around the farm and I have been wary of them ever since. The video perhaps pressed the point slightly too hard. I battle through a hedge and jump the stream, I had thought it a tributary but when I emerge out the other side I realise it was the Delkin itself. I can see the line of houses that marks the part of the main road through the village, in this part called Hamshill. The village is laid out parallel to the Delkin, offset by a couple of hundred meters. Close enough to fetch the water daily, but far enough that your waste won't flow straight back in. I remember a picnic years ago. We were with Julie, a childminder, parent during office hours. My friend was about to start school, and it was his last day being looked after. I would have to wait another year to go myself. We ate by the stream and played with a ball, I would have been three years old. The last time I had seen that friend had been only hours earlier, we talked of sleeping mats and rock climbing.

I am in a field of clover, although it rises to my knees, I have not seen a similar field before. I later find out it is a



cover crop, to suppress weeds whilst giving the soil the same rest of a fallow year. I can hear a jet plane above me. Looking at my phone I find out its destination. It is a jumbo jet that left Heathrow, exactly 100 miles to my east 15 minutes ago; it will arrive in Washington DC, thousands of miles to the west, in seven hours. The leaves of a horse chestnut are brown and curling at the ends, the traditional first tell of autumn. It is always far too early and typical jolts every year. I hear a woodpecker in the tree, knock knock it goes, who's there I reply. The woodpecker is silent. The joke stalls.

The Delkin has dropped below the field into a small valley, no more than 10 meters deeper than the fields, cut over generations of erosion, although only an instant on geological timelines. I continue to follow the stream, the hills growing larger around me as I walk into their bowl. I see Cam Peak to my left, legend has it the devil created the hill from the earth. He had been planning to dump it on the town in its shadow, but he asked a passing cobbler with a bag of worn shoes to repair how far it was to the town. The cobbler cottoned on to the devil's' plan and replied that he had worn all the shoes in his sack walking from the town. Satan, being particularly idle, gave up on his plan and dumped the soil where it was.

I climb out of the Delkin's valley and look upon the back of the street I grew up on. Our house was the other side of the road, I am on the less familiar side, yet I know it well. A friend of mine used to live next to this field. Their house was demolished several years ago, condemned after a ground source heat pump caused the house to subside beyond repair. There are new houses and new



families there now. More cows are in the field, they are older and they wander towards me. I walk back down towards the stream. I walk along its side, fighting through the undergrowth. I used to play here as a child with the friend from the house above. Their mum used to watch me and my brothers and well as her children as we would play around the stream. I am now about the same age as she was when she watched us play and my friend now is a father to two children himself. I feel both old and young at the same time. I spot a bird skipping away from me along the floor as another cried above me. A fledgling that left home too early.

I approach the end of the field, the trees have blocked the light. Horse manure shovelled out the back of a stable up the slope litters the stream bank. I walk through the water, the only clear path. A road crosses the stream, I crouch and enter a small tunnel underneath the road, the sound of the water flowing, my sloshing footsteps and my breathing echoing off the walls. I emerge back into the light and climb out of the hole I find myself in. This was once the boundary between two fields, but now a house is being constructed in front of me. I have popped up in what would be the garden. The builder of the house is another farmer, the biggest local landowner. He has landscaped the Delkin into his own personal arcadia, the stream is gone and now there are small lakes, connected by concrete tubes and home to ducks. The farmer is notorious for shaping the local landscape to his own tastes or business interests.

The end of the garden is marked by barbed wire crossing the stream and beyond it the valley grows to its deepest.



The stream runs through a thick copse, rarely walked through by humans, but home to badgers, pheasants and deer. The woods are not clear so broken trees lie where they fall, blocking paths. I follow a route to walk around a large spiked holly tree, but it was created by badgers. I wade through the bracken and climb over branches, whilst the badgers path wanders along beneath. The leafmould is unstable and my legs shoot off down the hill, my body unable to follow. I fall straight to the floor. I return to walk along the Delkin. As I walk through the wet mud bubbles boil around my feet. I am walking along a large mud flat at the bottom of the valley, in the winter this is probably a lake. As I reach the wettest part at its head my foot sinks deep. I place the other to regain my balance and it sinks too. I try to remove one foot but the other begins to sink further. I am reminded of the children's song: Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain. He stepped in a puddle, it went up to his middle and he never went to Gloucester again. I pull myself from the thick mud, its vacuum suction giving up unwillingly. I empty the water from my boots, then walk on, covered in mud.

