Geographies of Memory and Postwar Urban Regeneration in British Literature:

London as Palimpsest

Geographies of Memory and Postwar Urban Regeneration in British Literature:

London as Palimpsest

By

Alina Cojocaru

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Geographies of Memory and Postwar Urban Regeneration in British Literature: London as Palimpsest

By Alina Cojocaru

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8453-4
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8453-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family for their patience and support throughout the entire period of my studies. I am forever grateful to professor Adina Ciugureanu, an exceptional mentor whose invaluable guidance, encouragement and insights made my PhD journey an inspiring experience. I also want to express my deepest appreciation to professor Nicoleta Stanca for her generosity, kindness and unwavering support. Finally, I would like to thank all the professors from the Faculty of Letters of Ovidius University who shaped and inspired my academic career.

INTRODUCTION

This book proposes a new interdisciplinary approach to the representations of London in contemporary British literature by exploring the interplay between reality and fiction in mapping the urban imaginary. Studying narrative space and its geography (from Ancient Greek γεωγραφία -"earth-writing"), an analogy may be drawn between textual strategies and mapping techniques. Literature functions as a map since it introduces the readers to manifold imaginary places, offering descriptions and landmarks designed to guide them through the created universes. Consequently, the examination of narratives as cognitive maps produced by writers/ cartographers will emphasize them as products of a geography that derives from both reality and fiction but exists independently.

By means of correlating geocriticism, spatial literary studies and memory studies, I investigate London as both a narrative spatial construct and a real city which stands under the sign of urban regeneration. Considering the plethora of literary works revolving around the cartography of the city and the complexity of the theoretical and conceptual framework, I inquire into a specific segment of the dimensions which the metropolis exhibits in fiction. This monograph conducts a geocritical analysis of London in contemporary British literature published between 1975 and 2005, exploring the literary representations of the real urban restructurings prompted by the rebuilding projects aimed to revitalize the war and poverty-stricken districts of London, the reterritorialization and remapping of the metropolis by immigrants, the gentrification and displacement of communities, as well as the urban dissolution caused by terrorism. I argue that the London fiction written at the turn of the twenty-first century provides a record of the city in times of de/reconstruction, emphasizing the structure of London as a palimpsest, which becomes a central image in the selected literary works. As the title of the monograph suggests, London is interpreted as a palimpsest, prone to being obliterated and rebuilt yet preserving traces of the past embedded in the urban fabric of the city. I also challenge the pre-eminence of the temporal organization of knowledge and contend that spatiality creates alternative ways of interpretation.

The research questions regarding the discursive and aesthetic complexity of London addressed in this monograph are the following: What features of metropolitan London highlight the recent spatial, mental and social

reconfigurations undergone by the city? How is cartography used to negotiate the connection between the metamorphosing effects of reconstructions on urban planning and the changes in experiencing the city locus? To what extent does the nature of the personal and collective past affect the connotations assigned to the multicultural London metropolis? How do the mind maps conjured in the selected novels mediate the imaginary geographies of contemporary London? In order to answer the research questions, the research objectives pursued are: to provide a theoretical overview of textual approaches to geographies of memory, to analyse the psychogeographic incursions into London as a city which undergoes a process of redevelopment yet preserves its sacred heterotopias and *lieux de mémoire*, to analyse the ironical reterritorialization of London by immigrants, to investigate the entropic habitus resulting from the pursuit of spatial justice in gentrified London and finally to examine the urban specularity and the spectacularity of urban simulations in order to address the current issue of portraying London as an alleged space of terror.

What this monograph brings as a novelty is the reconsideration of literary spaces through the lens of the new field of geocriticism and spatial literary studies associated with memory studies, which allows for an interdisciplinary insight into the physical and psychological terrains proper to any city. Moreover, I contribute to the development of the field of research by proposing and developing a number of original concepts: *mythopos, mnemotopos*, *landguage*, *entropic habitus, urban specularity*. By using these original concepts, I examine how the textual city functions as a repository of memories and a gateway to the past, as the structural element in the narrative and as a space capable of producing countless geographies but also prone to destruction. Throughout this study, a special attention is paid to architectural practices and urban planning occurring after periods of destruction and reconstruction in connection to the individual urban experiences.

The primary sources I use in my research include the novels *Hawksmoor* (1985) by Peter Ackroyd, *City of the Mind* (1991) by Penelope Lively, *White Teeth* (2000) by Zadie Smith, *Small Island* (2004) by Andrea Levy, *High-Rise* (1975) by J.G. Ballard, *Mother London* (1988) by Michael Moorcock, *The Good Terrorist* (1985) by Doris Lessing and *Saturday* (2005) by Ian McEwan. The reasoning behind the choice of this literary corpus was to narrow the selection of novels to a set of criteria. First, all novels are set in London and explore the literal or metaphorical journeys of the characters across the city. Second, the novels were published between 1975 and 2005 while the narrated events convey a portrayal of the urban

landscape, mindscape, atmosphere, lifestyle and characters in the context of the postwar urban regeneration of London. Since space is the focus, I propose the idea that London fiction may be read as a transhistorical epistemic source centred on spatiality which reveals a timeless pattern of destruction and rebirth. Third, I propose an analysis which explores the works of writers relevant to the British cultural scene, who are recipients of literary prizes, offering a balance of male and female writers, in order to provide a heterogeneity of perspectives while preserving a common narrative thread.

