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Making Home in the City: A Spatial Analysis of Representations of London in Contemporary Fiction

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Abstract

The plethora of novels dedicated to describing London over the centuries is telling of the city's prolonged perceived importance to authors, their readers and inhabitants alike. Longstanding though the compulsion to imagine London may be, fiction – even fiction written and published in the same moment of history – provides contradictory accounts of the city at best, something which this thesis traces to the very ambiguities and instabilities of London itself. Using a focused spatial framework, this thesis places four stylistically, authorially and thematically diverse contemporary novels that are situated in London and, to an extent, about what it means to live in London, side-by-side with a view to highlighting the multitude of experiences available in the city. Citing the urban space as the site at which the social and the political is constructed, the practice of space is emphasised to be a key trajectory through which identity, agency, and notions of home and belonging are established. With a view to developing Doreen Massey's (2005) distinction between *space* and *place*, coined terms 'the cartographical' and 'the phenomenological' are applied to analyse the significance and effects of different spatial practices and develop an understanding of London's contingency. This contingency theorised is further cultivated through an analysis of the city's palimpsestuousness – that is, how London seems to retain much of its heritage and discursive history (whilst simultaneously modernising, and thus overwriting much of its ancestry) – and an exploration of how each of the four novels interact with the city's palimpsestuous quality through the employment of intertextuality. Providing insight into both the politics and poetics of London, then, this thesis contributes to the remerging field of spatial scholarship and brings a new and fruitful lens through which to read contemporary works.

Keywords

London, Spatial Theory, Contemporary Literature, Geography, Cartography

CONTENTS

Word Count: 27,540

Notes on the texts

Primary Text	In-text citation	Author	Full Reference
Saturday (2005)	*Saturday*	Ian McEwan	McEwan, S. (2005). *Saturday.* London: Johnathan Cape.
Something to Tell You (2008)	*Something*	Hanif Kureishi	Kureishi, H. (2008). *Something to Tell You.* London: Faber and Faber.
NW (2013)	*NW*	Zadie Smith	Smith, Z. (2013) [2012]. *NW.* London: Penguin.
A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers (2008)	*Concise*	Xiaolu Guo	Guo, X. (2008) [2007] *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers.* London: Random House.

Introduction

> [I]f you live in London, it isn't that you get on with the business of living and the backdrop happens to be this place called London. It is that you are living in London. Living in London is a thing.
>
> China Miéville in Schmeink, *On the Look-Out for a New Urban Uncanny*

The general consensus at which authors have arrived, as early as Charles Dickens and Samuel Johnson, and as late as Iain Sinclair, Martin Amis and, of course, China Miéville, is that London brings with it a particular spatial experience – both in name and inhabitation. For all their unanimity, however, these are authors who express the nature of that particularity quite differently, and the experience of the city is thus as complex as it is idiosyncratic. The respective Londons about which they write have come to influence contemporary understandings of the city, and continue to guide how the city's spaces are lived in and appropriated. Not only is London a city defined by particularit*ies* then, but it also represents a nexus between the real and the imaginary. At once, London is both a real, topographical location around which socio-political discourses circle, and a work of fiction, undergoing constant re-writing and compilation.

The trance of London and, in particular, the propensity to narrativise its form has been highlighted by a great many over the years, including Ian Jack who writes in his 'Introduction' to Granta's *London: The Lives of the City*, "People who come to London also bring it with them in their minds. They have a feeling of how the city should be before they meet it" (Jack, 1999, p. 6) Writing just less than ten years later, Gail Cunningham expresses much the same; for her, "London occupies a unique position in England's – and probably the Anglophone world's imagination" (Cunningham, 2007, p. xi). Though the compulsion to imagine or narrativise the metropolis is not new (and London has a long discursive history), in contemporary society, the stakes are – arguably – somewhat higher considering the social, cultural and ethnic diversity that has borne out of its new international standing.

Narrativisation (not just in terms of the literary but discursivisation in general) can mark an intervention on the plural, the complex and the different, and can be accompanied by the standardisation – and subsequent codification – of laws, rules, identities, and moral and ethical standards. Narrative can also be generous, however; literary narratives have the ability to both present and create different or multiple truths. Indeed, often, literary narratives critique narratability itself which, for urbanity, represents an awareness of the city's complexity and an unwillingness to tame it. Imagining London in discourse can therefore be deconstructive and offer new ways to make sense (or not make sense) of the city's contemporary condition.

In order to begin a critique of the supposed narratability (read: *singularity*) of London and highlight the importance of such deconstruction, it is useful, first, to look briefly at the sheer plurality by which the city's demographic is now, more so than ever, defined. In today's London, difference is both omnipresent and complex. Quantitatively speaking: over the ten year period following the establishment of the European Union in 1993 (which also saw the inclusion of further member states), Rienzo and Vargas-Silva observe that the number of foreign citizens in the UK doubled to around 7.8 million (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva, 2014, p. 2). In terms of migrant demographic, London outstrips other UK towns and cities by far; the capital accommodates over a third of all migrants entering Britain and has borne witness to the highest rates of migrancy for the past decade. The city now plays host to over three hundred languages, having united people from all seven continents (Kershen, 2015, p. 13, 18).

This process of migration and settlement has affected the very fabric of what constitutes the city; London has seen the greatest change to its landscape in terms of food, the Arts, and popular culture whilst, according to Kumar, "large sections of British society remain relatively untouched" (Kumar, 2003, p. 261). Not just affecting London's culture but the

bearers, makers and recipients of that culture, the capital's consistently high level of net migration (Perfect, 2014, p. 2-3) and its resultant heterogeneity has produced, Kumar goes on, "not simply more variegated but also more provisional, constantly changing, identities" (Kumar, 2003, p. 242). This constant bodily flux can be observed most clearly in the creation of creoles between second and third generation youth migrants (Kershen, 2015, p. 20) and, certainly, migration and ethnic diversity are amongst the most discernible sites of multiplying difference in terms of London. This changing social reality has had a number of different effects; most prominently, it has brought with it both the possibility of renegotiating Britain's national identity and the fear of losing a national identity, or the notion of Britishness, entirely – with the two implications neatly wrapped up in the term *multiculturalism.* Indeed, multiculturalism and to what, or whom, it supposedly refers have each been plagued by several high-profile differences of opinion since its citation in Britain (see Modood, 1997; Alibhai-Brown, 2001; Kumar, 2003). Discussions frequently centre on notions of belonging and citizenship: whether either can be achieved by hybridised bodies, *how*, and, most recently, whether such citizenship is to be regarded positively or with some scepticism.

That said, difference and the accompanying politics of doubt also occurs at the level of identity and belonging more broadly and affects all inhabitants of the city – not simply those for whom London is more recently or more contestably home. One of the clearest examples of this within the capital is, of course, social class. As "an urban space notable for its scattered nature and suburban sprawl" (Philips, 2006, p. 2), London comprises thirty-two boroughs, each of which functions – quite succinctly – as its own social, cultural, political, demographical and economic microcosm. Without dwelling too much on particular economic events and financial crises of the last 10 years that have exacerbated differences between and within social classes (see Dorling, 2010), the inequalities remain emphatic. The city harbours both poles of the class spectrum and is home to some of the richest and poorest

people in the country. Not only does London play host to the greatest number of 'Ultra' high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs) in the world – some 4,224 families no less (Dorling, 2014 p. 90) – it also has more squatters than any other city in the UK (Dorling, 2014, p. 83).[1] Research by Trust for London (2013) reveals that there remains a significant and widening gap between London's wealthiest and poorest.[2] This financial hardship has produced an impoverished working class, that, unable to afford to live in the city, typically resides in rented accommodation just outside of London (Trust for London, 2013, p. 3). This economic, and resultantly spatial, disparity is present, too, within the discourse of migration; as Kershen points out, London has boroughs hosting "billionaire Russian oligarchs in Westminster, Knightsbridge and Chelsea" as well as "unemployed ethnic minorities in Tower Hamlets and Newham" (Kershen, 2015, p. 2). The interconnectedness of spatial and socio-political or ethnic trajectories is a pattern which recurs in London, creating a series of urban (and suburban) belongings that are produced by many different discourses and thus which are contingent and temporary. That is, the intersections of class, race and gender (the latter not covered until later but equally pertinent) prevent bodies from achieving final situ via one overriding discourse. As conditions of identity, their mutuality undermines the stability of the subject and where that subject finds him/herself at home.

Bearing in mind the plurality theorised of London and, the intersectionality of discourses contributing at once to the subjectivity inhabitants are granted, this thesis aims, in part, to explore both the possibilities and difficulties of achieving a sense of grounding or belonging in contemporary London. In turn, the contingency of London as both a topographical

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[1] The term high-net-worth individual (HNWI) is given to those with more a million US dollars (or equivalent) in disposable wealth. 'Ultra' high-net-worth individual describes the top 1% of HNWIs: i.e., people with at least $30m' disposable assets though sometimes climbing to as much as tens of billions of dollars.

[2] Average hourly wages in London, for both high-paid and low-paid workers, are higher than the nationwide average – proportionate to the higher cost of living in the capital. Despite that, the monetary difference between London's low-paid workers compared with UK-wide low-paid workers is significantly less than that between London's highest-paid and nation's highest-paid. The latter typically earn a third more than their nationwide counterparts whereas London's low-paid community earn just a tenth more than average low-paid UK workers. (Trust for London, 2013, p. 22-3)

location and a textual site will be exposed. The concentration of fiction dedicated to London is indicative of this plurality and difference and will thus form the cornerstone of the study, anchoring the complex socio-politics of the moment and the philosophical questions raised by notions of identity, home and belonging to the city. More than that, contemporary London fiction brings to light the personal aspect of living in London, revealing the acute implications (and contradictions) of intersectionality for inhabitants and, furthermore, the strength and meaning of each individual's tie to the city.

A deliberately broad range of contemporary London novels, with London settings that are equally wide-ranging, will be discussed: *Saturday* (2005) by Ian McEwan, *Something to Tell You* (2008) by Hanif Kureishi, *NW* (2013) by Zadie Smith, and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008) by Xiaolu Guo. In spite of all their differences (in authorship, narrative style, politics etc.), all four, either explicitly or implicitly, deal with ideas of home and belonging in the city and, *because of* their differences, greater insight into London's polysemy and plurality can be provided. More critically, the works each provide highly individualised account of city-dwelling: offering depictions that are indebted to their respective narrators and, in part, to their authors and, hence, which are aware of their subjectivism. These personal impressions not only disrupt the hegemony of London as a static enclosure or entity but, importantly, establish a situatedness of discourse into which particular social, cultural and philosophical positions can be read.

Vernaculars of London

Before outlining the spatio-theoretical framework that this thesis will take as its masthead, a brief reflection upon the particular authorial voices present within the novels is crucial as the experience of living in the city and, in turn, writing about the city, is utterly entrenched in the

personal. This is apparent even in all four authors' current and historic geographical locations – literally the locations from which they speak. Like Dickens and Johnson, and like Sinclair, Amis and Miéville, Ian McEwan, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Xiaolu Guo have all, at one time or another, lived in London and experienced the city at a personal and intimate level. As Zadie Smith herself says, "[T]he streets I *do* know [...] they're kind of a deep knowledge in me" (Smith, 2012, np; emphasis added). Indeed, Kureishi and Smith both grew up in London, whilst McEwan moved there in later life, and Guo relocated to the city as a teenager. This closeness that the novelists bear to London – geographically and emotionally – has the effect of transforming their position of authors to auteurs and, in fact, many critics have commented on the autobiographical semblances of *Saturday*, *Something to Tell You*, *NW* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* in turn.

Beginning both temporally and spatially, Ian McEwan's *Saturday* is both the earliest novel in this collection and is most closely situated to the centre of London. Though published in 2005, McEwan's three hundred page epic takes place over the course of just one day, February 15th 2003, a date which is as crucial to the novel as the very streets in which it takes place. To the backdrop of the very real anti-Iraq war demonstration closing at Hyde Park, and with the sensibility of an epoch forever changed by the 9/11 attacks, *Saturday* is simultaneously a novel directed by wider cultural influence and microscopic introspection. [3] The free indirect discourse with which McEwan drives the novel's plot, and with which the author provides access to the highly rational mind of central protagonist, Henry Perowne, has led to a conflation of the two men by some critics. John Banville, in particular, scathingly condemns the novel for its "disturbing tendency toward mellowness", calling out its protagonist as "an unashamed beneficiary of the fruits of late capitalism" and implying of

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[3] McEwan, himself commented on the terrorist attacks of Lower Manhattan in which we saw the twin towers fall – each of their ten stories tumbling to the ground in mere minutes. At the close, he remarks, "Like millions, perhaps billions around the world, we knew we were living through a time that we would never be able to forget. We also knew, though it was too soon to wonder how or why, that the world would never be the same. We knew only that it would be worse" (McEwan, 2001, np).

author, Ian McEwan, much the same (Banville, 2005, np). Certainly, Perowne enjoys a privileged position and is, but for the Saturday depicted, afforded immunity to much of London's and the wider world's political unrest; he even extends this detachment and empiricism to the doings of his daily life. Likewise, passive observer as he is, it is quite true that Perowne evades both situation and politics and, as Amiel-Houser points out, in doing so, "[he] escapes making a clear moral decision..." (Amiel-Houser, 2011, p. 134).

The criticism lodged by Banville for the author himself can meanwhile, in part, be placed squarely at the door of fictional Perowne himself. The W1 postcode of his Georgian home, which frames the narrative both spatially and discursively, is shared with McEwan who lends his central London home to *Saturday*'s protagonist (Smith, 2005, np). And what the two men have in common – the place they call home and, perhaps, their social and political privilege – Andrew Dickson, interviewing McEwan for the Guardian newspaper, suggests emerges, too, in person. Dickson writes of the author's manner and mannerisms: "I try to put my finger on who he reminds me of: a studiously unflashy neurologist, perhaps, like the protagonist of his 2005 novel, *Saturday*" (Dickson, 2014, np). And so, whilst in materiality and scientific investment – two key themes which define Henry Perowne and two central epistemologies on which the novel reflects – McEwan perceives a discernible difference himself and his protagonist (Fact290, 2014, 7:02), comparisons made demonstrate the inevitability of autobiographical readings, and their pertinence, to the act of writing London.

The attention critics have paid to the semblances between McEwan and Perowne and their apparent shared vision of London may be surprising but it by no means matches the volume of critique dedicated to comparing author, Hanif Kureishi, with the characters that appear in his work, nor does Banville's commentary equal the venom with which some critics have lodged complaint against *Something to Tell You*. As an author who regularly "tackles uncomfortable topics and the messiness of human interactions without absolutist answers"

(Fischer, 2015, p. 2), and whose work has been defined by "its very refusal to say what it should say" (Ahmed, 2009, p. 29), Kureishi has wielded the same political ambivalence present in McEwan's *Saturday* throughout his literary career. Following the publication of the author's early screenplays and first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2000 [1990]), and his becoming something of a figurehead for the emergence of British Asian fiction in the 1980s, this ambivalence has previously been critically understood as a strategic, postcolonial move and one which is ultimately geared toward bringing attention to (and potentially renegotiating) the politics of migrancy (see Ball, 1996; Kelata, 2010 [1998]; Sen, 2000; Upstone, 2010; Romanow, 2011). Whilst that description might correspond with his early works and his first novel however –which, without doubt, present a radically inventive counter-discourse to challenge those who see British Asian identity condensed into a singular realisation – and previous autobiographical readings have hence been largely positive, his later work has proven difficult to read in the same way.

Something to Tell You has not only led reviewers to hastily remark on its author's flagrant disregard for postcolonial identity politics (see Wagner, 2008; Tonkin, 2008) but has also attracted critics to chastise Kurieshi's not only unimaginative but potentially problematic depictions of London (see Upstone, 2010; Wagner, 2008; Tonkin, 2008; Fischer, 2015). Where the protagonist of his seminal work negotiates the prospects and limitations of his dual heritage and succeeds in establishing a "new breed" (Kureishi, 2000, p. 1) of Englishness formed by both and neither, *Something to Tell You* and its narrator, Jamal Khan, have been said to side-line questions about British Asian identity altogether. Whilst, like McEwan, Kureishi has been elided with his protagonist, then, he has faced much greater consternation from critics for the problematic position of spectator that Jamal assumes and the protagonist's lack of political, social or ethical reflection. Such is indicative of the different – arguably, more demanding – responsibilities of postcolonial authorship – a

grouping under which Kureishi is commonly placed (see Ball, 1996; Kelata, 2010 [1998]; Sen, 2000; Upstone, 2010; Romanow, 2011).

Whilst autobiographical readings of fiction only get us so far as to discerning the meaning of the work (here, *Something to Tell You*) and, subsequently, the extent to which *writing* about London is a testimony concerned with the personal experience of *living* in London, it should be highlighted that Kureishi's work at least justifies that certain comparisons between author and protagonist be made. During an interview with Colin McCabe, he admits that much of his work is either autobiographical or, at least in part, informed by his own experience as, first, a member of an ethnic minority and, furthermore, his being billed as a postcolonial author (McCabe, 1999, np). Like Miéville, however, Kureishi does attach a certain reverie or mystique to London and admits that, during his early life living in the suburbs, "London was always a place that I imagined" (McCabe, 1999, p. 37). For all his insistence that 'his' London "isn't going to be like anybody else's London" (ibid, p. 37) and that "all the places I write about...are imaginary places, in a sense they're all in my head" (ibid, p. 40), his sister, Yasmin Kureishi, shares quite the opposite view – insisting his characters, at least, are not quite imaginary enough. Writing for the Independent in 2008, Yasmin Kureishi reveals the apparent magnitude of her brother's inspiration from real-life:

> There is quite a bevy of us now [in Hanif Kureishi's novels] – my mother and father in *The Buddha of Suburbia*; Uncle Omar, portrayed as an alcoholic in a bedsit in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, then lauded in Hanif's memoir, *My Ear at his Heart*; an ex-girlfriend, Sally, [...] [and a] semi-autobiographical novel, *Intimacy* (1998) centred around a man leaving his wife and kids for a younger woman. Tracey Scoffield, his ex-partner ('the wife') was not impressed. [...] There are probably many more...
> (Kureishi, 2008, np).

Whether Hanif Kureishi was aware of such likenesses at the time of writing or not is unclear, though Yasmin's accusations gesture toward the inevitably personal, and thus subjective, act that is writing London.

In the same context of authorial responsibility, both that concerning the writing of the ethnic body, and the issues related to making the personal public, Zadie Smith presents her latest novel, *NW.* And, indeed, regularly framed by Kureishi and his body of work – critics making the parallel identification of ethnic (specifically, second-generation migrant) concerns – both Smith and her novels have been pursued by associations with the politics of women, black identity and postcoloniality. Though back in the familiar Willesden streets of her childhood home and much-acclaimed debut, *White Teeth* (2000), *NW* is, however, far less engaged with either the inherent plurality of the migrant and second-generation migrant experience or the potential to reconcile those social, cultural and political differences expressed in her first novel. Rather, in the context of *NW*, the bold political statements made by *White Teeth* feel premature and the enthusiasm that it exhibits toward multiculturalism very much of its time.

If *White Teeth* can be said to bear the hallmarks of the millennial moment, however, then *NW* is, too, heavily influenced by the socio-politics of contemporary society and is laden with post-2000 cultural motifs. The chapter, 'Host', led by one of the protagonists, Natalie, is most redolent of the novel's predilection for tropes of the zeitgeist. It traces the transition from "the year people began saying 'literally'" (*NW*, p. 225) to "the year people began saying 'living the dream', sometimes sincerely but usually ironically" (ibid, p. 252) to "the year everyone was saying that such and such was 'their rock'" (ibid, p. 266); marks the arrival of the digital age (ibid, p. 255) and, later, the Apple iPad (ibid, p. 289); and even notes the rise and fall of singer, Amy Winehouse (ibid, p. 287-8). Such incisive inclusions have the effect of not only marking the historic particularity of the London on which *NW* centres but also

allude to the intimate knowledge of the city, its practices and its discourses that Zadie Smith herself possesses.

Her construction of the peripheral yet recurring figure of Nathan Bogle indicates the author's relational proximity with London clearer still; whilst Nathan's blackness is circumstantial to the novel, his ethnicity – and Smith's treatment of his ethnicity (or lack thereof) – bears strong resonance within the social-political climate of the period in which she was writing. As she comments:

> I was really struck, I suppose during the riots in London [taking place in both April 1981, and the summer of 2011 after the shooting of Mark Duggan by police], that so many people were so willing to stand up and describe, comment or explain the behaviour of young, black men – people who have never met a young, black man, unless it was by walking across the street to avoid him. I found all the commentary so tiring, this assumption of understanding, and so – in Nathan's case – I wanted to leave him alone. I wanted him to speak with his own voice (as much as that's possible with fiction) and just to exist outside of commentary or control. (Neary, 2012, np)

The problematic imaginary conjured by the young, black body is first called to attention during Leah's early stint as narrator wherein she mistakes another male for Nathan, later justifying her error with: "The cap, the hooded top, the low jeans, it's a uniform – they look the same" (*NW*, p. 81). Omitted though ethnicity may be, his race is implied via the employment of the pronoun 'they' which, in the context of a white person speaking, denotes bodies which are *black* or *other*. Moreover, the "commentary" (Smith, 2012, np) with which Smith takes issue is successfully critiqued with the attire Leah appends and the stereotype she so readily accepts of casualwear and blackness.

