

Un Mapa Propio

Casa nuestra en la
Tierra en ti fuimos y
seremos malos huéspedes
y un día tus fantasmas

Tú yo vamos leyendo
mundo soñando mundo
inventando lo que no
existe para verlo pero
también sufriendo un
mundo que desgasta y
hay nuestra piel
desnuda nuestros mapas
rosados con islas
negras y secretos
maelstroms / No
sé si es un
recuerdo: si topógrafos
ciegos medimos un
instante las curvas de
nivel de la envoltura
zoológica más tersa.

Es que saben, estaba
borracho de realidad,
creo que hasta le quería
dar una congestión
realista; pero pierdan
cuidado ya se está
restableciendo de esta
dolorosa, gacha, y a la vez
penosa enfermedad, que
por mal nombre se le
conoce como ¡VIDA!



By way of introduction

By way of introduction

This fanzine compiles the work done by members of *Un mapa propio*: an exercise on collective reading and mapping of literary works related to Mexico City and the different ways of inhabiting it. The dialogue we held around the texts, and the different cartographic exercises we carried out, led us to rethink our way of reading the city, of textualizing our urban experiences and, of identifying the imaginary, utopic, oniric and fictional bonds that make up our lived spaces.

This fanzine seeks to share our experience, socialize our learnings and encourage further exploration around literature, biographical experience, urban travel, and cartography. More than a closed and formulated discourse, among its pages the reader can find fragments of our reflections, which we hope serve as inputs that detonate new questions and ideas.

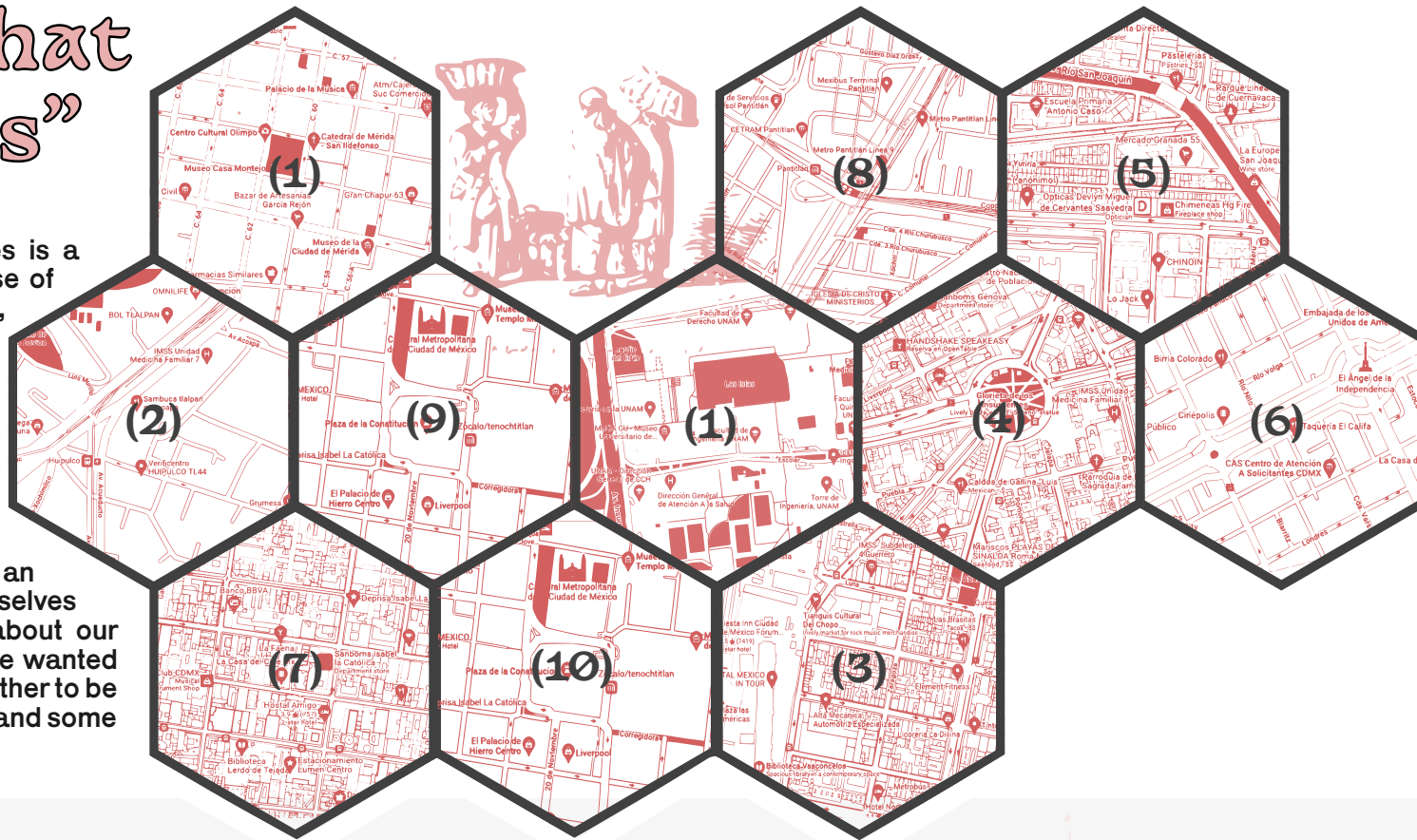
These pages invite us to learn from other people's perspectives regarding the complex experience that is reading and inhabiting the city, and to defy the way in which we create joint ventures and ideas of the city by means of creativity, play, and imagination. We invite you to conceptualize reading as a creative practice of discovery and imagination. That is why this fanzine is made up of different mapping exercises created by the members of this collective reading experiment, exercises that reflect and explore the three literary spaces that we have come to identify: the space of the book/text, the space of the author, and the space of us, and that present the cities we built from desire, journey, from memory and dream, and from the juxtaposition of spaces.



