

Dear River Pool Linear Park,

You have enchanted me. We haven't known each other long. I doubt you know me at all, in which case, this is probably a one-sided relationship. My connection with you is experiential. I recently took up jogging. I run around you, my Adidas trainers gently pounding your banks. You do not know me, but I like this about you. Our meetings are methodical.

I like you because you are multiple things at once. You are wild, but well-mannered. You freely flow, you rise and fall, expand and contract. You have clearly been manipulated. Metal bridges curve over you. Concrete barriers direct and interrupt you. Sometimes you rise up and over these walls, disrupting paths and challenging attempts to contain you, though you seldom summon this wilder part of yourself. Reams of brambles undulate across your banks, they twist, turn and curve, intercepted by grasses, nettles, bushes and trees. Ducks, Moorhens, squirrels and rats coexist with you, they swim in you, or perch and scurry beside you, darting or creeping amongst the brush and undergrowth.

I encounter street furniture on your verges. Rather than dissonant, it feels a part of you. The surface of these electric blue relics is cracked and chipped, layers of greens, whites and other hues are exposed. The geometric, spiralling linear structures of these objects are in parts twisted and misshapen. Perhaps they were conceived in the 1980's, but their aesthetic looks older, and reminds me of the simple abstractions of Modernism. Their meshed surfaces somehow reflect the formality of Vladimir Tatlin's Tower. Recently I have been wondering about the aesthetic of European Modernism, its indebtedness to cultures beyond the West, and its consequent links to colonialism. These concerns were cemented in a conversation I had with the artist Lotte Anderson, whose NADA Miami booth presented a 'meditation on the success of the dismantling of Empire'. The PDF for the project describes it as 'a metaphor for collapse, and the subsequent choreography of collapsing structures, where the residue or core is revealed.'. I like you because you embody the contradictions of a society which is both progressive and flawed.

I am so calm when I am with you. I recently took photos of you. I don't want to introduce you to other people. It's not that I don't want to share you, but I don't want my experience with you to be diminished. You are a bit like a favourite song. I'm concerned about the prospect of showing you to other people in case they dismiss you, or question my fondness of you. I am looking you up online now. You 'run between Catford and Beckenham'. You are a 'Riverside park featuring a walking/cycling route through native trees and wildflowers'. You have four stars on Trip Advisor, and four point five stars on Google. Three hundred and thirty nine people have reviewed you. Perhaps our one-sided relationship is less specific to me than I thought. I am visiting your page on the Lewisham Council website. This is a bit like Googling a crush or a new lover, perhaps it's best to let you remain mysterious. I don't know if I want to know the details of your history. I would rather my understanding of you remain speculative.

Sometimes the bins on your banks overflow with fast-food packaging. These crumpled objects are always colour-coordinated and look like cascading jewels. They somehow add to your mystery and your aura. You are quirky, you feel like a place

beyond the intensity of the city and of capital, but on days like this, I am reminded that you too are a part of its fabric. Perhaps your jewels are a microcosm of humanity, with its systems of repetition and excess. One day I encountered a large plastic tarpaulin laundry bag on your surface. It was laying on its chequered side and its contents were strewn over your riverbed. You were gently flowing between them, and rather than carrying them, you navigated around them and let them lie.

Is time linear? What I am interested in about you, is that my encounter of you goes beyond the mind. Though I have a physiological and intellectual response to you, my experience of you transcends these. In a discussion recently a friend of mine said that I should link memory to ontology or to the metaphysical. But these things aren't interchangeable. Memory is a subset of ontology, as rather than the experience itself, it is an internal recollection of the actuality of experience. Remembering you does not live up to being with you.

Dear River Pool Liner Park, you are sacred to me. Perhaps this is why I have not been with you for a little while. I am worried that with overfamiliarity, my feelings for you will fade.

I don't know if I love you, but I like you.

Yours Faithfully,  
Clare