1. Experiencing the City: Urban Space in Literature

What is the Citie, but the People? True, the People are the Citie.

William Shakespeare,
Coriolanus

Cities have always held a fascination for human beings. Inhabitants or visitors – cities need people to build them and to turn them into vibrant, dynamic, pulsating and multifaceted showplaces of manifold lives and experiences. Cities have become centres of everyday life, but why and how do cities affect people and – vice versa – how do people affect cities? This chapter explores the urban experiences of individuals physically moving through the urban landscape. Walking through the city, these individuals are shaped by their urban surroundings while at the same time projecting their subjective experiences back onto the city. Particularly relevant for this study are urban experiences as represented in literary texts. While most people have had their own personal experiences with cities, the way in which urban experiences are processed in *literary* texts and then conveyed to a readership is of concern in the first part of this chapter (1.1). What readers get from literary experiences of cities are subjective and often very personal impressions of city life. Therefore, readers always need to ask to what extent urban space is constructed in literature, as descriptions of urban space and urban experiences are never objective. Hence, the question to what degree literary descriptions of cities are factual and in what way they are embellished with fictionalised elements is a central issue in the following sections. Chapter 1 is concerned with a more general view of real and imagined dimensions of (literary) urban experiences, providing the relevant framework for understanding the concept of psychogeography in all its facets. For this purpose, after tracing the ori-

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gins and recent developments of the concept of space in literary and cultural studies (1.1.1), the chapter introduces relevant terminology for tackling the interrelation of real and imagined spaces (1.1.2) and in a last step explains why the activity of walking is central to experiencing urban space (1.1.3). The second part of this chapter proceeds by taking a closer look at psychogeography as one particular mode of experiencing the city (1.2). Whilst psychogeography *per se* is a practice, the chapter, after a brief introduction to psychogeography in general, steers the focus towards manifestations of psychogeographical experiences in literary texts.

1.1. Real and Imagined Cities

> The city must never be confused with the words that describe it.
> And yet between the one and the other there is a connection.
>
> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

1.1.1. Literary and Cultural Studies and the Concept of Space

"The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space" *(Foucault 1986: 22)*. What Michel Foucault prophesied almost 30 years ago not only foreshadowed the increased amount of research carried out on space in the last decades, but still holds true. Until now, space has been a highly debated concept in the humanities, but a specific moment in time when the fascination with space and spatiality began and initiated what has come to be called the spatial turn[16] cannot be pinpointed.[17] A look at

[16] The term *spatial term* was first used by Edward Soja in his study *Postmodern Geographies (*Soja 1989*)*

works dealing with matters of space and spatiality, however, points toward the late 1960s, when a considerable number of scholars across the humanities turned their attention to the concept of space (cf. Bachelard 1969 [1958]; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Tuan 1977; Foucault 1986; Tuan 1977Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991).

Space is always there, ever present in our everyday lives, but as a concept it became particularly relevant with the evolvement of the spatial turn, which significantly changed the understanding of space in cultural studies in general and literary studies in particular. From the 1960s onwards, space ceased to be treated as a mere backdrop or a "location where historical events unfolded" (Tally 2013: 30). The previously prevailing notion of space as a container, a stable setting to historical or temporal events, implied space as something "[…] dead,[…] fixed,[…] undialectical, […] immobile" (Foucault 1980: 70). This notion of space has long been considered not only outdated but also incorrect: the extensive research conducted on space has shown that "our daily life, our psychic experiences, [and] our cultural languages, are dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time" (Jameson 1991: 16).[18] The spatial turn, therefore, is "a turn towards the world itself, towards an understanding of our lives as situated in a mobile array of social and spatial relations […]" (Tally 2013: 16–17). In this connection, it is particularly the idea of space as a social product, a *lived* space, which shaped the new understanding of space. Gaston Bachelard's pioneering work *The Poetics of Space*

[17] Tally, for example, points to "roughly the 1960s" (Tally 2013: 159), while Harvey observes "a revived willingness […] to open the problem of spatiality to a general reconsideration" (Harvey 1990: 284) around 1970.

[18] The concept of time had long been the focus of literary and cultural studies. Concerning what Fischer-Lichte calls a "Shift of the Paradigm: From Time to Space," she observes that "across the many different theoretical approaches, recent years have seen a shift in focus from a poetological reflection oriented towards categories of time to an approach which tends to give precedence to categories of space" (Fischer-Lichte 1990: 15).

(1969)[19] was one of the first studies that placed space within the frameworks of literature and human perception, stressing the subject-oriented interrelations of space and spatial representations (cf. Jahn and Buchholz 2005: 553). Bachelard, as one of the first, stressed the importance of the individual in the physically empty, three-dimensional space and thereby became an influential impulse for other ground-breaking models of space. In *The Production of Space*[20] (1974), for instance, the French Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre proposes a triad which conceptualises three different levels showing what (social) space is composed of, viz. *espace perçu*, *espace conçu* and – drawing on Bachelard – *espace vécu*.[21] These three levels of spatiality influence each other and constitute (social) space, rendering space both a product and productive (cf. Tally 2013: 120). The most relevant contribution of both Bachelard's understanding of space and Lefebvre's "famously difficult" (Ganim 2002: 372) triad for literary studies is the way in which they acknowledge the significance of symbolic – or literary – representations of space. In this way, Bachelard's and Lefebvre's works draw representations of space into the larger and interdisciplinary framework of spatial studies, giving literary representations of space a crucial position within the overall study of space. Apart from that, what potential does the spatial turn hold for literary studies? According to Bachmann-Medick one of the turn's main purposes is to direct scholars' attention towards spatial *practices* and forms of spatial *representation* (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006: 299). Especially after Bachelard's and Lefebvre's pioneering works, the latter has gained attention in literary studies, as it is understood that literary spaces are never just blueprints of

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[19] First published in French in 1958, under the title *La Poétique de l'Espace.*
[20] Original title: La Production de l'Espace
[21] For a more detailed reading of Lefebvre's triad see Schmid 2010; 2008

existing spaces, but always *representations* of these spaces.[22] After all, Iser reminds us that "fictional texts constitute their own objects and do not copy something already in existence" (Iser 1978: 24). Accordingly, literary spaces neither imitate reality, nor can they be neutral, objective containers of events or are ever just 'there' (cf. Bauriedl 2009: 220). Instead, they create worlds "in-between" which are always influenced by social processes, social relations or perspective-taking; thus, they are constantly re-defined (see also see Glasze and Mattissek 2009: 12, Massey 2005: 9). The conceptualisation of space as highly dynamic and constantly under construction is, therefore, not only essential for an adequate reading of literary spaces, but also central for this study.

Urban spaces first received considerable interest at the beginning of the twentieth century. Other, earlier works such as Plato's *Republic,* Augustine's *City of God*, and Stow's and Strype's *Survey of London* certainly also touch upon the idea of the city, but "the first books that considered the city as a subject in itself were written by early sociologists like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel" (Lehan 1998: 6). Since then, the study of cities – or urban studies – has taken many shapes and has become a recognised field of research.[23] But why are cities so fasci-

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[22] In this context, Bachmann-Medick suggests the term *topographical turn* to describe the effects of the *spatial turn* on literary studies. She argues that the valorisation of space in the humanities is deeply connected with a focus towards *representations* of space in literary studies. For her, the term *topographical turn* seems more appropriate, as it implies the central concerns of literary studies with matters of space, namely how space is described and how it is written about (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006: 310). Günzel, too, proposes a reconsideration of the term spatial turn, proposing sub-terms like *topographical* or *topological* turn (see his essay "Spatial Turn - Topographical Turn - Topological Turn. Über die Unterschiede zwischen Raumparadigmen," Günzel 2008). To avoid terminological confusion, I continue using the term *spatial turn*

[23] Nowadays, even universities offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in "Urban Studies" (see, for example, Stanford University, University College London, or the University of Amsterdam).

nating? David Harvey, author of *The Right to the City*, seems to have an explanation: The city

> is a place of mystery, the site of the unexpected, full of agitations and ferments, of multiple liberties, opportunities, and alienations; of passions and repressions; of cosmopolitanism and extreme parochialisms; of violence, innovation, and reaction (Harvey 1989: 29).