A map that reads "us"

This collection of images is a way of introducing those of us who make up the team, the places and some of its symbols in which we've placed ourselves, in some way, in Mexico City.

At the beginning of our first workshop (early 2022) we carried out an activity to introduce ourselves that consisted of talking about our favorite place in the city. We wanted our first approach to each other to be through the places we love and some of their elements.



(1) UNAM and downtown de Mérida / César Quintal

I was born and raised in Mérida. In 2011 I decided to do an academic exchange at UNAM, it was the first time I was away from my friends and family. I didn't know Mexico City, nor its subway, nor Ciudad Universitaria; its huge facilities, its chaos and its diversity.

(2) La paz #6 / César Quintal

This was the first house I lived in the city. It was huge, each room had its own bathroom, there was a game room, tv room, library, dining room, a little chapel, and each floor had its own living room. The house had a central courtyard with a tree in the middle. There I met people that today are more than friends.

(3) The tianguis / Adriana Avila

Ever since I arrived in Mexico City I've felt comfortable in its tianguis. I like the challenge of finding the stalls with the freshest and tastiest food. I come from a family of farmers that migrated to Bogotá. The sounds, mixture of smells, and crowds of the tianguis remind me of when I was a child, accompanying my mom to the marketplace where she sold fish, oranges or flowers.

(4) Glorieta de Insurgentes / Mariana Villarroel

Eternal point of encounter, connection, and transitions. I am an illusive observer of life, this roundabout is a place where to give meaning to the mere act of inhabiting and passing through.

(5) Granada 55 market / Juan Antonio Bárcenas

On a Tuesday, the 6th of June of 2006, on this market I came to realize that the world was ending (because the date made up the number "666"). When I was a child, this market was an island of tenderness in the midst of the city: a place to eat seafood, or tacos, or buy fruits and bootleg movies at 3x2. To me, it seemed that the fruit there was bigger and sweeter than anywhere else.

(6) Paseo de la reforma / Laura Ferro

I'm from Bogotá, I came to México to study for a master's degree. Reforma has always signified special moments: protests, meals, and beers with loved ones. Since I arrived in México, every year I've visited the paseo de los alebrijes. I love looking at those colorful monsters that give rise to parades of families, couples, and curious passersby. Yearly, the alebrijes have welcomed me and some of my loved ones that have accompanied me to see them on some October evenings and nights.

(7) La faena / Santiago Gómez Sánchez

This is a weird place because it's a canteen and also a bullfighting museum. During my time in college, this was a place of encounter, exchange, and party. During the pandemic I thought a lot about La Faena, and about a friend's birthday party that took place there, before all of the COVID chaos exploded. Remembering the smell of beer, fried quesadillas, and how light and careless I felt then makes me very nostalgic, and makes me want to listen to Manu Chao.

♪ Mama was queen of the mambo, Papa was King of the Congo started banging my first bongo... ♪

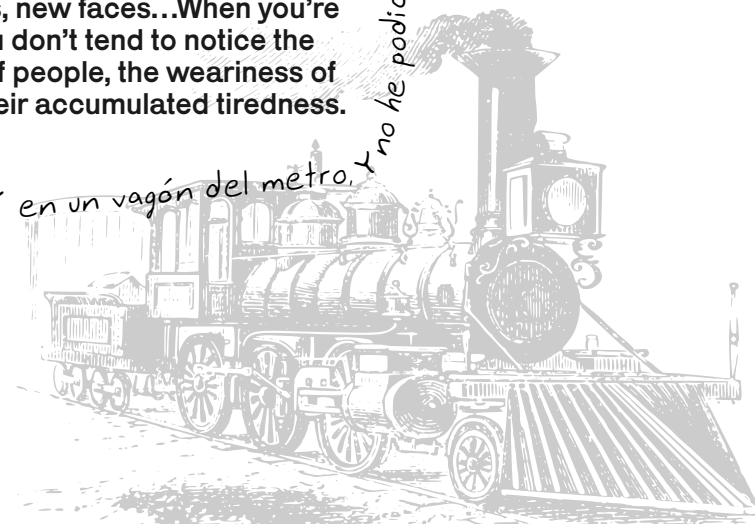
(8) Metro de la CDMX / Antonio Sevilla

I don't remember the first time I rode the subway with my parents. Since I was 13 they've let me use it on my own. My route was to board on Zaragoza and get off at Chapultepec. I liked that it had so many lines and that with only \$1.50 (that was what it cost back then) I could ride them all.

To get back to my house the route was Chapultepec - Pantitlán, but the routine wore me down, so sometimes I got off at Balderas to transfer to the green line, and from the green line to the brown line at Centro Médico, and there I would take the Pantitlán direction. I remember once I also got down at Balderas and traveled to La Raza to arrive at Pantitlán through the yellow line. That day I discovered 3 things: the science tunnel (which is beautiful), that it was a super long transfer, and that the yellow line was really slow. Between the ages of 13 and 14 I explored a lot of routes that gave me different views of the city, new roads, new faces... When you're a child you don't tend to notice the sadness of people, the weariness of routine, their accumulated tiredness.

♪ Me metí en un vagón del metro. ♪

no he podido salir de aquí, Llevo más de tres o cuatro meses viviendo acá en el subsuelo, en el metro... ♪



(9) Zócalo / Lorenz Paredes

A lot has happened to me in this place. I've had cool jobs, I've fallen in love, I've gotten my heart broken, I've cried, I've been happy, etcetera. It's an important geographic point for me because it's like my backyard.

