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At night the faces shine more, with the glow of the streetlights and the sultry peaks on the terraces. There is a way to check how sultry the environment is: put an industrial tobacco package on your chest: if it sticks, it means that the sultriness is ripe, and on the skin one has a mixture of sweat, pollution and humidity. Summer heat stuck between Camel Light and chest. But to say that the heat is sticky is to provide it with a body, when in fact it's the plastic of the chivato* that dissolves and adheres to the skin. The material dilates like shoes in the freezer, a wooden door stuck in summer, a wool sweater washed at more than 40º. But the ones I like are the materials that move, circulate, and their greatest enemy is the small cracks from which they escape.

It's mid-afternoon and the heat that has accumulated on the asphalt rises. The only place the air circulates and the 3 p.m. sun hasn't overheated is at the tree-wells, demarcated on the sidewalks. On the asphalt, the tree-wells are separated from the cement by 1m² pits where the earth and the trees are found. In parks, they are separated by cork or other materials that limit the space for the soil.

The street where I grew up was not paved and, despite the fact that it was called Carrer dels Pins**, a row of cypress trees made a wall which separated the path from the houses. Every time a car passed, a great dust took off, and I was glad because I could project whatever I wanted in the dust. When the path was paved, they brought a trailer to pour the asphalt and they removed all the cypresses and built a wall. Since then, the only presence of soil on the street has been the sacks of 1m³ of debris every time a house was demolished or built back up. As at the tree-wells, the soil and the debris remain enclosed. But instead of being permanently on the asphalt, the sacks of debris are only temporary, and they are taken away with a phone call. The debris circulates through the streets to be recycled or poured into the waste ground.

Today, the sun is as hard as it always is during August in Barcelona. I feel a very specific area under my neck burning from the reflection of the steel of the cars. I close my nostrils because it's summer and a gust of wind passes and something smells like a strawberry smoothie, thawing, about to rot. Now comes another smell that is acidic, from my body and from the sidewalk, mixed with lavender, a smell I have learned means clean. A drop of water from an air conditioner falls and I look up and see that it is the plane-trees which reek so much. Like they are sweating. Another drop falls, and it falls into one of the tree-wells on the sidewalk. I have always seen the debris bags still on the sidewalks, but never in motion.

* chivato: Cellophane wrapper in industrial cigarettes.
** Carrer dels Pins: Pine Tree Street

2

The bathroom of the house at Carrer dels Pins is a romantic apocalyptic anticipation which I often think of. The architecture of the whole house is evidence of a desire for a home with a wife, children and a dog. It has remained as a foundation and structure for my single father. Around the house there are strange objects belonging to a person who has lived alone for years, who has made the space his own. The bathroom is pink. Pink with a large sink big enough to share with someone. There is a bathtub, and even a bidet. On the sink there is a cornice to leave creams and candles, so their image can bounce in the mirror. But there are no creams. Instead, there are rocks from places he visited alone, or rocks from places his friends went. In the living room he has vases full of sand from other places where there were no stones to take.

I have never understood the obsession with stones; but the obsession with sand, on display in the living room in vases filled with deserts and beaches, I do. There is no debris or mountain soil, just pure sand. Outside, in the vicinity of the house, everything is forest and pine trees and soil, an amalgam of different materials and particles from living, organic matter. The sand is composed of finely divided particles, and is of different composition depending on where it was found. Above all else though, it is silicon and calcium.

On the surface of one vase there is a shell, half-buried, as if it had been dropped inside and then sunken with a finger. It's nothing special, it's the most vulgar shell one could find. Pink, about three centimeters, probably broken along the edges.