This prejudicial discourse set up by Smith is remedied by the preservation of Nathan's enigmatic character and, indeed, his ethnicity is largely unspoken throughout the novel.[4] We see only the "soles of their trainers" (*NW*, p. 166) as he and his accomplice climb the stairs of the Kilburn tube station, Nathan's dilated pupils (ibid, p. 301) and yellowed fingernails (ibid, p. 302), while, when Natalie goes to look upon him and scrutinise his appearance more fully, she is interrupted by his saying "Chat to me" (ibid, p. 304). Certainly, his relative anonymity functions as a plot point, allowing Smith to build tension around Felix's murder and Natalie's eventual resolve to admit knowledge of the fatal stabbing to the police, but – more than that – it serves as a means of the countering the epoch's and London's prevailing racial discourse as it understood and *felt* by Zadie Smith.

Although Felix's murder can be said to be the novel's main event, reviewers of *NW* have almost exclusively centred on Natalie Blake (formerly Keisha) and Leah Hanwell, tending to deem them the 'main' characters (see Banks, 2012; Hensher, 2012; Kakutani, 2012; and Mars-Jones, 2012). By virtue of Natalie and Leah's loquaciousness, such tunnel-vision is hardly surprising; the two women have the two largest segments of the novel devoted to their stories. In fact, the voice of Natalie is granted two chapters – albeit a shorter second one – and the novel's resolution is very much hers alone. As the de facto protagonist, then, Natalie certainly justifies a similar reading approach to that which problematised the authorship of both Ian McEwan and Hanif Kureishi, and ethics of their respective protagonists (read as surrogates). Moreover, in the context of Smith's critical essay, 'Speaking in Tongues' – over the course of which the author describes relinquishing her North London accent in, what she offers as, perhaps, "a case of bald social climbing" (Smith, 2009, p. 133) – there are obvious

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[4] During Leah and Pauline Hanwell's day out together, they do meet Nathan Bogle unwittingly: Pauline buys a discounted travel card from him before she recognises who it is. At this point, he is described as having an "Afro" (*NW*, p. 45) and that he has "an odd patch of white skin on his neck" (ibid, p. 45). Arguably, this might be enough to discern Nathan's ethnicity as black but, from there, *NW* says little else of his appearance.

comparisons between that can be made, and have been made (see Lorentzen, 2012), between the two and their respective becoming agents in London.

Like Zadie Smith, Natalie surfaces from the city's underclass and, like Smith, she defies the class system to become a successful, wealthy professional who, although living within reach of her past and the place she grew up, is altogether far-removed from the harsh social and political reality related to North West London. Bearing uncanny resonance with the author's story of leaving behind her local accent to better her career, the protagonist's genesis as the high-flying lawyer known as Natalie (rather than by her birth name, Keisha) comes with consequences for her identity, however. Where Smith literally lost her voice – or, at least, replaced it with an altogether more palatable one – Natalie loses her name and, in turn, her social, political and religious cause. Much like the author, Natalie herself orchestrates the destruction of Keisha. The transition is first overtly addressed during episode 58 of 185 in 'Host', entitled "Leah's third visit", wherein (formerly) Keisha is referred to as "Ms Blake" (*NW*, p. 202) for the first time. The episode is immediately followed by "Proper names" during which the new Ms Blake interrupts Leah's introduction of 'Keisha' with "'No, Natalie.'" (ibid, 203).

Natalie's symbolic self-immolation allows her to scale the class system and evade the racial politics to which others, like her sister, are subject and, indeed, that is the protagonist's aim. The rejection of her kin, her skin and the politics that accompany such in order to do so resonates with a younger Zadie Smith's own ascension as an author. As Smith says of the voice with which she now speaks – her adopted RP accent: "I genuinely thought this was the voice of lettered people, and that if I didn't have the voice of lettered people I would never truly be lettered" (Smith, 2009, p. 133). Indeed, Smith has talked at length about her determined efforts to secure a place at Cambridge University, retrospectively calling to attention the absurdity of her actions such as reading the entire course syllabus before even

arriving (Hemon, Phillips and Smith, 2015, np). And so, though Smith herself insists "I've always tried to write things out before I've done them as a way of pre-experiencing them, or a way of not experiencing them" (Wachtel and Smith, 2010, p. 13), there can be little doubt that the author and *NW*'s Natalie share this ambivalent experience of self-denial and the recovery of authenticity or agency (however their relative successes differ). The relationship between the London depicted in the novel and Zadie Smith's own London – the city in which she grew up and now spends half her time – is therefore much closer than might appear.

The autobiographical nature of Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* is more overt. Written in the form of a dictionary, the novel follows Zhuang Xiao Qiao – who becomes known as Z throughout, on account of the difficulty of her name's pronunciation for non-Chinese speakers – and her trip to London to study English on a temporary, student visa. Although it was not on a student visa that Xiaolu Guo first arrived in London but, rather, after finishing at an art degree in Beijing, she nonetheless admits that the novel borrows heavily from her experience as a Chinese migrant when she first arrived in the capital. In fact, the dictionary form itself is a direct reflection of the author's own relocation, during which Guo admits, for "the first six months I was just automatically collecting all the vocabularies, all the funny phenomenas [sic] I met in my daily life" (Guo, 2007, np).

Thus, in correspondence with Guo's own experience as a migrant, the novel's faux dictionary entries are not ordered alphabetically but temporally, organised by Z's language acquisition in London. Her learning of the language is thus paralleled with the duration of her stay in London and, both together and individually, they come to represent the narrator's integration into the city. Whilst one might therefore expect the denotation of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*' chapters to be specific to the city or Western world – that is, referring to words and concepts unaccounted for in Chinese language(s) or culture(s)

– and, indeed, the *content* of many of the novel's chapters reflect upon those idiosyncrasies, the novel's most sensitive reflections on language and its limits come as a result of its treatment of ambiguous referents, many of which arrive as chapter *titles.* Beginning with 'prologue', and moving through incisively-included items including 'pronoun', 'privacy', 'colony' and 'self', Guo interacts with the value of language: the discrepancies between denotation and connotation, its conventionality and, furthermore, its instability in translation. As Gilmour has pointed out, the novel considers "how different truths are suggested by different linguistic systems" (Gilmour, 2012, p. 217).

Entries, often denoting abstract concepts such as or subjective terms, are followed with their 'meaning' as told by the actual dictionaries that Z regularly consults before the narrative of the chapter (related to Z's acquisition of the logged word) begins. The effect of those juxtapositions – between a word's codified meaning and the protagonist's personal encounter and understanding of the same word during performance – as well as the authoritative contribution of Mrs Margaret (Z's language tutor) is ultimately such that language and its significance is revealed as unstable. More than that, in the context of Guo's authorial position as a migrant and, furthermore, the protagonist's own marginal identity, the dictionary, Mrs Margaret and the lover's presiding presence over Z's language learning come to reflect the conventions by which inhabitants must abide, nay, the process of assimilation migrants must undergo, if they are to achieve a sense of belonging.

Before belonging in the city – understanding its spaces and, moreover, the rules of its spaces – Z must of course master the English language and, in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary Lovers* as in life, that incorporates not just "collecting all the vocabularies [sic]" (Guo, 2007, np) but perfecting the language's grammatical structures, tenses and pronunciation as well as knowing the limitations of direct translation. And though Z's linguistic proficiency improves over the course of the novel, she regularly makes mistakes;

the narrative continues to be marked by idiosyncratic turns-of-phrase until Z's five hundredth day in London, her very last before she must return to China. For example, Heathrow Airport, in Z's tongue, becomes "'Heathlow Airport'" (*Concise*, p. 9) and the protagonist regularly forms questions incorrectly. It is as a result of Xiaolu Guo's own experience as a second language learner that she is able to identify the key linguistic deviancies between the two languages and appropriate them in such a way as to express both the difficulty of acquisition and linguistic translation, as well the translation of culture and identity that occurs simultaneously.

Despite the universalism of many of the novel's key themes, one cannot mistake the particularity of Z's account to London and thus the author's own role in the formation of the narrative. Indeed, as the backdrop to Guo's deconstruction of language and, moreover, the crux of such incongruities between codified and lived language or experience, London undergoes its own deconstruction under Guo and surrogate, Z's lead. Specifically, the narrator undermines the capital's symbolic identity – drawing attention to the inaccuracy of those depictions of London put forth by well-known and highly-regarded author of city, Charles Dickens, and calling to attention the city's somewhat different contemporary condition. Indeed, having read Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (in Chinese, known as *Foggy City Orphan*) as a child – the canonical writer seemingly appearing on syllabuses across the world and his representations of London apparently lauded for their veracity – Z initially comes to London with particular and out-dated expectations.

> Everybody know Oliver Twist living in city with bad fog. Is very popular novel in China. As soon as I arriving London, I look around the sky but no any fogs. "Excuse me, where I seeing the fogs?" I ask policeman in street. [...] He just look at me, he must no understanding of my English [sic]. (*Concise*, p. 21)

Unable to reconcile the real London before her with the imagined London she has consumed, Z is paradoxically more excluded from the city – despite her apparent prior knowledge of its spatial reality. More pertinently, this invocation of Dickens' novel is indicative of the pervasiveness of London literature (highlighted earlier) and the intermingling of real and imaginary tracts that takes place during considerations of the city. Furthermore, it highlights the specificity of each author's work, whether that idiosyncrasy is borne out of the author's temporal, spatial, racial, social or political position.

Theoretical Impetus

Having identified the personal aspect of living in and writing about London and, moreover, the instability of belonging, identity and subjectivity within the city as each are subject to multiple real and imaginary discourses, spatial scholarship and studies in human geography will provide the bulk of the critical framework. Doreen Massey's (2005) distinction between *space* and *place* will feature and be interrogated throughout and it is therefore useful to set out her theoretical parameters early on. Following the influential work of spatial scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, the likes of which include JB Harley, Michel De Certeau and Edward Soja, Doreen Massey suggests that "[p]lace [...] is the locus of denial, of attempted withdrawal from invasion/difference" (Massey, 2005, p. 5-6). Echoing McKerrow who insists, "Space is that enclosure or 'place' in which actions of one kind, but not of others, can occur" (McKerrow, 1999, p. 272), Massey employs a vocabulary of space and place throughout her work – the former as a model of plurality, contingency and continuity, and the latter as "a tabular conceptualisation of space" (Massey, 2005, p. 68), i.e. a reductionalist view of space as a vessel or, in socio-political terms, a territory. In turn, an ontology of place introduces an element of fixity – a quality that has been consistently problematised by postcolonial, migration and spatial scholars alike, including Soja who argues that such a concretisation "rationalize[s] existing conditions and thereby serve[s] to promote repetitive behaviour, the continuous reproduction of practices" (Soja, 1989, p. 14). Space is presented

as the very condition of being; we are always occupying one place or another, or making the journey between. Correspondingly, this fixity – intimated by narrativisation – imposes limits by which a body can recognised. This understanding of space's social and political implications will be recalled and scrutinised in correspondence with the four novels throughout using Massey's vocabulary of *space* and *place* often without rearticulating their denotation thus it is useful to either bear in mind or regularly return to this concise explanation.

Motivations and the finer theoretical details avowed, then, it is an exposure of the novels' reconceptualisations of London that represents this master's thesis' final end although not without, first, considering the implications of rethinking the city space for inhabitants by theorising the route by which *space* can be achieved – something which Doreen Massey leaves problematically unsaid. To do so, Massey's space and place dialectic will be coupled with Rosi Braidotti's theorisation of the *nomad* and, later, the thoughts of other poststructuralists. Ultimately, this thesis will pursue a critique of the ideas which attempt to suppress London's difference and contingency; focusing, instead, on particular abstractions of home and associated spatial terms, it seeks to interpret, and find a place for, otherness. In short, the aim is not to identify or locate the "thing" that Miéville insists characterises the experience of living in London but to reassert the impenetrability of that thing by way of illustrating the capital's mutability.

The first chapter is most heavily devoted to textual analysis and delves more closely into the mechanics and ethics of bodily and spatial production as well as belonging, supported by simple Geographic Information System (GIS) software. Following a thorough examination of the politics of space, the second chapter thinks about the poetics of space: locating the points at which the texts are self-reflexive or make reference to other London texts, and argues for a consideration of London as a palimpsest. From discussions on both the politics and poetics

of London, there will follow a conclusion during which the importance and significance of attending to the city's plurality and contingency will be stressed. The nature of that plurality and contingency will be expressed in both socio-political and literary terms with the final hope of reasserting London's particularity and the multiplicity within that particularity.

The Politics of Living in the City

> Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.

> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Voiced from radically different social, cultural and political positions, *Saturday*, *Something to Tell You, NW* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* each express London as a place of ambiguity and ambivalence. This mutual conclusion is, however, reached via very different routes and all four texts and their respective protagonists have very specific and very personal relationships with the space of London. Certainly, all four share an emphasis on inhabitants and thus foreground a kind of phenomenological experience of space in distinction to what De Certeau describes as the "texturology" of the city as it is "momentarily arrested by vision" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 91). Likewise, all four novels interact with London's topography – that is, its cartograph(ies), its streets and the demarcation of its spaces – in order to explore the relationship between self and world and, specifically, to interrogate the process by which one makes home in city. This chapter then aims to explore this double-practice of the cartographical and the phenomenological and develop a theory that can account for their function and their significance to the politics of living in the city. The two trajectories, despite being differentiated throughout, will be shown to have relationship of reciprocity wherein they are always entangled and depend on one another for meaning. As a result, it will be highlighted that both the cartographical and the phenomenological are capable of providing reassurance, embodiment and agency and, in the same vein, both can be disempowering, alienating and problematic.

Introducing Cartographical and Phenomenological Spatial Discourses

'Phenomenology' has been taken up variously by philosophers and critics, alike, since its most influential citation in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* ([1790] 1987). As might be expected, I consider the phenomenological less in those Kantian, Enlightenment-infused, individualistic terms, and align more closely with the later figuration of phenomenology put forth by Edmund Husserl in *Logical Investigations* ([1913] 1970), and specifically, the appropriation of his work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962).[5] That is, as phenomenology refers to "an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii), *the phenomenological*, for the purposes of this research, is the axis on which the experience of moving through space (and time) as a subject is made explicit. I should point out, however, I do not appropriate Merleau-Ponty's sense of phenomenology wholesale or uncritically. Merleau-Ponty rightly emphasises that his understanding of phenomenology via Husserl problematises Kant's intentionality of the act (which involves, in line with Kant's Enlightenment values, consciousness being elevated to the extent that it has having world-making potential). Merleau-Ponty's revised, phenomenology nevertheless retains some of those problematised Kantian values, if only implicitly. That is, whilst Merleau-Ponty rejects the idea that the task of phenomenology is "to reveal the mystery of the world and of reason" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.xxi), and comes close to deploring the possibility of a universal logic, he nevertheless maintains that phenomenology equates to "the act of bringing truth into being" (ibid, p.xx), a contradiction which not only reinstates his faith in monologism but also grants the perceiver world-making potential. These two upshots are incongruent to the phenomenological as I want it to be understood: the phenomenological as a trajectory of the individual and the experiential; and, likewise, the arrangement and interaction of individual perceptions, and how they are received (with not necessarily world-making ends) by the hegemonic order.

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[5] 1913 corresponds with the date of the publication of the second, revised version of *Logical Translations*. The original edition was published in 1900.

Within a spatial analysis, then, the phenomenological amounts to the subjective experience of inhabiting places (and space), as well as the inevitability of other, different subjective practices of space – both of which, all the while, are conditioned and identifiable only in that they are different from or other to normalised, empirical, or hegemonic knowledges of spatial practice. In this sense, I employ phenomenology as its etymology intimates: as *phainomenon* means literally, 'thing appearing to view', the phenomenological, here, denotes the inherent subjectivity imbued within the instantaneity of experience and perception. I nevertheless take from Merleau-Ponty, the sense that phenomenology is a drive "[t]o return to things themselves" and, hence, commit to a "world which precedes knowledge" in recognition of the fact that the world as we known it (as place) is a world about which "knowledge always [already] *speaks*" (Merleau Ponty, 1962, p.ix).[6] For this reason, when talking about the phenomenological or potentially phenomenological practices of space, I use the adjective, 'affective'. This is in recognition of the semblances between Merleau-Ponty's notion of phenomenology as a sensation before knowing, and Gregg and Seigworth's understanding of affect as "the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing" (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.1; emphasis in original) that "can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension" (ibid, p.1).

By contrast, I posit *the cartographical* as a kind of concatenation of those *place*-making discourses which, as they presuppose, and hence construct, places, foreclose and limit spatial

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[6] There is a sense in which this will later contradict the deconstructivist turn of my argument. When Merleau-Ponty describes 'a return to things', he alludes his premise that things *can* and *do* have meaning before knowledge and, hence, before discourse. Thus he later writes that "[i]n the silence of primary consciousness," wherein one accesses a phenomenological mode of perception, "can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.xv). Via what I attempt to illustrate as the mutuality of the phenomenological and the cartographical – that is to say, phenomenology and knowledge/discourse – I complicate Merleau-Ponty's understanding of phenomenology somewhat. Certainly, the phenomenological, as I posit it, retains the potential of being or perceiving otherwise but, unlike Merleau-Ponty, I attempt to expose how it is also imbricated and influenced by those codified modes of being and perceiving, and hence not utterly before discourse or knowledge.

practice. The potentially homogenising workings of the cartographical are best elucidated by scrutinising the function and effect of maps in relation to how we experience space. As a discursive practice, the act of map-making is alike to language in that it attempts to suspend phenomenological experience and provide a closed, perhaps reassuringly atemporal, picture of being. Located in a particular moment, the map as text has a functional role and serves to conceptualise an area, creating territories, and facilitating or preventing movement. Nevertheless, maps provide only partial representations. They are motivated products – the realities of which, Christina Ljungberg insists, are "neither true nor false since the reality to which they refer is only created by their being uttered" (Ljungberg, 2012, p. 2). Thus, she continues, cartography is a process of narrativisation insofar as it is "performative" and effectively "generates new 'realities'" (ibid, p.2). But the necessary process behind the making of new realities is concealed and, in their closed, objective, finished form, maps reject the participation of subjective perceptions. This, together, with the fact that maps are only capable of depicting a single frame at once, means that those new realities provided by maps are often far removed from the (perceptive) realities of inhabitants. Bound into a singular form, maps are opposed to difference and plurality and therefore share very little with either the polysemous character of London or, more broadly, the affective, phenomenological experience of living in, and moving through, space. For Braidotti then, cartography contributes to the "noticeable gap between how we live [...] and how we represent to ourselves this lived experience" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 4). As objects of knowledge, however, maps bear the trace of their production and, therefore, their possible motivations and subjectivities. As Merleau-Ponty reminds us, "[r]ationality is precisely measured by the experience in which it is disclosed. To say that there exists rationality is to say that perspectives blend, perceptions confirm each other, a meaning emerges" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xix). In simple terms, the very idea that there be an all-encompassing logic – here, a logic of place, and spatial practice – presupposes the co-involvement of subjectivities. Moreover, as objects to be read, maps also require and depend upon agential activity, even as they deny their reliance on the subjective or the phenomenological. Through consultation,

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the map's centralising authority can be heeded or denied. Its codified routes can be followed or readers can take a diversion. This is where the phenomenological comes into play.

First, in order to illustrate clearly how the cartographical and the phenomenological differ and locate the two discourses within the opposition of self and world, a short passage from *NW* will be used as an epigraph. The relationship theorised between the two spatial ontologies is nowhere more evident than in episodes nine and ten of *NW* in which Zadie Smith juxtaposes what appear to be directions taken directly from GoogleMaps with the wandering, free indirect discourse of narrator, Leah Hanwell, as she negotiates the same route specified by the page adjacent. It is Leah's walk through Kilburn that intimates the novel's concern with spatiality and first implores that the reader turn to a more heuristic account of London as it is lived by residents. [7] Episode nine provides a precise, minute-by-minute, mile-by-mile route, complete with the disclaimer: "These directions are for planning purposes only [...] You must obey all signs or notices regarding your route" (*NW*, p. 38). What becomes clear, however, from the description's inclusions and exclusions, is the failure of GoogleMaps (and cartography, more generally) to incorporate either the contingency or multiplicity inherent in individual spatial experience and, in particular, travelling. Corresponding only with London street names, and therefore conjuring what Robert MacFarlane (2007) has called a *grid map*, Smith's parodic interlude conveys the limitations of two-dimension spatial mapping, revealing how maps "make the landscape dream-proof, impervious to the imagination" (MacFarlane, 2007, p. 142). The map is universalising and appeals to a universal citizen that, as the novel will later insist with its disruptions of cartographic London and heteroglossia of voices and genres, simply does not exist.

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[7] By and large, critics tend to focus on the transformative figure of Natalie, remarking on the connection between her two aliases and what becomes two distinct, spatial and ethical awarenesses (see Zapata, 2014; Banks 2012). That said, the spatial resonance of the novel appears much earlier on with Leah Hanwell's opening chapter bringing to the forefront a number of nuanced points concerning inhabitation, ownership and belonging in space.