Queremos mis amigos dedicar el siguiente tema musical para todos mis amigos de Tepito y Caracoles... Esto es sonando Cóndor

(10) Zócalo / Carlos Valadez

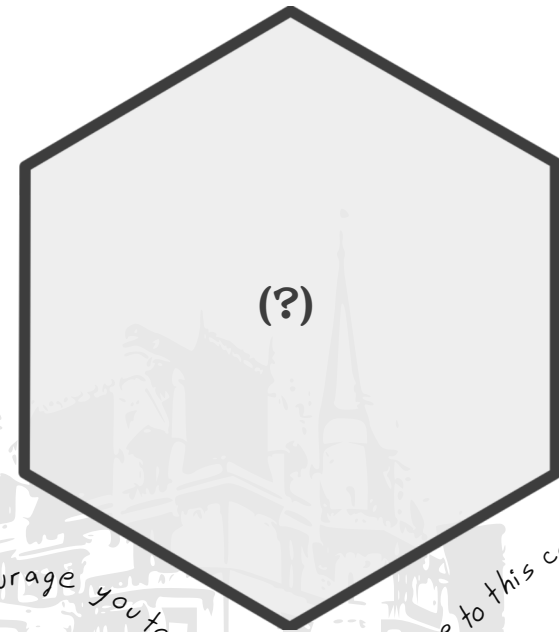
I started going there when I was studying for my bachelor's degree. Sometimes, Zocalo is the starting point to visit one of many museums that are around it, either to see an exhibition or to attend free concerts on weekends. Other times, it is the place to arrive after a protest. The image of the Zocalo is impressive. When there are no social protests or concerts, just the image of the Mexican flag at the center, the National Palace, the cathedral, and the Templo Mayor ruins are

impressive due to their majesty and the imposing history they have in their foundations. Part of the personal relationship that I have with the Zócalo unfolded when I used to visit the old bookstores, those places full of dust and with the characteristic smell of rusty paper.

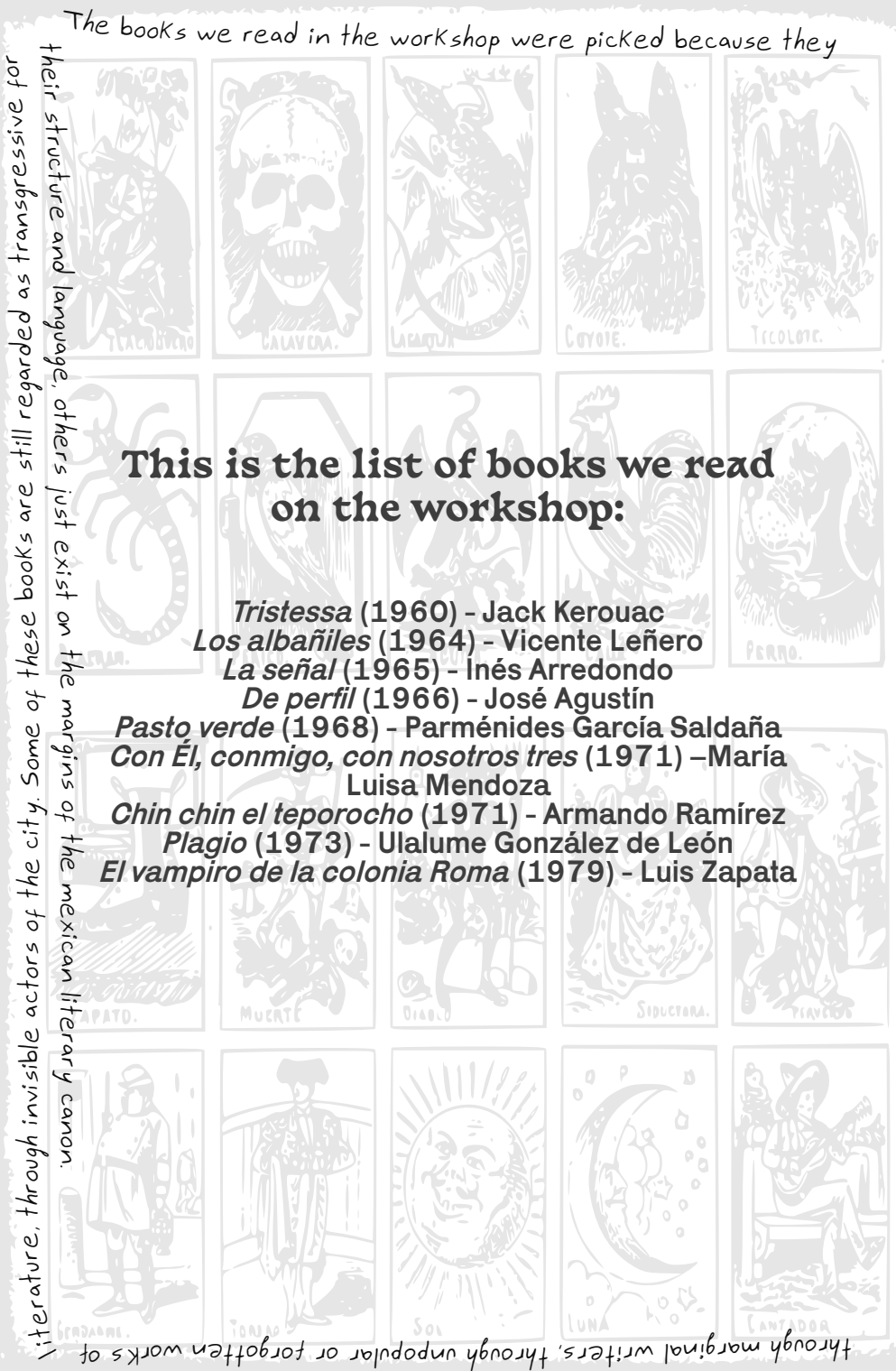
The Zócalo of Mexico City is one of those places that have great historical value, but that can also be part of your personal history if you let yourself be carried away by its impressive image, its surroundings, and its urban charm that allows you to have a little bit of everything.