The secondary sources which have been essential for this monograph include Bertrand Westphal's pioneering work *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011) and Robert T. Tally's *Spatiality* (2013) which reference the main theoretical strands and conceptual developments introduced by scholars in order to investigate the meeting point between literature and geography on the search for recurrent patterns which uncover the "making" of a place. The spatial turn was spurred by the changes occurring after the Second World War. Taking into account the metamorphosis of cities in an "epoch of simultaneity"[1] defined by uncertainty and incredulity towards historical progress, Tally explains that the focus shifted towards a re-evaluation and re-interpretation of space. This monograph reveals the protean nature of London, whose recent transformation into a city assaulted by high-rises and tower buildings was brought by changes which harken back to the Blitz.

The incursion into memory studies employs the vital secondary source of Andreas Huyssen's *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003) from which I borrow the guiding principle of the city as palimpsest. The concept of palimpsest implies that spatiality, literature and memory involve similar devices, such as planning, structure, pastiche, encoding and decoding. The representations of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, places which act as depositories of collective memories, are examined throughout the research. Further conceptual tools are those of "collective memory", coined by Maurice Halbwachs in the study *The Collective Memory* (1980), referring to the stories embedded in the fabric of the city and Cathy Caruth's "double wound" in which the boundary between past and present collapses. The aforementioned concepts resonate with Homi Bhabha's notion of "third space" of cultural hybridity, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "deterritorialization" and the "non-places" of Marc Augé. The postwar strain on spatiality, which is investigated by focusing on hyperreality, coined by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and*

[1] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan. (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 22.

Simulation (1981), reverberates in Pierre Bourdieu's habitus from *The Logic of Practice* (1992) which I associate with inner spaces and entropy (J.G. Ballard). The point of convergence of these concepts is the impact of global conflagrations on the physical and psychological terrains which overlap in the city.

Chapter 1, "'Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice': Textual Approaches to Geographies of Memory", proposes an interdisciplinary approach which associates memory studies with geocriticism and spatial literary theory. The idea advanced is that the concept of space represents a fundamental organizing principle in any literary work which may be simultaneously read as a narrative and a map by means of which the individual and collective memory of the protagonists can be brought to the surface despite the architectural dissolutions of the city. I propose a brief overview of the spatial turn, ranging from the psychogeography of *derive* and *détournement* of the *flâneur*, first proposed by Guy Debord, the distinction between place and space made by Michel de Certeau, the Foucauldian heterotopia and the spatial triad of lived/perceived/conceived space, introduced by Henri Lefebvre (*The Production of Space*), to the postmodern geographies which include concepts such as Fredric Jameson's "cognitive mapping" (*Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*) or David Harvey (*Social Justice and the City*) and Edward Soja's "spatial justice" (*Seeking Spatial Justice*). I demonstrate that space is inextricably interwoven in the narrative structure, social formations and cultural practices which are textually portrayed. When examining the spatiality of the city, an emphasis on movement alone does not suffice to describe the broad spectrum of social exchanges and cognitive processes involved in everyday experiences. Thus mapping London involves following a geography of power and a thread of thought which connects all its structural aspects.

Furthermore, I delineate the underlying principles of a geocritical analysis. In addition to Westphal and Tally as the main critical sources, I equally refer to space as a sensuous experience for Paul Rodaway and Sten Pultz Moslund, the relation between consciousness and places from the perspective of Eric Prieto as well as Marc Brosseau's parallel between literary works and geography. I infer that the author may be regarded as a creator of worlds who forges with words metaphorical maps and spatial trajectories. I develop on the theory of geocriticism by correlating it with memory studies and by observing the connections between memory, space and urban dissolutions. Navigating London, the protagonists document and map the changes on the physical and the psychological terrains, both prone to collapse.

Chapter 2, titled "The Presence of the Past: Geographies of Memory and Myth in London (*Hawksmoor* and *City of the Mind*)", examines London as a contested space, oscillating between the historical and the mythological, the personal and the collective, the public and the hidden layers of meaning which construct the cityscape as a palimpsest. The two focal points of my investigation are, on the one hand, geographies of memory and the spatial manifestations of myth in Thatcherite London inasmuch as London is presented in both novels as a simultaneous city, a place where all events are instantaneous, which is reminiscent of the Borgesian spatial model and, on the other hand, the mapping of the city following the destruction and reconstruction of East End. I propose two original concepts: *mythopos* and *mnemotopos*. I form the term *mythopos* by combining the Greek word for story ("mythos") with the Greek equivalent of place ("topos"). I observe the portrayal of London as a topos endowed with a mythical, supernatural, eternal quality epitomized by the seven churches of Nicholas Dyer. Conversely, I describe Cobham house or Frobisher house, designed by Matthew Halland, in one term as a *mnemotopos*. The term *mnemotopos* originates from the juxtaposition of the prefix "mnemo," derived from the Greek word for memory ("mnḗmē") with "topos", or place. Consequently, I demonstrate that London may be perceived at the border of memory and myth.

In mapping the the de/reconstruction of East End", I employ the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, coined by Mircea Eliade, in order to analyse the representative architectural typologies erected in East End. I use the term sacred heterotopia to refer to the seven churches from *Hawksmoor* which act as gateways to another plane of existence. By means of space, hierophanies occur once the sacred irrupts into the city to create an eternal return. The *lieux de mémoire* identified in the redeveloped historical houses convey the profane, personal connections to the urban space. I argue that both constructs act as *axis mundi* and demonstrate correspondence between the architect of churches and that of tower blocks considering that the former erects churches to channel a supernatural force, whereas the latter obeys the will of the new capitalist power that worships money. I demonstrate that London is no longer composed of a chronological sequence of events, but is perceived as a focal point of energy which has a hold on the imagination of its inhabitants to the point that the urban continuum equally manifests itself in the obliteration of time and in an eternal quality assigned to the metropolis.