Leah's revised route in episode ten invokes a more subjective experience of space, specific to both her and the Kilburn locale. Smith's employment of GoogleMaps as a preface reflects Leah use of cartography as a starting point only from which to appeal to the phenomenological. Her walk follows the route outlined by cartography whilst being imbued with sensory, phenomenological perceptions. For instance, it sees her inhale the "[s]weet stink of hookah couscous, kebab, exhaust fumes of a bus deadlock" (*NW*, p. 39), the scents drawn in a linear pattern by the chapter's free indirect discourse so as to mirror her forward process of her inhalation and walking. With the reclamation of individualism in mind, Leah also deplores the place of an epistemology of collectivism within spatial experience. Her repeated, ironic avowals during the highly cartographic interlude: "Everybody [does this]. Everybody" (*NW*, p. 39-40), mimic the ritual replacement of significance that occurs when thinking and talking about the capital, her sweeping statements invoking humour in their falsity. Interwoven with her highly affective description of moving through the city, the parodic mode employed alludes to the problematic, totalising imaginary of London and also draws a connection between such totalisation and the cartographical.

Cartography, London and Cartographic London

If the cartographical can be said to potentially encourage (and enable) totalisation and, in turn, produce totalising figurations of inhabitants, then London presents certain challenges to pluralistic and individuated patterns of reading. London has a dense cartographic history dating back as early as 1544 (Porter, 2000, p. 14) and there are, at present, a wide range of maps dedicated to understanding, explaining and distinguishing between its spaces. Though over time, maps are succeeded and replaced with others claimed to understand better, or know more about, a particular place, there is nevertheless a synchrony of cartographical texts which exist contemporaneously. London, in particular, has accumulated a horde of

maps, many iconic, dedicated to making sense of its landscape, as well as designating areas of public and private concern. At present, the city boasts maps which foreground: the overground rail network, underground tube, roads, cycle routes, bus spider maps, tourist maps with landmark trails, as well as various others. This range of texts, in turn, presents multiple, often contradictory, descriptions of the *place* that is London and puts at the centre a variety of locums, depending on the focus or purpose of each particular map. Maps therefore have an underlying falsity, a 'truth' which they are unwilling or unable to share because of their centralising form.

In any case, maps possess a character of stability. They exist outside or above human concern and interaction their supra-visory nature making them less susceptible to either contestation or change. Thus cartography is a productive discourse by which, in Massey's terms, *spaces* become *places* and the multiplicity of spatial experience is replaced by a singular narrative or, an "always-already completed holism" (Massey, 2005, p. 15). This prefigured omniscience – or 'view-from-above' – endows maps with a verisimilitude from which inhabitants not only understand where they are in a physical, geographical sense but also arrive at their connection with others, as well as the implications or responsibilities of those connections. In his influential essay, *Deconstructing the Map*, Harley (1988) draws attention the politics of cartography, suggesting that the implied connections made between cartographic representations and the realities they appear to serve to produce a "ready-made and 'taken for granted' epistemology" (Harley, 1988, p. 2). This significance of cartography's withdrawal from agential action or deliberation and its being seen as an object of knowledge is therefore inherently political, and maps raises important social and ethical questions as to inhabitants' being- and living-together in a space such as London. So salient or "'taken for granted'" (Harley, 1998, np) are mapping practices, and so frequently are maps called upon to support social action, that ontologies of *place* have become the established mode of spatial experience. As Hoepker, echoing Harley (1988), goes on,

Cartography as a cultural technique is so deeply ingrained in the fabric of our

episteme that our viewing habits tend to blur the difference between representational

sign system and represented territory. We either conflate the two or use their terms

interchangeably, due to what is in our eyes the stunning structural similarity of map

and territory. (Hoepker, 2011, p. 12) [8]

For all the perceived similarities between the signified that is the map and the signifier that

is space, the effect of space's semiotic translation is profound. Cartographic representations

deny the contingency inherent to space, particularly a space such as London, as well as

inhabitants' relative proximity. They create and support the physical division of London's

thirty-two boroughs, in turn, forming exclusionary notions of citizenship. In their refusal to

admit inhabitants' mutual, coinciding existence by drawing literal and symbolic lines

between communities of people, maps effectively divorce communities from political, social

and ethical responsibility for one another.

As has been continually alluded to, however, maps are objects – objects of power, objects of

knowledge, objects *to be read*. The map always requires a reader despite its a priori

positioning beyond agential action. Just as the process of receipt and interpretation has the

potential to validate a map's ontological authority so, too, do readers (or inhabitants)

therefore have the opportunity to challenge or undermine the representation offered by the

map. Both Harley (1988) and Hoepker (2011) encourage a deconstructive reading of the

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[8] This bears striking resemblance to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the concealment of
phenomenological experience beneath what we consider phenomenology (and which is, in fact, the
subjective mediation of an a priori set of perceptions). As he writes, "We think we know perfectly well
what 'seeing', 'hearing', and 'feeling' are, because perception has long provided us with objects which
are coloured or which emit sounds. When we try to analyse it, we transpose these objects into
consciousness. We commit what psychologists call 'the experience error', which means that what we
know to be in things themselves we immediately take as being in our consciousness of them. We make
perception out of *things perceived*" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 5; emphasis added). This confusion
between subjective perception and the perception of 'things [already] perceived' effectively
communicates the same confusion outlined by Hoepker wherein the map ('things perceived') is
mistaken for the experience of being in space (perception).

map, as does De Certeau (1984) – if without ever directly referring to cartography. De Certeau describes the act of spectating on the city (akin to the production of the map) as a process of "immobilizing the most immoderate of human texts" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 92). Furthermore, he adds that to position one's self outside the city – he elects the World Trade Center – is to occupy an interrogatory position from which it is possible to identify problematic, "'geometrical'" or "'geographical'" (ibid, p. 92) constructions that serve to maintain the city's governance by an "anonymous law" (ibid, p. 92). For De Certeau then, maps appear to provide "a viewpoint and nothing more" (ibid, p. 92). In the same vein, JB Harley (1998), highlights the inherent subjectivities of cartographic discourse – that is, maps are not immaculately conceived but borne out of human, if particular humans', concern.

There is therefore a symbiosis between the cartographical and the phenomenological; the former functions as the trajectory from which the phenomenological takes its lead and where inhabitants have the potential to regain agency. With this in mind, the relationship that all four texts have with the cartographical is crucial to the sense of belonging that their respective protagonists achieve. The appearance of maps, signs related to maps (such as street names, buildings, parks and landmarks) and practices of walking within the texts are each significant discourses through which to interrogate identity, agency and situatedness. Moreover, the attitude that the novels and their narrators take to the cartographical – whether viewing it as a source of ultimate knowledge and thus something to be heeded, guarded, and for which disobedience ought to eradicated, or as a subjective artefact open to interpretation – is telling of their socio-political positions regarding belonging, citizenship and territory.

Reading Cartographically

According to Lawrence Phillips, London is "an urban space notable for its scattered nature and suburban sprawl" (Philips, 2006, p. 2). That is precisely the view of the capital that the collection of novels appears to show; each is contained within a much smaller expanse than London itself. While *NW* is, as the title suggests, clustered around the north west of the city (Fig. 1), *Saturday* is orientated much more centrally (Fig. 2) and *Something to Tell You* and *A Concise Chinese English Dictionary for Lovers*, meanwhile, move back and forth, from east to west, and include journeys south of the River Thames (Fig. 3). With the South of London ruled out as unthinkable by the majority of Smith's cast, imagined to be as remote as the other side of the world, these subtle choices of location cannot be overlooked. In fact, the texts' particular locations – specifically, their interaction with those locations – exist in conjunction and complementarity with the themes of each novel. At a fundamental level, the texts resist organising themselves around a mutual centre and, rather, they orient themselves around different and much smaller regions of London than the hegemonic metropolis, imagined as a *place*, would suppose. In the case of *Something to Tell You, NW* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, attention is refocused to the city's margins and spaces ordinarily unaccounted for, or even discounted, in London's concentrated spatial imaginary. McEwan's *Saturday*, on the other hand, is very much of the centre; it takes place at the heart of the capital, and both author and protagonist speak from the depths of the city's spatio-cultural enormity. Far from simply reiterating the dialectic of self and world, or reinstating cartography as the mode through which to understand space, such a position – in the context of *Saturday* – puts both the boundaries and established practices evoked by *place* under duress. All four texts can therefore be said to enact a deconstruction of cartographical London and, while living in one in the same city, the novels' protagonists occupy wildly different spaces and are confronted by varying concerns.

As intimated, *Saturday* is a novel which exists in and speaks from the centre – not just the centre of London in a geographic sense but a centre of power more broadly. From Henry

Perowne's position of privilege and wealth, cartography – as a discourse which favours and strengthens the centre – and cartographic London are trajectories on which he relies for his sense of grounding and belonging. Indeed, the map's ability to abstract and distort the relational proximity of others is a capacity on which Henry Perowne comes to depend for his very sense of self – a self which is, in many respects, as much defined by conservatism and exteriority from social and political concerns, as it is by its topographical location. In fact, the two are closely connected. Occupying his "own corner" (*Saturday*, p. 5) of London – the "congruent proportion" (ibid, p. 5) of Fitzroy Square – Henry is physically denied social and political awareness of others elsewhere in the city and, freed from responsibility for others, is able to cast them as *others*. These artificial boundaries drawn by cartography are continually evoked and serve to create a symbolic division between Henry Perowne and the London beyond his eye line as well as those residing outside his view. The protagonist draws regularly on street names and local landmarks with a view to maintaining his grounding within a particular location and, in turn, distinguishing himself from that which he deems alien or *other*. The Post Office tower, featured on the cover of the novel, looms large over Perowne's London imaginary and nearby Charlotte Street (*Saturday*, p. 5, 13, 217, 270), Gower Street, (ibid, p. 61, 243, 244), Warren Street (ibid, p. 65, 72-3) and Euston Road, (ibid, p. 16, 38, 48, 271) are mentioned on various occasions and serve to reiterate Perowne's parochial centrality and the security that can be derived from stability (see Beck, 2013, p. 113).

In a city which grows increasingly fractured and fractious – giving way to gaping social and racial disparities, and fuelling the fear of terrorism – and which, in the early hours of the Perowne's Saturday, is experiencing a plane crash, the cartographical serves to detach Perowne from those disquiets and effectively situates them elsewhere. Even Euston Road, less than two hundred metres from his house, is used to draw an analogy of Henry's remoteness from international terror. As the plane descends – initially paralleled with 9/11

though later revealed as non-threatening – and fails to stir sleeping wife, Rosalind, the protagonist admits, "the noise is probably no more intrusive than a passing siren on the Euston Road" (*Saturday*, p. 16). Such a comparison between the potentially global catastrophe and the highly local effects of the nearby road make clear the Perowne family's far-removal from either the city's or the world's politics and, moreover, highlights the cartographical's role in facilitating that insularity. As the novel overtly points out, events are "observed from a safe distance" (ibid, p. 16); without attachment, investment or the benefit (and vulnerability) of personal experience, "the obliging imagination [is] set free" (ibid, p. 16).

In the place of empirical knowledge, Perowne supplants his own version of events in a bid to make the unknown, known and thus thwart the feelings of insecurity prompted by the falling plane. In fact, throughout the novel, he demonstrates a reliance on the visible as it is acutely enmeshed with the cartographical – a material ontology which, as De Certeau argues, "makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 92). In the context of *Saturday*'s London, practicing space cartographically protects him from the uncertainty of London's future amidst talk of the impending war on Iraq and what is to be a decades-long war on terror. It establishes order where there is none and enables Perowne to reiterate his position of power and thus derive a sense of security.

Henry enjoys, for instance, being able to plot exactly the homes and natural spaces of his patients, taking great care to deliver topological references at the mention of any and all of Friday's patients. Thus begins a mapping through Hyde Park to Brixton as Perowne provides details on the various procedures of the day, insisting "Friday's list was typical" (*Saturday,* p. 7), and therefore intimating a narrative of pathologising tendency because not only is Friday's list "typical" but so, too, is his propensity to catalogue and thus stultify events. His

patients' residences are amongst the most geographically remote from Perowne's own central position and are pointed out as such. The points appear at a distance and feature alongside remote points such as Heathrow Airport where tanks are arriving for war, Jay Strauss' home, and the Cabbage Patch Pub where his son, Theo, enjoyed a jamming session with Ronnie Wood's brother, Art (Fig. 4). Each point is symbolic of a space with which Perowne has little or no connection: respectively, the political sphere, the lives of others, and the creative ontological mode. As Green puts it, "Henry's default way of thinking is essentially unimaginative" (Green, 2010, p. 61) and that which he cannot empirically pass judgement over is deemed incomprehensible, potentially threatening, and infinitely *other*. These places are catalogued in a way which draws attention to their distance, and accentuates their difference, from Perowne. As such, his meticulous inventorying of places serves to promote a detachment from either local or global responsibility. Any sense that Henry occupies the same London, faces the same mortality by which his patients are threatened, or is part of a city at war with itself over the prospect of conflict in Iraq is obscured by his empirical, material view of life.

Perowne's dependence upon his home in Fitzroy Square, and the notions of safety and belonging which accompany it, further exemplify both the protagonist's reliance on the cartographical and his use of space to secure borders and his own identity. His Georgian manor house in the centre of London encapsulates the city's affluence and is the axis on which both his sense of self and all of his decisions rest. The intrusion of his home, which occurs late in the novel, then comes to symbolise an intrusion on Henry's self and way of life. It disrupts the barrier between both public and private space, and public and private selfhood, as well as undermining the territories to which cartography and Perowne himself have laid claim. According to Ljungberg, the centrality of cartographical space is one that is persistent and wide-reaching: we each have "[a] need to be able to orient ourselves in our immediate geographical environment or in our mental imaginary space to know where we

are and where we have been in order to know where to go" (Ljungberg, 2012, p. 2). Spatiality is then, in complex ways, bound up with identity. Spaces provide, or refuse to provide, a platform on which to be – or *become.*

Perowne has great fluency with London's topography and a strong sense of belonging to the city – however parochial his perception of that city might be. As such, he is provided footholds with which to assume certainty on what was, is and will be, and thus retain his position above the city as impartial spectator. But what of those who are less accustomed to London's rhythms and rules? Those for whom London is alien, or to which they, themselves, are alien? What of those whom would be cast *other* under Perowne's short-sightedness, but who nevertheless live and remain in the city?

A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary's bilingual narrator is ironically non-fluent in either the topography of London or its related urban practices and, though she knows well from where she has travelled, she is less sure what to expect on arrival. Travelling to London with the aim of studying the English language for a year before returning home to China, Z has limited knowledge or understanding of the city before she arrives. What she does know is inflected by her Chinese schooling as well as what little Western culture her peasant village had access to. And it is on her parents' wishes that she leaves China to learn English: she and her family are filled with the promise of a "better life through Western education" (*Concise*, p. 12) and the somewhat localised prospect of "making lots money [sic] for their [her parents'] shoes factory by big international business relations [sic]" (ibid, p. 12) on her return. Z's stay in London therefore has a finite duration. The unambiguous deadline hangs over the narrative throughout as well as being emphasised by the diary-esque form her dictionary takes. Any sense of belonging achieved by Z is therefore marked as only temporary; geographically, affectively and symbolically, she is to remain outside the city.

Z's exteriority from the capital, and the Western world it comes to represent, is signalled from the very beginning of the novel; the first chapter charts the experience of Z's flight from Beijing Airport to London Heathrow:

> Now. Beijing time 12 clock midnight.
>
> London time 5 clock afternoon.
>
> But I at neither time zone. I on airplane. Sitting on 25,000km above to earth and trying remember all English I learning in school [sic]. (*Concise,* p. 3)

The reader is primed to read Z as a delocalised figure, situated neither at home nor away, and yet also someone who is mediated by those places with which she is unable to identify. She is realised as the in-between. Occupying a space and time aligned with neither continent, Z has no centre, no orient and no home from which to assume a sense of belonging. While she, like Henry Perowne, is imagined above the city in this short passage, the overwhelming image is then one of alienation rather than omniscience, as in Perowne's case. In fact, even after Z has arrived on the solid ground of London and subsequently makes a home with an unnamed lover, she continues to exist in a liminal space between home and away, with neither China nor London fitting neatly into either side of the dialectic. Neither recognised by her home country nor stable as a migrant, she belongs only at the interstice between English and Chinese cultures: she moves from being literally, to figuratively, "a body floating in air" (*Concise,* p. 3).

The regular appearance of cartography and cartographical signs prevent Z from ever forgetting that she is rooted nowhere and that, at best, her very embodiment as a subject remains under scrutiny. Not only does the cartographical directly mark Z's difference – defining her as an "ALIEN" in the airport (*Concise*, p. 9) – but, written in English, the signs confound her and remind her of her outsiderness and otherness. An early episode documenting Z's arrival in London exemplifies this persistent othering that occurs as a result

of cartography. Having worried unduly over the admittance of her passport and proceeded through queues after subsequent gates, she is instantly estranged from all that she knows – spatially and symbolically – and cannot comprehend even the modest signage adorning the airport:

> 'Heathlow Airport'. Every single name very difficult remembering, because just not 'London Airport' simple way like we simple way call 'Beijing Airport'. (*Concise,* p. 9)

Whilst she apologetically concedes herself an 'alien', in accordance with the airport signs that designate her so, Z is not sensitive enough to the language to pick up on her non-standard pronunciation of Heathrow – a common mistake in Chinese second language learners of English.[9] Her inability to correctly enunciate Heathrow Airport comes to reflect the alienation she feels at the hands of the city: its cartographic presence and its accompanying spatial practices and rituals. And indeed, this early evocation of the cartographical – that is, place names with corresponding material referents – intimates what becomes a novel saturated with references to London's topography. Furthermore, whilst many spaces frequented by Z have accumulated a rich, symbolic identity that surpasses their cartographical denotation, their histories and stories are to remain, for the most part, untold. As a relative outsider, Z comes upon London with very little knowledge of its spaces and thus regularly finds herself vulnerable in what the reader might deem the wrong places – be that a pokey house-share or a peep show. The distance between Z and the reader is widened as a result; with some prior knowledge of London, the reader assumes a greater position of belonging than the narrator is ever to negotiate, despite him/her not being physically located in the capital.

Clearly, a sense of belonging does not arise from simply living in the city. Z has homes throughout the novel, albeit temporary ones, having moved from Nunnington House hostel

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[9] Because, aside from geographic and cultural outsiderness, Z also lives outside the language (as discussed during the introduction in 'Vernaculars of London').

to a house in Tottenham Hale where she boards with a Cantonese family until eventually moving into her lover's house on Hackney Road. She thus has her own physical space, however complicated the ownership of that space might be, and the safety and security that a dwelling provides. What she lacks is a familiarity with the innate sociability of space. Massey insists that "the social is constructed" within "the negotiation of relations within multiplicities" that take place through space (Massey, 2005, p. 13). That is, identities, agencies and subjectivities are constantly being made through encounter and interaction. Literally voiceless – unable to communicate her own particularity or multiplicity, and thus her corporeality as a spatial, social agent – Z cannot articulate her own belonging, at least not in a way which adheres to norms, cultural codes and territories of London.

In his essays, 'The Neighborhood' and 'Propriety', Pierre Mayol stresses the importance of the social aspect of space, specifically as it relates to spatial customs and notions of belonging. In the theme of the volume in which are they collected, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, both essays address aspects of urban-dwelling related to, but not necessarily effected by, residency. Mayol writes, "[f]aced with the totality of the city," inhabitants are "obstructed by codes that the dweller has not mastered but that he or she must assimilate in order to live there" as well as "a configuration of places imposed by urban planning" and "the social unevenness inside urban space" (Mayol, 1998a, p. 10). He addresses the same totalising urban structure to which Massey (2005) later so vehemently objects, whilst also delving into the mechanics and various regulatory practices that places and spaces involve. For instance, in the same way as a native would know to drive on the left hand side of road and would consider it polite to hold the door open for someone, the city is, too, bound by practices of conformity: ontologies that decide who is who, where they go, how, and to what end. The existence of these regulatory practices is covertly signposted during the episodes in which Z converses with London's locals, including her language school teacher whom she incorrectly addresses as "Mrs Margaret" despite protest and correction from Margaret herself. Whilst the exchanges between the women typically refer to standard Western codes of practice

(such as rules of politeness) and Z's failure to assimilate them (*Concise,* p. 36-7), they come to represent the broader spatial systems by which London lives and breathes and, moreover, the various criteria of belonging that Z cannot help but not fill.

On her first night away from home (China) which she spends at Nunnington House, the narrator goes for a walk. Although it is said that the hostel is situated "in Brown Street, nearby Edward Road and Baker Street" (*Concise*, p. 12) and even that Z "write[s] all the names careful in notebook [sic]" (ibid, p. 12), geographically locating the hostel in London is somewhat difficult. The streets noted by Z do not naturally correspond with extant cartographies of the city and it is not clear whether she has mistakenly called the more appropriately positioned Edgware Road, Edward Road.[10] These early details underline the foreignness of London – its cartography and its spatial codes – to Z in preparation for the walk she subsequently takes which, in particular, unsettles her preconceived ideas of the city. Indeed, heavily reliant on the teachings of her childhood – that "everybody in West has social security and medical insurance" (*Concise*, p. 14) and, with respect to London specifically, that Buckingham Palace, the "Big Stupid Clock" (ibid, p. 14) and the "Spicy Girls" (ibid, p. 14) ought to be more prominent – the protagonist's short walk in the city confounds and frightens her.

> I scared by cars because they seems coming from any possible directing. I scared by long hair black man passing because I think he beating me up just like in films. [...] Walking around like a ghost, I see two rough mans in corner suspicionly smoke and exchange something. Ill-legal, I have to run... [sic] (*Concise*, p. 13-4)

Z's unfamiliarity with the capital means that she does not, at first, perceive the danger of walking in central London alone at night – particularly as a young female. The walk causes her to confront not only her reality as "a ghost" (*Concise*, p. 14) – that is, someone whose

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[10] For that reason, the location of Nunnington House on the GIS map which appears in the appendices is approximated.

corporeality and agency is under threat – but also her preconceptions about what living in London would be like.