A map that reads "us"

It's very meaningful when a friend takes you to know his/her favorite places. So, emulating that invitation, here's us. We propose to you to unfold here a new map of the city, one made up of fragments of our experiences, which articulated give place to a common space made up of our favorite places...



We encourage you to add your favorite place to this collective map...



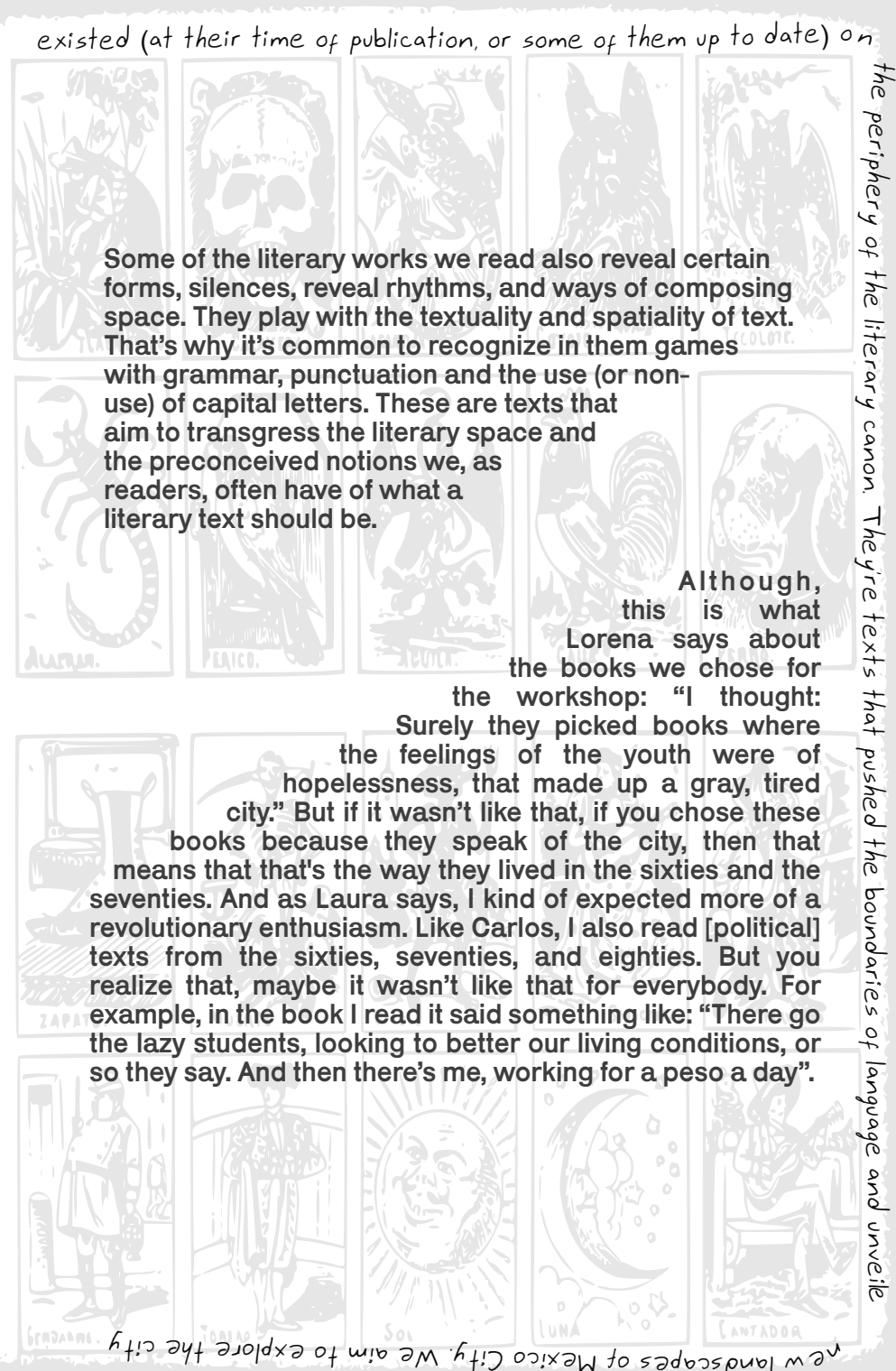
The books we read in the workshop were picked because they

literature, through invisible actors of the city. Some of these books are still regarded as transgressive for their structure and language, others just exist on the margins of the Mexican literary canon.

This is the list of books we read on the workshop:

- Tristessa* (1960) - Jack Kerouac
- Los albañiles* (1964) - Vicente Leñero
- La señal* (1965) - Inés Arredondo
- De perfil* (1966) - José Agustín
- Pasto verde* (1968) - Parménides García Saldaña
- Con Él, conmigo, con nosotros tres* (1971) - María Luisa Mendoza
- Chin chin el teporocho* (1971) - Armando Ramírez
- Plagio* (1973) - Ulalume González de León
- El vampiro de la colonia Roma* (1979) - Luis Zapata

through marginal writers, through unpopular or forgotten works of



existed (at their time of publication, or some of them up to date) on

the periphery of the literary canon. They're texts that pushed the boundaries of language and unveil

Some of the literary works we read also reveal certain forms, silences, reveal rhythms, and ways of composing space. They play with the textuality and spatiality of text. That's why it's common to recognize in them games with grammar, punctuation and the use (or non-use) of capital letters. These are texts that aim to transgress the literary space and the preconceived notions we, as readers, often have of what a literary text should be.