Studying the literary city has also undergone a significant change: Early literary studies proceeded from the notion that cities in literature are blueprints of actual cities, described and imitated in the form of written words. Needless to say, this notion, just as the notion of space as a neutral container of history, has become obsolete. Andreas Mahler, a German scholar whose anthology *Stadt-Bilder* (1999) has become a pioneering study when it comes to literary cities, blames the "illusion of mimesis"[24] (Mahler 1999: 12) for this outdated notion. In *Stadt-Bilder*, Mahler takes a new approach and proposes a distinction between *Stadttext* (text *about* a city) and *Textstadt* (literary city). *Stadttexte*, as defined by Mahler, are texts in which urban space is a dominant theme and in which the city does not merely function as a setting or backdrop, but is an essential part of the text. *Textstädte*, in turn, are not cities of the real world, but fictional cities that create their own intra-textual reality. Of course, not every literary city has a real-world equivalent[25], but many texts bear referentiality to real-world cities, cities that also exist (or existed) outside the text. According to Mahler, this referentiality can be established in various ways: Often, for instance, the title of a literary text alone signals on which real-world city a literary city is built, *The London Spy*, for instance, or *The Art of Walking*

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[24] The concept of mimesis, famously conceptualised by Ricoeur, is discussed further in chapter 1.

[25] If we think, for example, about Coketown in Dickens' *Hard Times*; or, more extreme, Gondor in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings,* or King's Landing in George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*.

the Streets of London would be two such examples. In another way, the text can display references to specific buildings (e.g. St. Paul's Cathedral), streets (e.g. Fleet Street, the Strand) or landscape specifics (e.g. the river Thames) that also exist outside the text, so that the real-world source is unequivocally recognisable. The grade of referentiality can vary to a great degree, but the referentiality of the texts to be analysed in Part II is particularly high. Nonetheless, referring back to the opening quotation of this chapter, "the city must never be confused with the words that describe it" and nevertheless "between the one and the other there is a connection" (Calvino 1997 [1972]: 61). Therefore, the question now remains of how literary scholars can approach the relations and interrelations between fictional cities and factual cities.

1.1.2. Urban Imaginaries and Cities Real and Imagined

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
> The river glideth at his own sweet will:
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still!
>
> William Wordsworth, "Upon Westminster Bridge"

Wordsworth's famous poem "Upon Westminster Bridge" creates a vision of London as perceived on a fine, crisp morning. The poem combines the sublime and the pastoral, transforming the usually energetic and polluted city into calm, smokeless and tranquil beauty.[26] The lyrical I is enwrapped in the awakening city, and yet experiences London at its least city-like moment. Just like the title suggests that London is perceived from upon Westminster Bridge, this literary representation of London captures only one specific moment in time, space and in history, as experienced by one single individual. The sight of the sleeping city triggers an emotional response in the lyrical I ("I felt", "calm") that points towards an interaction between the "real" city and the way it is perceived and represented by an individual.[27] Hence, it is important to emphasise that literary representations of space are always also *interpretations* of spaces and, therefore, the interrelation between the material existence of a city and its literary representation needs to be understood. As Mahler's distinction between *Stadttext* and *Textstadt* has shown, literary representations of cities have a unique status when it comes to understanding and approaching fictional cities.

The interrelation between descriptions of cities in literary texts and "real"[28] cities has been widely debated.[29] The increased interest in the

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[26] Seeber (2014) offers an interesting reading of the poem, arguing in favour of the use of literary criticism in literary studies and exploring the continuing success and popularity of "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge."

[27] Although Wordsworth's poem leaves the impression of having been composed while actually standing "upon Westminster Bridge", it was in fact written after Wordsworth himself perceived London while crossing the bridge in a horse carriage.

[28] In the context of the present study, "reality" or "the real," in accordance with Woflgang Iser, are understood as the extra-textual world, everything that lies outside the text and provides the text's multiple field of references. Thus, "reality" or "the real" "is the variety of discourses relevant to the author's approach to the world through the text" (Iser 1996: 305).

combination and relation between real and imagined spaces, however, has brought about a number of different terminologies.[30] While all of the terms essentially conceptualise the (inter-)relation between real and constructed spaces, an unconsidered application of the terms carries dangers, as in different contexts or disciplines, the concepts imply different things.[31] Moreover, most concepts have not arisen from of the context of literary studies *per se*[32], therefore require a re-conceptualisation before an application to literature becomes viable. Hence, this section takes a closer look at concepts relevant for understanding where psychogeographical texts are situated within the discourse of cities and their representations in literature.

Literature transforms reality and real-world experiences into written words. To better understand the interrelation between a real city and its literary counterpart, Ricoeur's concept of "threefold mimesis" is employed. In his work *Time and Narrative*[33], Ricoeur introduces three moments of mimesis: $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$, and $mimesis_3$ (cf. Ricœur 1984: 53).[34] According to this distinction, the moment of $mimesis_1$ describes a *prefiguration* which precedes the process of writing. Before a real city can be written about, a certain pre-knowledge of the real city to be represented in a literary text, a "preunderstanding" (Ricœur 1984: 64) of the world as

[29] See, for example, Alter (2005), Arnold (1999), Ball (2004), Eco (1991), Eilan et al., Gregory (1995), Henningsen et al. (1988), Klotz (1969), Lehan (1998), Lynch (1960), Mahler (1999) or Weiss-Sussex/Bianchini (2006).

[30] Examples would be Edward Said's notion of "imaginative geographies" (Said 2003 [1978]), or Edward Soja's concept of "real-and-imagined places" (Soja 2003).

[31] Edward Said's "Imaginative geographies," for instance, originated from the context of Orientalism.

[32] The majority of concepts dealing with real and imagined spaces come from the field of sociology.

[33] For a more detailed reading of Ricoeur's work, see Kaplan (2008).

[34] As the title *Time and Narrative* already suggests, the focus of Ricoeur's study is on time rather than space. Nevertheless, his concept of threefold mimesis can be applied to space and narrative as well.

it actually is, is required. The authors of the texts to be analysed in Part II all were familiar with London and not uncommonly did their own experiences and pre-knowledge of the city influence the way London is conceived in their texts. Mimesis_1 is followed by the process of *configuration* during which the pre-knowledge of the actual world is represented in the text and brought into a relation with the literary world. Tally calls this process a projection of the world, whereby "literature takes the data of life and organizes it according to this or that plan" (Tally 2013: 42). Mimesis_2, therefore, is the act of writing, in the course of which the real world is narratively arranged and enriched with subjective interpretations, for instance via the narrative strategy of perspective-taking. Finally, Mimesis_3 "marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the [...] reader" (Ricœur 1984: 71) and affects the formation and understanding of the real world.[35] Indeed, mimesis has been a central concept of aesthetic and literary theory since Aristotle. The understanding of the concept has changed over time, a development that Hans Blumenberg has chronicled in his ground-breaking essay "The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel" (1979 [1964]).[36] Literature[37], so Blumenberg argues, has an "autonomous reality" (ibid. 46) in that it textually reconstructs its own world. Literary texts thus produce their own reality and, as a consequence, have the potential to not merely "represent *objects* of the world or even to imitate *the* world, but to actualize *a* world" (ibid. 39, original emphasis). This potential is what Blumenberg calls the "feasibility" of literature, as literary texts do not statically represent aspects readers are already familiar with, but offer them new aspects of reality within their own intra-textual

[35] It is possible, for example, to walk along the sites of novels by Charles Dickens, to visit 221B Baker Street or to find platform 9 ¾ at King's Cross.

[36] Original title: "Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans" (1964).

[37] Blumenberg relates his reflections to the novel in particular.

reality.[38] In this context, Blumenberg also stresses the “single perspectivistic topographical view” (ibid. 33), as the feasibility of literature also comprises the representation of the extra-textual world through the eyes of one single individual; in that way, Blumenberg’s understanding of fictional reality proves helpful to understanding the blends of fact and fiction inherent in the texts to be analysed in Part II.

With their unique blends of fact and fiction, the texts to be analysed in Part II are particularly intense when it comes to literary configurations of the city in general and perspective-taking in particular. Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at this relationship as a configuration; the moment of mimesis$_2$ creates one specific literary representation of space. In accordance with a definition by Westphal, in this study representations of space are thus understood as

> the translation of a source into a derivative — the source is sometimes the ‘real’ (the world), and the derivative is ‘fictional’ (the mental image, the simulacrum). […] [The] representation is conveyed by the word, the image, sound, and so on (Westphal 2011: 75).