In fact, though the protagonist's understanding of English gradually improves – reaching near fluency toward the end of the novel – her understanding of the city itself is always flawed by the same temporal variable that tests her acquisition of the language. As Mayol continues, urban propriety and the formation of identity and subjectivity more generally each rely on repetition. He writes, "[T]he time factor […] authorizes them [dwellers] to make demands that only habituation allows them to make" (Mayol, 1998b, p. 20). The length of time spent in the city is therefore significant; it represents not only a greater sense of entitlement to London but, equally, more time to master the practices and norms that the city mandates. Time is not on Z's side, however. From the beginning, her temporary situation in the city weakens her right to belong and determines that her integration within London can be only partial. Equipped with only a limited understanding of the language, alongside Chinese cultural codas and the strict instructions of her parents, the narrator therefore continues to find herself in various urban situations which unsettle any momentary illusion that she belongs. What begins with an early episode where she is unable to communicate with a taxi driver culminates in her misunderstanding of "Be my guest" (*Concise*, p. 53), an exchange which leads her to pack up her belongings and take up with a relative stranger, the unnamed male lover.

The man occupies a position as not just Z's lover but her tutor and sole companion. He guides her through vocabulary acquisition, shows her the intricacies and complexities of language, and confidently demonstrates the correct way to inhabit London, effectively impelling the protagonist to follow his lead. The lover's apparent mastery of the city nevertheless ensures that Z remains not just a guest in his home but a guest in London. Under the gaze and supervision of the man and, moreover, charged with a finite stay in the city, the narrator cannot possibly comprehend or conform to the laws and practices the

urban space presents. The names of later chapters map this ultimately flawed journey of assimilation, marking abstract concepts such as "physical work" (Concise, p. 151), "equal" (ibid, p. 173), "identity" (ibid, p. 185), and "anarchist" (ibid, p. 187) as contested terms according to their disparate interpretations by Z and her lover. "Physical work", in particular, is inflected by a variation of the very same argument on which the premise of *Saturday* rests; in the same way as McEwan's novel interrogates ontologies of science and literature, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* exercises a dialogue between the physical and intellectual through the voices of Z and her lover - again, through a spatial lens. While for the man, manual labour is romanticised as a return to "a simple life" (*Concise,* p. 153) – and he has aspirations to relocate to the countryside – Z has long condemned the potential of physicality having been born into China's Communist regime, under the revolution of which intellectualism was censured and punished. The spatial gap between them thus becomes a cultural one that is far less easily bridged and its irresolvability leaves Z unmistakeably outside the capital. Hence, she concludes the chapter: "in this country, I am barbarian, illiterate peasant girl, a face of third world and irresponsible foreigner. An alien from another planet" (*Concise*, p. 154).

Although her linguistic competency has significantly improved by the point at which this argument surfaces, the distance between his and her world (to use Guo's preferred referents for the pair) is nevertheless widened as Z fails to finds a corresponding term that mirrors his words exactly.[11] The argument is purely academic and requires that Z adopt a referential frame with which she has no connection. As she reveals:

> In my hometown, we don't use these two words:
>
> *Physical work/ mental work*

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[11] During an interview, Xiaolu Guo asserts the universalism she strived for in the portrayal of the relationship between Z and her lover. "[If] I could do another draft, I would take out the Z as a name. The whole novel should be she and him [...] The reason I wanted to make them almost nameless, anonymous, is actually because they're one person. They represent a person's two sides and two personalities. I think that sometime [sic] they exchange their identities." (Guo, 2007, np)

All the work is called 除生活 – scavenge the living. (*Concise*, p. 153)

Racheal Gilmour (2012) has suggested that the process of signification is at the heart of the novel, drawing attention to its dictionary form and the linguistic coding of the two central characters. She argues that the relationship between Z and the man reveals "how different truths are suggested by different linguistic systems" (Gilmour, 2012, p. 217) and that, while Z invests in both languages' veracity, her linguistic performance in fact "subvert[s] notions of linguistic stability and purity in favour of a meditation on feminine subjectivity, and creativity, constructed between languages" (ibid, p. 217). Certainly, language as a whole, Z finds, has its limits. It is incapable of either reflecting her world to others (the words, unfamiliar and imprecise) or relaying that world to herself in a way which is meaningful and evokes a sense of belonging. These two insufficiencies can be traced back to the central thesis of the chapter, that is: how the gap between representation and its referent, i.e. the word and the concept or the cartographical and the phenomenological, fosters a disassociation between self and world. Returning more wholly to the semiotics of space and London, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, itself, suggests as much with Z describing London's tube map as a "plate of noodles" (*Concise*, p. 19) in much the same way as *NW*'s Felix Cooper finds himself perplexed by its iconicity.

> He considered the tube map. It did not express his reality. The centre was not 'Oxford Circus' but the bright lights of Kilburn High Road. 'Wimbledon' was the countryside, 'Pimlico' pure science fiction. He put his right index finger over Pimlico's blue bar. It was nowhere. Who lived there? Who even passed through it? (*NW*, p. 163)

Like Leah, during her affective walk on Kilburn High Road, both Felix and Z find that the cartographical serves only to displace their situated being rather than enhance it. The cartographical, the protagonists suggest, wilfully denies the experiential and bears no

relation to the personal affect of living in London. Felix goes as far as to suggest, like Ljungberg (2012) and Wood (2010), that the map's reality is a work of fiction: that London's supposed centre and southern regions are purely of the make-believe. This disconnect, in turn, opposes a sense of belonging to, or in, the city. As the characters' confrontations with London, the city's maps and its language show, spatial experience is a highly subjective phenomenology. The cartographical never exists alone; rather, it requires interpretation and interaction with subjectivities in order to gain the very purchase on space it presupposes.

Turning to the initial proposition of this chapter – that is, the indistinguishability of the cartographical and the phenomenological and, hence, the instability of *space* and *place* – it is the synthesis between the two discourses that is suggested as having the ability to undermine the stability associated with space. If the two exist synchronically rather than diachronically, then it necessarily follows that London is as much an individual, phenomenological experience as it is an organised, *a priori,* cartographical one. Furthermore, a phenomenological experience is not intentional or purposive but compelled by the very practice of inhabitation.

A Carto-phenomenology of London

Jamal Khan's being in space embodies the tension between a cartographical and a phenomenological practice of space as well as highlighting the involuntary evocation of the latter. The reader meets the protagonist and narrator of *Something to Tell You*, Jamal, at a crisis of middle age. Since divorced from the mother of his son, Rafi, Jamal leads a relatively comfortable middle-class life, working as a psychoanalyst and, like many of the characters in Kureishi's previous novels, residing in London's leafy suburbs. As a brief aside, it should be noted that this is – at least in a symbolic sense – both London and not London, and Kureishi is well-known for writing of the borderlands, so to speak. John Clement Ball (1996) most

famously discussed the author's preoccupation with the suburbs, in distinction to the city, though this perceivable tension between the two has since been picked up by a number of scholars of Kureishi's work (see Ball, 1996; Frith, 1997; Childs, 2000). Following Ball's direction and, moreover, the critical assumptions made after the publication of *The Buddha of Suburbia* (2000 [1990]), which is split in two by the chapters 'In the City' and 'In the Suburbs', these arguments have typically been inflected by postcolonial concerns about migration and domicile. However, to a greater extent than *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *Something to Tell You*'s West London suburbs are much more readily identifiable as representing the past, compared with the present of the inner city.

Indeed, not only does Jamal have an affinity with Freudian psychoanalysis but, somewhat uncannily, the narrator also has an unresolved past – the secrets of which threaten to interrupt his present. The novel oscillates between two temporal poles, the "mid-1970s" (*Something*, p. 46) and the present. These axes embody the before and after of his relationship with first love, Ajita, as well as the catalyst of her leave-taking, the moment of her father's death. Understanding her father to have died at the hand of trade unionists, Ajita fears for her safety, leaves for India and, subsequently, makes her home in New York – her departure establishing a temporally dialogic narrative form of before and after. This language of *before* and *after* is borrowed from James Berger who, in his hugely influential book, *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse*, stresses how traumatic events operate as "definitive historical divides, as ruptures, pivots, fulcrums separating what came before from what came after" (Berger, 1999, p. 5). *Something to Tell You* enacts this rupture formally, weaving a composite narrative of traumatic events via recollection and memory as well as retrospection and dialogue as it shifts from past to present.

Whilst the reader learns very early on that Ajita is absent from Jamal's present – the narrator cries out to her at the end of the second chapter, "Oh Ajita, if you are still alive,

where are you now?" (*Something*, p. 41) – the circumstances around her departure, the suspicious death of her father, are not fully revealed until halfway through the novel. As it turns out, it was in fact Jamal and his two friends from university, Wolf and Valentin, that ultimately precipitated Ajita's father's death following her confession to Jamal about her father's prolonged sexual abuse. Despite only wanting to scare the man into submission, the three – Jamal brandishing a knife - cause Ajita's father to suffer a fatal heart attack during the ordeal which, as mentioned, prompts Ajita to reconsider her own safety in the city and leave Jamal and London behind. As the mother of Jamal's son, Josephine, calls time on their relationship in a less abrupt but somewhat familiar way, memories, recollections and even faces from his past resurface with renewed vigour and he is caused to reflect on where he came from, where he is and where he will now go. A coming to terms with the present is thus marked by revisitations to the past and Jamal's cartographical ontology is constantly displaced by his phenomenological input (personal memories of the past).

This interstice of time is therefore mapped onto an interstice of space and, in a less global sense than Berger's imagining of the post-apocalypse but in a nevertheless urgent and affective way, "The writer and the reader must be both places at once, imagining the post-apocalyptic world and then paradoxically 'remembering the world as it was, as it is'" (Berger, 1999, p. 5-6). Thus the narrative effectively creates, and exists in, two Londons – the city as it was in the seventies and eighties, and the city as it is now. Of course, the thirty year gap between the novel's two temporalities is also one marked by rapid urban regeneration, development and enlargement. As Jamal himself reflects "every place is becoming London now, the city stain spreading" (*Something*, p. 18). *Something to Tell You* is therefore as much about physical displacement as it is psychical displacement and the novel's interplay of the cartographical and the phenomenological reflects that.

Neither of the two Londons depicted, corresponding with the mid-1970s and the present, are mere replicas of either the collective imaginaries or maps serving the periods – despite Boyd Tonkin deploring the novel's "lazy rehash of period clichés" (Tonkin, 2008, np) and suggesting its events have a "stagey quality" (ibid, np), and Erica Wagner offering that *Something to Tell You*'s London feels "as if its descriptions have been dragged off the Internet by someone who might never have visited the place" (Wagner, 2008, np). Rather, as will be underlined, topographical references made reflect the idiosyncrasies of the first-person narration and the cities are, as result, particular to Jamal's past and present experiences. Attending to both Tonkin's and Wagner's decidedly critical comments, there is no doubt that *Something to Tell You* is acutely aware of its location and, in many respects, the novel *is* highly cartographical. Wagner is right, for instance, to draw attention to the number of London-specific places and events to which Jamal makes reference, true for both temporalities (Fig. 5). Jamal enjoys a Stone Roses gig at Earls Court; has lunches and dinners at various well-known locations including Fortnum & Mason, the Royal Academy of Arts and The Ivy; and the Groucho Club was he and ex-girlfriend, Karen's favourite haunt. The points are, however, imbued with a more nuanced or phenomenological trajectory – most prominently a sensate trajectory of the past.

Whilst Jamal takes time to differentiate between the temporalities and their corresponding spaces in order to assert his presence or situatedness, Londons of past and present continually intertwine over the course of the narrative – threatening the narrator's situatedness and drawing attention to the city's amorphousness.[12] Unlike Henry Perowne in *Saturday*, Jamal therefore finds little comfort in the physical, material things that constitute the city, finding instead that their substantiality – or lack thereof – only accentuates the dwindling of his own materiality or corporeality. London becomes not an objective reality

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[12] The GIS map created (which appears in the appendices) mirrors the distinction Jamal reinforces between past and present, coding present spaces orange and past spaces brown despite recognising the arbitrariness of such a distinction.

into which the narrator can insert himself but a city tied to the past – Jamal's personal experience of the past. An interaction with cartography is therefore always inherently phenomenological.

Jamal's relatively limited mobility directly confronts this tension between past and present, the cartographical and the phenomenological, permitting Jamal no objective distance from which to view the city cartographically.[13] His revisitations to past streets, houses, bars and restaurants, in particular, cause him to confront the condition of his own ageing, each place having acquired a symbolic, since effaced, memory of before. He catches up with Ajita over dinner, for instance, approximately less than four hundred metres away from the pub where, thirty years earlier, he, Wolf and Valentin spent the takings from what was to be their last burglary (Fig. 6). The episode, during which the three take an assortment of goods from an old couple's house behind Ajita's home, occurs immediately before Ajita tells Jamal the truth about her father raping her – the catalyst for what becomes her father's murder. Likewise, Jamal reveals that Wolf used to play tennis at Brook Green courts, "not far" from where lives and where he now takes Rafi for tennis lessons (*Something*, p. 59-60). The present is reduced primarily to signify confrontations with the past though it provides little in the way of catharsis for Jamal who, himself, surmises:

> I have lived on the same page of the A-Z all of my adult life. I liked to stroll around the tennis courts like the other workers. This area, between Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush, I heard once described as 'a roundabout surrounded by misery'. (*Something*, p. 13)

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[13] In this respect, the enormous spread depicted on the GIS map which appears in the appendices is to some extent deceptive of the narrator's narrow spatial perception as it portrays places only fleeting mentioned or briefly frequently in the same manner as those in which Jamal spends most time.

If *misery* stands as a metaphor for the past then Jamal is certainly surrounded by it. It intrudes on his present and, by remaining in the same four square kilometres of London (Fig. 7), Jamal only increases the significance of Ajita's father's murder, as well as the sense that he no longer belongs.

His fixed locum, "between Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush" (*Something*, p. 13), is nevertheless unrepresentative of the relative social, political or psychical distance travelled. As *NW*'s Leah stresses when she points out her birthplace to Shar – across the road, "[t]wo floors up, one window across" (*NW*, p. 12) – "From there to here, [is] a journey longer than it looks" (ibid, p. 12). The language of the cartographical cannot account for this discrepancy between spatial and social journeys – arguably the central theme of *Something to Tell You*. The interjection of the phenomenological within Jamal's cartographical experience marks the lack on the part of the latter, drawing attention to the inseparability of the two discourses and making clear the personal, social and political act that is living in London. *Something to Tell You* therefore resists "the longstanding tendency to tame the spatial into the textual" (Massey, 2005, p. 54) by demonstrating the polysemy of the city and how spaces are constantly injected with meaning by their dwellers.

In the same theme of injecting spaces with meaning, it is important to highlight that neither *Saturday* nor *A Concise-Chinese English Dictionary for Lovers* rely exclusively on the cartographical for the construction of their respective Londons. Certainly, Perowne regularly refers to the cartographical but is it his *appropriation of the cartographical* – that is to say, his carto-phenomenology – that ultimately affords him the security he derives from cartography. This can be seen most clearly during Perowne's drive back from his squash game with Jay Strauss during which he appraises the personal, affective value of several nearby streets before passing by the Chinese Embassy. At the sight of "a Falun Gong couple keeping vigil across the road" (*Saturday*, p. 123), a knowledge of the Chinese Communist

Party and their persecution of Falun Gong is stirred in him. However, no sooner has he condemned the Party's actions as outrageous and ultimately futile, than "the embassy with its sinister array of roof aerials is behind him" (ibid, p. 123) – replaced with the "private clinics and chintzy waiting rooms with bow-legged reproduction furniture and *Country Life* magazines" to the west (ibid, p. 123). Grounded in the cartographical though his responses to Goodge and Charlotte Street, to Portland Place, and the medical district to the west, in turn, may be, his descriptions feature an excess that can be located within the phenomenological. Moreover, it is his personal drive through London – his selected route and the haste with which he navigates the city's streets – that allows him to pass personal judgement over the communist regime, the private healthcare sector and, later, the three women wearing burkas on Devonshire Place without reprise or consequence. As Root corroborates, Henry maintains "a strange kind of passivity", behaving "as though observation were incompatible with action" (Root, 2009, p. 66). His mobility and his agency – his phenomenology – endow the cartographical with meaning; the cartographical proffers him his mobility and manifests his agency.

Unable to derive either mobility or agency from the cartographical, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*' Z phenomenology takes rather a different form. As a subject who is largely obscured by rules, customs and her male lover, it is appropriate that Z should find her agency in sex and female sexuality. Much of the intercourse depicted between Z and her lover is highly problematic, featuring him as the characteristically dominant male and reducing her to passive, "small object" (*Concise*, p. 131) – his "colony" (ibid, p. 132). When she eventually explores her sexuality by herself, however, she becomes more than either "a wooden house" (*Concise*, p. 68) suffering a storm, or a "nail" (ibid, p. 68) being hammered into a wall (as she describes herself during intercourse with the man). Indeed, it is largely outside the bedroom of her lover's Hackney home that Z takes ownership of her sexuality and, equally and as result, takes ownership of her spatiality. The episode 'prostitute' – in

which Z travels to Charing Cross and, later, Berwick Street – reflects Z's exploration of female sexuality most clearly whilst also exposing the relationship between such a reclamation of agency and spatial practices (specifically the act of walking). Actively watching a peep show, even returning the same day with more money, Z reclaims her sexuality and her independence from both the man and cartographical convention that says that The Red Light District is not the place of female observers. In stark contrast to the description she offers of herself during sex, she likens one female performer's body to "a ceremony, a power station, a light house [sic]" (*Concise*, p. 139). And whilst in Tavira, Portugal, it is this memory that is recalled as she masturbates for the first time and delivers herself an orgasm as she lays atop the roof of her hotel "in semi-public" (*Concise,* p. 244) as the cited book, *Women's Pleasure or How to Have An Orgasm As Often As You Want* advises her. Her climax comes with the conclusion, "I can be on my own. I can rely on myself, without depending on a man," (ibid, p. 245), a declarative which reinstates not only Z's ownership of her sexuality but, furthermore, her ability to move through space and belong in space without her lover. As a result of her own personal journeys through London and the time spent alone in Europe, she comes upon an alternative way to be and comes to recognise the value of her own personal carto-phenomenology.

Female sexuality and its articulation are important themes in *NW* too and, as in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, the two strands are shown to have an intimate relationship with space. Leah and, most notably, Natalie, seek to redefine their sexuality – both finding themselves confined by notions of home, and the heterosexuality and nuclear family that, respectively, home represents. Indeed, if London can be said to give rise to a range of spatial experiences and, moreover, that those personal experiences shape the form of the organising structure that is the city itself, then Zadie Smith's *NW* works hard to capture the totality of the city and the multiplicity of subjectivities whilst always holding at arm's length any sense of completeness or finality.

We join the cast of NW in the same geographical location as Smith's stand-out novel, *White Teeth*: London's north-westerly outskirts in and around the London Borough of Brent. Aside from the middle section, 'Guest', during which the reader is diverted to central London to follow Felix in his final hours, and Natalie's early memories of training to be a lawyer, the narrative is almost exclusively centred on Willesden, neighbouring Kilburn and Smith's fictional Caldwell estate. Directed by spatial and temporal dynamics, *NW* comprises a series of fragments and each, it is revealed, orients around the night of Felix's murder as the four narrators relocate the reader to moments leading up to, and finally after, the event. Unlike *Something to Tell You* which reveals its secrets (however delayed their revelation may be), his death remains a lacuna. Even with the resolve of Natalie at the end to tell the police all she knows (or guesses) about the stabbing, the particular temporality of Felix's murder is never fully played out, reflecting the abrupt end of his life. As Wells has argued, "the emphasis is on the withholding of information while foregrounding experimental modes of writing as if almost to distract the reader" (Wells, 2013, p. 98). Indeed, *NW*'s technic lends itself well to keeping secrets; the multiple narrators and varied narrative styles prevent the reader from gaining access to either the complete story or a total picture of London. We as readers are privy to "the contemporaneous existence of plurality of trajectories; a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey, 2005, p. 12) whilst paradoxically being grounded in the particular moment (and technic) in which the characters are invested. The novel puts forward "a new kind of mimesis" (Knepper, 2013, p. 113) that invests in "felt and lived experience" (ibid, p. 113) and "prompts its readers to remap known relations to place and explore the contested production of localities in a globalizing world" (ibid, p. 116).

Despite sharing with Kureishi's novel a cartography remote from central (hegemonic) London, there are significant inconsistencies between the experiences of their respective

protagonists. When we temporarily re-join *Something to Tell You*'s Jamal in the present, for instance, he calls attention to the routine racism faced by his sister, Miriam.