Chapter 3, "Breaking *Land*guage Borders Through the Ironic Reterritorialization of London (*White Teeth* and *Small Island*)", discusses London as a metropolis which is reterritorialized by immigrants. The

Deleuzian term reterritorialization is used in this analysis to refer to the acts of effacement and remapping committed by the protagonists on a small scale throughout the novels. This quest is ironical since it does little to change the face of London, yet it intrinsically evokes the tensions underlying the spatial interactions of the Anglo-Jamaican Joneses, the Bengali Iqbals and the white Jewish Chalfens within multicultural London. First, I use the concept of reterritorialization to examine the superimposition of the cultural and spatial dimensions, arguing that immigrants reterritorialize London by transferring pieces of memory to their surroundings. Second, I demonstrate that immigrants undergo a process of mental deterritorialization which manifests itself through language. Third, I analyse the portrayal of third space and non-place, demonstrating that both spatial instances are connected to the issue of assimilation. Moreover, I acknowledge that the term *landguage* ("The Presencing of Place in Literature" 31) is only mentioned in the topopoetics of Moslund but it has not been explained or applied to any literary works. I develop the connotations of the term, analysing how immigrants reinvent the aesthetics and the language of the new environment.

In this respect, the investigation of the reterritorialization and remapping of London by immigrants, starts from the idea advanced by Jacques Derrida in *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (1998) that the mind can equally be envisaged as a territory susceptible to be erased and reinscribed. Both novels provide relevant examples of amnesia regarding the homeland and hypermnesia of the colonizing country which hinders their integration. I argue that in order to cross the borders of *land*guage and begin the process of reterritorialization, protagonists must gain control over the language. Relying on Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" and Gaston Bachelard's poetics of space, I also argue that throughout the peregrinations of the characters, the rationale behind their action is, the idea of "home", of a maternal shelter, which ontologically equates to homeland. Homes are used in both novels as microcosms. For instance, in *Small Island*, Hortense is incapable navigating the public and private space without assistance due to her thick accent and outdated language. Conversely, the generation of immigrants born within the borders of the country integrates easily. In *White Teeth*, Millat adapts to a plethora of dialects and situations, invents a new language called Raggastani and has clout on the peripheral streets of North West London.

Through the exploration of third spaces and non-places in multicultural London, the changing shape of London which produces hybrid spaces is outlined. I argue that the third spaces and non-places are connected to the issue of assimilation. In this respect, the British Empire Exhibition is a

symbolical third space capable of accommodating simulations of the Other, who is perceived only in terms of goods whereas project FutureMouse© anticipates the threat of the transformation of London into globalized space of transit designed to accommodate neutral areas of communication and consumption. Moreover, I examine the topographical contrast of North/ South, East/West and Inner/Outer London as cardinal points of cardinal importance. The protagonists gravitate towards Inner London but remain on the outskirts. In addition, I argue that there is a contrast between the liberal North-West London, represented by Willesden, and South West London, portrayed by the London borough of Lambeth, which has a strong religious stamp. By observing the effect of the deterritorialization of the immigrant mind on navigating the streets of London and the ensuing reterritorialization of the cityscape, London evolves towards heterogeneity, hybridity and spatial malleability.

Chapter 4, titled "Entropic Habitus and Spatial Justice in Gentrified London (*Mother London* and *High-Rise*)", shifts the perspective from the alleged spatial threat of the invasion of immigrants to the wounds in the urban fabric caused by gentrification. I employ the concept of inner space, described as a space which reflects the inner life of the inhabitants, to argue that both novels delineate the traumatic effect of spatial dissolutions. The physical and the psychological strata of the city are interconnected. In this respect, Lefebvre observes the productive nature of space and Bourdieu develops the idea that this ability to shape space, to have spatial capital, results in habitus. I propose the original concept of "entropic habitus" to refer to the social space in which urban regeneration has produced a state of anomy and a divide between classes in line with the principle of entropy which regulates the world in the vision of Michael Moorcock and J.G. Ballard. The concept of spatial justice, which has recently started being used in literary criticism, completes the pursuit of analysing the connection between memory and cityscape in the larger context of unjust geographies at a global and local level.

The literary journeys into the inner spaces of East and West London reveal the new architectural layer added to the palimpsest of London with the election of Margaret Thatcher who saw the opportunity of transforming the buildings from East End affected by the Blitz into residential estates or office buildings. I demonstrate that the commodification of London in the form of urban simulations together with the imagery of the tower buildings appear to be consistent with the future envisaged by J.G. Ballard inasmuch as the deracinated cityscape is envisaged as being alienated from its past and driven by personal interests rather than respect for communal experience. Spatial injustice permeates as a result of class

struggle, with the lower middle-classes violently pushing the boundaries of their assigned levels in the vertical city of *High-Rise*. Conversely, the upper class undertakes the politics of evicting the lower class from their homes and demolishing hundred-year old buildings in order to construct skyscrapers. I argue that the novels depict inner spaces in which the mind and the city coalesce, hence the proclivity for displaying an eclectic urban configuration which translates into psychopathology in the case of the inhabitants. The resulting habitus is entropic considering that the palimpsest nature of the city implies a cycle of destruction and reconstruction.