Once a source is translated into a representation of that source, "[t]he represented world, however realistic and truthful, can never be […] identical with the real word it represents" (Bakhtin 1981: 256). In that context, Wolfgang Iser’s notion of mimesis and representation proves useful, as for him, fictional representations of the “real” world are infinite:

> The text game proceeds as a transformation of its referential worlds, which gives rise to something that cannot be deduced from these worlds. It follows that none of these worlds can be the object of repre-

[38] Regarding this point, Blumenberg draws attention to the concept of an “open” reality as opposed to a “guaranteed” reality: An open reality allows for the aesthetic quality of the *novitas*, an element of surprise and unfamiliarity offered to the reader, whereas a “guaranteed” reality does not allow for anything unfamiliar or new to become “real” in a text. He stresses the legitimisation of an open reality and objects to the notion that an open reality implies that literature becomes a lie (cf. Blumenberg 18f.).

> sentation, that the text is in no way confined to being the representation of something given (Iser 1996: 281).

Literature, according to Iser, is characterised by an infiniteness of which a single text is just one of many other possible representations. Literary representations hence appear in kaleidoscopic manifestations of reality (cf. Iser 1998: 670) and, as a consequence, each literary city (*Textstadt*) is not identical with its real-life referent city but creates its own autonomous reality. This process is what Iser has described as *Emergenz* (emergence): literary representations of cities are understood as something new that emerges from the interrelation between reality and fictional representations of the latter. A literary text thus takes only one singular position among many possible others, and, therefore, a real world source can be translated into a variety of fictional representations, each one potentially offering a different viewpoint and different ways of world-making (cf. Nünning 2009).[39] Hence, "the world is divided— at least in the universe of fiction— into a plurality of possible worlds in terms of representation" (Westphal 2011: 117). This also means that different fictional worlds can coexist in the same space and time, and that literary texts can provide different visions or versions of reality. In the texts of this study in particular, multiple perspectives lead to a multi-focalisation of the city and allow for a reading of eighteenth-century London from a broad range of perspectives. But how real or how imagined are these perspectives?

Configurations of reality, or in Ricoeur's words mimesis$_2$, create worlds "in-between," worlds in which the real and the imaginary have become indistinct:

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[39] Also see the concept of possible worlds in literary studies, which examines possible worlds and literary universes created by fiction. See, for example, Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* (1990 [1978]), Marie-Laure Ryan's *Possible Worlds* (1991) or Ruth Ronen's *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (1994).

> the gap between the world and the text has been significantly reduced, while taking a somewhat baffling form. The distinction between real space and represented […] space has blurred (Westphal 2011: 85).

As soon as a city finds its way into literature and is represented in a text, it becomes a world "in-between." To understand this world "in-between", a generally accepted binary opposition of the real and the fictional has to be overcome. Wolfgang Iser, in his pioneering *The Fictive and the Imaginary*[40] (1996), therefore introduces a triad of the real, the fictional[41] and the imaginary that particularly tries to grasp the fictional qualities of a literary text, the worlds "in-between" created by literature. The "real," in Iser's triad, is the extra-textual world, while the "imaginary" is a process that "tends to manifest itself in a somewhat diffuse manner" (Iser 1996: 3) and that involves the power of the imagination, a power which is held by both author and reader. The sheer act of writing/reading guides and manifests the shapeless imaginary projections of writer/reader in the fictional world (cf. de Bruyn 2012: 160). The "fictional" then describes the intentional and guided act of fictionalising[42] the real so that ultimately in a merging process, "real" and "imaginary" dimensions combine into a fictional construct:

> the text's apparent reproduction of items within the fictional text brings to light purposes, attitudes, and experiences that are decidedly *not* part of the reality reproduced. Hence they appear in the text as products of a fictionalizing act (ibid).

[40] Original title: Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre.

[41] In the English translation of Iser's triad, the German "*das Fiktive*" is translated as "the fictive." To ensure terminological clarity, however, I will use the term "fictional" to describe this dimension of Iser's triad.

[42] Actually, the English translation "fictionalising" from the German "fingieren" ("to feign," "to fake") does not grasp the understanding of the term entirely (cf. Berensmeyer 2000: 202).

The fictional world created in a literary text is thus generated by representations of the real that are merged with the imaginary. The fictionalising act hence crosses boundaries of reality while at the same time making the imaginary appear real (ibid., also see Berensmeyer 2000: 202f.). Iser's triad proves to be an important contribution to unravel the complex dimensions of the fictional. While I argue along similar lines, namely that the fictional worlds created by literature are composed of real and imaginary dimensions, I use the term "urban imaginary" to describe the "worlds in-between" created by literary representations of eighteenth-century London.[43] The term "urban imaginary" is inspired by Edward Soja, one of the key thinkers on space and place, who, through a "Lefebvrian filter" (Latham 2004: 271), argues for a re-positioning of space at the centre of social theory. A social theorist and urban geographer, Soja's attempt to combine these two disciplines manifests itself in his two influential works *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989) and *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined-Places* (1996). Drawing on and describing the condition of postmodern cities, Soja argues for a new form of spatialised thinking based on "a triple dialectic of space, time, and social being" (Soja 1989: 12). Soja's approach is clearly situated in postmodernism, but his concepts of *Thirdspace* and *real-and-imagined-spaces* – re-conceptualised – provide a relevant basis for the way I understand London and its literary representations. Drawing on Lefebvre's triad and possibly also Iser's, Soja introduces and discusses the concept of "Thirdspace," a concept which similarly aims at expanding a restrictive dualism. "Thirdspace" tries to deconstruct polarisations such as subjective vs. objective, real vs. fictional or material vs. mental (cf. Soja 2009: 49). For Soja, there is no either/or

[43] I thereby differ from Iser's terminology by using the term "urban imaginary" where Iser uses "*Das Fiktive.*"

choice when it comes to the question of whether space is real or imagined. Instead, he sees "the possibility of a both/and also logic" (Soja 2009: 50) which dissolves the restrictions of binary logic. In "Thirdspace," Soja argues,

> *everything* comes together […]: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history (Soja 1996: 56–57, original emphasis).

Understood from the perspective of literary studies, "thirdspace," like mimesis$_2$, creates spaces "in-between," spaces where reality and its subjective literary representation come together and form a new space (also see Tally 2013: 160; Bachmann-Medick 2006: 298). As a consequence of "Thirdspace" and according to Iser's triadic model, the antithesis between reality and fiction has to be replaced because "what we call 'reality' is in fact saturated with fiction(s), necessary or other; and what we like to refer to as 'fiction' often contains more reality than we care to admit" (Berensmeyer 2000: 202). Ensuing from this understanding of literary representations, the texts to be analysed further on escape the either/or question. Are they real? Are they imagined? The answer is they are both. They all create an "urban imaginary," new "real-and-imagined" spaces, where factual descriptions of reality are enriched with subjective interpretations of the latter, creating spaces in-between.

In summary, urban imaginaries, configured in the way of mimesis$_2$, provide different points of views of reality and allow different perspectives to emerge. The texts of this study, with their own characteristic way of creating real-and-imagined spaces, are prime examples of urban imaginaries and offer particularly multifaceted visions of urban space. In that way, "[t]he city […] is made up of many cities and by many represen-

tational strategies" (Rotella 1998: 14). Or, to say it in Dickens' words: "What inexhaustible food for speculation do the streets of London afford!" (Dickens 1973 [1836]).

1.1.3. Experiencing the Urban Imaginary at Street-Level

Walking, the physical "action of moving or travelling at a regular and fairly slow pace by lifting and setting down each foot in turn so that one of the feet is always on the ground" (OED Online 2014), is such an elementary activity of everyday life that there is hardly much thought wasted on it. Walking, however, although we might not be aware of it all the time, is one of the fundamental modes of relating to the environment, of making sense of the world around us and of perceiving ourselves in relation to our surroundings (also see O'Rourke 2013: 43f.). Thus, walking is an everyday practice, and is at its very essence understood as a corporeal movement of individuals in space and time. But what exactly are the qualities of walking and pedestrian mobility? Why is walking so important for experiencing urban space and for creating urban imaginaries? And why does walking in the city – as opposed to moving through it by other means of transportation – play such an important role?