I'm looking around, under the towel, inside the water, there are no shells. The sand is in thick grains that still say what it once was: a green Coca-Cola bottle, gray asphalt, debris. The original sand is not there because in coastal cities the economy is dampened with each wave. Out of the 500m³ that was placed on the seabed to create the beach during the Barcelona Olympics, there is nothing left. The more gentrified the beach is, the thicker the sand is, the taller the buildings are. To transport sand to the sea it must arrive by the rivers, by the fluvials, but urbanism stops the sand, and my father is still on the mountain, and I stop the sand in the city. A house is 200 tons of sand, and a kilometer of highway is 30,000. The sidewalk, the buildings and their windows are sand, and I and those on the towels are half-sunken shells, pink, half-broken and vulgar.

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Since we went to the beach, I've been finding sand everywhere. The bottom of my bags are full of beach sand that accumulates between the seams and mixes with the tickets and filters and other things left inside. I don't shake it because to shake sand inside the house feels wrong, just as it does in the street or on the sidewalks of Barcelona, all paved.

Outside the walls of the Old City of Barcelona it was all waste, ground, soil. With the Pla Cerdà, everything that was once land has since been covered by sand and cement. The Eixample was not only built by the indians***, but was raised bourgeois, speculated. The indians returned and wanted their homes there, and they built more to rent.

I have trouble shaking the bag because I do not know where the sand belongs, and because sand is the best commodity I can have in my bag, in my pocket or in my purse. I walk to find soil, to a park with enclosed areas for children to play, for three trees to grow and for dogs to poop. Around cars, buildings and the Gayxample. Gentrification is not caused by people but by municipal policy. The sand between the seams falls on the ground of the park, it's lighter than the soil. The sand meets capital, queer meets Eixample meets capital and in the first rain everything will mix.

*** Catalans who came from the Latin American colonies during the 19th century, mostly from Cuba.

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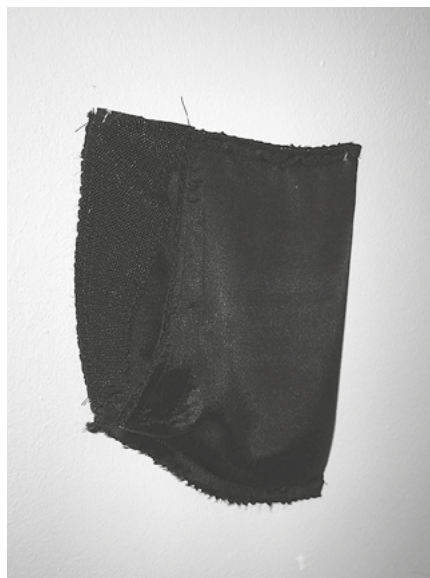
It was like receiving a text message with coordinates. There was no Google Maps, so directions had to be like: turn left at the fourth exit of highway C-32, make a right, continue straight until midway down the road when you can veer right and cross. When the message was received, we all organized and bought fruit and spices for the weekend and went to the abandoned farmhouses to rave. They were the parties of those who lived in the mountains of industrial villages.

I went hand in hand with my best friend who was the butchest of all the butches of all the towns of the region, but since there was neither vocabulary nor references nor gaycapital nor land struggle, it was simply la Meri. La Meri was practically the only one with whom I could talk. With la Meri and with el Maño I could talk. The others could only babble under the effects of the drugs.

In 2009, el Maño disappeared for a few days until he was found next to one of the farmhouses. He was stabbed and burned and buried in ground waste. As if the circulation of soil, text messages and directions had been misunderstood and crossed, the soil was in a circle, terminated and closed.

Because the circulation of commodity is more than an exchange of goods or surplus, because it takes over life in its entirety, it needs to grow between one cycle and the next. El Maño developed the exchange value obtaining gain at the time of circulation, but it was the commodity that created value. The whole life is 500 tons of sand, or to end up buried because of 200 euros worth of hashish. Commodities cannot be exchanged, so many grams of hashish are not so many grams of sand, are not my friend. With only circulation, there would be no global profit.

I break a cigarette and I burn the hashish that feels like sand on my hand and I mix it with the tobacco. On the terrace we open the packages of cigarettes, and we put them on our chests, sweating.



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