In conjunction with the urban reconstructions and gentrification of London, the triad of cityscape, mindscape and soundscape is examined in relation to the principle of entropy in an attempt to investigate the effects of the aforementioned urban projects of revitalizing London once gentrification is exacerbated in the case of *High-Rise*, or once it is resisted in the case of *Mother London*. I demonstrate that both novels emphasize the centrality of owning property. In conformity with the concept of entropy, both novels foresee the failing performance of the high-rises themselves, which could purportedly degenerate in the next slums. Characters interact indirectly through the use of sound. They are in tune with the sounds and the motions of the city, letting themselves be carried away by the urban frenzy. Thus sounds echo architecture and architecture becomes sound. The concept of "spatial justice" is employed to refer, in *Mother London*, to the dissension caused by policies which favoured the upper class at the expense of geographically excluding social or racial groups. In *High-Rise*, the concept applies to the distress of apocalyptic dimensions caused by the vertical class stratification in the allegorical high-rise building. In both instances, the ensuing conflicts reveal how the urban regeneration of London may lead to struggles for space which have deeper implications than a mere spatial reconfiguration and superficial change in the aesthetics of the city. I demonstrate that while in *High-Rise* the total disregard for the past in the attempt to erase the palimpsest of memories embedded in the urban fabric results in the obliteration of the whole structure, in *Mother London* gentrification is acknowledged as a damaging force yet it is counterbalanced by holding on to memory and myth. Thus instead of the dissonance experienced by the inhabitants of the heterotopic high-rise in their individual pursuit of spatial justice, the collective polyphony of memory and myth in the London of Michael Moorcock ensures the endurance of the city.

Chapter 5, "London, a Space of Terror? (*Saturday* and *The Good Terrorist*)", engages in an exploration of the private and public spaces within a London threatened by terrorism during the Margaret Thatcher and

the Tony Blair administration. I analyse the palimpsest of physical traumas inflicted upon the cityscape and psychological traumas of the perpetrators who threaten that which the protagonists value most – the security of their homes. I argue that both novels trace the connections between the private and the public spaces which become analogous under the strain of urban transformations. I refer to the connection between spatiality and terrorism by relying on the theories of Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Žižek regarding the rise of simulations and the urban spectacle once the portrayal of the violent dissolutions of the city was mediated by mass media. Moreover, I use the theory of Bachelard that public spaces are imbued with the characteristics of private spaces and the concept of "double wound" proposed by Cathy Caruth which emphasizes the compulsion to repeat traumatic events. I continue with the idea of the fetishization of property, arguing that owning, claiming or destroying buildings offers agency to the characters.

The house located in South-East London, at 43 Old Mill Road which becomes the headquarters of a communist organization, in contrast with the takeover of a domestic space situated in Fitzrovia, Central London, which mirrors the anxieties regarding terrorist attacks in the public space. I propose the concept of urban specularity in order to explore the relation between the mind and the city in the larger context of the spectacular character of the city, situated between reality and simulation, recomposed and decomposed by conflicts of memory.The origins of the term "specularity" resides in the concept of specular image introduced in psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan and is used in the monograph to refer to the projection of the psyche onto the infrastructure of the city, as well as the importance of architecture and territorial control in the development of the psyche which inflicts terror or is affected by the phenomenon. In order to support this interpretation of the two novels, I analyse the imagery of the house either transposed in connection with filth and scatological vocabulary to reveal the unspoken problems which divide society, or in terms of an opulence which ignores the problems of the city regarding the gentrification and dissolution of London. Moreover, the memories of terrorist attacks, as a recent form of war, are interpreted in agreement with the vision of Halbwachs regarding memory as a social phenomenon which creates social cohesion. The image of the panoptical tower building in Fitzroy Square propagated by the extremist group conveys a Foucauldian imagery of surveillance and control.

Furthermore, the transformations undergone by London in relation to the experiences of the protagonists are scrutinized. In agreement with the concept of urban specularity, there is a mirroring of the city and the mind

which implies that both memories and spatial metamorphoses can account for the terrorist attacks. I use the concept of cultural memory introduced by Jan Assmann to refer to the redeeming quality of art since the engagement with of disengagement from literature determines either a search for urban solutions or the urban dissolution of the city. I argue that London is constructed as a city governed by simulations and dissimulations, a theatrical space according to Baudrillard and Žižek. I employ the idea of Georg Simmel about the impact of the city on the mental life. The persistence of memory ensures the transhistorical character of London whose design is comparable to that of a palimpsest.

CHAPTER 1

"EVERY STORY IS A TRAVEL STORY – A SPATIAL PRACTICE"[1]: TEXTUAL APPROACHES TO GEOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY

The concept of space represents a fundamental organizing principle. Every novel has to be set in a fictional world which is never inconsequential or arbitrary. One of the defining theoretical directions of the last decades that is shaping literary and cultural studies is the examination of the cultural, aesthetic and political impact of spatiality on literature, as well as the influence of the literary discursive practices on the apprehension and construction of real sites[2]. Literary landscapes constitute not only a framing background against which a story is told, but may also be a means of reassessing the relation between textuality and geography, an instrument of interpreting the world, a passage into the stories of a nation. Pondering on the centrality of space in the twenty-first century, this chapter explores the increasing interest of recent literature to highlight urban space as a dominant force that organizes and reflects all aspects of existence. Space is inextricably interwoven in the narrative structure, social formations and cultural practices which are textually portrayed. The city thus acquires an artistic importance as a locus of aesthetic re-articulation and re-appropriation.