To provide a general history of walking would extend the limits of this study[44], so suffice it to say that walking is as old as mankind and has undergone many developments. Pilgrimage is one of the first traditions of purposeful walking, calling to mind early Christian pilgrimages, medieval pilgrims' journeys to sacred sites like Canterbury, Rome or Padua, or popular contemporary religious journeys along the Way of St.

[44] For a detailed history of walking, see Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust* (2002) or Andreas Mayer's *Wissenschaft vom Gehen. Die Erforschung der Bewegung im 19. Jahrhundert* (2013)

James, for instance. Walking generally is often also associated with the countryside, with going back to nature and experiencing rural landscapes that radiate calmness and solitude. Particularly rural walking is often associated with the landscape poets of the romantic period.[45] Wordsworth, Rousseau and John Clare, to name but a few, are figures at once connected with contemplations about nature and passing through rural landscapes on foot. Paradoxically, this development is also related to the availability of new alternative ways of moving about, such as stage or hackney coaches, as the stagecoach network significantly expanded towards the end of the eighteenth century.[46] Under these developments, walking was no longer the only choice for movement, but became an option. Suddenly, it was often performed consciously and deliberately to enable direct and immediate experiences of one's environment on the one hand, but also to counteract new technologies that significantly ignited the revolution of transport. Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, thus muses:

> Never did I think so much, exist so vividly, and experience so much, never have I been so much myself – if I may use that expression – as in the journeys I have taken alone and on foot […] I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs (Rousseau 1953 [1782]: 158; 382).

Here, walking is deeply connected with thought and experience, an embodied experience carried out from a particular point of view (cf. O'Rourke 2013: xvii). Walking is Rousseau's "chosen mode of being, because within a walk he is able to live in thought and reverie, to be self-sufficient, and thus to survive the world" (Solnit 2002 [2001]: 21). Walking, for Rousseau, has its very own particular and personal relevance, and calling to mind the single position-taking connected with the urban imagi-

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[45] See Seeber (2000).
[46] Also see Wallace 1994: 10f.; 21f.; Seeber 2000: 7f.

nary, walking serves to intensify the subjective, point-of-view experiences of an individual's environment.

Although landscape and walking are an inseparable pair[47], urban space and walking also has its history. In fact, "the modern city had been associated, from the beginning, with a man walking, as if alone, in its streets" (Williams 1973: 233), as Williams puts it in his *The Country and the City*.[48] The city, therefore, evokes ideas of a figure walking through the streets, being in the thick of things while at the same time exhibiting a certain degree of detachment.[49] Iain Sinclair, too, argues that moving through the city on foot seems to ensure the most direct and individual experiences you could ask for:

> [w]alking is the best way to explore and exploit the city; the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, trampling asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to assert itself (Sinclair 2003 [1997]: 4).

Sinclair, who is regarded as one of Britain's most popular contemporary writers of psychogeography, strongly encourages everyone to experience the city by walking through it. Knowing that already in the eighteenth century walking was often a conscious decision against new modes of transportation, advocating walking becomes all the more powerful in the twenty-first century with its innumerable transport options. Being situated at street-level, therefore, seems to be a necessary requirement for having immediate experiences of urban space. In support of this, Michel de Certeau argued for the distinction between *walker* and *voyeur* in his essay

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[47] See also Henry Thoreau's famous essay "Walking" (1862) about nature and walking.

[48] In "The Figure in the City," a chapter from *The Country and the City*, Williams refers to the works of Blake, Wordsworth, Dickens and Gaskell as marking the beginning of (literary) city walkers.

[49] Chapter 2.2 examines the particular position of the London walker in great detail.

"Walking in the City," published in his collection *The Practice of Everyday Life.*[50] According to de Certeau, walking in the city in the form of pedestrian mobility is the activity which "makes up the city" (Certeau 1984: 97), while the *voyeur* takes up a detached, uninvolved position, observing the city from a physically elevated position or from a distance. The *voyeur* is

> lifted out of the city's grasp. [His] body is no longer clasped by the streets [...] When [he] goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. [...] His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance (Certeau 1984: 92).

From the bird's-eye view of the *voyeur*, the city appears static. The *voyeur* gets a synoptic view of everything that lies beneath him and can only see the city in its large anonymous totality. Because the desire to see the entirety of the city from above preceded the means of realising this desire (cf. Certeau 1984: 92), art from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance aimed at uplifting the spectator of paintings or reader of poems to a superior, god-like position. Topographical poetry from the seventeenth century, too, creates broad images of land- or cityscapes from an elevated position and in that way produces a distance between individual and spatial surroundings. In John Denham's "Cooper's Hill"[51] (1642), for instance, the protagonist describes his surrounding landscape from a viewpoint reminiscent of de Certeau's *voyeur*. Standing on top of a hill, the protagonist of "Cooper's Hill" is not part of the landscape, but views his spatial surroundings, with London in the far distance, from an elevated position, creating a static viewpoint and a distance between landscape and reader. In contrast, Certeau's *walkers* at street-level

[50] Original title: *L' Invention du Quotidien*
[51] (Denham 2009 [1780])

> live 'down below'[...] They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write (Certeau 1984: 93).

"Down below" is the realm of *lived space* as conceptualised by Bachelard and Lefebvre, while the view from above is often the way space is perceived by those with power, e.g. urban planners or architects. The *walker* experiences the city first-hand and can engage with his urban surroundings individually, creating a highly dynamic interaction between him and his spatial surroundings: While walking through the city, taking turns, choosing paths or circumventing obstacles – in short: making selections – pedestrians interact with the city and create individual urban texts. Thereupon, de Certeau compares walking to speech acts: "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language" (Certeau 1984: 97). For de Certeau, the "enunciative function" of walking

> is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system […], a spatial acting-out of the place […], and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions (Certeau 1984: 97–98).

Just like the speech acts of language, therefore, *pedestrian speech acts*, as de Certeau calls them, weave the city together in subjective ways, each of them one possibility out of many others.[52] In that way, "each walk moves through space like a thread through fabric, sewing it together into a continuous experience" (Solnit 2002 [2001]: xv). Ultimately, the city compresses "all the variety of human life into a jumble of possibilities" (ibid. 182) and, therefore, the city exists of many layers stacked on top of each other. Pedestrian speech acts thus "are of an unlimited diversity" (Certeau 1984: 99), with each individual walker creating his own story – and his own urban imaginary. Accordingly, in contrast to the *voyeur*, who insists

[52] Note the connection to Iser's triad here.

on his proprietorial and distant position, the *walker* “individuates and makes ambiguous the ‘legible’ order given to cities by planners” (During 1999: 126). The individualisation of the city evoked by walking is the crux of the matter when it comes to understanding psychogeography. It has to be noted, however, that the walking activity of individuals through the city also involves certain restrictions, as the walkers on street-level can only see urban space fragmentarily. The walker

> experiences the city as a labyrinth, although one with which he may be familiar. He cannot see the whole of a labyrinth at once, except from above, when it becomes a map. Therefore his impressions of it at street level at any given moment will be fragmentary and limited: rooms, buildings, streets (Pike 1981: 9).

Nonetheless, this limitation and restriction of experiences is not at all disadvantageous, least of all in the texts to be analysed. Although architecture limits where the walkers can go – just like language limits what can be said – the restrictions give structure to the walkers’ experiences. As I show in Part II, certain areas of the topographical reality of a city stir up very personal experiences, thereby individualising the city. In that way,

> [a]lthough the city as labyrinth is determined in the static mode (the streets and buildings are fixed and have fixed identities), it is also highly susceptible to chance [...]. This combination makes the street-level city the […] vehicle for the journey of adventure (ibid. 35).

All things considered, the urban imaginaries of this study are fundamentally connected with walking. By moving through the city on foot, the primary texts, by way of perspective-taking, construct a diversity of urban imaginaries in their very own individual way. Hence, walkers do not only leave fleeting traces in the web of urban space, but – most interesting for literary scholars – they also leave literary traces that want to be discovered and unfolded (cf. Weigel 2002: 154). The city is, after all, nothing but a repository of real and imagined possibilities.