Although, this is what Lorena says about the books we chose for the workshop: "I thought: Surely they picked books where the feelings of the youth were of hopelessness, that made up a gray, tired city." But if it wasn't like that, if you chose these books because they speak of the city, then that means that that's the way they lived in the sixties and the seventies. And as Laura says, I kind of expected more of a revolutionary enthusiasm. Like Carlos, I also read [political] texts from the sixties, seventies, and eighties. But you realize that, maybe it wasn't like that for everybody. For example, in the book I read it said something like: "There go the lazy students, looking to better our living conditions, or so they say. And then there's me, working for a peso a day".

new landscapes of Mexico City. We aim to explore the city

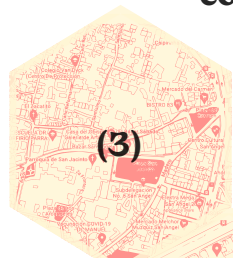
α map that reads desire

(1) El vampiro de la colonia Roma (Luis Zapata, 1979) / read and commented by Juan Antonio

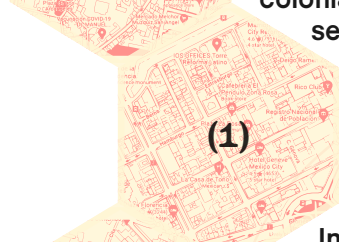
The vampire waits on a street of **Zona Rosa**, smoking and looking at the car's lights, or the stars [it's not in the book, but while I read it I imagined someone looking at the stars while the night's really close to the street]. El vampiro de la colonia Roma is really sensory, although these senses are not really mise en scene, they're implicit in the way the character waits: waiting for the night, waiting for someone, another skin, another body, a junky that waits for his dealer, a sex worker that waits for his next client.

In Japanese poetry there's a tradition: the most potent love, the purest one, is the one that never culminates. We live in the city, there are cases where someone lives in **Cuautitlán**, or **Huehuetoca**, places that are really far away, and that person has to travel a long way to meet with his partner that lives in **Coyoacán**. And these people wait on public transport, they wait for that transport, or wait to meet with their partner, and that wait is precisely another way of inhabiting the city. Because in it you find your feelings,

you conjugate yourself, and question, too, that same inhabiting: ¿What am I waiting for? ¿What do I want out of this relationship? ¿What do I want out of my time?



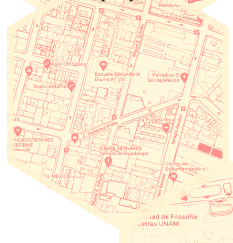
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(1)



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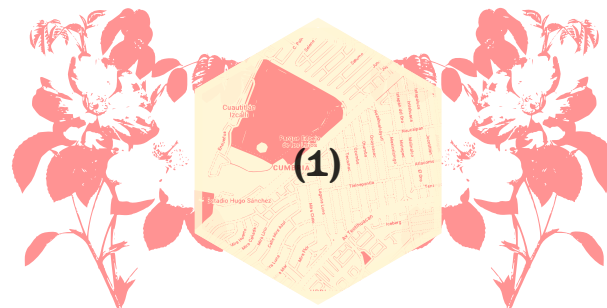


(1)

Tu y yo vamos leyendo mundo soñando mundo inventando lo que no existe para verlo pero también sufriendo un mundo que desgasta"
"Noticias de mis libros de ciencias naturales más paréntesis con noticias nuestras"
(Ulalume González de León, 1973)

(2) Plagio (Ulalume González de León, 1973) / read and commented by Mar

In her poems, Ulalume borrows texts from Life magazine, and she talks a lot about animals, the caribou, and the hunter. This game of persecution, of desire, is always present. Everything is really libidinal, romance is always in full bloom, desire and to know ourselves desiring creatures. This is what stuck with me of her texts, this conjugation, where desire is always having an impact, and from there she's always narrating being and existing in the world and in the city. The poem "Noticias [...]" takes place in **Galeanaschulz** and **San Rafangel**, places that I'm not sure if they exist or not. I read the poems through my memory, from things I remembered and things that also pained me to remember, but also through my internal fire, and what it makes me feel.



(1)

(3) La señal (Inés Arredondo, 1965) / read and commented by Antonio

I located the story "Estar vivo" in **San Ángel**. It's about two friends, Benjamin and Luis Alonso; Benjamin encourages Luis to have an affair with one of their friends. And it seems that Benjamin is always competing against Luis's wife, and that's why he keeps pushing him forward on this affair. I located this story in **San Ángel** because there used to be a time when a lot of intellectuals lived in that neighborhood: painters, sculptors, etcetera.

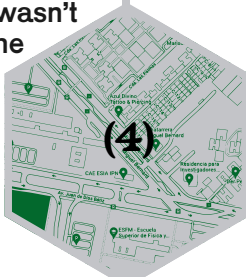
And the story of "Mariana" took me to the early years of **CU**, a **CU** that has changed completely. Back then it was far away from the city, they were just beginning to build the stadium, and the first school buildings surrounding what today are called "the islands", because when **CU** expanded, that's when they became islands, because everything else was swallowed up by the urban area.

α map that

To get lost together in a city that I'm not sure if we

(1) Chin chin el teporocho (Armando Ramírez, 1971) / read and commented by Lorena

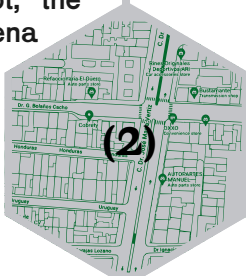
The young characters of the novel live in **Tepito**, but they work in factories far away from there. While the narrator doesn't mention explicitly where are these factories, every time he talked about his daily route he mentioned taking the bus to his workplace. I located this factory in **Azcapotzalco**, where there are a lot of factories. The narrator always talked about how horrible his route to work was. This made the narrator sad, but he had to get there on time because, if he was just a minute late, he wouldn't get paid. He sometimes narrated his commute on inefficient public transport. A lot of the time he wasn't allowed to work because he wasn't on time, and he felt enslaved. In the collective map we made on the workshop, I signaled out **Azcapotzalco** and **Cuauhtémoc**, also **Tepito** and **CU**, and I intervened the whole map with little drawings of footsteps. I think this is a way we can inhabit the city, transiting it, conceiving it through transit. It's like creating an experiential cartography.