I find a waterfall, either unknown to me or forgotten. It is picturesque, falling a couple of meters off a limestone ledge. I clamber up around the side, noticing the debris caught in branches a meter high, evidence of a previous storm. I emerge out of the copse, and follow another animal's path, cows had cleared a wide stretch for me, although the ground was slick without hooves. I notice movement at my feet and find a small frog hopping along. It hops off and I depart. The path is steeper than before, the hill towers above. The local limestone causes springs beneath the hill, and there are many here. A larger one



cascades down stones into the Delkin. The minerals in the water have made the rocks grotto like, organic rounded stalactites dripping water. I approach more lakes, I can see a house in front of me, it belongs to the farmer who had built below. The ponds are more evidence of his bending nature to his will. Geese, sheep and the empty windows of the farmhouse watch me as I walk along. The ground is broken, earth and rocks spill out between the grass. I stop and pick up a rock with two large clamshells embedded. They are millions of years old, evidence of the great flood that followed the last ice age. The ice had stopped its southern spread just kilometers away, and when it melted this place, 120 meters above today's sea level, was underwater. The stream has entered another concrete pipe, passing beneath the road to the next village. I cross the road entering an unfamiliar field, and follow the Delkin onwards. It is now only a trickle in a ditch. I follow the boundary of the field, climbing the hill, walking towards the treeline. As I get higher up the hill the flow gets weaker until I find a wet patch of mud, water trickling up from it. This is the highest spring, the source of the Delkin. I turn around and look down, the great River Severn glints nine kilometres away and 150 meters below, the final destination of the wet trickle emerging from a hillside in a field.

WANDERING
ALONG
THE
RIVER

INHABITATION
OF
RIO
ARZOBISPO

Inhabiting Rio Arzobispo

Maria had just picked up her children, Sofia aged 11, and David, just 9, from the collegio and had begun to walk them home, along the Rio Arzobispo. They had run towards her at the school gates, hugging her, whilst simultaneously abandoning their school bags and football in her hands. She walked along the path, mirroring the route of the small stream besides her carrying the cast off bags as her children ran rings around her. 30 years before it had been her running rings around her parents, and now it was her turn to be the centre of these orbits.

Her parents had been architects. Her father had been born in a small town to the east, at the edge of the Amazon rainforest. He had met her mother, a native Bogotana on the first day of architecture school, and that was that. She remembered her mother telling her stories years ago about how the city had come to be here. Her mother had explained about the mountains above, and the streams that ran off them into the marshes below. How people had begun to live along these streams, a precious source of fresh water. She told her about the arrival of the europeans, commanded by a powerful king to build a city of square blocks and how the colonists had linked

the riverside villages together with straight roads, at first for horses, then for cars and buses. The rivers, once the main route for people walking through the city had been forgotten about for years as the automobile ruled the city.

Her parents had been working on plans to change that, to make the rivers the main routes for people walking through the city. Working together they managed to transform the rivers, turning them into pleasant places to meet and to play, and most importantly to move around the neighbourhood without getting into a metal box. The Rio Arzobispo that she was walking along now was their first transformation, she remembered running around the dug dirt as her parents oversaw the works.

Her father had been a landscape architect, creating the river's path and the series of water plazas. The river, a simple channel before was now a park of colonnades, grassy slopes, terraces, and pools of water reeds linking the community together. These plazas were public spaces, sunk into the ground, and during the afternoon rains they would fill up. Her mother had worked for the city, she had written the *Cartilla de Andenes*, the primer of the street. This document detailed every brick and paving slab at the disposal of Bogotá, and Maria's mother's hand was visible all across the city. The primer had specified how the street meets the river, the moment when city ends and nature regains some control.