1.2. Psychogeography and Urban Space: From Walking to Writing

> At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences.
>
> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*

Cities want to be explored at every instant and psychogeography is one way of doing so. In recent years, psychogeography has become somewhat of an "in-" term a term abundantly used and to be found everywhere, causing it to have turned into "the Dolce & Gabbana of the pedestrian underground" (cited in Elias 2010: 826). Beneath its commercial surface, however, psychogeography has also raised the curiosity of scholars who try to use it as a tool to explore the nexus between the human psyche and the geographical environment. As the external physical world does not exist without influence by the mind, by memories, or by sensory perception (also see Ross 2013), an understanding of psychogeography can help to access and decode (literary) experiences of the city. To counteract the generally accepted notion that psychogeography cannot be concisely defined, I would like to cite what I regard a rather good definition of psychogeography. The definition is provided by the Bureau of Unknown Destinations, an online-based art project which provides opportunities (such as the Psychogeographic Destination Kits) for people to leave their predictable paths and set forth on new, psychogeographical voyages through

habitual spaces, directing them towards a new awareness of the urban landscape:[53]

> Psychogeography is the art of moving through space according to feelings and effects rather than ordinary purposes. Like all the experimental arts, it seeks to break routine ways of being, hoping for the freshness of new experience. Psychogeography has a history that begins in Paris with the poet Baudelaire's favorite figure, the "flaneur" or drifter – one who spends the day walking through the city with no other purpose than to experience its ambiances. Later, Guy Debord and his companions in the Lettrist and Situationist movements briefly held the dream that "the new type of beauty can only be a beauty of situations." Only an art of creating "situations," they thought, had the potential to change how people lived and felt. The situations they loved involved cities, going from one place to another, chance encounters (Bureau of Unknown Destinations 2012).

The definition contains important key words that help to grasp psychogeography, such as *feelings*, *effects*, *routine*, *new experience* or *ambiances*. These key words are not only necessary to understand what psychogeography is, but also give people unfamiliar with psychogeography a first idea of what it entails. In the following subchapters, I put the key words into context by first sketching the origins of psychogeography before investigating the literary dimension of psychogeography, thereby also challenging the notion that psychogeography started in Paris.

1.2.1. Psychogeography and the Situationist International

The first recorded use of the term "psychogeography" dates back to 1905. J. Walter Fewkes uses the term in the context of his research about "The Influence of the Sun on the People of the Hopi Pueblos" (see Pepper 1905: 445), naming it "one of the most interesting phases of anthrogeography or psychogeography in the southwest." The coupling of the

[53] http://unknowndestinations.org/

term with "anthro-geography" positions psychogeography within the discipline of the humanities, but other than that, the term is used without reflection or further explanation: what Fewkes explicitly means by "psychogeography" remains unresolved. After that, the term appears time and again, but in all cases a further explanation or even definition remains absent.[54] It is only with the Parisian Situationist International in the 1950s that the term is shaped and gains an unexpected importance.

The Situationist International ("SI" for short), a group of European intellectuals and scholars interested in arts and politics[55], were active between 1957 and 1972 in Paris. The group was founded rather loosely, "in a state of semi-drunkenness" (Home 1988: 30), by delegates of various small, artistic avant-garde groups[56] who joined together to form the SI. Throughout the time of its existence, the group remained considerably small, partly attributed to the difficult and elitist attitude of Guy Debord who regarded himself as leader of the group and to date continues to be the figure most closely associated with the SI. By the 1950s, interest in everyday life and culture of the masses was growing, and the main reason for the formation of the SI was a commonly felt aversion towards consumerism and capitalism:

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[54] According to the OED, J.L. Moreno used "psychogeography" in his book *Who Shall Survive? (1934: 251)*. Kerstetter and Sargent also use the term in their essay "Re-Assignment Therapy in the Classroom: As a Preventive Measure in Juvenile Delinquency" (1940: 299).

[55] Clark and Nicholson-Smith even call the SI an "art-political sect" (Clark and Nicholson-Smith 1997: 19)

[56] The two key groups were the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, whose most famous associate was Asger Jorn, and the Lettrist International, which was founded by Guy Debord. For more on the different movements that led to the foundation of the SI, see Stewart Home's *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to ClassWar (1991)*.

> [T]he SI sought a utopian, revitalized urban life that could both elude the aesthetic tyranny of spectacularized global capitalism and provide a vital, liberatory mode of urban Being (Elias 2010: 821).

For the SI, "spectacles," created by the superabundance of consumerist images, products and activities, were barriers that prevented people from discovering "the authentic life of the city teeming underneath" (Sadler 1998: 15). The influences and restrictions of consumerism, the SI criticised, made people victims who "see very little of [their] own world, for [they] are habituated to it and willing to concentrate only on extraordinary 'spectacles'" (Porteous 1990: 4). Therefore, the SI developed a series of approaches and activities in order to rebuild the city "upon new principles that replace our mundane and sterile experiences with a magical awareness of the wonders that surround us" (Coverley 2010: 84). Fundamental to these activities is the creation of what the SI called ambiances, or – eponymously – situations. Debord explained that the SI's "central idea is the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality" (Debord 2006 [1957]: 70). For the purpose of consciously experiencing the city, the SI hence went on a quest for particular ambiances or atmospheres, ensembles of impressions that can determine the quality of a moment (cf. Debord 2006: 75). These impressions were, naturally, not only left to chance, influenced by particular areas of a city or various other circumstances, but also dependent on the individual experiencing these ambiances. The city, therefore, if experienced consciously and beyond the clutches of consumerism, offers a whole spectrum of diverse feelings and atmospheres just waiting to be encountered (cf. Chtcheglov 2006 [1953]: 21).

To experience ambiances in the city, members of the SI engaged in psychogeography, which was commonly regarded as an urban practice.

The term itself, it seems, was not chosen carefully, but instead attributed quite casually, as Debord remarks:

> The word psychogeography, suggested by an illiterate Kabyle as a general term for the phenomena a few of us were investigating […], is not too inappropriate (Debord 2006 [1955]: 24).

Yet the first “official” and most-cited attempt at a definition of psychogeography comes from Guy Debord himself:

> Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals. The charmingly vague adjective psychogeographical can be applied to the findings arrived at by this type of investigation, to their influence on human feelings, and more generally to any situation or conduct that seems to reflect the same spirit of discovery (Debord 2006 [1955]: 24).

Debord admits to the vagueness of the term psychogeography, but the vagueness somehow matches the loosely organised nature of the group itself, as well as their often unspecified activities. In spite of this, it is clear that the individual and his experiences of the city are at the centre of psychogeography. In that way, psychogeography combines the objective – the laws of the geographical environment – with the subjective – the emotions and behaviour of individuals, a combination that immediately brings to mind the notion of the urban imaginary or worlds in-between. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord claims that “[t]he secrets of the city are, at a certain level, decipherable. But the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable" (Debord 1992: 28). The purpose of psychogeography therefore is to take in the objective, material environment of the city and uncover from it subjective, hidden meanings of the city that vary from individual to individual. In that way, the SI realised that the individual cannot be detached from the city and that, vice versa, the city cannot

be understood when it is looked at without considering the individual. In other words: people are as much shaped by the city as the city is shaped by its people, or to re-quote Shakespeare: "What is the Citie, but the People? True, the People are the Citie." And so, psychogeography signifies the point at which psychology and geography collide (cf. Coverley 2010: 89). The intersection of psychology and geography in the form of psychogeography thus proceeds from the "postulate that different environments or ambiences work directly on human feelings and are more or less conducive to […] states of being or behavior" (Sheringham 2006: 162). Accordingly, for the SI, the assumption that certain parts of the city evoke a *fixed* set of ambiances is profoundly wrong. Instead, they attempted to make people aware of the potential of the city as being able to evoke a *variety* of feelings in individuals and therefore to create kaleidoscopic manifestations of reality (compare Iser), which has become the essence of psychogeography:

> People are quite aware that some neighborhoods are sad and others pleasant. But they generally simply assume that elegant streets cause a feeling of satisfaction and that poor streets are depressing […] In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiances, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke (Debord 2006 [1955]: 27).

As a means to practise psychogeography, the SI advertised a particular mode of walking, the *dérive*. In that way, walking became an essential prerequisite for the SI, who, as walkers in de Certeau's sense, aimed at experiencing their own urban imaginaries at street level.[57] The

[57] For the Situationists, the conscious decision for walking also had a political dimension: Cars, as one big side effect of consumerism, replaced bipedal movement more and more. Thus, walking through the city also became an act of subversion against the consequences of consumerism. For more on the "dictatorship of the automobile" (Debord 1992: 174), see Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*.

dérive ensured immediate, psychogeographical experiences of the city, mainly because of its undetermined and exceedingly dynamic nature:

> One of the basic situationist practices is the dérive [literally: drifting], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll. In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there (Debord 2006 [1958]: 120).