> …political parties on the Right were well supported. Muslims, who were attacked often on the street, and whose fortunes rose and fell according to the daily news were their target.[14] (*Something*, p. 20)

Less than three miles away, the Willesden and Kilburn suburbs around which Smith's novel centres, meanwhile, are flagged as multicultural hives where no such persecution exists – at least not in respect of the ethnic body. Ethnic minorities are, here, the majority and, in Smith's corner of London, it is whiteness that is marked as both different and other. This is made obtrusively clear by the racial demographic at Leah's workplace and the sense of non-belonging fostered by colleagues. Her relationship with Michel – a black, African hairdresser – prompts much consternation from the all black Fund Distribution Team. As she recalls of a team-building excursion back in 2004, in the voice of a colleague:

> no offence, but for the women in our community, in the Afro-Caribbean community, no offence but when see one of our lot with someone like you, it's a real issue. It's just a real issue you should be aware of. No offence. (*NW*, p. 34)

Smith's sharp, perceptive use of free direct speech expresses the complexities of racial tension in the contemporary moment of so-called liberalism and political correctness. Even when one of the female staff on the Fund Distribution Team makes a final remark that recalls the hardships of black slavery, it is tempered by a comedic reference to contemporary culture. As the clock shows 5pm, marking the end of the day, she borrows the phrase

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[14] Jamal also provides a nuanced commentary on how racism has changed or, at least, how the discourse of racism has changed. As Jamal returns to memories of his grandfather in the mid-seventies, he recalls the various rhetorics called upon in order to frame the migrant identity. "Most whites consider Asians to be 'inferior', less intelligent, less everything good. Not that we were called Asians then. Officially, as it were, we were called immigrants, I think. Later, for political reasons, we were 'blacks'. But we always considered ourselves to be Indians. In Britain we are still called Asians, though we're no more Asian than the British are European. It was a long time before we became known as Muslims, a new imprimatur, and then for political reasons" (*Something,* p. 55).

"Quittin' time!" (*NW*, p. 37) from the film adaptation of *Gone With The Wind* (1939). As is revealed, the relationship between Leah and the women "[f]rom St Kitts, Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, India, [and] Pakistan" (ibid, p. 37) is not one that rests on arguments of either privilege or disgust but, instead, revolves around the black women's sexual right to a "good brother" (ibid, p. 36). Through the string of unattributed quips that follow Leah's initial memory, the women outwardly express their envy of Leah and, in particular her marriage to "lovely", "sensitive" and "professional" Michel (ibid, p. 36). Trajectories of femininity and race therefore begin to intertwine; racial discourse is understood in feminine terms, femininity is viewed through an ethnic lens and, as a result, their co-production is revealed.

Under such constraints, negotiating the terms of identity becomes increasingly difficult. As Zapata suggests, the colliding trajectories of "race, gender, and sexuality [...] disclose the interconnection of oppressing discourses present in the formation of subjects currently *living under* the influence of neocolonial and neoimperialist discourses." (Zapata, 2014, p. 87; emphasis added). In her essay, '"In Drag": Performativity and Authenticity in Zadie Smith's NW', Zapata principally addresses the idea of *becoming subject* in Braidotti's terms though, in doing so, she also alludes to the effects of space on both subjectivity and agency. Because while she never attempts to theorise the metropolis within the inter-relatedness she supposes between hegemonies of race, gender and sexuality, the image of *living under* nevertheless imbues her argument with a highly cartographic quality. Produced as a white, female subject and thus identifiably *other*, Leah's sense of belonging is always contested – at work and at home in Willesden more generally. She is subordinate to, *beneath*, the black majority.

Not only does Leah *live under* metropolitan hegemonies of race, class and gender, but, as a result, she also *lives under* the radar. Alongside being perceived as *other* because of her

whiteness, as a thirty-something woman, she also finds herself subject to essentialist notions of femininity and the stipulation of motherhood. As mothers, the women with whom she works "have some shared knowledge of their sex to which Leah is not party" (*NW*, p. 34-35); they speak in a way "in which no voice is separated from the other" (ibid, p. 35) and, in turn, she is dislocated from the symbolic space of the feminine or sexual. She is thus restricted as to where she is able to self-signify spatially, if at all. And whilst her marriage to Michel "pleased [her mother] Pauline" (*NW*, p. 23) and is sexually gratifying, Leah admits (in the course of her stream-of-consciousness narration) that it was perhaps simply "the occasion of their friendship" (ibid, p. 23). Whether the platonic love Leah has for husband can be traced back to her experimental, lesbian youth and continued interest in women is never fully explained. Leah nevertheless continues to take Natalie's contraceptive medication secretly while Michel, blissfully unaware, suggests they might have more luck if only they heeded her menstrual cycles more diligently.

The novel's standpoint on motherhood remains resolutely and purposefully opaque. Leah is neither set against having children nor biding her time until she is, what Western society describes as, 'ready'. Her neither-nor politics places her at the interstices between not just ideas around femininity but theories of subjectivity more broadly. Author, Zadie Smith, has talked at length about the recurring theme of ambivalence, asserting of the theme of motherhood:

> I found, I think, a very common experience in women of my generation who, at one in same time, absolutely want children and absolutely don't want them. In the same breath; in the same moment. It's same feeling, split in two. (Louisiana Channel, 2013, np)

Both Leah's aspirations and obligations are split between what is normal or expected and what is of the self. She, like Z, faces a dilemma concerning the price of assimilation in London and, whilst her hesitation renders her somewhat abject (again like Z), she is able to engage with the phenomenological and reassert her agency. In Leah's case, this amounts to the opportunity to act ethically. Of all the novel's central characters, she is, by far, the most ethically-minded, as seen in both her philosophical reflections and her treatment of Shar. Following their first encounter, during which Shar cons her out of thirty pounds, Leah continually seeks out the fallen-on-hard-times local and experiences a worldly love and responsibility, as well as underlying sexual affection for her. From the girl's first entrance, after which Leah's chapter *Visitation* is named, Shar is described in terms that foreground her otherness. She is "the stranger" (*NW,* p. 5): unkempt and malnourished yet frantic in a way which moves Leah to action. Because despite hammering the door as a "stranger" (ibid, p. 5), when she crosses the threshold of Leah's flat, Shar becomes less easy to distinguish from the self. The two women are "the same age" (ibid, p. 5); both "went Brayton [sic]" (ibid, p. 9), the local school; and Leah confides in only her about the pregnancy. On letting her in, the stranger thus becomes "her guest" (ibid, p. 8) and, walls – like identities – are revealed as unstable constructs, the realities of which require constant mediation.

According to Stephenson and Zanotti, walls and boundaries "are powerful constructs that, while fixing meaning and demarcation, also function as ambiguous spaces whose social meanings are contested and around which political agents may coalesce to bring about change" (Stephenson and Zanotti, 2013, p. 7). In this case, the doorway is a pivot on which ethical action rests. As Leah releases the chain on the door and becomes the first and only resident to permit Shar entry, she defies cartographical convention. She effectively joins public and private sphere by committing a transgressive political act of citizenship, however misplaced. For Shar's story of a sick mother in hospital is revealed to be just that, a story, and during later encounters between them, Leah is vilified for trying to help. The protagonist

nevertheless remains undeterred and, having instigated Shar's crossing from exile to native by inviting her into her home, Leah remains emotionally moved. She commits to an act of citizenship – something which Braidotti describes as an action that "intervenes in the public sphere to remind the public sphere of some basic issues that they are forgetting" (OecumeneVideo, 2013, np) – and subjects both Shar and herself to an irreversible transformation. In the same breath as intrusion is renegotiated as sanctuary, Leah as an embodied subject undergoes a radical break or a flight to ethics. If "[n]omadism [...] is about becoming situated, speaking from somewhere specific and hence well aware of and accountable for particular locations" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 15), Leah's actions are to nomadic end. She is not only "faithful in her allegiance to this two-mile square of the city" (*NW*, p. 6), but holds herself accountable, refusing to understand as Michel does, or Natalie says, that "people generally get what they deserve" (ibid, p. 332).

Indeed, although all four protagonists occupy the same *place*, the cartographical region of Kilburn and Willesden, Smith's four protagonists do not share the same *space* – either socially, politically or emotionally – and *NW*'s polyvocal narrative form brings to light the inherent pluralism of inhabiting London. The complementary chapter titles (*Visitation*, *Guest*, *Host*, *Crossing* and *Visitation*), themselves, play on the Derridean différance of parallax and demand that the reader acknowledges not only the multiple subject positions available in the city but, equally, how the city itself changes according to those different discursive and experiential sites. Over the course of the narrative, the reader is caused to live and re-live the specificities of North West London's temporal and spatial rhythms as well as the polysemy of spatial referents as they are invoked by the modulation of each episode's respective protagonist. As a result, the situation of inhabiting the city becomes difficult to define, even more so to understand as a whole. In fact, the biggest "secret" (Well, 2013) that *NW* holds on to is the notion of London. The novel's very refusal to present a unified narrative of the city, from which a definite urban form can be derived, defies the *a priori*

imaginary of London presented by cartography. Zadie Smith's London hence provides the ground on which to further Braidotti's nomadic project; with a shifting perspective, the novel enacts "not just mere deconstruction, but the relocation of identities on new grounds that account for multiple belongings" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 10).

Concluding Thoughts

A deconstruction of London and what London represents as, first and foremost, a home but equally a symbol, a world city, a cartography, a social and a political site, and a name under which sit various expectations, conventions and regulations is enacted by all four novels. *Saturday*, *Something to Tell You*, *NW* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* each invoke highly specific accounts of the city and, in doing so, they confront hegemonic ideas surrounding the city, identity and belonging that are both implicit and enforced as part of London's ongoing production. Though the texts all refer in part to the shared socio-politics of the contemporary moment (and how those politics are experienced, and often amplified, within the capital) – terrorism, multiculturalism, racism, gentrification and poverty, and migration respectively – they do so with an emphasis on the personal, the phenomenological, that prevents them from contributing to a collective urban politics. London's politics is complicated, the novels conclude, and notions of home and belonging are differently experienced amongst all inhabitants and, as well, vary from moment to moment, place to place.

The novels' personal recapitulations of the city come not as a result of neglecting either cartography (which has been shown to have potentially universalising effects) or London's own acute cartographical standing but via the appropriation of the cartographical in ways which are attentive to its form, its production, its possibilities and its limits. Indeed, through an analysis of the novels' employment of cartography, the projection of London provided by maps has been revealed as partial and potentially problematic. Whether obscuring the

continuity and contingency of the city as in *Saturday*, denying London's memory and temporality as in *Something to Tell You*, suppressing whole locales, wholes lives and inhabitants' togetherness as in *NW*, or determining the suitability of subjects (deeming them appropriate and therefore able to appropriate) and where they might act as agents as in the case of Z in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lover's*, the cartographical has been shown to possess both a latent power and a latent invalidity. Of course, as has also been recognised, this potential and this insufficiency is only realised through inhabitants' own practice of space – by the reading and interpretation of maps, signs or otherwise and by adherence or defiance (whether purposeful or not).

Most critically then, the cartographical and the phenomenological enjoy a contingent relationship; cartography requires agential practice and, likewise, practicing space phenomenologically requires some knowledge of the city's propriety. The co-dependency of these two discourses means that neither represents stable or reliable effects. Certainly, the cartographical can offer security and safety but, equally and as a result, it can be exclusionary and deprive inhabitants of home, belonging and agency. The phenomenological, meanwhile, can be the cartographical's empowering antithesis – inviting agential and ethical action. In turn, however, practicing space phenomenologically can come with the risk of abjection. With the threat of disembodiment in mind, we have also seen how the phenomenological can be articulated in way which performs and hence reinstates the regulatory mechanisms of cartography.

The inherently inconsistent effects of both the cartographical and the phenomenological render making home in the city a contested and ongoing cause. As all four novels demonstrate, spaces require interaction for meaning and, likewise, rely on reiteration for the ratification of laws of propriety. The co-dependency of the phenomenological and the cartographical exposes the co-dependency of self and world. In the context of London and

the four contemporary novels, these mutualit*ies* render the urban space unstable and, in turn, grant inhabitants the possibility and the potential to re-define both their sense of self and that space which they call home.

The Poetics of the City: London as a Palimpsest

> The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back *from the supplement to the source*: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source.
>
> Jacques Derrida, 'From/Of the Supplement to the Source', *Of Grammatology*

What have been considered, thus far, are the discourses and practices contributing to the production of London as a text as well as the place of individuals' own practices and experiences of the city in relation to the creation of an urban politics. Through the framework of the cartographical and the phenomenological, the notion of spatial belonging has been revealed as an unstable and contested term, and one which not only depends on individuals' agential action but is, furthermore, motivated and influenced by the spatial practices of others. Despite reflecting on the concurrence of discourses and experiences centred on the city in order to expose London to its own heterogeneity, the importance of London as a textual site – and therefore pertaining to a simultaneous and ultimately contingent spatiality – has yet to be properly acknowledged. According to celebrated contemporary author of the city, Peter Ackroyd, the city's labyrinthine temporality is

amongst its most significant attributes (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 2); in accordance, he provides not a history of London but *London: The Biography* – an achronological, bodily account of the city's becoming. Indeed, the city is not only constituted by a *synchronic* co-existence of discourses but is, in fact, defined by its retention of *earlier* texts or events *prior* (a fraction of which came to light during the introduction). Thus this chapter considers London as a palimpsest; it seeks to attend to the city's diffractive temporality and, furthermore, the way in which each of the four novels acknowledge the simultaneity of times and discourses which at once define the capital's contemporary condition and, in turn, which shape their narratives.

Whilst De Certeau and Giard's understanding of the city as a "stage" on which takes place "a war of narratives" (De Certeau and Giard, 1998, p. 143) problematically re-situates space as a vessel in which actions take place – rather than being understood as something constituted by those very actions and their agents – the sense of conflict and simultaneity evoked by such an assertion is nevertheless a useful starting point from which to begin a more complex analysis of the interaction between space and time and, henceforth, explore London's palimpsestuousness.[15] At one in the same time as trajectories of the present collide, London conjures both shared and personal memories of its past. The term 'memory' is perhaps imprecise; these trajectories are both real and imagined, literary, vernacular and political in nature. It is these particular textual memories and, specifically, the intersections and translocation of these memories, which this chapter aims to explore. Such encounters, it will be suggested, disturb the notion of space as a container or, at the very least, demonstrate the limits of such thinking, because what London 'holds', it has no command over and thus what constitutes the city and its spatial experiences is always at stake.

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[15] The term "palimpsestuousness" was first coined by Sarah Dillon (2005).

Haunted Houses and Spooked Streets

It is nothing new to describe London as an old city nor is it, paradoxically, original to call London new or youthful. Certainly, it has history; although the relevance of that history seems to periodically fade from view, obscured a little more with the welcoming of each new skyscraper, each new government and each new populace. According to Phillips, "the newness of much of the city exists in tension with a prevailing sense of the city's age that has embedded a contradiction at the heart of the image of the city" (Philips, 2006, p. 2). At the centre of this contradiction – this urban temporal ambivalence – is architecture and the materiality of the city itself. Over the course of their essay, 'Ghosts in the City', using an architectural analogy, De Certeau and Giard (1998) draw attention to the ways in which the urban space is, at once, an accumulation of the past and a projection of the future, resulting in a present which is ambivalent: temporally and spatially unsettled. According to the pair, the remains of past buildings "burst forth within the modernist, massive, homogenous city like slips of the tongue from an unknown, perhaps unconscious language" (De Certeau and Giard, 1998, p. 133). In terms of the capital, the presence of London's history (such as the Tower of London and old Victorian terraces) and, furthermore, the pressure to remember London's history (via The Cenotaph and Nelson's Column for example) prevents the city from having a linear temporality. London's unique bricolage of architecture is thus both a cause and a symptom of its temporal contingency, signalling the city's maturity and newness.

This sense of architectural haunting is dealt with explicitly by *Something to Tell You*. Beyond the act of visiting and revisiting past places which, in itself, foregrounds London's peculiar temporal ambivalence, Jamal also enunciates present spaces in the context of the past. Not only has 'Highbury' since become the Emirates Stadium, but so too have the Sunday Times headquarters, the Astoria music venue and The Three Tuns pub referenced in the novel been demolished, re-purposed or redeveloped (Fig. 8). Making reference to 'Highbury', the Astoria and the Sunday Times headquarters, closed in 2006, 2009 and 2012 respectively, serves to

draws attention to Jamal's – and indeed the novel's – temporal interiority. Their invocation highlights the frequency with which the narrator is compelled to return to the past in order to resolve present spaces as well as marking London's accelerated development. Moreover, whilst in the two passages in which the Astoria and the Sunday Times headquarters are cited, Jamal is referring to an earlier temporal moment (not quite the mid-to-late seventies of his youth but somewhat before the present spatio-temporal context of his recount), the subsequent closure or re-purposing of the buildings further accentuates the city's transience and temporal condition. It is here that the reader's own location plays a crucial role in the defining of *Something to Tell You*'s past and present spaces, effectively contributing to the temporal displacement manipulated by the novel's dialogic temporality. This appeal to the hermeneutic sphere in most acute in the case of Kureishi's involuntary resurrection of The Three Tuns. The re-purposing of the pub at which David Bowie regularly performed took place some years after Kureishi's novel was published: after a brief name change to The Rat and Parrot, The Three Tuns finally became a Zizzi's (an Italian restaurant franchise) in May 2011. This spatial irony produced in the wake of the novel's publication requires that the reader hold in mind two ontological and, indeed, temporal frames at once (providing the reader knows the changes of usage that have occurred) and, moreover, at the slippage or fusion of those frames, is forced to concede London's palimpsestuousness.

In Jamal's unwillingness or inability to hermetically seal the past from the present, as well as the imperfect nature of the novel's own sealed temporality, London becomes a space in which temporal trajectories – real and imagined – are constantly colliding, neither displaced nor utterly obliterated. This process of reprisal interrupts a vision of the city as a discrete entity. London is eternally lived and re-lived; it is a palimpsest in which shadows of pasts and others return to walk side-by-side in a temporally-conditioned (yet ambivalent) present(s). These "ghosts" of London(s)'s past threaten the fabric of the contemporary city,

"creating bumps on the smooth utopias" (De Certeau, 1998, p. 133), and thus demanding a reconceptualisation of the city's staticity.

The materiality of space is doubtless responsible for a part of London's temporal ambivalence and, in accordance, is employed by three of the four texts in a temporally unsettling way. These are novels of the perfect and pluperfect tense; in many ways, they derive their location in the negative, i.e. differentiating themselves from where and when they are not. For Henry Perowne in *Saturday* it remains important to make the distinction between temporalities of past and present, and to deny London's effaced existence or *being-spectral* in Wolfreys' terms. To live in the present, in the same way as it is to live in the private space of home and the familiar streets surrounding his home, is – for Perowne – a way of rationalising the impending trauma of Britain's going-to-war. Via practices of temporal and spatial location, Perowne is able to sure up his "own corner" (*Saturday*, p. 5) and, literally and symbolically, able to prevent the intrusion of others and otherness.[16]

At the first recalling of the Paddington rail crash, taking place on October 5th 1995, Perowne maintains a clinical distance from events, dedicating no more than a phrase to the traumatic event. This emotional and temporal stoicism is not to remain however and, following Baxter's interruption into, first, the personal sphere and, later, the private, domestic sphere of home, Perowne's temporal presence is dislodged. As the distinction between outside and inside is abruptly rendered uncertain, arbitrary even, trajectories of the past – relating to both himself and London – infiltrate his usually narrow cognitive tract. Thus when he looks out of the window onto the London beyond in the closing pages, or at least "his small part of it" (*Saturday*, p. 276), he no longer sees either those arbitrary dividing lines separating spaces, temporalities, and the realm of public and private concern which he invoked at

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[16] For examples of Perowne's reliance on architecture as a source of stability, return to page 30 of 'Reading Cartographically' in *The Politics of Living in the City.*

beginning and so determinedly guarded throughout the narrative. The Paddington disaster surfaces once more; this time it is not only more thoroughly reflected upon but also forms an important moment around which Perowne considers London's present and future, finally addressing his and contemporary society's fear of terrorism.

> Rush hour will be a convenient time. It might resemble the Paddington crash – twisted rails, buckled, upraised commuter coaches, stretchers handed out through broken windows, the hospital's Emergency Plan in action. Berlin, Paris, Lisbon. The authorities agree, an attack's inevitable. He lives in different times – because the newspapers say so doesn't mean it isn't true. But from the top of his day, this a future that's harder to read, a horizon indistinct with possibilities. (*Saturday,* p. 276)

The asydentic list produces a series of fragmented images, the particular temporality of which is unclear. Appearing without deictic articles that would tie them to the historic or contemporary moment, the images serve dialogically as both a memory of the Paddington rail crash and a prophecy of events to come. And so, when Perowne reflects that "[h]e lives in different times" (*Saturday,* p. 276), he is as much aligning with a phenomenological experience of space as a palimpsest of temporal trajectories, as he is passing judgement over the very fragility of the contemporary moment in relation to the past. As Groes has commented of Ian McEwan's work in general, the reader is provided with "a more intricate and profoundly disturbing engagement with [...] the historical dimension of the contemporary" (Groes, 2009, p. 8).