(2) De perfil (José Agustín, 1966) / read and commented by Adriana

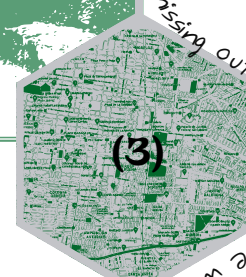
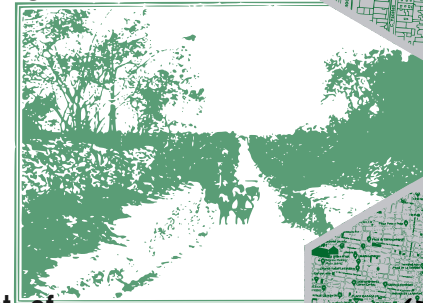
The main character travels on busses a lot, the interesting thing, and it contrasts with what Lorena was seeing in the novel she read, is that this character shares his journeys as being very boring, and that's why, in his head, he's always doing parodies of the commercials he reads on the street. For him, public transport is more like a time of leisure, where he gets bored and creates these parodies or poems.

The novel is always trying to show us this petit bourgeois lifestyle that's boring and that only changes or becomes interesting when the characters travel to peripheral or marginalized neighborhoods, like the **Buenos Aires** neighborhood, where life is interesting, in contrast with **Narvarte**, where characters live.



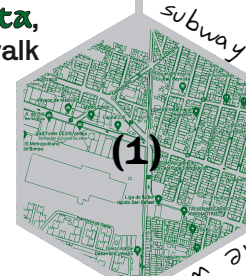
(3) Carlos commentary on this map

I remember I was very little when the whole mess with **route 100** happened and it stopped operating. It was a very important bus route and that shook the whole city. From that moment on, the transformations regarding how we move in the city can be seen in how much access we have to reach certain points in the city, or if you have the chance to sleep on the bus for half an hour and wake up as you arrive at your house or destiny. A lot of people that live in the city spend the majority of their day on public transport.



(4) El vampiro de la colonia Roma (Luis Zapata, 1979) / read and commented by Juan Antonio

The vampire lives for a while in **Lindavista**, where he meets some junkies that just walk around and smoke. Walking seems to me to be a very common and easy activity, but it can also be something sad, because walking can also be done with no destination, walking nowhere, and I think that for junkies that's the only place they have, sometimes, at least for the ones in the novel...that's the only place they walk to: nowhere.



reads journey

through the streets. (Laura)

really know, I think of all the things we're missing out on every time we use the subway or every time we were walking

A map that reads dream or memory

(1) **Con él, conmigo, con nosotros tres** (María Luisa Mendoza, 1971) / read and commented by Carlos

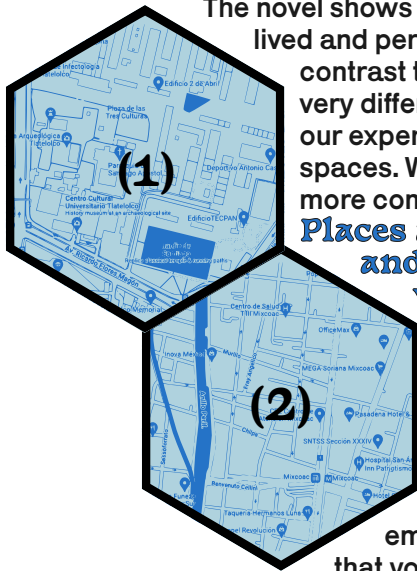
The novel tells the story of 2 de octubre, an event that is marked with the childhood memories of the narrator, of when she lived in **Tlatelolco** and played in the **Plaza de las Tres Culturas**. In the book there's a whole description of the Plaza, and of the apartment complex that fell down due to the earthquake of 85.

The text shows us a **Tlatelolco** that now is completely changed. It shows us, too, the way people used to live there, how these spaces were conceived, and it's interesting to contrast that with how Tlatelolco is now. The author describes the buildings from back then, the ones surrounding the **Plaza**, buildings that I know from videos or photos, but that don't exist anymore, and if you go to **Tlatelolco** now it isn't anything like the novel.

The novel shows us the way these spaces were lived and perceived before, and when we contrast that with how the space is now, it's very different: that implies thinking about our experiences and the way we build spaces. Which shows that places are a lot more complex than just "what is there".

Places are traversed by events, and these events are also traversed by our individual experiences.