In contrast to journeys or strolls, which usually have a predetermined route or destination, the *dérive* guides the walker according to his experiences related to or feelings invoked by his urban surroundings. Despite the fact that the *dérive* lacks a clear destination, it is not without purpose. On the contrary, the *dérive* is much more intense than a conventional journey, as any feelings or atmospheres experienced along the way have priority. Accordingly, "the *dériveur* is conducting a psychogeographical investigation and is expected to return home having noted the ways in which the areas traversed resonate with particular moods and ambiences [sic.]" (Coverley 2010: 96). Hence each *dérive* becomes a unique rereading of the city, a rereading that weaves the city together in subjective ways. What the Situationists called *dérive*, therefore, resonates with de Certeau *pedestrian speech acts*. As a result, the *dérive* literally and figuratively paves the way for psychogeographical explorations of urban space, which in turn put the walkers in a "reverie, a state of mind" (Sadler 1998: 76) and emotionally excite both the walkers' body and mind.

Although the SI's approaches were quite promising and their initial aim to "play upon topophobia and create a topophilia" (Anon. 1960: 7) was honourable, the group did not prove to be successful on a long-

term basis.[58] The SI failed for various reasons: First and foremost, the group was accused of being “too busy talking, fighting, writing manifestos and being expelled” (Antony and Joel 2005: 22) and so, actual results of all the SI’s experiments and activities remained more or less absent. The high degree of theorisation of the *dérive*, psychogeography or other Situationist concepts stood in their own way and became an obstacle for the SI’s actual aim: to plead for a conscious confrontation with the city and to have people experience the “particularly intense urban atmosphere” (Sadler 1998: 69) that became critically endangered by consumerism and capitalism. Especially Debord’s theoretical psychogeographical methodology remained at odds with the essentially personal nature of the relationship between the individual and the city (cf. Coverley 2010: 101) and failed in so far that it, too, discouraged the purely personal, emotional and intimate encounter of the city and the individual. A good example to illustrate the paradox of the SI’s psychogeographical practices is Debord’s "Guide Psychogéographique de Paris", published as *The Naked City* (1957).[59] The guide is a map composed of nineteen cut-out fragments of a map of Paris, without the logical relation between one another as one would expect from a conventional map. The psychogeographical map instead tries to demonstrate unities of different ambiances experienced on a *dérive* through Paris. The cut-out fragments are woven together by arrows symbolising the direction of the *dérive*. People using the map can follow the arrows in their preferred way and can thereby choose their own direction. In that way, Debord encouraged people to witness

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58 While the Situationist International was mainly forgotten after their dissolution in 1972, the group attracted increased interest once more after Debord’s suicide in 1994. For more detailed information on the legacy and reception of the Situationist International, see McDonough 1997, Rasmussen 2004, or Kaufmann 2006.

59 For a more detailed discussion of Debord’s psychogeographical map see McDonough 2002: 241–65.

> [t]he sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places (Debord 2006 [1955]: 27).

The problem here is the map's element of instruction. Although *The Naked City* is an example of what Debord called "renovated cartography" (Debord 2006 [1955]: 28), the map, like any map, becomes a manual by which to navigate the city. And while psychogeography essentially promoted individual, hardly imitable experiences of urban space, *The Naked City* offered a way of experiencing the city which was partly prescribed already, thereby creating a paradox between theory and practical implementation.[60] But while the SI's tools for psychogeography might have been a failure, the idea of evoking subjective, partly imaginary perceptions of the city while drifting through it bears high potential. After the fall of the group, this potential was re-recognised by a number of mostly male British authors who re-directed their attention towards psychogeography and via the medium of literature found a way to manifest individual psychogeographical explorations of urban space.

1.2.2. Literary Psychogeography, Or What is Psychogeographical Writing?

The SI encouraged psychogeography as a spatial practice, but as of today, psychogeography is not merely regarded as a practice any more, but has expanded its realm to all kinds of different media. Although psychogeography has gained new popularity among artists, urban planners, filmmak-

[60] For a more detailed insight into the rise and fall of the SI see Sussman's On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International (1990).

ers or those generally interested in the city, it seems that "the current revival of psychogeography manifest[s] itself as a literary trend with London at its centre" (Colombino 2013: 18, also see Coverley 2010: 111).[61] And although psychogeography is criticised for remaining a "slightly stuffy term" (Hart 2004: 1), it has gained mainstream acceptance as a literary phenomenon.

I use the term *literary psychogeography*, coined by van Tijen in 1991, to describe the manifestation of psychogeography in literature. While it is clear by now that "[p]sychogeography is the art that tries to record and understand the influence of the outer environment on the human mind and vice versa" (van Tijen 1991),

> [l]iterary psychogeography is the expression of this phenomena [sic] in literature, whereby literature is taken in its widest possible sense: any writing that manages to capture the influence of a particular part of a city or landscape on the human mind, or a person's projection of inner feeling or moods onto the outer environment. Well versed literary texts, poetry, novels or theatre plays, but also popular fiction, comic books, journalistic writing, songs, films, official reports and advertisement slogans, all these can have fragments or passages that capture 'psycho-geographic moments' in descriptive text. All these scattered text fragments, when put together, will make it possible to 'read' the life story of the (city) landscape, to 'map' its changes of atmosphere and mood (ibid.).

Literary psychogeography or psychogeographical writings, terms which I use interchangeably, are, on a very basic level, psychogeography in written form.[62] There is one simple and quite important criterion, however, that indicates what psychogeographical writings are not: topographical references, – references to streets, buildings, public places, etc. – are not

[61] This is why psychogeography and film (see, for instance, the documentaries of Patrick Keiller), as well as psychogeography and the visual arts is widely neglected in this dissertation, although it poses a great potential for further research.

[62] In order to conduct readings of selected eighteenth-century literary psychogeography, chapter 2.3 explores particular textual and formal elements of the latter.

enough to define a text as literary psychogeography. Instead, texts need to contain elements describing a mood produced by the geographical surroundings, or, vice versa, describing the impact of the mind on these surroundings (cf. van Tijen 1991). As the individual mind has no limits and geographical surroundings can be influenced by a myriad of factors, producing a number of different atmospheres or 'situations,' psychogeographical writings and, concomitantly, urban imaginaries, can take innumerable forms.

In order to obtain a glimpse of the situation of contemporary literary psychogeography, the limitlessness of psychogeographical writings is now briefly demonstrated by taking a look at today's most successful writers of psychogeography. Among them, but certainly not exclusively, are Will Self, Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair. Will Self, an English author and journalist, came to fame with his column "Psychogeography" which appeared serially in the English national newspaper "The Independent," before being published as a book with the title *Psychogeography* (2007). *Psychogeography* is a collection of short pieces, each one about walking a different city or landscape, among them Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Dublin, the Scottish Highlands, Ohio and London. Self's texts are skilfully crafted, replete with choices of unusual, uncommon und unconventional words, a style stemming from his view of conventional English prose fiction as constricting (cf. Self 2012). What is most striking about Self's literary psychogeography is his intention to offer a new manner of seeing in a world where everything looks similar and familiar. And so "[for] Self, walking is a way to see the world anew, often in simple but striking ways" (Weiland 2007), as this excerpt from *Psychogeography* shows:

> [H]ere, in Stockwell, striding down to the Wandsworth Road and working my way through the redbrick blocks of the interwar, London

> County Council flats, I'm still heavily embodied […] I have limned then hymned the fly-tipped garbage at the bottom of these flats: the Stella Artois boxes, crushed picnic chairs, torn-out MDF kitchen units and garish plastic toys – even the swollen gonads of the humped, black rubbish bags. I have meditated upon our local equivalents of a catafalque – angle irons sprouting from brick, strung with barbed wire and steel mesh, webbed with polythene – more times than I care to think. Oft times London is a heavy coffin, borne upon such security ornamentation (Self 2007: 20–21).

The symbolism imposed upon a London neighbourhood allows a bleak block of flats to appear in a different light. Conventionally passed disregarded or even with revulsion, Self mercilessly describes the dilapidated condition of the Stockwell housing but at the same time appears to stand up for them – not surprising as a Stockwell resident himself. The passage illustrates exemplarily Self's sense of exploring his spatial surroundings with a fondness for all its minutiae, causing him to be constantly "dizzied by impressions" and "oscillating in the moment" (Self 2012: 23).

