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SNAIL TIME

Stella Baraklianou
The Art of Wandering, Sheffield, 2015

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crawl along it, expanding and contracting alternately this foot of his, which is really the whole underpart of his body. Looking at his small rate of progress, you will probably be surprised at the rapidity with which the contractions and expansions of his foot follow one another; they cause quite a rippling of the surface of his body, and seem as though a good deal of exertion were required to produce even so slow a movement as his. Most likely your snail will keep on protruding his feelers, or 'horns', as they are usually called, in a tentative kind of manner as he makes his way towards the edge of the glass. If you put a finger in front of him he will probably walk straight on until one of these feelers comes to contact with it. The moment that the obstruction is thus made known to him, he will draw on his horns, and stopping his journey push them out again in a timid and hesitating fashion, plainly endeavouring to ascertain by the sense of touch whether it is still in his way or no. If he happens to be rather a wide-awake specimen of his race, he will most likely discern the presence of your finger when the tip of his horn is about the twentieth of an inch away from it; the tentacle will wave slowly about, rearing it-

Somerset, Arthur, 'Snails', Longmans Magazine, 1882-1905, Volume 15, Issue 88, pages 424-433

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Snail time is about the slowing down of time. It is about being immersed in the different spans and rhythms of these overlooked creatures. Take a while to observe the paper from a lower angle; you will start to discern the silver trails of the snails as they have left their imprint onto the paper. Look at the different patterns, consider the rhythms. The reflective rotating mollusc above will guide you into slowing down your pace. Mirrored onto the reflective surface, the trails bear witness to a slowing down and even a deadening of time. When does time expand the most? When do we feel a certain deadening of time? Are we fearful of this, of a sense that nothing occurs? The time it takes for the snail to trace its silvery imprint onto the paper, this is dead time. Silvering time, slithering time, expanded time. Next time you are in a hurry, when your bus or train is running late, take some time and consider this idea of snail time. Take a deep breath, think of the silvering patterns, quietly, patiently, being traced and retraced onto pavements, footpaths and think that time is never lost, only regained.

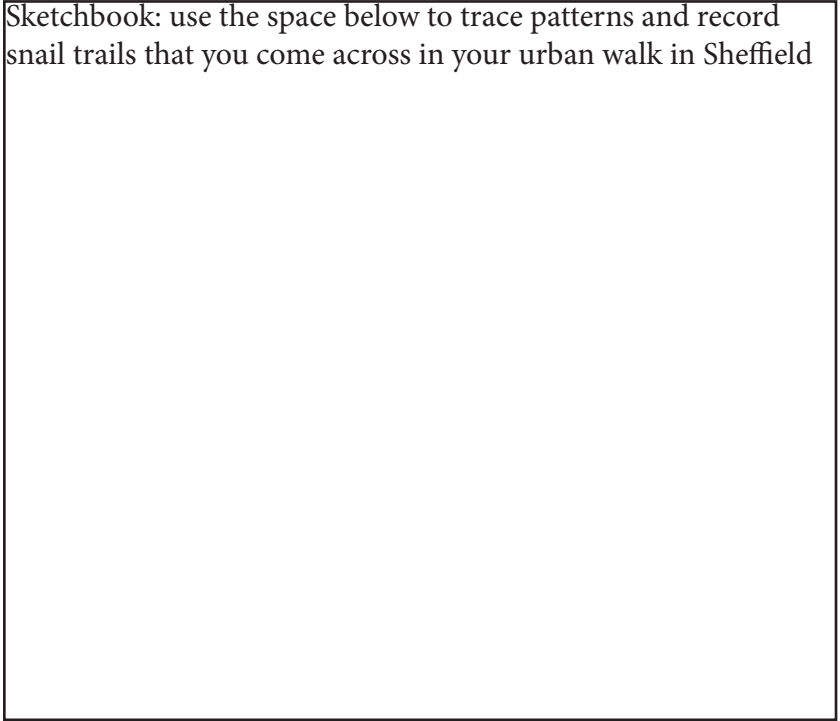
Baraklianou, Stella 'Snails', photographic background paper, laser-cut gold mylar, snail trails, 2015

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Sketchbook: use the space below to trace patterns and record snail trails that you come across in your urban walk in Sheffield



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