Though Z of *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* has no such personal histories or past traumas located in London to draw upon nor a knowledge of that city that would allow her to make connections between the places she visits and the capital's own heritage, Zadie Smith's *NW* exhibits a similar preoccupation with the past and draws similar

conclusions to *Something to Tell You* and *Saturday* as to its significance to the present. Not only does the novel place past and present cheek-by-jowl via its peculiar, achronological form but, like the two novels previous, *NW* continually returns, whether physically or discursively, to places from the intratextual past. Leah Hanwell's mother, Pauline, anchors her history and her desperation to Grafton Street, Dublin and Buckley Road, Willesden (*NW*, p. 16): the streets – despite inevitable change since Pauline's poverty – retain her personal, anecdotal past. Vijay India Restaurant acquires a similar temporal ambivalence. Following the death of Leah's father, Colin, the restaurant – where "on special occasions, he took his little family" (*NW*, p. 85) – occupies a space in both past and present, functioning as a reminder of her father and a reminder of his death. Places such as Kilburn High Road and Kilburn Underground Station meanwhile are haunted by more recent history still; visited or mentioned by Leah, Felix, Nathan and Natalie, they hold traces of each protagonist and their respective journeys (symbolic or literal). By the time Leah reaches Kilburn High Road and considers the ill fate of black men there (*NW*, p. 81), for instance, it has already been walked by Keisha and her mother with younger brother, Jayden in tow as they go, as children, to get their feet measured for new shoes (ibid, p. 173). Felix's brother, Devon, has also already left his mark on Kilburn High Road and, back in the present, is serving a prison sentence for armed robbery of Khandi's Gem Express and Jewellery (a seemingly fictional store, located on the high road) (ibid, p. 165). And, of course, these events all took place before Pauline's early recollections of Kilburn High Road – the road, for her, being a reminder of her emigration from Dublin (ibid, p. 17).

Though, upon Natalie's return to Kilburn High Road as an established young woman, she remembers none of these histories and, indeed, many she has no ability to recall – their not being her own and all – there is nonetheless an acknowledgment on the part of the author both that these pasts remain and are significant, and that they reside on Kilburn High Road. As Natalie wanders down the road and recognises the plurality of London's populace, she is

impelled toward "a strong desire to slip into the lives of others" (*NW*, p. 279). This urge can be traced back to her own insubstantial identity: her struggle to articulate herself in way that doesn't encroach on the contradictory selves which been carved out for her by her ethnicity, her mother, her sister and, in some respects, Leah, her husband, and her job. That this compulsion "to know people" (ibid, p. 279) and "[t]o be intimately involved with them" (ibid, p. 279) affects her most strongly on Kilburn High Road is indicative of the road's significance within the novel and its centrality amongst *NW*'s characters. Natalie's recognition of not only the heterogeneity of the people before her – Somalis, Russians, Ukrainians – but the place of their personal stories and their histories on the high road functions as synecdoche; for the reader, her response to the urban environment serves as both a reminder and an interaction with the stories foretold by others in spite of Natalie's ignorance of their existence.

Textual Ghostings

Nevertheless, understanding the city as a palimpsest is about much more than either recognising its tangible artefacts or the literal cohabitation of past and present that the urban landscape represents. The haunting that takes place in the novels is largely discursive and reflects London's bountiful, textual history – literary, social and vernacular – and, in turn, the coincidence of texts, stories and lives more broadly. The analysis of *NW*'s architectural haunting started to gesture towards this textual aspect of London's palimpsestuousness but all four novels' employment of intertextuality and the significance of that recurrence needs further exploration. At this point it is helpful to return to the definition of the palimpsest provided by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), bearing in mind the overt citation of the textual that it supplies. The OED defines a palimpsest as:

A parchment or other writing surface on which the original text has been effaced or partially erased, and then overwritten by another; a manuscript in which later writing has been superimposed on earlier (effaced) writing. (OED, 1991)[17]

Implicit in the production or realisation of a palimpsest is its existence within and over time. What defines the palimpsest has little to do with its tangibility and, rather, more to do with how that materiality changes and is affected by time. It is only by engaging with temporality that something's significance can be said to have been "effaced", "erased" or "overwritten" and, furthermore, that another meaning has been "superimposed". London exists as parchment, effacement and effaced parchment. The first conceptualisation provides a useful way of thinking about the city as a topographical place. Like the parchment, cartographical London is a definitive space: both signify completeness in their enclosure as well as independence from either author, reader (or inhabitant), or the external world more broadly. The analogy drawn here is not so far-reaching when one considers how the capital enunciates itself within the context of the global and to outsiders especially. To be presented with and to read a map of the city, for instance, is common practice prior to being physically located within its space. In poetic or literal terms, an understanding of London as a parchment (or text) highlights the ease with which its diversity and interdependency with both inhabitants and other spaces can be overlooked. Compiled and disseminated as it is on a single sheet, the range and significance of the individual characters and words contained are obscured. They are reduced to having a purposive role within the larger text and, in turn, that larger text subsumes its parts.[18]

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[17] Later definitions also extend to account for an object likened to parchment or writing paper "having been reused or altered while still retaining traces of its earlier form; a multilayered record" (OED, 1991)

[18] This process of distortion as it occurs synchronically has been demonstrated by previous discussions on the function of the map as well as the later employment of GIS.

However, textual succession is evitable. As Foucault insists in *The Order of Discourse*, discourses are determined to have a "transitory existence" and one which "is destined to be effaced" (Foucault, 1970, p. 52). The textual or historiographic city is thus unstable, undergoing radical re-imagining or re-enunciation on an ongoing, individual and collective basis. Whilst Foucault (1970) and a number of others who have either explicitly or implicitly dealt with the idea of the palimpsest have drawn attention to the *order* or hierarchy of texts that such an idea appears to promote, it is the simultaneity of discourses theorised by Kristeva (1981) as *intertextuality*, or by Bakhtin (1981), earlier, as *heteroglossia*, that are most fruitful when thinking about the discursive space of London.[19] Although the palimpsest typically evokes a sense of layering, a figuration aided by the vocabulary of overwriting commonly employed to describe its functioning, it is applied here in line with the poststructuralist thought of Bakhtin, Kristeva and, later Derrida – i.e. in way which is more engaged with the trans- or intra-activity of texts.

For Kristeva, as for Bakhtin with the *utterance*, the text is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 36). As a result, polyphony – to use Bakhtin's (1981) term – is at play in any discursive act: the text is at once singular or momentous whilst simultaneously being conditioned by the tenets of its context as well as the processes by which those tenets were codified. As Kristeva highlights then, a text functions dialogically as a singular instance or discursive act and, hence, is both a palimpsest and proleptic intervention amongst texts and textual production. The invocation of the palimpsest to describe London's discursive space is not merely an impasse with which to

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[19] Kristeva's sense of the *intertextual* is produced in the wake of Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* and, whilst the two thinkers differ somewhat in particular emphasis – Kristeva is less concerned with the social aspect of language theorised by Bakhtin and, arguably, more influenced by the dialogic function of language he puts forth in the very same essay, "Discourse in the Novel" – they are widely considered to convene around the same central standpoint: texts are simultaneously discrete entities whilst being bound by the very linguistic, literary, historic, social and cultural codes and texts both that they follow and by which they are followed.

properly introduce intertextuality as the city's primary mode of production however; rather, it draws on the particular temporal strands on which both Kristeva and Bakhtin are already pulling. The sense of a text being contested and complicated by other texts or codes synchronically and diachronically, i.e. *intertextuality*, coheres with the peculiar plurality of the palimpsestuous object and inheres it with a productivity ordinarily lost through the emphasis placed on effacement, rather than resurrection.

Thinking about the palimpsest productively then, the palimpsestuousness of London's intertextuality or the intertextuality of London's palimpsestuousness (to give equal weight to both concepts) has the potential to further disrupt the idea of wholeness or finality attributed to space and, in particular, London. As Massey has stressed of an interaction with time as well as space more generally, the reader or inhabitant is confronted with "the unboundedness and complex internal multiplicity of what we refer to as entities" (Massey, 2001, p. 257-8). Note, here, Massey's use of the word *unboundedness*. For if there is no perceivable point of origin nor a moment at which representation meets reality (and therefore at which textual production ends), then there is necessarily no stable centre from which the nature of the city can be determined. As David Roden summarises:

> [T]he absence of another now cannot be accounted for in terms of the difference
> between a determinate 'now point' and similarly self-identical past 'now' in retention
> – phenomenologically, they are equally indeterminable. (Roden, 2004, p. 95)

It must be stated that Roden's reading of time is an acute interpretation of Jacques Derrida's thinking on the subject/object divide which, according to Derrida (1976), is a myth.

> Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one
> writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than a shadow or

reflection of the represener. [...] In this play of representation, *the point of origin becomes ungraspable*. (Derrida, 1976, p. 36, emphasis added)

Taking the philosophical foundations laid by *Of Grammatology* (1976), Roden replaces *the represented* in Derrida's thought with the conceptual entity of time. Thus when he speaks of *another now*, he is directly addressing the continuity and mutual inflection of past and present to an extent where neither can be independently identified: past and present must always be taken in tandem.[20] Returning to Kristeva's understanding of *intertextuality*, i.e. that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 36), and combining it more forcefully with the temporal aspect of texts and textual production, and London's palimpsestuousness can be fruitfully exposed. And, by all accounts, these are novels that manipulate their proximity – geographically, symbolically, directly and thematically – to other texts and thus which play on the city's intrinsically intertextual, palimpsestuous character.

Whilst it is fair to say that Z, more so than any other protagonist, finds herself silenced – even erased – by the plenitude of competing voices in *Concise*'s London and, as a migrant, perhaps London more broadly, the mechanics of the palimpsest are not quite so simple as to invoke erasure only. As suggested earlier, the erasure which takes place is always incomplete and, beneath the over-written, lie traces of earlier, effaced discourses. London is therefore alive with conflicting discourses at, and from, any given time. Sarah Dillon (2005), like

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[20] A great many of Derrida's ideas have typically been understood to stand in direct contradiction to a phenomenological approach; he deplores the Cartesian idea of an intentional subject and challenges Husserl's idea of absolute autonomy (Roden, 2004). As should now be clear, this is not the phenomenology up for discussion and there is little doubt that the subject is not only interdependent with others and the environment, but is also constantly negotiating his/her identity through interaction. Derrida effectively becomes a de facto proponent of deconstructed phenomenology wherein neither objects, humans, spaces are self-satisfying and all undergo a continual process of un-making and re-making, during which they transform their own significance as well as the material and symbolic relationships they possess with others.

Wolfreys (1998), evokes a suitably ephemeral vocabulary to describe the function of the palimpsest which also, strikingly and usefully, invokes the workings of intertextuality put forth by Kristeva. Making reference to the lingering of a "ghostly trace" (Dillon, 2005, p. 244) and borrowing from De Quincey's (1998 [1845]) original poetic coinage of 'palimpsest', she stresses: "The palimpsest is an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other" (Dillon, 2005, p. 245).

In *Saturday* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, those underlying scripts are, in part, works of fiction themselves, handled, read and appropriated by the protagonists. Interestingly, the novels' protagonists do not come upon such works either by themselves or by accident. They share the presence of a figure who sources and delivers works of fiction: in *Saturday*, Perowne's daughter Daisy proffers canonical texts of her choosing whilst, in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, the anonymous lover also problematically acts as a source of the knowledge for Z – again, handing her novels of his choosing.[21] Of those he selects for her to read, the protagonist overtly cites Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Hanif Kureishi's *Intimacy*. What she infers from each of the books has less to do with their content or the particular themes around which they centre and more to do with the implication of *him* recommending them to her. She accurately describes Wilde's children's stories as "sad" (*Concise*, p. 185) yet cannot read them outside the context of her own subjectivity, namely the strained relationship in which she finds herself halfway through the narrative. In that respect, *To the Lighthouse*

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[21] There is certainly something to be said about the way in which alternative discourses or imaginings are received in each case, as well as how Z accepts the books and invests meaning in them so wholly while Perowne approaches Daisy recommendations both more guardedly and more dubiously. The mechanisms of power at work are usefully summarised by Michel Foucault who writes, "[I]n every society the production of discourse is once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role it is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality" (Foucault, 1970, p. 52).

functions metafictively for it is both centred on the complexity and singularity of perception and invokes a highly subjective review from Z herself upon reading:

> I can't breathe freely because there are hardly any full stops. [...] The writing is so forceful, is nearly painful for me to read. I suddenly understand that you must be suffered a lot from me, because I am so forceful and demanding on words too. And even worse, you are forced to listen my messy English [sic] every single moment. (*Concise,* p. 185-6)

As well as presenting her with popular novels from what appears to be his own, personal collection, Z's lover also hands over his old maps of Europe to help her negotiate the cites during the month she spends alone travelling. These are not the first non-literary texts to find their way into the narrative; Xiaolu Guo also includes: a mock-up of Z's passport and accompanying legislation (*Concise,* p. 4), excerpts from the Concise Chinese-English Dictionary which Z carries with her (ibid, p.11, 15), a B&B breakfast menu (ibid, p. 16), excerpts from the Collins English Dictionary (ibid, p. 20), quotations from the Little Red Book (Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, the former chairman of the Communist Party of China) (ibid, p. 28, 29, 43, 175), a chalkboard menu (ibid, p. 33), the instructions on the back of a condom packet (ibid, p. 70-1), a napkin list of the lover's favourite vegetables (ibid, p. 77), old letters between him and another lover (ibid, p. 91), his old diary entries (ibid, p. 93-95), newspaper headlines (ibid, p. 121), a poem (ibid, p. 143), lyrics to a Bette Midler song (ibid, p. 145), the description and instructions for a vibrator (ibid, p. 161-62), a leaflet on Schengen space (ibid, p. 197), hand-drawn maps (ibid, p. 203, 207, 214, 229, 240, 246, 255), Klaus' note requesting water (ibid, p. 225), an excerpt from a book on female self-pleasure (ibid, p. 244), a business card with details of an abortion clinic (ibid, p. 273), advertising slogans (ibid, p. 274), extracts from Walt Whitman (ibid, p. 292), Z's recipe ideas (p. 294-5), a Sun Tzu quote (ibid, p. 299), an Ibn Arabi quote (ibid, p. 326), the documented promises of language school (ibid, p. 342) and, finally, a letter from the unnamed lover to Z

(ibid, p. 354). As a result of this entanglement between high and low forms, and the fictional and real, there is "a confusion of ontological levels" (Waugh, 2002, p. 31) wherein the reader must concede the arbitrariness of singular frames of reference. In *A Concise English Dictionary for Lovers*, there is no order of discourse: no form or voice takes precedence. The space of London is portrayed as being alive with the temporal arrangements of all manner of subjectivities. As Allen neatly summarises, employing the language of Bakhtin:

> In the polyphonic novel, we find not an objective, authorial voice presenting the relations and dialogues between characters but a world in which all characters, and even the narrator him- or herself, are possessed of their own discursive consciousness. The polyphonic novel presents a world in which [...] all discourses are interpretations of the world, response to and calls to other discourses. (Allen, 2000, p. 23)

The function of intertextuality in McEwan's *Saturday* plays much the same role; by and large, it is not so much the texts' contents that evoke this idea of the city as unstable, but the attitude Perowne takes towards them. Where Z both readily accepts the novels proffered and their profundity, incorporating conventionally low order forms of discourse throughout, Henry Perowne approaches recent English graduate, Daisy's book recommendations both more guardedly and more dubiously. Indeed, he has little interest in – and is even concerned about – the intrusion of the literary within the real, the latter of which he ascribes as being synonyms with the rational or the purposeful. Thus he refers to his daughter's recommendations as "assignments" (*Saturday*, p. 6) and, at various moments in the novel, Perowne provides particularly scathing critiques. On reading *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*, he writes,

> At the cost of slowing down his mental process and many hours of his valuable time, he committed himself to the shifting intricacies of these sophisticated fairy stories. What did he grasp, after all? That nineteenth-century women had a hard time of it,

that Moscow and the Russian countryside and provincial France were one just so.

(*Saturday*, p. 67)

Not only employing "fairy stories" pejoratively, Perowne further subordinates literary discourse beneath the empiricism of science by offering the insight that he learned little from the novels but for their socio-geographic authenticity. In providing such a critique, Henry implicitly casts literature in a didactic role and, furthermore, charts the failure of the literary as its inability to quantify the real – the real being a cause of greatest anxiety for the protagonist. As he, himself, admits, "[I]t interests him less to have the world reimagined; he wants it explained. The times are strange enough. Why make things up?" (*Saturday*, p. 66). Unlike Z, Perowne finds no worthwhile resonance in the fictions Daisy extends, either on a personal or global level, and he remains stoic to literature's importance and effects throughout the narrative. Just as "he has a right now and then [...] not to be disturbed by world events, or even street events" (*Saturday*, p. 108), Perowne reserves the right not to have his singular discursive tract interrupted or diverted by other discursive forces elsewhere. Indeed, the intrusion of the literary is just one of impediments on the real that Perowne marks out; he suppresses trajectories of anything from low culture to liberalist activism to Islam (each of which he fears are personal attacks on his way of life) to mortality more generally.

However, as Christina Root notes in her article, 'A Melodiousness at Odds with Pessimism: Ian McEwan's *Saturday*', despite remaining committed to the realist agenda of its protagonist, *Saturday* nevertheless "keeps another layer of meaning provocatively hovering just out of Henry's reach that suggests dimensions beyond those available to him or to the intellectual debates as they are currently constituted" (Root, 2009, p. 64). The exact form of the layer of meaning described by Root is left purposefully imprecise, though Root highlights

the infiltration of the literary and, in particular, how Perowne's use of language is inflected with poeticism. She writes,

> [L]iterary ghosts such as Herzog provide a kind of counterpoint, an alternative position from which to assess and rethink the dichotomies Henry understands as intrinsic to his situation. [...] [H]is language reveals a kind of cacophony of discourses. (Root, 2009, p. 68, 70)

She is right, of course, to draw attention to the novel's prologue. The extract from Saul Bellow's award-winning novel serves both to dramatise the experience of living in London that follows and to contextualise *Saturday* within the broader problematic of first-person or stream-of-consciousness narration. However, this meaning is only accessible to readers of Bellow's novel; those unfamiliar with the pervasive consciousness of Herzog and his eventual revelation remain, like Henry, at arm's length of *Saturday*'s poetic undercurrents. Chiefly then, the prologue acts proleptically and intimates the novel's concern with that which lies beneath or beyond Perowne's consciousness.

Because, while Henry takes a particularly dim view on the significance of literature, deploring magic realism most vehemently, it is Daisy's recital of Matthew Arnold's poem, 'Dover Beach', (which she fools Baxter and, ironically, Perowne, into thinking is her own) that eventually disturbs Baxter's violent resolve, rendering him almost childlike – an "amazed admirer" (*Saturday,* p. 225) – and providing Perowne and son, Theo "the moment to rush him" (ibid, p. 226). The choice of Arnold's lyric poem, here, is important for it speaks not of London directly but of the nationalism and the fear surrounding the loss of nationalism that, for Perowne, London evokes. Rather than proposing a reiteration of the collective and a reinstatement of the exclusionary notion of Britishness as a solution, however, the poem's concluding stanza calls for individualism, and responsibility and

empathy in individualism. During Daisy's performance at the Perownes' house, 'Dover Beach' breaks the spell of Perowne's passivity; as Green puts it, "the poem brings about a perspectival and behavioural shift" (Green, 2010, p. 66). Life literally imitates art, Henry's understanding (and compartmentalising) of the two is complicated as result, and – for the first time – the protagonist experiences real vulnerability, responsibility and empathy. As far as intertextuality is concerned, this resurfacing of the literary and the demonstration of its timelessness and potency, figures London as a locus around which narratives – real and imagined – not just accumulate but intersect. In a border-crossing manner, fiction is re-situated within the domain of the real (or what the reader is supposed to invest in as real), and the city, as a result, enacts its intertextuality.

What is effectively a process of relocating a particular work of fiction to another work is not unique to *Saturday*. In fact, three of the four novels recall specifically *London-based* texts. As Fiona Doloughan (2011) has noted, the plot of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003): both narratives foreground their protagonists' arrival in London, noting high levels of anxiety; both deal with the ethics of translation; both feature a fractious and, ultimately, unsuccessful, heterosexual relationship; and both gesture toward a redefinition of diasporic identity. Whilst such similarities may simply point to a convergence between experiences of migration to London, the fact the Guo's novel makes reference to the location, Brick Lane, appears to imply some acknowledgement of the intertextuality on the part of the author. Z and her lover first head to Brick Lane out of necessity: they want to buy contraception anonymously, primarily without attracting the disdain of their local, Muslim shopkeeper. At Brick Lane, "the Bangladeshi shopkeepers are kind and messy, and they can't remembering [sic] every single customer face [sic] whom from Hackney Road" (*Concise,* p. 69). The theme of anonymity is important in both *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* and *Brick Lane;* during grocery shopping, a similar warning is voiced by Nazneen's neighbour: "Razia

always said, if you go out to shop, go to Sainsbury's. English people don't look at you twice" (Ali, 2003, p. 42). Although both novels are, here, describing quite different notions of anonymity, their protagonists nevertheless share the sense of wanting to inhabit the city freely, unmarked by their racial or cultural difference. Equally and as a result, both women find themselves confined within the domestic space of the home: Z allows herself to know little else, and Nazneen's selfhood and mobility are restricted by husband, Chanu. Xiaolu Guo purposefully fosters this literary allusion, calling upon *Brick Lane*'s topography, themes, characters and narrative plot, and subsequently re-working some of Monica Ali's ideas on the migrant experience as well as highlighting London's palimpsestuous nature.