Maria felt tired. She had followed to family trade and was also an architect, and had squeezed 8 hours of work into 6 so she could be there at the school gates when the bell rang. The children however were not tired, they ran

back and forth, shouting and yelling, seemingly more energised than when they had gone to school earlier that morning. The river's path cut diagonally through the city's rectilinear grid, refusing to shift to suit the dictates sent by King Philip II of Spain, 8000km away.

Maria walked below a colonnade that ran continuously, sheltering the path from the harsh weather, the sun and the rains, that fall from above. An articulated concrete roof sat, cradled in deep notches at the top of every column. The bend of the roof creating a channel down which water could flow, raised rivers visible only to those living nearby, released into the Arzobispo through occasional punctures through the concrete. Walking downhill the roof appeared to rise up as the ground fell away beneath it. Every now and then the roof would step down, a new one nestled beneath it. From ground level it was impossible to tell if the two roofs touched or just hung there, apart. Maria's journey continued, the colonnade running right up against the nearby buildings, thickening their thresholds, creating a negotiable space. People would sit out and say hello to the neighbours, or sell food from their front garden, colonnade acting as a parasol. Maria thought of her now retired father, he would sit outside on a folding chair he kept just in the door, and chat to the passers by, staying connected with his creation. Moments later the path would draw away from the buildings, becoming more central. Street vendors would use the space, selling to people walking along like her, or people sat by the Rio to her side.

Maria looked towards the water, at the soft grass sloping downwards were students from the nearby university

buildings, neglected of dedicated spaces within their institutions in which they could relax, laze in the sun. On the other bank a low terrace, defined by walls and stairs a quiet spot next to the water, a place to eat lunch or to rest a while. Along the river the surface water from the street and from the top of the colonnade would flow into reed beds to be filtered and cleaned before it flowed into the channel. These terraces held the water from the street, helping to clean it, removing dirt and pollution, preventing it from progressing further into the ecosystem. The reeds flowed in the gentle breeze, their heads swaying in waves and making a noise that reminded Maria of the sea, hundreds of kilometers away.

Maria and her children walked by the end of a street that would have once fed cars onto the streets that bordered the Arzobispo. Now they either crossed straight over the rio or were cul-de-sacs, keeping the cars away and leaving it to walkers and careful cyclists. At the end of the cul-de-sac was a surface drain, taking the water that had fallen on the street and leading it into the Rio rather than the sewers. It was built out of the bricks from the Cartilla de Andenes and the sight of these simple kerbstones reminded her of her mother. Her mother had died two years previously, not young enough to be considered a tragedy, but not old enough that it didn't feel like theft to Maria. The stones were a memorial, anonymous and utilitarian to most, but crucially important and evocative to Maria.

Maria was still feeling tired, and keen to delay avoid the inevitable pandemonium that would begin the second the two children got into the door of their small apartment.

They had already walked by one of the water plazas, but it had been full of students so they hadn't stopped. They were walking by the largest of the plazas that lined the Arzobispo. When the afternoon storm rolled in it would hold millions of litres of water that flowed off the streets of La Soledad, their barrio. The water would either soak away, or be released slowly into the river, saving those downstream from inundation when the heavy afternoon storms appeared and without pressuring the already stretched sewers with almost clean water. Over the last 30 years climate change had meant the rains had got heavier as the El Nino weather system grew stronger, fed by warmed oceans. The waterplazas had meant the risk of flooding had not grown with the size of the storms. The waterplaza was dry for now, and there were children, friends of David and Sofia playing in the space below. Parents of the children were sitting to the side, keeping an eye on the children and chatting amongst themselves.

David tugged at the hem of his mother's blouse.

"Mum, mum, can we stop and play?"