The exchange between geography and literature seems to have a wide sphere of influence. Nowadays, spatial literary studies have such a broad spectrum that the frontiers of literary and cultural studies seem to be transgressed daily. In support of the literary analysis of mapped textual worlds, voices from various fields have sustained the inherent connection between protagonists and their environment. As Michel de Certeau

[1] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 115.
[2] Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

observes, "[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice"[3]. Hence, London, among all other cities, is to be represented both in terms of concrete space, memories and practices and in terms of narrative. In the recent global context, characterized by mobility and transnationality, new forms of writing and reading founded on the creative tension between the imagined and the real experience of the city require interdisciplinary tools of analysis. The spatial turn has inspired a profusion of innovative approaches to space in literature.

1.1. A Brief History of the Spatial Turn: From Psychogeography and the Production of Space to Postmodern Geographies

In the lecture entitled "Of Other Spaces", Michel Foucault predicted that following the pre-eminence of the temporal organization of knowledge, the epoch to come would shift its attention to space as a dominant mode of analysis. Hardly surprising, the simultaneity, juxtaposition and fragmentation[4] that Foucault identified as the main features of the age of space continue to be relevant to this day. Since its publication, the text has attracted numerous critical responses which prompted the paradigm shift in the humanities and social sciences. Drawing on the studies of Henri Lefebvre (1974), Michel de Certeau (1980), Deleuze and Guattari (1980) and Michel Foucault (1984), the geographer Edward Soja militates in his 1989 study *Postmodern Geographies* for the reassertion of space in critical social theory. Literary theorist Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, equally identifies the centrality of space as a defining feature of postmodernism. Soja and Jameson are thus widely considered responsible for coining "the spatial turn", which would become one of the most creative and compelling meetings of fiction and reality.

What the turn represents is actually a distancing from temporality as a central concern of modernist thought. In the context of the growing industrial capitalism of the modern city, which required efficiency in the mass production of goods, space was regarded as a physical, fixed canvas

[3] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 115.

[4] Foucault gave the lecture "Des espaces autres" in 1967, but its delayed publication occurred in 1984. In "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," Foucault observes: "The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history […] The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (22).

on which time could be represented in disjointed frames, as in Cubist painting. Time was associated with individual psychology and narrative development. In the influential nineteenth-century study of Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, "space alone is homogeneous […] there is neither duration nor succession in space"[5], meaning that the human being erroneously perceives time as spatialized, measurable. The homogeneous time-in space opposes the heterogeneous time of pure duration, the real inner time of human experience that cannot be thought, but only felt. Bergson opposes space, perceived as a measurable substitute for time, to duration, and advocates for thinking in terms of time rather than space. Beginning with postmodernity, time and space are regarded as fluid strands that can be brought together. This occasions a different configuration of the chronotope of the novel, as well as the existence of parallel worlds and multiple time-spaces. Jameson observes the "spatialisation of the temporal"[6], while Soja similarly intents to "spatialize the historical narrative, to attach the *dureé* an ending critical human geography"[7]. Space is acknowledged as a socially produced locus which participates in the creation of culture and whose changes reflect the history, rhythms and dynamics of an urban milieu.

If one were to trace the origins of the recent interest in exploring the relationship between individuals and their environment, it could be argued that piercing the obscurity of everyday practices is, among others, a heritage of psychogeography, an artistic movement rooted in situationism. Guy Debord first described psychogeography[8] as "study of the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, acting directly on the affective deportment of individuals"[9]. Its main features are "urban wandering, the imaginative reworking of the city, the otherworldly sense of spirit of place, the unexpected insights and

---

[5] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York: Dover Publications, 2001), 120.

[6] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 156.

[7] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 1.

[8] The term "psychogeography" was first mentioned by Guy Debord in his article "Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine" in a 1955 edition of the Belgian journal *Les Lèvres nues*, where he subsequently published various articles on dérive and détournement.

[9] Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency" in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002), 45.

juxtapositions created by aimless drifting, the new ways of experiencing familiar surroundings"[10]. In 1952, Debord established a group of artists and theoreticians called Letterist International that set out to creatively redesign the routines of everyday life. Psychogeography functioned as a means of a ludic disruption of the functions and meanings of daily practices in the name of freedom. Alternative maps of the city were devised to record actual activities of the community, sights, sounds and smells, ranging from advertisements and fashionable locations to popular songs and overheard conversations.