To reflect on an event or a place isn't to reflect only on what you're seeing right now, but there are a lot of things that come together: your preconceptions, your emotions, the referents of that place that you have. **The city accumulates layers of memories and pasts, like paint on a facade.**



... (which sometimes are the same)

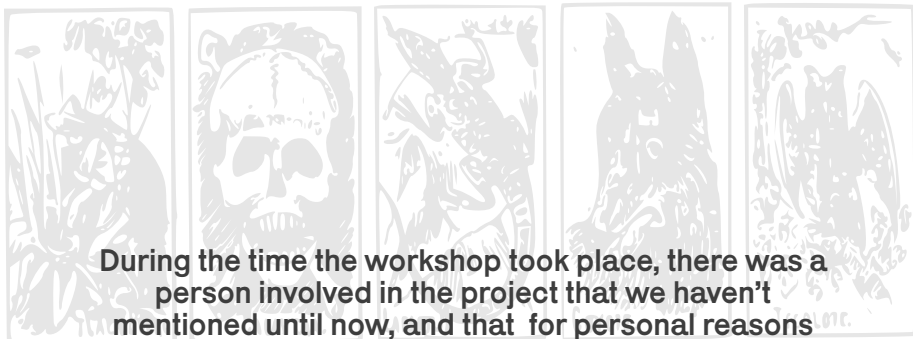
(2) **Los albañiles** (Vicente Leñero, 1964) / read and commented by César

I agree completely, the city is constantly transforming, I don't know, every day a construction starts, somewhere, a new house is starting to get built. Even **changing the color of a house, I believe, leads to the transformation of the city**. Colors are closely related to feelings, to emotional states. And it's funny that in the intersection where this novel takes place, before the pandemic started, they were constructing a building there.

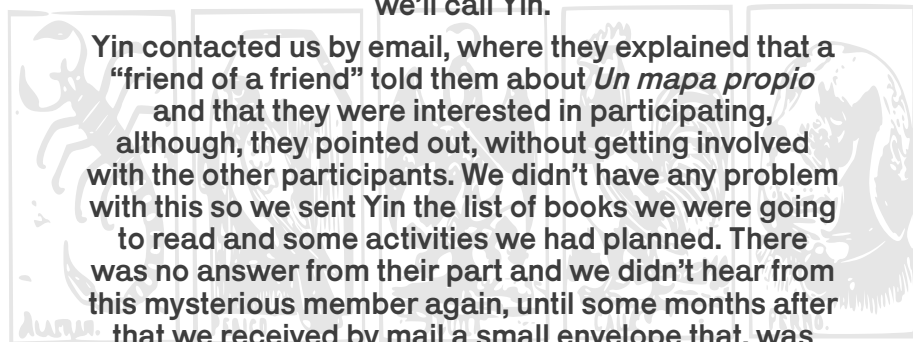
I think that, although this book was written in the early sixties, it's practically timeless. While reading, I never stumbled upon something that made me think "Ah, this could only be read inside the context it was written." I think it's interesting how a book can stay relevant, and the story it tells could very well be happening today. Like, I don't know, the idea that albañiles (construction workers) come and go, at least here in **Mérida**, it happens often. In **México City** it's a more frequent occurrence that albañiles live in the construction they're working on, and it's the space they inhabit from Monday to Friday, and on the weekends they go back to **their hometowns**.



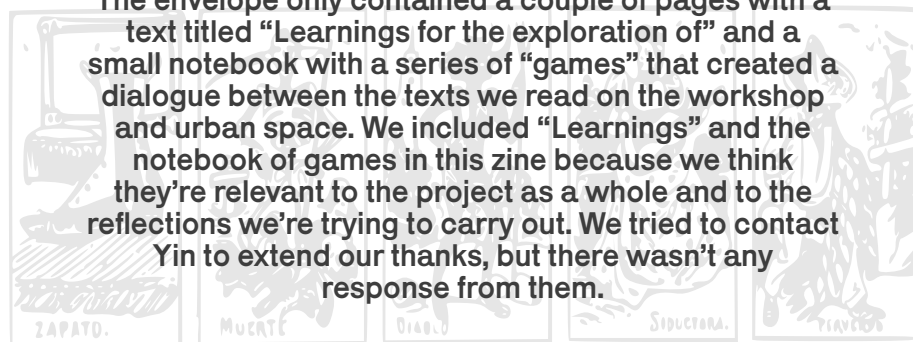
It's nice to think that this city [the one in the books], although it marks many borders, also has a lot of porosity that allows us to inhabit in many ways and imagine possible cities that are changing all the time. (Adriana)



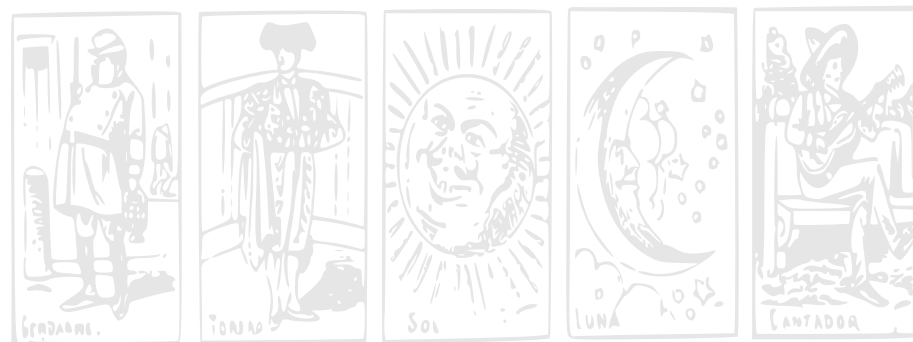
During the time the workshop took place, there was a person involved in the project that we haven't mentioned until now, and that for personal reasons we'll call Yin.



Yin contacted us by email, where they explained that a "friend of a friend" told them about *Un mapa propio* and that they were interested in participating, although, they pointed out, without getting involved with the other participants. We didn't have any problem with this so we sent Yin the list of books we were going to read and some activities we had planned. There was no answer from their part and we didn't hear from this mysterious member again, until some months after that we received by mail a small envelope that, was sent from a remote address in the desert of Sonora.



The envelope only contained a couple of pages with a text titled "Learnings for the exploration of" and a small notebook with a series of "games" that created a dialogue between the texts we read on the workshop and urban space. We included "Learnings" and the notebook of games in this zine because we think they're relevant to the project as a whole and to the reflections we're trying to carry out. We tried to contact Yin to extend our thanks, but there wasn't any response from them.



Learnings for the exploration of...

