

Reality Apparent

Here there is a bridge above a place that is not especially remarkable. There are some people nearby, maybe very many. It is a brief moment for which we could make divisions upon divisions to describe where you are and all its vestiges.

The bridge directs perspective. From here we can observe the relays.

There is motion in every which way, inside and outside of everything, and it is all the time.

From the bridge we might say that we know that this could be how it is for all time. The cars go along. The tram goes along. There will be another one soon. Yet it is difficult to say more than this.

What is not clear is for what period each thing will go along. There are averages for these things, should we want to make divisions.

Without oil the motors of the cars would not work. With enough wind the cars would perhaps work again. The tram works when the ticket machine does not.

Small catalogues of minerals pass by.

The motion is disastrous.

With each phase change it becomes more apparent that reality is bisecting.

I have the feeling that all these divisions can be misleading.

Reality Bisected

The railway line is hard to look away from. It is innately detailed, and I immediately picture the mechanical work that it is figured into as an exacting and relentless job. I can't imagine how the patina of the metal could be rendered through compassionate means. This quality forks its beauty, reminding me that there's no sense to this.

I fixate on the rectangular sleepers. They duplicate out of sight through the trees.

They are often eventually repurposed. Early roads were regularly constructed with railway sleepers, as if benevolently retiring them into a bond with rubber, a more forgiving colleague.

This area was a much larger marshland before the railway was laid through it, dividing it into the marsh of Jette and the marsh of Ganshoren in 1881.

In the 12th century the Duke of Brabant built watermills in Brussels. Different bodies of water were partitioned and channelled so that their construction would be effective additions to the city's infrastructure. Two waterways in Anderlecht were sculpted into the Senne of Ransfort, and three islands were created following the excavation of a number of trenches closer to the centre of Brussels. There was a triangular island called Hergoedshof, and on this island were a number of ponds where fish were held prior to their sale at market. Developed marshlands surrounded much of Brussels in the 12th century, and from these fish would be taken and placed into the holding ponds on Hergoedshof, eventually to be consumed elsewhere within the city walls. Today, nearly a thousand years later, the Marriott Hotel stands on the site of the island, its stacked lodgings an unintentional recollection of the ponds.

The Plants

Trains pass by intermittently and I imagine each sleeper below the tracks bracing for a moment, each measured interval indistinguishable through the cascade of sound. What I'd playfully thought of as an industrial xylophone with the train its percussive mallet is now a siren; perfectly inharmonic as it reveals the interconnectedness of each sleeper, differently tuned vertebrae in a sprawling nervous system.

There are many worn paths through the marshland. Marginally higher ground, dependent on the season, seems to be eagerly pursued in all directions from the look of the meandering trails that peel off to the sides. I weigh up what each new route may afford based upon its frequency of use, or at least what I can make of its use from the trampled grasses and unthreaded earth through the foliage. Surely one of them is a trap. With this small doubt I realise that my perspective is changing.

The residential towers in the distance stand out above everything that can be seen over the marsh and the surrounding area. The symbols emblazoned on their sides face outwards towards me, towards the railway line, towards the marsh. Each colour and shape make its appeal.

Three blue marks stand for water. The small rise and fall in the near-horizontal lines indicating the movement of a swell. The three turquoise circles of different sizes are ambiguous. I wonder if they are bubbles, supposing that they indicate air. The red symbol, again employing three marks, is clearly indicating fire with its rising swing.

Further away—not as legible as the others—is another tower. Its symbol can only be inferred by the presence of the other three. In overcast tones there's a collection of quadrilateral marks, almost giving the impression of a deep relief that radiates into the rooms of the apartments, covering their internal walls. Recalling the other symbols—water, air, fire—I surmise that this must be trying to picture earth. It seems an unremarkable decision, even kitsch, to append the structures with these four elements, yet the idea that there are a set of substances with which the material world is assembled remains, as I can see on the horizon, impervious to time and place. What this last symbol pictures, however, is not very convincing within this schema. It almost has the appearance of morse code, perhaps typeset vertically, and I wonder, persistently, if I could have mistaken the other symbols.

Scanning the horizon for more signs and totems to make sense of the towers, I recall the dissonant warning as the train went by, broadcasting the railway line implanted on the surface of the earth. It occurs to me that the idea of elementary substances or even deities could itself be a received transmission, a deep disturbance, a directive of some kind, and at a stage of design or construction of this particular tower the message was disordered into the strange glyph staring back at me in the marsh.

The Clearing

The way ahead is clearing, and I know that my eyes have been fixed on the distant towers as I've walked through the thickets. The path barely accompanies the vegetation, a silent generator excavating visitors.

The intrigue of the marshland is giddy. Almost trying to undo this, I sense that my journey has been surveilled and the towers likely a contrivance. My baleful attempt at humouring my unease falls short. And for this I picture the clearing as a moment in which my concentration will seize a new grammar to better contain my perspective as it presently manifests.

The wind changes direction in the clearing, a vestige that reports directly to our memory.

Approaching the road, the cars are parked with an awkward affinity to the overhead flora. Their strategy is baffling. Each car interrupts and thereby frames a number of spindly bushes and tree trunks. The effect is a series of dramatic juxtapositions between colours and shapes that seemingly adhere to the punctuation of the last symbol that caught my attention, or whatever it is that is rendered on the tower.

I come to a second railway line and walk across it. The sleepers are now different. Their uniformity specifies an unexamined volatility.

Walking by the side of the road, the contact and tone of the gravel below is soothing.

The Buildings

Unable to continuously look up as I navigate the roundabout, the tower of fire glistens in my peripheral vision, its closest face a waterfall of vermillion lacquer. Everything about the towers that I was sure of from the marsh now appears indefinite. I am no longer complicit in the exhibition of the elements. They are projected over my head into the distant environment. Out of range at the foot of the towers, it is as if I've crossed the threshold into the eye of a storm.

I wonder if the ponds on the triangular island of Hergoedshof, that oblivion between marsh and market, were tranquil?

With the sodden grounds now at a distance from my place among the towers, my thoughts reside with the manifold routes that I crossed and followed. The cleaving railway line feels especially present. My inability to generate a transparent mental report of the markings on the towers is continuous with the segmentation of the marshland. I can't seem to partition one from the other without the ambiguous nature of the symbols flooding my perception. The expression of their meaning is only exposed in this eclipse.

Walking between the towers, I can see residents at the end of the road moving between the cars.