As opposed to Self's magniloquent psychogeography, Peter Ackroyd's style of psychogeographical writing is most notably characterised by elements of antiquarianism. His profound interest in history influences and is reflected in his writing style, which is sometimes referred to as "New Antiquarianism" (cf. Coverley 2010: 123). Ackroyd's antiquarianism is strongest in his massive 800-hundred-page *London: The Biography (2001)*, in which Ackroyd traces London's "personality" by partly weaving in autobiographical elements. Also reiterated throughout his other novels, such as *The Great Fire of London* (1982), *Hawksmoor* (1985) or *Chatterton* (1987), *London: The Biography* is structured according to different zones within London "which display chronological resonance with earlier events, activities and inhabitants" (Coverley 2010: 124). These areas are connected to certain activities which appear time and again, "as if time were moved or swayed by some unknown source of

power" (Ackroyd 2001: 774). In addition to the spatial dimension of psychogeography, Ackroyd hence sees temporal patterns underlying the city that influence and even control its dwellers:

> Just as it seems possible to me that a street or dwelling can materially affect the character and behaviour of the people who live within them, is it not also possible that within our sensibility and our language there are patterns of continuity and resemblances? (Ackroyd 2001: 346)

Throughout Ackroyd's works, the present is viewed as the past revisited, creating entangled relations between times and space, which is why many of his novels contain more than one period in which the plot unfolds. *Hawksmoor*, for instance, tells two parallel stories: One time strand follows a 1980s detective trying to solve a murder series, while in the other strand Nicholas Dyer, under the supervision of Christopher Wren, is helping to build several churches in the East End of London where the twentieth-century murders take place. Ackroyd's sense of the city is that of an eternal and illimitable one, where patterns of habitation or patterns of activity seem to emerge in the same small territory (cf. Ackroyd 2001: 355).

Iain Sinclair developed yet another style of literary psychogeography and notably gained fame with *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997) and *London Orbital* (2003), both accounts of his walks in and around London. One of Sinclair's most popular works, *London Orbital (2003)*, records Sinclair's walk around London's orbital motorway and the experiences he has along the way. After developing what Sinclair himself calls an "unhealthy obsession with the M25" (Sinclair 2003: 3), the only way to come to terms with it for him was to use it in the opposite way to that intended – to walk the M25 instead of driving it:

> Nobody can decide how long the road is, somewhere between 117 and 122 miles. By the time you've driven it, you don't care. You should be way out in another eco-system, another culture: Newport (Mon.), or Nottingham, or Yeovil. The journey must mean something. Not a

> wearied return, hobbled, to the point of origin. It was obvious, therefore, that the best way to come to terms with this beast was to walk it. To set out, counterclockwise, from Waltham Abbey, and to complete the circuit before the (official) eve of the New Millenium. (Sinclair 2003: 6–7)

London Orbital is an account of the unloved outskirts of London, of obscure London places at the margins and of discovering parts of the city which are conventionally widely neglected. As with each psychogeographical writer, Sinclair's own way of experiencing the city and writing about it is a mixture which Coverley calls "his own highly successful brand of psychogeography in which urban wanderer, local historian, avant-garde activist and political polemicist meet and coalesce" (Coverley 2010: 112). Of course there are other authors whose works may also be called psychogeographical[63], but Self, Ackroyd and Sinclair unarguably belong to the group of authors that is currently regarded as being centred at the core of literary psychogeography.[64] But, as just shown, psychogeography can take many shapes, and Will Self clearly points out:

> Although we psychogeographers are all disciples of Guy Debord and those rollicking Situationists who tottered, soused, across the stage set of 1960s Paris, thereby hoping to tear down the scenery of the Society of the Spectacle with their devilish *dérive*, there are still profound differences between us. While we all want to unpick this conundrum, the manner in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place, the ways in which we go about the task, are various (Self 2007: 11).

Nevertheless, what all of them have in common is the insistence "upon the importance of the unique nature of place, entering into an intimate dia-

[63] J.G. Ballard would be an author who should be mentioned in this regard. Both Sinclair and Self often make references to Ballard, who served as inspiration for their own writings about the city.

[64] For a more detailed reading of Self, Ackroyd, Sinclair and other psychogeographical writers, see Laura Colombino's *Spatial Politics in Contemporary London Literature* (2013).

logue with the city spaces they inhabit" (Green 2013: 29). But while all of them show this great interest in the city and pursue psychogeographical explorations of the city, why would they start writing about it?

While writing is generally a method of expression, (cf. Turchi 2004: 18), permitting one to express and immortalise individual experiences and thoughts, the writing dimension of psychogeography deserves particular attention. Having quoted Coverley earlier, who sees psychogeography as the point where psychology and geography collide, etymologically, the word "psychogeography" holds yet another dimension. "Geography" also encapsulates the word stem "graphy," which originates from the Greek "graphein," which in turn means "to write." Etymologically, therefore, literary psychogeography links earth, mind and hand (also see O'Rourke 2013: 6–7), creating preserved records of psychogeographical experiences. As opposed to psychogeographical practices, where only the practitioner himself is temporarily affected, literary psychogeography grants all readers access to psychogeographical experiences. By means of reading, the reader of literary psychogeography is going on a mental journey with an individual exploring the city, tracing his footsteps and perceiving the city from one selected (and restrictive) viewpoint:

> [J]ust as the act of writing expresses a journey through the terrain of the imagination, so too does the act of reading itself mirror this journey, as the reader is conducted on a journey with the author as guide (Coverley 2012: 42).

Although not only the *author* functions as guide in literary psychogeography but also the texts' protagonists, Coverley is right when he says that the reader is conducted on a journey when reading literary psychogeography. Psychogeographical texts, with a walking subject at their centre, create walks that allow the reader to enter into a fiction (cf. Sinclair 2002), paths made in words that readers can follow by means of reading. Calling

to mind Bunyan's famous phrase, "this book will make a traveller of thee" (Bunyan 1976 [1678]: 8), psychogeographical writings thus take their readers on mental journeys. But considering the route taken by the psychogeographical walker who does not follow a predetermined path and often encounters obstacles, the mental journey for the reader can also become something of a rough and anything but smooth tour through the text.

During this journey, psychogeographical writings capture a very specific moment in the life *of* the city and of life *in* the city. And while psychogeographical practices are volatile, psychogeographical writings record and preserve the influences of the physical environment on the behaviour and perception of individuals, making them much more tangible. In this way, "the urban writer is not only a figure within a city; he/she is also the producer of a city, one that is related to but distinct from the city of asphalt, brick, and stone" (Parsons 2000: 1), and which the reader is able to mentally traverse. Enabling the reader's journey, literary psychogeography can also be said to become a form of mapping, with the act of writing considered a mapping activity. "Like the mapmaker, the writer must survey territory, determining which features of a given landscape to include, to emphasize, or to diminish" (Tally 2013: 45). Just as a map represents a selection of the world, psychogeographical writings also only describe fragments of (urban) space and those experiences encountered within it. The writer of psychogeographical texts, therefore, "must determine the degree to which a given representation of a place refers to any 'real' place in the geographical world" (ibid. Tally 2013: 45). This degree certainly has a wide range with different writers placing emphasis on different features, and so, literary psychogeography creates distinct urban imaginaries. Hence, based on their common referent eighteenth-century London, each psychogeographical writing is one perspective from which the city unfolds, creating a gulf between the 'real' city and the 'word city'

and making each psychogeographical writing an intense configuration (mimesis$_2$). It would therefore be reductionist "to insist that it [a writer's city] has any counterpart in the cities of the earth." By doing so, Virginia Woolf legitimately warns, one would "rob it of half its charm" (Woolf 1986 [1905]: 35, also see Ameel: 22). This implies that psychogeographical writings are, as referenced earlier, more than a descriptive act or mimetic attempt to transcribe urban experiences. Therefore, Pike argues, "[t]he many links between the real city and the word-city are indirect and complex, and not, as they might at first appear, simple references from one to the other" (Pike 1981: x). Instead, the *Textstädte* (cf. Mahler) created in literary texts are not cities of the real world, but create their own intra-textual reality in a complex interaction of the real, the fictional and the imaginary (cf. Iser)

For literary psychogeography, a walking entity exploring the (urban) environment on foot is always a prerequisite, as it is through this instance that earth, mind and hand are linked:

> Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord (Solnit 2002 [2001]: 5).