Literary allusions are stronger still in *NW* and *Something to Tell You*, albeit in a more self-referential way. Because whilst author, Zadie Smith has revealed that Felix's trajectory (and doubtless his name, too) echoes that of Felicia in Gustave Flaubert's *A Simple Heart* which, in her words, is about "a nice girl who then dies, basically" (Louisiana Channel, 2013, np), external textual influences are somewhat limited. Indeed, Smith appears to strategically leave out all reference to high or literary culture and, at those points in the novel where it appears, the author's tone is satirical and judgemental, marking its insignificance to each of her four protagonists. The third chapter, '*Host'*, is most redolent of this attitude; during the 185 numbered segments, the stream-of-consciousness narration (understood to be the voice of Keisha during her formation as Natalie) both alludes to and denigrates the significance of a number of well-known works, including: Jane Eyre, from whom Keisha takes false inspiration; *That Obscure Object of Desire* by Luis Buñuel, the title of which Keisha appropriates to describe a pair of Nike Air Infinity trainers; and like *Saturday*: the writings of Kafka, which she dismisses alongside a list of other "Camden things" (*NW*, p. 185). Despite their highly subversive reprisal, the fact that the literary still finds a place in what is arguably a narrative of the everyday which seeks to enunciate the little vocalised stories of those for whom London is *also* home tells of certainly the presence of an intelligent author

but, equally, the omnipresence of discourses – high and low – within the city.[22] That the city

lives and breathes such a plethora of narratives is, itself, complimentary to thinking about

London as a palimpsest but, furthermore, during Keisha's personal and subjective

appropriations, she commits acts of invocation and effacement on a micro scale. As such,

NW actively encourages a reading of London which is intrinsically discursive and,

furthermore, emphasises that the process of poetic recollection and eviction is both an

urban, or collective, phenomena and a personal one.

One work of fiction that *NW* handles without irony, however, is Smith's own novel, *White*

Teeth (2002). The narrative borrows the location of the best-selling debut (primarily

remaining in Willesden and neighbouring Brent) and, in early reviews, both Heller (2012)

and Neary (2012) cited *NW* as a novel which effectively picks up where *White Teeth* left off.

Sophie E. Heller, writing for the Harvard Crimson, suggests that, with *NW*,

> Zadie Smith has distanced herself from the youthful exploits she wrote about in
>
> 'White Teeth'; she instead uses her new novel to imagine the progression of members
>
> of the same generation into their 30s. (Heller, 2012, p. 2012)

Although Heller's summary somewhat over-simplifies the themes expressed in *NW* as well as

overlooks its experimental form, the suggestion that Smith's later novel implores a kind of

lateral reading – whereby some knowledge of the preceding text is required to fully grasp the

meaning of the current narrative – contributes to the idea of London as a palimpsest. Whilst

some hesitation is required before admitting Heller's supposition readily, there are clear

geographical parallels to be made between the two texts and, though it may be unreasonable

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[22] In view of the overtness of these allusions, intertextuality is likely a conscious stylistic device on the part of Zadie Smith. Ott and Walter (2000) underline the two, distinct phenomena which are both commonly cited as 'intertextuality'; chiefly, they write that intertextuality is "both an interpretive practice unconsciously exercised by audiences living in a postmodern landscape and a textual strategy consciously incorporated by media producers that invites audiences to make specific lateral associations between texts" (Ott and Walter, 2000, p. 430).

to suggest a relationship of linearity, there is an overwhelming sense that *NW*'s characters occupy much the same space as *White Teeth*'s.[23] Indeed, Zadie Smith admits as much during an interview with Neary for *NPR Books* on which the later review was based, insisting that, for all NW's stylistic and thematic difference: "I needed one thing which was stable, that I knew, and the streets I do know [...] they're kind of a deep knowledge in me" (Neary, 2012, np). It then appears the author implores the reader to hold in mind both frames at once – the space of *White Teeth* and that of *NW* – and, furthermore, that the reader acknowledge the interconnectedness of texts and, in turn, London stories.

For Wolfreys, such a level of engagement with intertextuality is characteristic of novels which deal with, or at least attempt to deal with, London. Again employing a vocabulary of haunting, he writes that, "[t]o understand the city [London] is to understand its being haunted its being-spectral" (Wolfreys, 1998, p. 139), continuing: the city is "always already disturbed from within by some other, haunting trace" (ibid, p. 139). As has been shown, this haunting is both diachronic and synchronic, real and imagined. The four novels each respond to London's hegemony, the city's textual history and the specificities within that history whilst also laying claim to their own histories – that is, their fictional predecessors – and *creating* their own intertexts.

This can be been seen most clearly in *NW* with the manipulated recurrence of the number 37. In 'Visitation', the number 37 marks the appearance of an achronological, incongruent chapter, is the subject of discussion, and makes up part of Shar's address, 37 Ridley Avenue. Later, in 'Host', the number 37 recurs as both a segment title (*NW*, p. 184), a bus route (*NW*, p. 185), and, moreover, where the 37th segment ought to appear during the chapter, it is

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[23] In a digital mapping project at the University of Washington, Podlipnik et al (n.d) created a digital map of the primary locations in *White Teeth* (200o) and various cross-overs in location can be seen between the central sites in *White Teeth* and *NW* by examining Podlipnik et al.'s map and the GIS map created on *NW* for this research project.

ostentatiously absent. Despite the frequency with which the number recurs and, indeed, Leah being told to "[w]atch for 37" (*NW*, p. 42) by someone the reader assumes is an ex-girlfriend, its significance remains determinedly unclear. Nevertheless, the number 37 holds an intertextual place within the novel; transposed from chapter to chapter, it becomes a symbol of alterity and London's interconnectedness. Moreover, in Kristeva's terms, it appears both within the extra-novelistic textual set and novelistic textual set (Kristeva, 1981, p. 37). As both a real bus route and real address as well as a formal literary device (i.e. the number of a chapter and an intra-textual resource), the number 37 alone expresses the tension between the real and fictional that underlies the *NW* and literature more broadly. The effect of this juncture between real and imagined with respect to the space of the text and, moreover, the space of London, is to emphasise the recurrence of signs within the city as well as their inherent *doubled-voicedness*, such that the number 37 "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324).

Thus, as Wolfreys notes, "the very act of writing about the city of London always involves its own dislocation, that which leads the writer *and reader* astray" (Wolfreys, 1998, p. 144; emphasis added). Just as the writer must endure and write through the complexities of the city and its palimpsestuousness so, too, must the reader interpret novels about London in a way which is sensitive to the polysemy of the city and, particularly, its inescapably intertextual character.

Recognising the intertextuality of *Something to Tell You*, for instance, requires significant work on the part of the reader. Like *Saturday*, *NW* and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, the novel is haunted by various literary spectres – the appearance of which contributes to Jamal's spatial and temporal displacement. To a greater extent even

than *NW*, however, those ghosts are more often than not obscure references to Kureishi's own works. Some knowledge, preferably understanding, of Kureishi's back catalogue is thus required in order to decode the novel's meaning. The novel most strongly takes influence and even borrows from Kureishi's first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia.* The protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim Amir, makes a cameo appearance, as does his idol and the object of his affection in the novel, Charlie Hero, during the days-long party at Mustaq's house. An episode of uncanny reunions, the party then sees not just the coming-together Jamal and former lover, Ajita, but also the coming-together of the two text worlds as Jamal enjoys "smoking and talking with Karim about South London and The Three Tuns in Beckenham High Street" (*Something*, p. 319). What knowledge is shared between the two men about the either the region or the pub is left unsaid though their co-inhabitation of the space itself is enough to unsettle any idea that either London or Jamal's story is whole unto itself.

If the intertextuality of Kureishi's work serves to contextualise the novel within the broader theme of writing the metropolis then there is no example bolder than Jamal – at the very same party – confusing the punk musician, Charlie Hero, for Stephen Hero (*Something*, p. 280) which, as we know, is the pseudonym James Joyce donned for his autobiography, published posthumously. Whether we read into the insertion of Joyce, a renowned writer of the city and one of the first to complicate the uniformity of urban space, or not, these allusions to facts and fictions prior are nevertheless significant. By compiling real and imagined, as well as past and present, texts in tandem, *Something to Tell You* places doubt upon the very corporeality of protagonist, Jamal Khan. He becomes one story of many, and a figure whose significance is placed in dialogue with the innumerable personal and literary histories of the city.

Echoing Wolfreys and commenting on the particularity of London, Perfect writes:

London represents a symbolic space as much as – if not more so than – it represents a particular geographical location […] London does not just contain plurality but is, itself, plural…" (Perfect, 2014, p. 26)

The narrative thus enact a reverse process of erasure wherein the novel itself calls into question its own fidelity; *Something to Tell You*'s intertextual impulses constantly displace, and render untenable, the idea of a London *par excellence*. Haunted as it is by diegetic and non-diegetic literary, architectural and topographical spectres, the novel puts forward a new way of thinking about the cartographical as phenomenological, and the phenomenological as cartographical standpoint, ultimately producing a radically plural insight, torn by ambivalence, into what it means to be in London in the wake of personal trauma but, more than that, in light of the city's relentless and mutable particularity.

Of course, as has been pointed out, both the identification and significance of intertextuality is very much down to the reader. The reader has their own agenda – their own, personal bank of textual resources on which to draw, their own geographical situ as well as their political and poetic standpoint. These are all factors which not only influence the meaning of the texts but, considering the texts as alternative spatial imaginings of London, factors which also affect an understanding of the urban space both inside and outside the text. In this sense, my reading of these novels and, specifically, the act of collating (and mapping) four, stylistically and thematically diverse novels is not exempt and should be scrutinised. Nevertheless and moreover, such methodology also contributes to the peculiar intertextual happenings which occur during the reading process; by bringing together these four novels, a number of nuanced intertextual connections are made: most strikingly, the foregrounding of Hyde Park.

With the exception of *NW*, three of the novels refer to Hyde Park, one of London's largest green spaces: protagonists, Jamal Khan, Z and Henry Perowne all reflect on the park with reference to the Anti-Iraq War demonstration. Jamal remembers purposefully attending the protest march with friend, Henry, and his daughter, Lisa, whilst Chinese Z finds herself in amongst protestors very much by accident. Lost in the city as she searches for temporary accommodation, Z becomes part of a crowd of demonstrators. Perowne meanwhile never participates, even accidentally, in the march though the anti-war protest march remains at the centre of his introspections, recurring throughout the novel as a spectre of the 9/11 terror attacks and otherness more broadly. Despite briefly reflecting on the significance of the march, and even considering joining protesters after finding himself affected by Iraqi patient, Professor Miri Taleb's personal stories of conflict and persecution (*Saturday*, p. 63), as well as being seduced by the swarms of people gathering, he quickly quells political ambition or ethical obligation, preferring to act as bystander to "what is expected to be the biggest display of public protest ever seen" (*Saturday*, p. 69). The remoteness from the protest that Perowne, himself, sets about fostering is further emphasised by his compulsion to watch unfolding events either by the wayside or on the news. He thus receives a reading of events – a translation that, whilst appearing complete and objective, is nonetheless affected by its production and inflected with political proposition.

As he watches the first of several televised commentaries of events at Hyde Park, he comments: "All this happiness on display is suspect. Everyone is thrilled to be out on the streets – people are hugging themselves, it seems, as well as each other" (*Saturday*, p. 69). Perowne is cynical of the motivation behind the protest and dubious as to the possibilities it presents in terms of reconsidering the decision to go to war with Iraq. Z's observations are uncannily similar; she compares the march to "[l]ike having weekend family picnic" and imagines that, at its end, protesters will "rush drink beers in pubs and ladies gather in tea

house, rub their sore foots [sic]" (*Concise*, p. 29).[24] Admittedly, in view of Jamal's retrospective commentary on the demonstration, as well as the reader's own awareness of what became an eight-year-long conflict with significant casualties incurred on both sides, the perceived impact the demonstration ultimately had is relatively small. However overt the novels' negative surmises may be, the question of whether protest is self-satisfying is nevertheless beyond either the scope or interest of this paper. Be that as it may, the very fact that such a deliberately varied collection of texts should provide commentary on the same location and the same event – and yet speak from radically different geographic, social and political positions – is important in terms of re-thinking the way space is framed.

For Jamal, Hyde Park and the Anti-Iraq War demonstration are memories. For Perowne, they are imagined realities which he deliberates over at length both when he visits his dying mother at Perivale and whilst he cooks fish stew at home in Fitzroy Square, the two reflections being prompted by broadcast news. For Z, the matter of Hyde Park and the protest march is personal and present, and she occupies precisely the spatio-temporality of the real Anti-Iraq War demonstration which took place on February 15th 2003. The effect of this particular assembly of the novels and, specifically, their coming-together at Hyde Park is therefore such that it reveals the way the way space is understood intertextually. As a real, topographical location, Hyde Park functions as an intermediary point of discursivity where multiple and contrasting trajectories meet and where, as a result, different and nuanced spatial imaginings are evoked. No longer is Hyde Park (or space more generally) either singular or map-able for, as Dennis Wood points out in *The Power of Maps*, "It's not that the map conveys meanings so much as the reader unfolds them through a cycle of interpretation in which he or she (or they) continually tear down and rebuild it" (Wood, 2010, p. 98). Taking *interpretation* to, here, denote *reading*, the intertextual character of space becomes

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[24] There is an irony to the views expressed by both Z and Perowne for both novels were, in fact, written and published after the decision to go to war with Iraq was made.

clearer. If *reading* and, furthermore, a *cycle of reading* is required for someone to arrive at the meaning or reality of a space then it follows that spaces precipitate a certain lateral or intertextual way of thinking.

Despite *NW* neither mentioning or momentarily occupying Hyde Park, that is not to say that Smith's novel is either insular or 'less' intertextual when it comes to its position within the collection. There are a number of points at which the novel's protagonists inhabit or refer to much the same spaces as those in any one of the three other novels. At Oxford Circus station, *NW*'s Felix attempts to decode the tube map (*NW*, p. 117) whilst *A Concise Chinese English Dictionary for Lovers*' Z, meanwhile, uses the station as a meeting-place for potential landlords. Likewise, the moment at which Natalie decides to visit her estranged brother Jayden (*NW,* p. 263) takes place at the very same Victoria Station where Henry's mother-in-law was struck and killed by a drunk driver (*Saturday,* p. 47). And Felix's casual ex-lover, Annie, lives just down the street from Patisserie Valerie (*NW*, p. 136), the Old Compton Street café at which Jamal and Karen used to enjoy breakfast when they were together (*Something*, p. 269). The effect of bringing together the texts is thus to draw attention to the innumerable experiences which not only take place in the city but contribute to its very spatiality. The methodology used effectively becomes an exorcism of London whereby these multiple stories across various temporalities are resurrected, shown to coincide, and thus perform the city's affective contingency.

What becomes clear from such a discussion is that any urban representation or attempt to allegorise London is, from the outset, flawed by the inescapable persistence of its own productivity as a discourse. Thinking about the city instantly conjures a multitude of discourses – popular, political, real and fictional – and thus, both to write and read the city is to engage with those multiple and conflicting trajectories. With a language of hauntology and the concept of the palimpsest, the resurrection of these trajectories can be fruitfully explored.

Unlike the conventional understanding of the palimpsest whereby discourses are overwritten and even erased, the supplanting taking place here in the urban space is destined always to remain incomplete. London's spaces, its streets and its buildings continue to function dialogically and thus they figure their discursive (real *and* imagined) and material reality simultaneously. More than that, and as the previous outline of the palimpsest highlighted, the city's discursive reality and its material reality are mutually affected. Just as the phenomenological was shown to influence the cartographical and vice versa, the textual and the real, together, shape spatial experience.

Conclusion

London remains a strange, enigmatic being which, despite thorough investigation and narrativisation over the years, continues to elude mastery. Authors attempting to capture the city (including the four featured here) have done so with ambivalent sentiment, finding qualities of both elegance and lechery, hope and desperation, home and exile within the city. These narratives, not *in spite of* their opacity with regards to defining the character of London but *because of* the uncertainties they let lie, provide the space to deconstruct what the city means both in name and inhabitation. Laden with the subjectivities of their respective protagonists, underneath which traces of their authors can be found, London fictions demonstrate the unavoidably personal aspect of both living in and writing about

London. Hence, they express the undeniably subjective and thus contingent character of the capital itself.

The tension between a preordained version of London and that which is experienced by those who live there has been fruitfully explored through the framework of the cartographical and the phenomenological. The politics of the cartographical and map-making has been underlined and distinguished from an affective, subjective phenomenological spatial practice: literally, a view-from-above vs a view-from-the-ground. Rather than establishing a new binary from which an understanding of the collective and the personal can be derived (like Doreen Massey's problematic *space* and *place*), however, the cartographical and the phenomenological have been shown to have a relationship of complementarity wherein they both depend on and are given meaning by each other. Certainly, the cartographical can represent conformity and thus the collective but so, too, can the phenomenological appeal to an ascetic order of spatiality, be disempowering or assimilatory. Likewise, manipulated in inventive and foreign ways, the cartographical can become phenomenological and effectively undo its own universalising and codifying praxis – as seen most clearly in the maps of Europe which Z draws in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers.*

Indeed, the four novels – taken both to represent (as much as is possible with a sample of just four) the plurality of London and, moreover, the task that is quantifying London – have illuminated the contradictions inherent to living in and making home in the city. *Saturday*'s Henry Perowne learns that the cartographical alone cannot prevent what is to become of London, its borders and its safety. *Something to Tell You*'s Jamal Khan recognises the mutuality of the cartographical and the phenomenological – that a geographical site can never be disentangled from either its collective urban history or personal memories, however long ago those memories may have been made. *NW* puts forward the coincidence of the

cartographical and the phenomenological more strongly still – most overtly, directing the subjectivities of the narrative via topography thus creating a new, phenomenologically-invested cartography of London. For Z in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, the importance of forging a new urban spatiality is inevitable but its effect is profound. Her migrant identity and bilingualism prevent her access to either the hegemonic idea of the city or to the cartographical from which many (including her lover) derive their sense of self. Thus Z moves around the city anarchically – phenomenologically – and, in turn, draws her own, personal cartography. Finding the point at which the cartographical ends and the phenomenological begins is therefore far more difficult than finding the points at which the two intersect – occasions which are many and demonstrate the ongoing potential of space and thus the possibilities to make, un-make and re-make home.

The fragility of home and the fragility of even the idea that is London has been further qualified through an analysis of the novels' employment of intertextuality. The recurrence of intertextual references amongst all four texts undermine conventional ideas about the text (that is, its apparent closed, finite stature) as well as introduces the idea of a mutual relationship between text and world or, in this case, text and London. Subject to architectural and textual hauntings, all four texts make clear their position in relation to both the real and the fictional world and, also, their existence in conjunction with past as well as present discourses. This polyvocality highlighted underlines the plurality of London – its inhabitants and its stories – and the difficulty, nay, impossibility of depicting the city wholly. Each sign, each utterance and each building resurrects another narrative, preventing the distinction between then and now, his and hers, them and us, and the personal and the collective thus always leaving the city open to interpretation.

In the context of the contemporary moment – from which has borne a new fears over border securities, ownership and protection of space – exploring the role of space and place in

literature is important. Space is the axis on which the social rests and hence is both the domain where gender, race, economic inequality and politics are expressed and where each can be insightfully explored through narrative and subsequent analysis. The large concentrations of people living in urban spaces as well as the hegemonies and codified laws and practices which accompany the metropolis make cities a fruitful centre for investigation. And whilst London, as a space of social and political variety and constant flux as well as a site toward which narrative gravitates, has proved a useful anchor for this particular project, there are growing bodies of fiction dedicated to other UK cities such as Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow that could benefit from spatial exploration into the mechanics of the social and the political. And, of course, spatial inquiry should not be reserved for fiction only; whilst the elongated form of novels has, here facilitated an extended critique of London, the importance of poetry, essay and even autobiography to spatial analysis should not be overlooked.

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Appendices

At part of this research project, a digital map has been created charting the sites either

mentioned or visited by the protagonists of *Saturday, Something to Tell You, NW* and *A*

Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers. The use of geographic information systems

(GIS) has presented the opportunity to not only locate the texts within London but also to

identify their relationship with cartography and cartographic London as well as their relationship with one another.

GIS refers to a broad range of software-based technologies capable of capturing, analysing and collating data specific to particular geographic locations. Whilst they tend to take maps and cartography as a starting point, GIS visualisations have the ability to display multiple layers pertaining to different data types at once. Social and environmental geographers as well as urban planning committees have therefore found GIS useful for drawing relationships between spaces and variables such as population density, demographics, distribution of wealth, agriculture, utilities and power, pollution and crime rates. Digital visualisation has since been successfully taken up by literary and film studies with a number of GIS maps spanning a great variety of spatio-temporalities having been created in the last ten years. Notable examples include: Ian Gregory, Sally Bushell and Dr David Cooper's collaborative GIS project, *Mapping the Lakes: Towards a Literary GIS (2010)*, on the work of Thomas Gray and Samuel Coleridge; the Map of Early Modern London (MoEML), based on the Agas Map, first printed in 1561 (Jenstad, 2012, np); and *Mapping the City in Film*, a spatio-filmic taxonomy of Liverpool by Julia Hallam et al. (2008-10). Of the three interactive visualisations, two make use of Google Earth software whilst MoEML employs the slightly more complicated OpenLayers 3 programming. In fact, this difference between programming tools as well as themes and location is characteristic of the GIS field and new and more advanced GIS mapping software continues to be released regularly.