Maria nodded, of course, and they began to walk towards the plaza. It was set in a space where the houses drew away from the river. The colonnades, following the path of the river cut through the square, creating small pockets of space. Small territories that could be adopted temporarily by visitors to the space. A long ramp led down into the square, running parallel to the bridge over the river. The bridge was more of a dam really, a dyke. There was just a small hole in the bottom for the Arzobispo to run through, and it would be quickly overwhelmed the second it started

to rain. At that point the plaza would start to fill up with water, once the rain finished falling the water would slowly drain out and the space would become usable again. Occasionally, when the rain was truly exceptional, the rain would threaten to fill the plaza entirely. When this happened, like any sink, the plaza had an overflow. The bridge was comb like, the top third a series of teeth that would allow water to pass through with little impedance, stopping the water from escaping out of its channel and into the neighbouring house's front halls. Sofia ran her hands over the concrete walls, and felt the ghost of the grain of wood, imprinted by the formwork that had once held wet concrete in place. Subtle stripes ran from top to bottom along the bridge's width, contemporary fossils in artificial rock.

Beneath their feet a grille of non slip galvanised steel held their weight, bouncing slightly as they stepped onto the panel. They were just centimeters above the structure below, a cavity for water to drain through. This was a place where the grime that inevitably was swept along with the water would deposit, leaving metal and cement to make direct, firm contact with a shoe's rubber sole, concentrating it out of sight ready to be cleaned away.

As Maria walked down the slope her hand ran along the balustrade, enamelled steel cool and hard on her skin, a welcome contrast to the unusual stuffiness that permeated the air. Her fingers brushed over the vertical supports, her footsteps falling into rhythm with the tapping of each support as her hand moved by. The balustrade rang quietly behind her, echoing her path.

They exited the ramp, the path they had been walking on moments before now well above all their heads. In front of them was a set of large steps that ran halfway around the space, until to sloped down, excusing itself so the Arzobispo could run into the space. The stairs were made from large heavy blocks, and the children were clambering up them, running along their length. The colonnade cut the corner of the stairs, casting a shadow, a sheltered spot to sit out of the harsh sunlight.

Enclosing the rest of the space, was a heavy retaining wall, again concrete, but this time smooth and shining in the light. It's thickness and weight reassuring, the mass of dirt, stones, pipes and wires hidden behind it safely held back.

Maria thought about the feel of the wall, its mass staying cool and its surface smooth, almost paper like. At the bottom of the wall was a small gutter, barely noticeable. It ran around the entire plaza, lassoing the central space.

Two elements sat within the square, the largest was a basketball court, its tarmac black, a single expansive surface. A football skidded across, hissing as the plasticated leather rubbed and bounced over the rough chips of black stone, bound together with tar, rolled flat. The other element, almost as different as you could get from the wide flat basketball court was the incision of the river. It cut a slice from the floor, and the water was almost invisible from afar. It slowly snaked its way through the square, disappearing underneath the bridge to continue its path. The football skittered towards the rio, tipping over the edge just before it would have come to a rest. The ball rolled gently through the shallow water, pushed

on by the current. David and Sofia ran over, and together with the child that had kicked the ball, they raced to one of the small bridges spanning the water. They lay on their stomachs, arms hanging over the side, and grabbed the ball, lifting it dripping from the channel. They dropped the ball back onto the long bricks that covered the bottom of the square. As it rolled along, following the direction of the long, straight dark bricks, it left a shining trail of river water.

The children ran away together, the group was now big enough to set up a match. Maria walked along the river, coming to a spot where it sloped down, beachlike, to the water's edge. The other parents were sat here chatting, what was going on at the school, who was going to play at who's house at the weekend. Maria watched the water sliding by their feet. She looked up at the sky, the sun was still on them, but clouds were beginning to tower, their tops growing wider. The rain would come in an hour or two. Maria looked around her, over towards the children, and up at the stairs around the square and imagined the all the water in those billowing clouds falling down to the ground. She imagined how the trickle of water by her feet would rise and rise, until it was well above her head height. The square no longer a place to lay and sit, but a lake of turbid water. Things could change quickly in Bogotá, the landscape uncertain. For now though the sun still fell on the Rio Arzobispo. Maria slipped off her shoes, and felt the warmth of the bricks against the soles of her feet. She leaned back, happy for a moments rest. She could hear the children's play, the conversation of the parents next to her and the trickle of water. She cherished it, a moment, finally, of stillness.