ONE To read isn't a solitary and individual act. It's an experience motivated by past and collective learnings that intersect with our way of seeing and imagining the world when we are confronted with a literary work or any kind of discourse.

TWO Reading is a material experience. The book has a concrete materiality: the pages, the paper, the arrangement of the letters, and their size. But, at the same time, reading implies being in a place that gathers different persons, living beings, and elements. Furthermore, reading involves the body, which allows us to understand different materialities: to signify the letters, to recreate literary landscapes, to recognize the context, to feel the materiality inhabited while reading, and the representations that books keep.

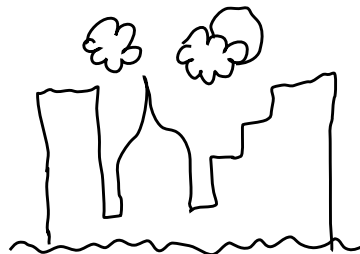
THREE Nothing of the latter happens in a vacuum: to read is a spatial experience. The map we made allowed us to identify at least three spaces. The first, that which the books narrate, the Mexico City they build along their pages. The second, is of each reader. The landscapes that are formed from each reading, and its merging with biographical and collective experience from each one of us. The third, the imagined and represented city, product of the dialogue between the collaborators of this project. A city that gathers representations of the past, our daily life, and our dreams and illusions of this urban space that we share.

Overlapping city / fragmented city



FOUR Cartography is a tool for socializing and sharing the collective, material, and spatial experience involved in approaching literature.

FIVE Neither literature nor cartography are innocent practices: both create city, are things not about the world but that sprout from it, from its structures, conditions, and idiosyncrasies. Their creation, and subsequent reading, both depend on where they are enunciated / interpreted from.



We share with you our flaneur through the city we drew, imagined, and mapped that emanated from the texts we read:

Santiago: I just remembered a story about the jacarandas, that long ago they wanted to plant cherry blossoms on México City but they wouldn't bloom here, because of the climate, so instead they planted jacarandas. In *Tristessa*, Kerouac does, I wouldn't call it a comparison, because it doesn't feel like a comparison, but he's continuously overlapping places in his narrative. The city he creates sprouts from this overlapping of places. That's why I thought of the jacarandas and of **Japan** because I think that this small anecdote creates a **Japan in México**, I mean, the places don't exist side to side, but one on top of the other, and inside each other.

Juan Antonio:

Also, in the **Plaza de las Tres Culturas** and in a lot of other places, I think there's a juxtaposition of cultural events, you know? Like ruins next to a modern building. This juxtaposition is always present and latent because all of the time we're actors of our reality, in both a positive and negative way. Not even positive or negative, or like going back or forwards: **our actions and our passage through spaces create new realities.**

For example, in the subway or in any kind of public transport, our own activities, and our thoughts regarding those spaces create these new realities. And I think it's really interesting that we're constantly living with a lot of elements from past times and also creating new elements constantly, and these new elements make another perspective of the city.




Laura: These books have led us to think of connections between cities that really disrupt the orders we had regarding the city


Santiago: Literature creates a city: there's no fixed city...


...but rather each time the city is written about it's being


simultaneously created...

 Adriana: In *De perfil*, one of the characters leaves the **Narvarte** and goes to the **Buenos Aires** neighborhood -that's only a few blocks away from **Narvarte**- and narrates the contrast between both neighborhoods: that the **Buenos Aires** back then didn't have any pavement, that some of the streets had no light, that there was a patronal party that was celebrated like in a pueblo. Also the same characters point out contexts [in that neighborhood] where there was a strong sexism, and that for them it was this huge odyssey, it was transgressor to cross to another neighborhood, since there they didn't have the comfort to which they were used to. They point out that [the Buenos Aires] is a neighborhood between the **Doctores** and the **Narvarte**, and it's an example of the contrasts that **Mexico City** has, and that are still present in a lot of ways, even though the **Buenos Aires** is already paved, it's still there, in the middle of the city, but it's an area that isn't whole integrated to the city.



 Mar: I think it's an interesting exercise, to think about what privileges we have in the city. For example, I miss living in **Mexico City**, but it's because I know I wasn't living in an area with a lot of violence, or crime, etcetera. So, for me to think about the city is like a dream. But there are people who are living there in other conditions, that live in the city in different ways and it isn't easy to poeticize their dwelling like I did in my exercise today; to me it was very natural, so to speak. I am left thinking about that, how **cartographies are also pain and violence, and also the marginalities that are not talked about**. Without falling into the danger of exoticizing those people or those areas, it's a responsibility we have or should think about when it comes to mapping.

 Adriana: What's powerful about these types of exercise is that they broaden our gaze, both from our readings -reading per se broadens our gaze-, and from sharing our interpretations of the readings and of the city, and of how we perceive the city. It's also very interesting how these books give us clues to imagine how to inhabit and how a lot of these writers were maybe ahead of their time and thought of a heavily **mobile city**, like Santiago said. And that the city in which we live today is a city that links, like Cesar and various of us said, but that also marks inequalities; **it's a city that interconnects and which is porous**, like Lorena said; in which there is complexity and not everything is antagonism. It's powerful to think that in these movements and in these other ways of living, there are also possibilities of transformation that are lived in daily life and to which we give life every day.

 Mar: And with everything you're talking about, I think it was very fortuitous that I chose *Plagio*, and this reading with its libidinous overtones suited me very well, but I wonder what would've happened if I had chosen some of the texts you read. **And I think a lot about the relevance of being uncomfortable all of the time**, as people who reflect on space, on literature, on creating other worlds ¿what's there? ¿what's making us uncomfortable, all of the time?

In this movement and in the other ways of living that we read in the books there exists a possibility to transform our daily lives.



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