For instance, Guy Debord's *Guide psychogéographique de Paris* placed aerial views of Paris alongside maps of his peripatetic wanderings through the city. The aim was to visually record these walks by combining cuts from actual maps and mark their routes with red arrows, a practice which highlights the personal experience of the city as a composite of physical, social and mental spaces. The term *plaque tournantes* was used to describe how these arrows assign "unity of atmosphere" to the fragments of the city assembled in the psychogeographical map[11]. The most important concept and practice which stood at the basis of these maps was that of *dérive*. Coverley likened it to a military strategy for getting acquainted with the milieu, "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus"[12]. Through *détournement* – a rearrangement of pre-existent realities reminiscent of postmodern plagiarism and intertextuality – elements from existing works of art or features connected to urban sites could be appropriated and reused for different purposes, challenging their established meanings. Members of the Letterist group would drift on foot across Paris in pointless journeys meant to oppose the discipline and efficiency demanded by capitalist urban life. Hence their guiding slogan, "Ne Travaillez Jamais". Nevertheless, these strolls were not meaningless, but implied an investigation of the relation between moods and places, as well as a refashioning of the city. Psychogeography did not cease to exist with the Situationists but developed, especially in contemporary writings about hidden London of novelists and historians such as Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair or Will Self. Psychogeographic urban novels deconstruct London topography and cultural memories, using the trope of unsolved crimes and following the socioeconomic and physical transformations of the city in order to uncover the psychological aftermath of its material

[10] Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), 31.
[11] Tom McDonough, "Situationist Space" in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002), 243.
[12] Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), 97.

restructurings.

The concepts of space and place are of seminal importance to the terminological framework. Given that the spatial dimension cannot be separated from its appropriation through the practices, perception and imagination of its inhabitants, Michel de Certeau describes, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a dual model based on the distinction between space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*). Whereas place represents the fixed location designed as "an instantaneous configuration of positions", space is "a practiced place"[13]. Or, as Yi-Fu Tuan explains from a phenomenological perspective, "[p]lace is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other"[14]. Space is thus construed against place as an additional layer of meaning consisting of social interactions, practices of living and political tensions. For de Certeau, the act of walking is "a space of enunciation"[15] offering meaning to a space in a similar way in which the act of narrative articulation constructs texts. In this respect, de Certeau compares "the art of 'turning' phrases" to "an art of crossing a path"[16], since both walking in the city and using language imply an enunciation of a certain style, trajectory, perspective. The city generates millions of texts daily and all these subjective accounts turn the static, material city into a dynamic, discursive space which is constantly rewritten.

In its turn, any city is conceived and metaphorically created by means of words. In this respect, the textual city corresponding to London represents an accumulation of subjective narratives which form a cultural palimpsest, delineating the city as a space of memory. If de Certeau distinguishes space from place, Edward Soja connects space and being by using the term spatiality, since "the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translations, transformations, and experience"[17]. Indeed, spatiality is dynamic and dependent on the experiences of its passers-by. Their seemingly meaningless peregrinations thorough the city are important for constructing their stories and, thus, shaping the cityscape. By moving through city space, a *"migrational,* or metaphorical, city thus

---

[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

[14] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 3.

[15] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 98.

[16] Ibidem, 100.

[17] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 80.

slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city"[18]. De Certeau ponders on the mutability of the word "metaphorai" and on the inherent link between space and stories:

> In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called metaphorai. To go to work or come home, one takes a 'metaphor' – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories.[19]

"Stories" and hence "spatial trajectories" must be expressed through narratives, which give meaning to spatial itineraries and organize them into mental maps. It was Henri Lefebvre who pioneered the study on the connection between material and discursive spaces, introducing the idea of the social production of space. City space is produced and reproduced according to the interests of its inhabitants and the patterns of everyday life should not be taken for granted. Both de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre regard city living as multi-faceted and multi-layered, harbouring numerous experiences behind the conventional mapping. Textual representations of the city reveal both aspects, narratively tracing the cartographic features and conjuring the historical, social and cultural aspects grounded in and shaped by the metropolis.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre presents space as a "living organism"[20] which operates in the overlapping physical, social and mental fields[21]. Whereas the physical space can be mapped, the social space consists of social relations and negotiations of power and the mental space refers to representations of thoughts about the urban experience. The physical, mental and social levels of spatiality are developed into a triple dialectic of city space encompassing spatial practice (*le perçu*), representations of space (*le conçu*), and representational spaces (*le vécu*), which expresses their interaction and unity. The perceived, conceived and lived spaces are interwoven in the continuous process of space production. The first component, the spatial practices, represents the world as it is perceived in one's daily routines. It includes characteristics of trivialized or symbolic places made "desirable or undesirable, benevolent or malevolent,

[18] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93.
[19] Ibidem, 115.
[20] Henri Levebre, *The Production of Space*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 14.
[21] Ibidem, 11.

sanctioned or forbidden to particular groups"[22], relations of local to global, the division of labour, social interactions in the public and the private sphere. Spatial practices connote the surface layer of meaning, which ensures continuity and cohesion[23].

The representations of space are conceived by experts who map and supervise spatial practices. These practices are connected to relations of power and production in a dominated space. An internal logic of space plays a social and political role, reflected in the conceived level of existence[24]. The third component refers to the dominated, lived spaces experienced by citizens, from workers to writers, on a daily basis, through a set of symbols and images[25]. Lived spaces are linked to perceived and conceived spaces, in the sense that they produce a multiplicity of perspectives at the border between the real and the imaginary. London has long been associated with mystery and myth but its flexible character permits a simultaneity of multicultural and multiclass diversity of images. Everyday life contains and organizes such representational spaces.