In respect of time and detail, this thesis is unable to fully realise the potential of GIS as it simply is not feasible, as a single, self-funded researcher, to implement the kinds of tools used by the aforementioned projects. For that reason, after rejecting the use of ArcGIS as too complex for the purposes of this thesis' spatio-textual analysis, GoogleMaps has been used – becoming a quasi-GIS platform – henceforth, simply GIS – via its MyMaps function. Whilst

the technology then imposes limits on the level of insight that can be provided by an interdisciplinary, or GIS approach, GoogleMaps nevertheless accommodates the basic objectives set out earlier, i.e. it allows us to *not only locate the texts within London but identify their relationship with cartography and cartographic London*. GIS provides the opportunity to enact the three-dimensional approach to narrative inquiry endorsed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who reiterate that narrative experience occurs "over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Converting what becomes the *data* of the texts into real, geographical co-ordinates from which to reconstruct the novels' Londons, the use of GIS is able to ground the novels within their particular locales as well as identify routes of diversion, deviation and affectivity from those spatialities which are conventionally put forth by cartography. It provides the opportunity to engage directly with the novels' relationships with cartography – and their potentially deconstructive intentions – and contribute to a re-compiling of urban data (street names, points of interest) thus re-formatting the experience of living in London. In other words, it offers the capacity to explore the discontinuity and difference between each of the novels' London*s* as well as their adherence to or deviation from hegemonic and cartographic representations of the city.

In fact, a preliminary digital mapping of the novels' locations plays several roles, not least that it allows for a familiarity with London that is near impossible as a non-local. With greater accuracy and, even in some cases, the ability to pinpoint exactly to what or where characters are referring, GIS can reveal the remoteness of each text world, both to one another and the London of a cultural imaginary that is so readily transposed. As a final word on methodology: a great majority of places referred to in the texts have existing, corresponding references that can be plotted on a map. In cases where the authors employ fictional reference points, an approach of geoparsing has been taken wherein the location of ambiguous, textual data is approximated so it can be plotted. Likewise, some discretionary

omissions have been applied for places to which the novels refer but which have either no direct bearing on the narrator's experience, or are located far beyond the limits of London (and are therefore beyond the scope of this study). The inevitable uncertainties that arise from such an approach are sometimes the most fruitful in terms of what they express about a relationship with cartographical space and, in any case, approximations are stated and distinguished from definitive referents. Stills from the digital map, *Literary London* appear below and correspond with numbered figures imbedded with the texts. The interactive GIS map can meanwhile be accessed here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1cyJeE0iWhrsD08t4sqki1ktum6c&usp=sharing

Figures

Fig. 1
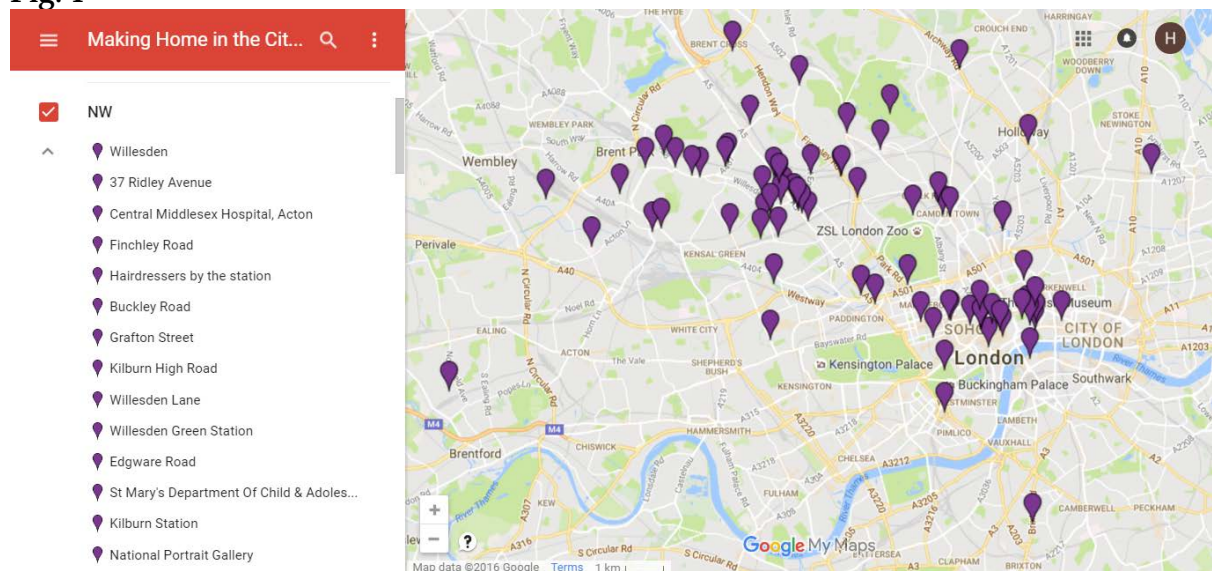
NW's spaces are coded purple and primarily congregate around the North West of London in Willesden and Kilburn.
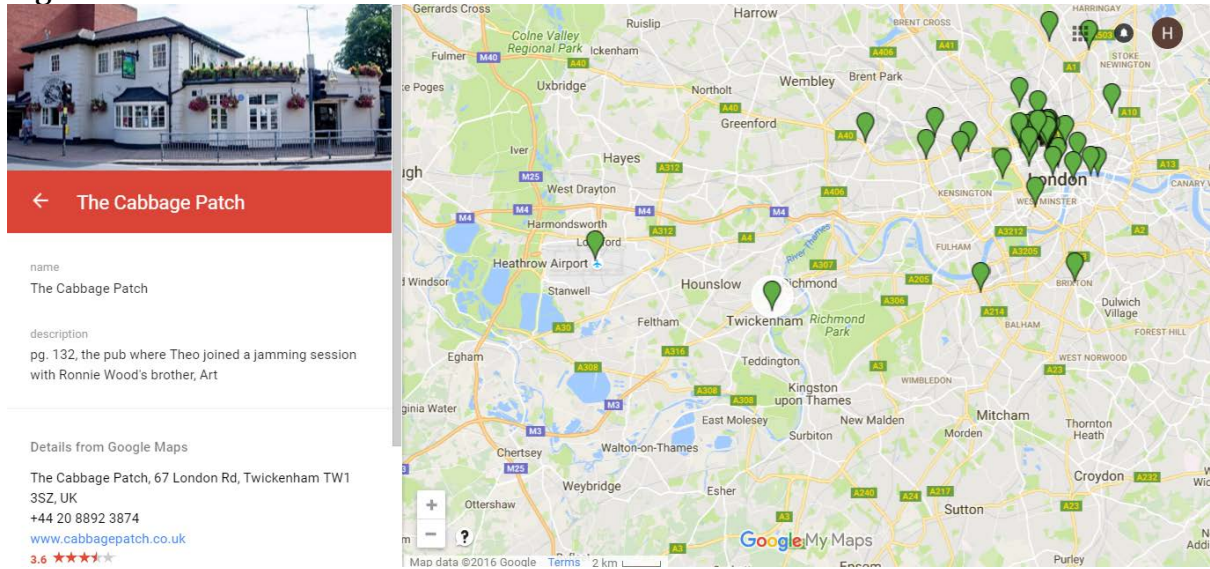
Fig. 2
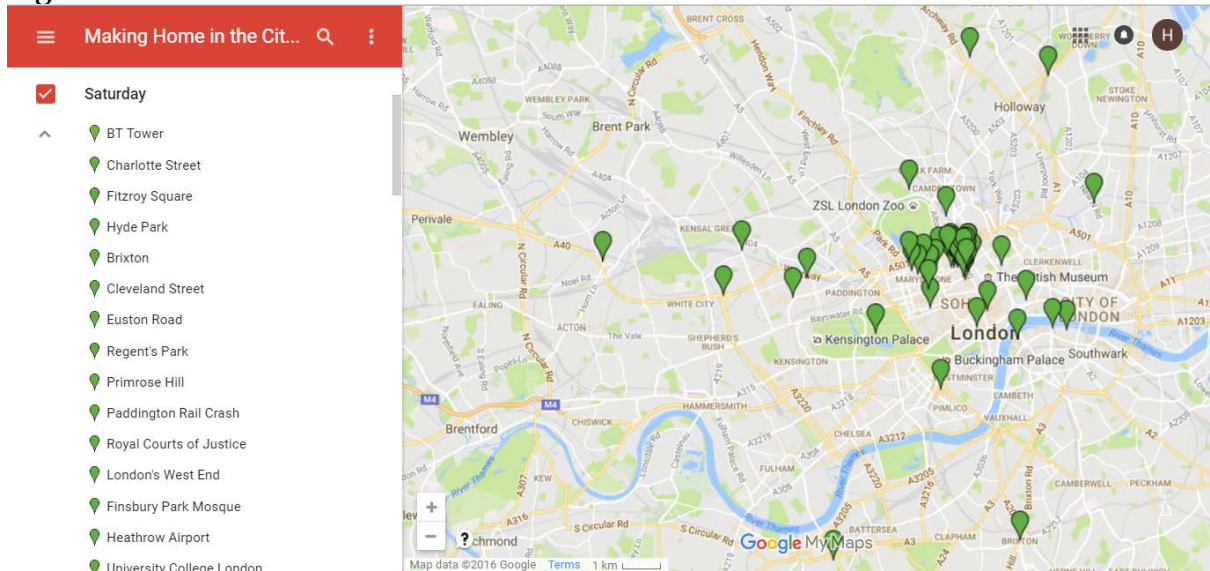
Saturday's principal spaces are located in central London, with the greatest density of points plotted in Fitzrovia.
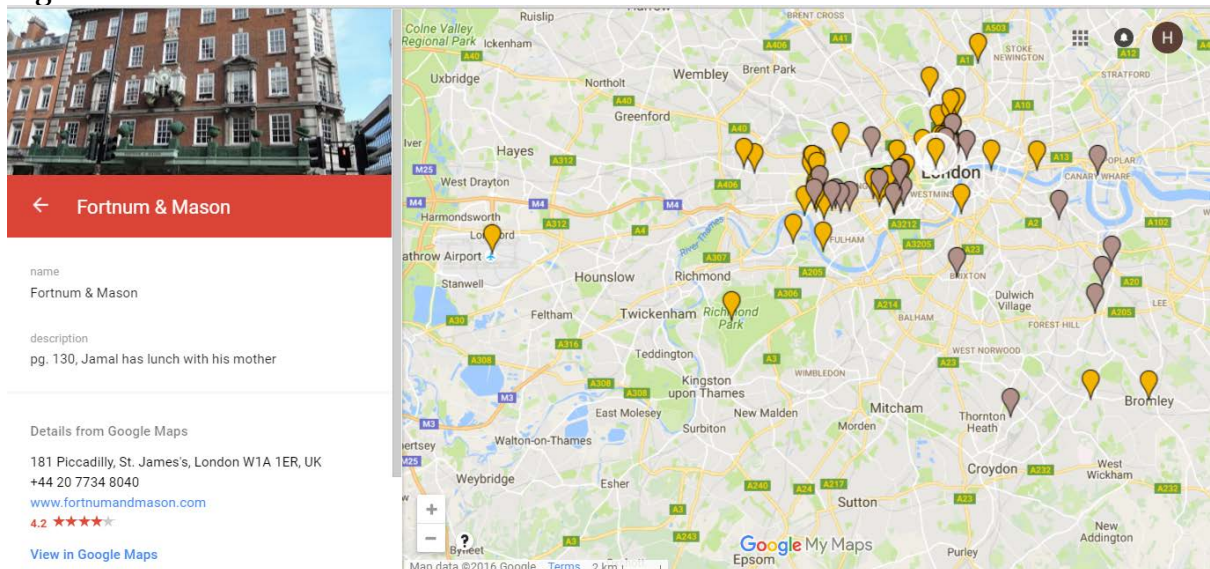
Fig. 3
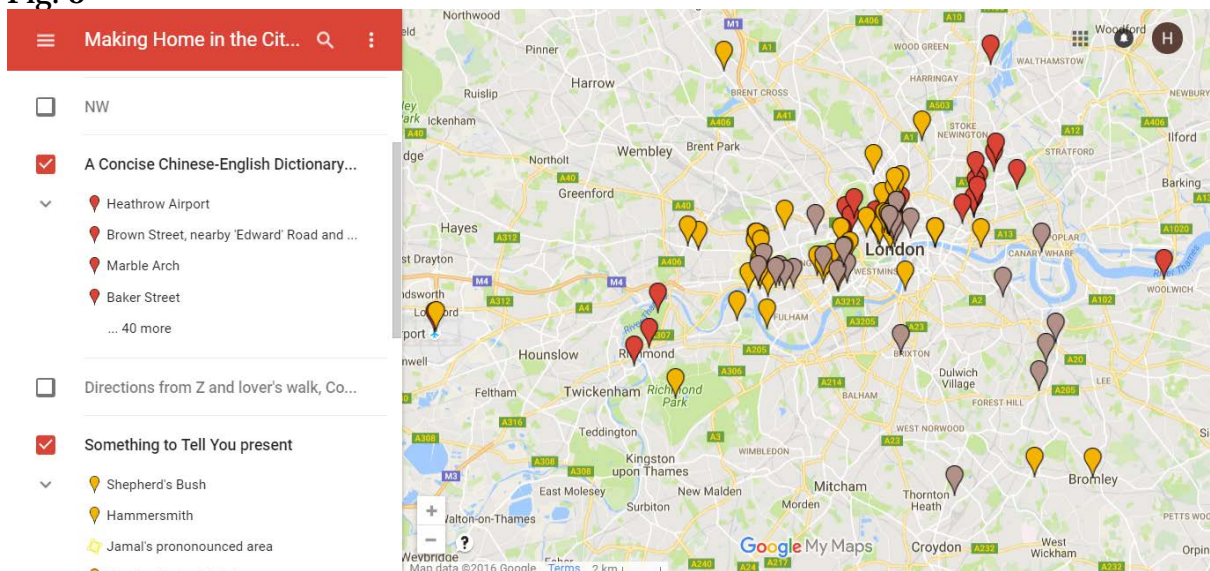
Something to Tell You's spaces are coded brown and orange– corresponding with past and present respectively – whilst *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary*'s spaces are coded red.
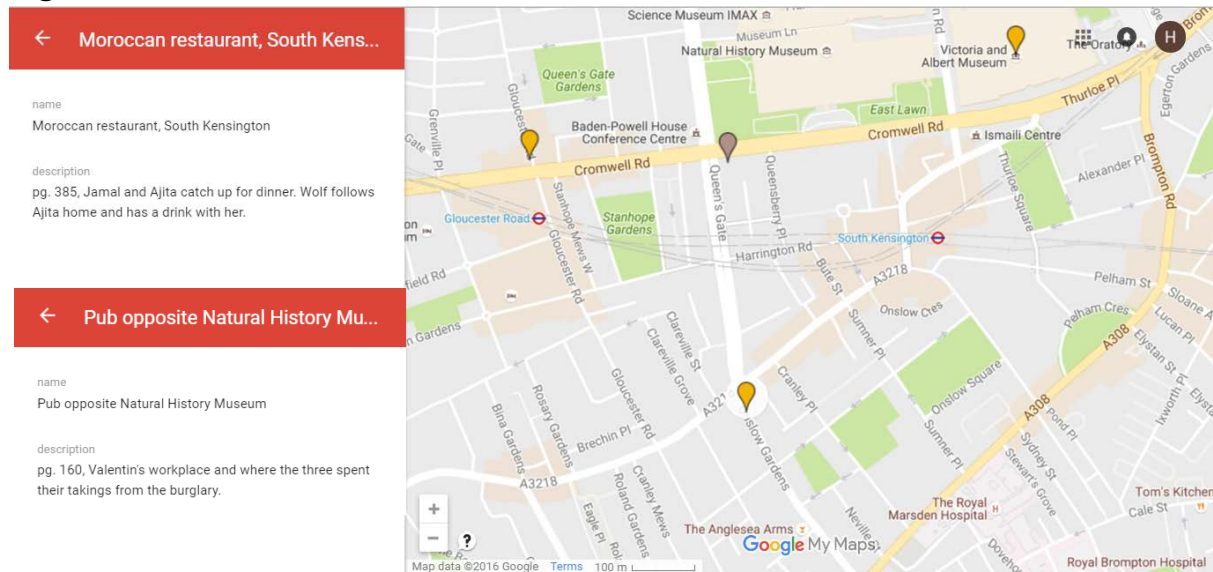
Fig. 4

Heathrow Airport, The Cabbage Patch Pun and Jay Straus' home are marked out as the most geographically remote places from Perowne's own location in Fitzrovia.
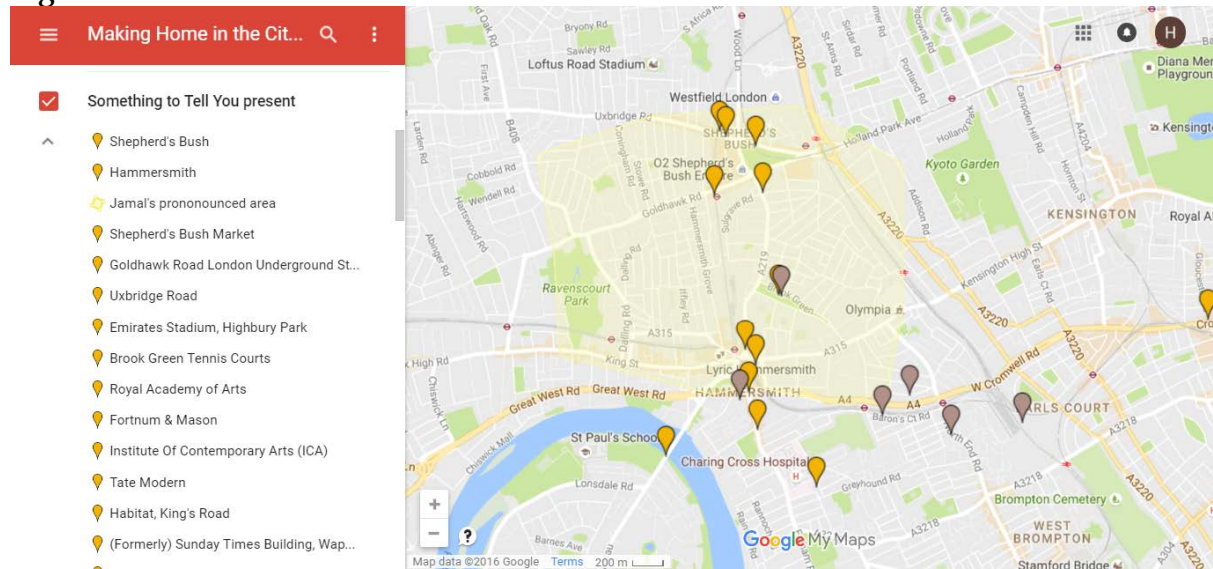
Fig. 5

The frequency with which *Something to Tell You* makes reference to real places in London and the distribution of points.
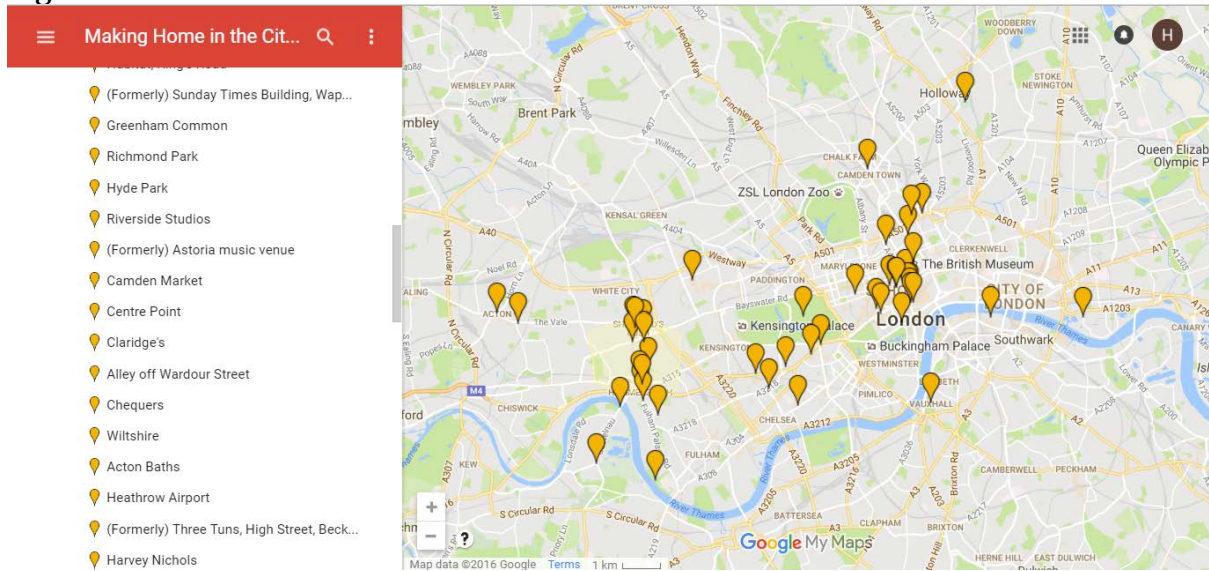
Fig. 6

The proximity of the restaurant at which Jamal and Ajita meet, now middle-aged, and the pub at which Jamal, Valentin and Wolf celebrate, and spend the takings of, their final burglary before the murder of Ajita's father.

Fig. 7

The area "between Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush" (*Something*, p. 13) that Jamal confesses has been home for his entire life.

Fig. 8

The side-bar on the left details three points which appear in *Something to Tell You* preceded by "formerly" in parentheses – the Sunday Times Building headquarters, the Astoria music venue and The Three Tuns pub – in order to denote their change-of-use or demolition. Nevertheless each point has been plotted on the map and re-situated in the present in accordance with Jamal's narrative of temporal disarrangement.