For Sinclair, calling himself and other psychogeographical writers a "ped" type of writer (short for pedestrian, see Self and Sinclair 2008), walking is the prime way of accessing material. And so, in literary psychogeography, the spatial practice of subjectively experiencing one's geographical environment coalesces with the written word. Asked in an interview what it feels like to *write* psychogeography, Will Self and Iain Sinclair both state that for them, walks are actual narratives (cf. Self and Sinclair 2008), and that the act of walking becomes the means of reading a landscape (also see Coverley 2012: 42–43). But for Self and Sinclair, walks not only nar-

rate the urban environment, but also let the city speak to *them*, narrating their inner state:

> *Will Self:* part of the beauty [of psychogeographical walking] is to not do that [imposing words to geography] and let [the environment] speak to you and if it is dull then let it be dull, and if you have no thoughts let you have no thoughts, and if you keep thinking about a tiresome pop lyric, you know what the Germans call the ear-worm that gets inside your head and you can't shake it off, then let that be part of it as well (Self and Sinclair).

The process of writing psychogeography is thus very different from other writing processes, where geography might be chosen in advance to support plot or characters or the other way round. Instead, psychogeographical writings are based on a walker whose walking activity is improvisational, and where the walker lets himself be dragged into the city.

To conclude, psychogeography tries to set one free from the habitual paths, the "small set of pre-programmed instructions" (Hart 2004: 1) that people usually follow as they walk through the city. It encourages breaking free from routes taken every day and seeing the familiar with new, different eyes. Its purpose is that of defamiliarisation[65], of rendering the usual unfamiliar, thereby recovering "the sensation[s] of life" (Shklovsky 1965 [1917]: 12). Psychogeography "removes objects from the automaton of perception" (ibid.) and allows for experiencing familiar objects and spaces anew. The city, thus, "always speaks, and with many voices" (Pike 1981: ix). Literary psychogeography expresses these voices with the help of the written word and each psychogeographical writing is a piece of a fragmented and subjective kaleidoscope (cf. Pike 1981: xiii). Through narrative, literary psychogeography preserves psychogeographical experi-

65 The term was coined by Victor Shklovsky and became a key term for formalist literary criticism.

ences of the city, bringing the real, the fictional and the imaginary into collusion.

1.2.3. Literary Psychogeography: Now and Then

The term psychogeography, it seems, is first and foremost connected with the Parisian Situationists. After closer inspection, however, the context from which psychogeography rose is rather narrow, which obscures psychogeography's much broader potential for reading, writing and understanding urban literature. As Coverley rightfully observes, psychogeography is "a shifting series of interwoven themes and constantly being reshaped by its practitioners" (Coverley 2010: 10), and so, once psychogeography is looked at beyond its Situationist context on both sides of the timeline, it becomes obvious that psychogeography is in fact anything but firmly fixed to 1950s Paris. I turn my attention towards predecessors of psychogeography and am concerned with earlier traces of literary psychogeography dating back to the eighteenth century. While the next chapter substantiates that a psychogeographical approach to texts from the *eighteenth* century should be particularly encouraged, I shall emphasise here that this approach is in no way historically confined.

Contemporary literary psychogeography, in its variety of forms, in one way or another remains a response to urban governance, thrives on a critical and resistant stance and often displays a political undertone. In that way, it shares the purpose with Situationist psychogeographical practices which were carried out as a subversive act against the political and social implications of consumerism and capitalism. As a brief look at the works of three contemporary psychogeographers has demonstrated, contemporary literary psychogeography comes in many forms. Sinclair's recent non-fiction work *Ghost Milk* (2012), to give another example of re-

cent psychogeographical writing, exposes the great myth behind the London Olympics of 2012 and in that way is an immediate literary response to urban politics. *Ghost Milk* records the preparations and transformations of London's East End, Hackney and Stratford into the fantasy of urban planners, a space created by computer graphics and, ultimately, "the insidious CGI promos of the 2012 Olympic dream" (Sinclair 2012: 11). Sinclair wrote *Ghost Milk* "in memory of the […] Manor Garden Allotments" (Sinclair 2012) and thus dedicates his book to the gardens that were demolished to make way for the Olympic sites. This critical and slightly nostalgic undertone, already established before the text effectively begins, runs through the entire book and thereby follows the anti-consumerist and anti-corporate notions of recent literary psychogeography.[66]

Reminiscent of Guy Debord and his rebellion against the "Dictatorship of the Automobile," the walking activity in contemporary literary psychogeography is mainly directed against the dominance of modern means of transportation. Urban planning becomes more and more adjusted to transportation, while walking as the most natural form of movement is more and more neglected, making cities hostile towards pedestrians. And it is precisely because of that that psychogeographers set out to experience the city on foot:

> […] why I've kind of set my cap at these airport walks is because I think that that is the most prescribed folk-way there is, you don't just walk to the airport, it's sort of inadmissible (Self and Sinclair: n.p.).

Walking in contemporary literary psychogeography is therefore a form of resistance to urban planning, an act of defiance against the prescribed ways of moving about. Walking is a conscious decision of letting oneself not be restricted by urban space and instead taking the personal freedom

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[66] For a more detailed reading of *Ghost Milk* see Berensmeyer and Löffler (forthcoming).

to walk wherever one wants. Still, it is generally understood that contemporary literary psychogeography was influenced "by earlier strains of urban adventure, including the nineteenth-century concept of the flâneur, the idle man-about-town who observed and commented on the urban scene" (Hart 2004: 2). Self and Sinclair themselves point to even earlier strains, mentioning writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Machen, Thomas de Quincey and William Wordsworth (cf. Self and Sinclair), but unfortunately not explaining in detail why they see a connection between themselves and these writers. Undeniably, psychogeographical ideas existed long before the Situationist International could label it as such and could develop a theory based on urban experiences in relation to individual and psychological dimensions of everyday life. Literature anticipated psychogeographical ideas and thus the tradition of writing about the city with regard to subjective explorations of the latter predates not only contemporary literary psychogeography, but also the Situationist International. And yet, there are some crucial differences that need to be considered when approaching eighteenth-century literary explorations of London with psychogeography.

While contemporary literary psychogeography is politically charged, influenced by postmodernism, anti-capitalism and Situationism, eighteenth-century literary psychogeography flourished under quite different circumstances. A rebuilding of London at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century transformed the English capital into the biggest and most important metropolis in Europe.[67] As a consequence, Londoners and visitors to London had to get used to the newly urbanised city, and as one means of doing so, started exploring it. Eighteenth-century literary psychogeography is rooted in this contempo-

[67] For more on the destruction and rebuilding of London see chapter 2.1.

rary desire to understand the new London, to absorb and observe the variety of urban experiences offered by the city and in a shift towards favouring subjective impressions of the city over objective information given in, for instance, maps or surveys of London. In contrast to its contemporary successor, therefore, where the aim is a re-appropriation of the city, eighteenth-century literary psychogeography processes an accustoming to a suddenly modern city which required a new urban identity. Thus, it is particularly interesting to see how individuals personally reacted to their new city and to examine the effects the new urban space had on them. Therefore, eighteenth-century literary psychogeography shows how people are "affected by being in certain places – architecture, weather, who [they are] with – […]" and therefore displays "a general sense of excitement about place" (Hart 2004: 1). Exploring the city on foot is, just like in contemporary literary psychogeography, the mode through which London in the texts selected for this study is experienced. Although not the only option any more, walking in eighteenth-century London is not as subversive as it is in contemporary London, where the streets have become hostile to pedestrians. While other means of transportation were certainly available in eighteenth-century London (e.g. Hackney coaches or water travel), the figures in the texts deliberately choose walking as their means of moving about, as it ensures the most direct and immediate experiences of the new city.[68] In any event, contemporary literary psychogeography and eighteenth-century literary psychogeography thrived under different circumstances and evolved in different contexts. Nevertheless, they both explore the nexus between the human psyche and the geographical environment and record feelings and effects triggered by urban experiences. Chronicling different ambiances that individual walkers perceive while walking

[68] In particular, see John Gay's *Trivia*, in which the London walker lists all the advantages of walking over taking a coach, chapter 3.1.

through the streets, literary psychogeography creates visions of London that oscillate between the real and the imagined.

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