The writings of Henri Lefebvre are inextricably connected to the theories of the neo-Marxist humanistic geographers David Harvey and Edward Soja. Harvey is regarded as the promoter of a radical turn in geography, which connects space, capitalism and social justice. The spatial matrix proposed by Harvey distinguishes urban space as absolute – "a thing in itself" –, relative –"understood as a relationship between objects" – and relational –"space regarded, in the fashion of Leibniz, as being contained *in* objects" –, a product of capitalism whose identity is formed through conflicting representations[26]. Space is equally explored by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* in the light of "time-space compression,"[27] echoing Foucault's harbinger ideas of postmodern

[22] Ibidem, 288.
[23] Ibidem, 33.
[24] Ibidem, 41.
[25] Ibidem, 39.
[26] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 13.
[27] Harvey considers that time reduces the constraints of space and vice versa : "As space appears to shrink to a 'global village' of telecommunications […] and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is" (*Condition of Postmodernity* 240). The changes technology brought to the apprehension of space are equally found in Castell's distinction between "space of places" corresponding to territorial urban activities and "space of flows" made available by global networks of information (Castells xxxi-xxxii) or Virilio's concepts of "dromology" and "speed-space" as substitutes for time-space continuum (Virilio qtd. in Clake and Doel 444).

simultaneity and juxtaposition. Since "disruptive spatiality triumphs"[28], the masses of literary characters which roam London in the age of globalization experience a sense of alienation in a world where spatial boundaries are blurred by the flow of human capital and global economy.

David Harvey also proposes the idea of "territorial justice"[29], a concept which was not further developed until very recently when the term "spatial justice" began to be used. Edward Soja published *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010), which draws on Harvey, Lefebvre and Foucault "to stimulate new ways of thinking about and acting to change the unjust geographies in which we live"[30]. In the times when boundaries are more and more malleable and urban planning faces the challenge of providing equal rights and avoid geographical exclusions, there is "a mutually reinforcing convergence between these two versions of the struggle over geography: for spatial justice and for democratic rights to urbanized space"[31]. According to Soja, the main reasons behind the unjust distribution of space are on the one hand the "imposition of political power, cultural domination and social control over individuals and groups"[32], such as the external political interests behind the reconstruction of London after the Blitz, and on the other hand the "endogenous process of locational decision making and the aggregate distributional effects that arise from them"[33], such as the internal propensity to produce geographies which favours one social or racial group This monograph develops the concept by applying it to the novels *Mother London* and *High-Rise* which trace the current state of urban planning in London but heighten it to the extent that the inequalities in the distribution of space, controlled by the wealthy and the powerful, result in struggles over space which in the latter case takes apocalyptic dimensions.

The threefold dialectic proposed by Henri Lefebvre is further developed by Edward Soja, who understands space as a cultural entity made up of matter and metaphor, in his construction of postmodern geographies. The dialectics of "spatial practice," "representations of space" and "representational space" is transformed into an extended postmodern

---

[28] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 302.
[29] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 97.
[30] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 5.
[31] Ibidem, 7.
[32] Ibidem, 32.
[33] Ibidem, 47.

perspective on space which mediates between the geography of the city and the literary imaginary. Namely, Soja observes the interplay of Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace. Firstspace corresponds to perceived space, consisting of the physical, socially produced level of existence as the result of mundane human activity and behaviour. Secondspace, or conceived space, is expressed through cognitive forms. Coming from writers and artists to scientists and urban planners, all created representations of the urban milieu are included in this subcategory. Finally, the physical and mental practices fuse in the Thirdspace. Soja examines the real and imaginary dimensions of spatial representations, merging them in a dimension based on Lefebvre's spatial triad and Homi Bhabha's liminal "third space of enunciation," where postcolonial identities of cultural hybridity develop. Thirdspace is a versatile, hybrid space where social practices, cultural identities and systems are constructed. It is a space of agency and conformation, uniformity and exception, everyday practices and history, familiarity and otherness; it is a space open to transformation[34]. Thirdspace operates in the field of images and symbols, which allows the scrutiny of existent conditions and the imagination of "Other" spaces. In this respect, Jorge Louis Borges' *Aleph* is presented as a relevant model of the narrative nature of space and of the difficulties encountered when attempting to capture its features in contemporary fiction. Therefore, knowledge of such space "is achievable only thorough approximations, a constant search to move beyond (meta-) what is known"[35]. Thirdspaces encourage new interpretations of the volatile urban spatial patterns.

In a heterogeneous metropolis like London, space, culture and identities are fluid. Bhabha stresses the dynamic portrayal of spatial representations, thus proclaiming London as a "third space" [36]. The spotlight on cultural hybridity is present especially in Black British literature. The novels of writers like Zadie Smith, Monica Ali, Andrea Levy, Salman Rushdie or Hanif Kureishi celebrate the ethnical diversity of London, constructing their own "representational spaces" which harbour distinct identities and social interactions. Recent London works of fiction equally present the metropolis as a Thirdspace encompassing countless physical and imaginary sites of power and counter-power. The novels of Peter Ackroyd, for instance, display a defiance of rationality and time in their

[34] Edward Soja *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 65-9.
[35] Ibidem, 57.
[36] Homi Bhabha, "Reinventing Britain: A Forum: The Manifesto," *Wasafiri* 14, no. 29 (1999): 38–39.

search of spatial knowledge. Their (hi)storytelling uncovers London's potentialities. Thus the "thirding" proposed by Bhabha and by Soja produces sites of rupture characterized by multiplicity.

When examining spatial representations of the city, only movement does not suffice to reveal the plethora of social exchanges and cognitive processes present in everyday experiences. The architecture of London plays an important role in exercising or extruding power. Manifold layers of meaning may be ascribed to the city's historical and modern buildings, which crystallize the energy of past inhabitants, apart from providing dwelling for the new generations. Moreover, the panoramic, cartographical projection of a city is complemented by the immediate socio-economic power relations found in the cosmopolitan metropolis of London. Therefore, mapping London involves geographies of power and a line of thought which connects its structural aspects.

1.2. Spatiality and the Distribution of Power

The city regarded from above or from below has been associated with particular levels of power. There is a distinction between the ideal, concept city and the textured flow of people who inhabit it. These different gazes over the city are achieved by the distinctive figures of the voyeur and the walker. Whereas the former has a detached, totalizing perspective from above, as de Certeau demonstrates by watching Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Center in 1980, the latter experiences and negotiates the shifting urban space. On the one hand, the voyeuristic gaze is perceived as a simulacrum, a perspective which is alienated from everyday life. On the other hand, the walker, reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's *flâneur,*[37] absorbs and merges with the rhythms of the city, hence his experience is deemed more authentic. The polarized approach engenders an opposition between the geographical, planned space of panoptic architecture and the anthropological, poetic spatiality of the walker who generates a "*migrational*, or metaphorical, city"[38].

Furthermore, power relations are equally examined by de Certeau by using terminology borrowed from warfare. For de Certeau, as for Foucault,

[37] See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, where he revises the figure of the *flâneur*, present in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, but still relevant to contemporary thinking, as the modern observer of the commodified society who provides alternative visions of the city transforms the public into private space, uncovers hidden histories and places and identifies intrinsic power relations.

[38] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93.

the city is a site of social patterning that one can abide or challenge. Hence the distinction between "strategies" of power manipulation and "tactics" of counteraction. Strategies are the hegemonic means of urban planning, which enable powerful institutions to appropriate a place. The result is the establishment of an autonomous place of panoptic mastery. In this planned milieu, tactics are used by those with reduced power of decision to resist strategies and make active choices of how to use their environment[39]. In a cosmopolitan metropolis like London, individuals transgress, sometimes illicitly, the physical and social constraints of the place and shape it according to their preferences. The city is thus creatively re-appropriated through the manipulation of everyday situations.

The study of Michel de Certeau is tightly connected to Pierre Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice*, published the same year. Bourdieu perceives the dweller as subject to a totalizing logic, engaged in capitalist relations of competition in a hierarchical social distribution of power. While de Certeau observes manifold social practices, some of which take the form of individualized tactics of navigating the cityscape, Bourdieu visualizes the urban space as the interaction of "structures," "practices" and the "habitus." In this tripartite representation of the urban space, the "structures" represent the socioeconomic status of a group which harbours a set of "practices." According to Bourdieu, human actions are not arbitrary but flow from a set of certain inherited, internalized dispositions that influence and interact with present circumstances. Each social class, according to its economic cultural, social and symbolic capital, generates certain practices, or lifestyles, that mediate the way in which the various urban fields of action are experienced. The dichotomy of centre and periphery, the difference in suburban lifestyle and city lifestyle, of living in East End and in West End assume a significant role in the literary depictions of London, where the coordinates of one's home point to a plethora of assumptions about class habitus.

Moreover, I will provide an original take on the idea of habitus by associating it with the concept of entropy and inner space introduced by J.G. Ballard in British science-fiction. In order to anticipate the possible effect of constructing tower buildings and destroying the historical architecture of London, I propose the term entropic habitus to show the dissonance and conflict caused between classes due to the spatial contingency of residents from different ends of the social scale in *High-Rise* and *Mother London*. Inner space, is defined as "the invented space that you see [...] derelict buildings, where the observer imposes his own

[39] Ibidem, 35-7.

dreams, fears, phobias"[40]. I argue that the wounded inner spaces resonate with the entropic habitus instilled by spatial reconfigurations. All in all, the manipulation of spatial relations, either through Lefebvre's spatial production, de Certeau's practices or Bourdieu's habitus, implies physical and psychological control of the individuals who navigate it and vice versa.

The dialectics space–power is taken even further by Foucault, who examines the relation between power, space and knowledge. To Foucault, space and power are interrrelated in transforming "man into an object of knowledge"[41], since the material organization of space and the underlying ideological knowledge act as instruments and amplifiers of control. The theory of space is central to the panopticon described in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and to the notion of heterotopia. Heterotopias act as spaces that disrupt the structures of power, expressing transgression, freedom, movement. In his 1967 lecture "Of Other Spaces," Foucault describes contemporary space in terms of two categories of sites that relate differently to time, space and reality: the imaginary utopias and the physical heterotopias. Despite their brief description, heterotopias reveal themselves as "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites […] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted"[42]. Moreover, heterotopias constitute sites of contrast and change, where several different spaces are juxtaposed, as in the case of museums, libraries, theatres, festivals, considered one of the oldest forms of heterotopia. The high-rise, for instance, may be regarded as a newly emerging topos which encompasses the juxtaposition of national and foreign cultural elements and the superimposition of real and imagined qualities which are required of a heterotopia. Heterotopias call attention to processes of exclusion and standardization. Heterotopias are thus worlds within worlds, liminal sites between utopias and dystopias that contradict and transform discursive spaces.

The interaction with the urban space is mediated by individual experiences, which produce a set of mental maps. Fredric Jameson proposes the notion of "cognitive mapping"[43] described as "a pedagogical

---

[40] Samuel Francis, *The Psychological Fictions of J. G. Ballard* (London: Continuum, 2011), 67.

[41] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan. (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 24.

[42] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986): 24.

[43] The term "cognitive mapping" is borrowed from geographer Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960) for whom the practice implies the "reconquest of a sense