

**Queer(ing) urban regeneration: decay, dwelling, and kinship in London
writing, 1981 –**

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Abstract

This thesis explores queer urban regeneration in London writing since 1981. My discussions are situated in the contexts of AIDS, the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation, and the embedding of neoliberalizing logics in the organization of urban space-time.

How have queer London writers registered these seismic shifts? And in what ways can queer print cultures resist normative modes of urban regeneration? I seek to theorize regeneration queerly, focussing on themes of dwelling, decay and kinship in three chapters.

Chapter one focusses on how the Docklands has been imagined and re/produced in print. I analyse the regeneration of Butler's Wharf and nostalgic productions of nation in planning and marketing texts. How did discourses of rejuvenation prescribe ideal modes of dwelling in the city, figuring queer lives and bodies as waste? And how do queer representations of the Docklands recuperate overlooked lives, spaces, and modes of dwelling in ruins.

Chapter two intervenes in critical discourses of Soho through close readings of Jeremy Reed's poetry of queer sex work. Reed registers built regeneration, elegizing a disappearing queer landscape. Through his poetic *overproduction*, Reed *regenerates* the city queerly, disrupting dominant imaginaries. I discuss how queer readers and writers *dwell* in queer print cultures, elaborating the interdependency of city, body, and text; and the tactical use of reading and writing as a mode of getting by in quotidian life.

Chapter three explores the re/production of homophobia and AIDS-phobia in print media, and its affects on everyday city life for marginal others. This frames a study of Derek Jarman's diaries; specifically Jarman's writing of cruising on Hampstead Heath. I foreground the diaries here to explore how this urban hinterland functioned as a vital space of dwelling and kinship for Jarman and others, elaborating the potential of queer sex publics in the time of AIDS.

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1.3 Butler's Wharf marketing prospectus (1995?), Prestbury Group PLC. p. 66

1.4 *North Southwark Plan*, June 1983, London Borough of Southwark. p. 77.

1.5 *Gay Times*, September 1992. p. 115.

1.6 *Gay Times*, September 1992. p. 118.

List of Abbreviations

LMA: London Metropolitan Archives

HCA: Hall-Carpenter Archives

LAGNA: London Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive

LSP: Louis de Soissons Partnership

Report: Butler's Wharf Report

LDDC: London Docklands Development Corporation

Smiling: Smiling in Slow Motion

AYOR: At Your Own Risk

WB: White Bear and Francis Bacon

Introduction

Any gay tourist, even a casual visitor, in a new city will know how to find the park or pub where our secret resides. The reader has similar skills. Underneath its glass dome, I reinvented the library. It became a hothouse, a conservatory; the catalogue entries became botanical labels which for the connoisseur can indicate a perfume, a peculiarly perverse method of reproduction, a special texture of foliage in a dry Latin name. The locked bookcase became a garden of flowers in the centre of the snow-covered city. Remember, we are expert at finding our pleasure in the most unlikely of places.

- Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*.¹

Keywords:

Affect, Auto-Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), bodies, decay, dwelling, gentrification, kinship, London, print culture, queer, regeneration, space-time, textual resistance.

London's queer print cultures have been overlooked in contemporary debates of the city's regeneration, yet many queer texts have responded directly to a shifting and often hostile urban landscape. This thesis explores the emergence and function of queer texts in London's recent past. I posit this here as the *writing of queer urban regeneration*, analyzing how writers and texts have responded to processes of built change and cultural erasure, and arguing that cultural productions *resist* such processes in their dynamic *regeneration* of queerness. These texts and print cultures contain a potentiality: to embody, express, transmit, and extend queerness in everyday life.

Principally, I explore how these queer regenerations do several things:

¹ Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* (Bristol:

1. Disrupt normative discourses and processes of urban regeneration, inverting othering imaginaries.
2. Offer a mode of tactical resistance, and a means of coping in quotidian life, through small acts of reading and writing.
3. Regenerate queer London by extending queer representations, connections, kinships, affects, and intimacies, across time and space: through reading, writing, and other modes of textual circulation and transmission.

Queer

Throughout this study, I use ‘queer’ in two main ways, which are often both applicable at once. Firstly, ‘queer’ connotes same-sex desire, or any sexuality which includes non-heterosexuality. Although I mostly deal with the writing of male-male desire, I mostly use ‘queer’ rather than ‘gay male’ in order to acknowledge a delimited range of sexual orientations, possibilities, and gender identifications or non-identifications that are not static, and to avoid inscribing, limiting, or misinterpreting the identities of those I am writing about. Dana Seitler notes this taxonomical tension in reference to David Halperin’s *How To Do the History of Homosexuality*, arguing that Halperin’s terms produce a somewhat ‘totalizing impulse’, with his final category ‘homosexuality’ precluding modern, multiple forms of sexual expression.² Secondly, my writing is informed by queer theoretical scholarship that has analyzed - since the beginning of the 1990s - the inherently unstable, *un*-codified relationship between sex, gender and sex acts. For instance, Judith Butler argues that:

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time...instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*...gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must

² Dana Seitler, “Queer physiognomies ; or, how many ways can we do the history of sexuality?”, *Criticism*, 46 (2004), pp. 71-102, p. 82.

be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.³

Butler extends feminist debates by theorizing the performativity of gender, and the normativity of the category of sex, as: ‘a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies.’⁴ Such arguments usefully show us the ways in which the ‘materiality’ of sex is forcibly produced, and the multiple violences at work in processes of inscribing cultural legibility. According to such queer scholarship, ‘identities become not so much categories to be occupied, owned, protected or rejected, but spaces to be navigated, revisited, revised and elided on a moment-to-moment basis’.⁵ This language of ‘revisiting’ and ‘revising’ suggests the work of critiquing the reduction of human experience to a set of clear categories with known limits. Queer theory works to unravel or refute this rigid binary of heteronormative/homonormative, and the variously hegemonic logics that depend upon the notion of a coherent self or endorse normative life paths and their rituals. To approach the city queerly, therefore, is to be alive to the possibility that all trace elements of the city cannot - *should* not - be captured or explained, and to welcome the inevitable gaps in meaning that emerge in analysis, and the un-representable remainder that cannot be dissected. Queer regeneration, then, is not a *replication*, but rather an endless *variation*. As the text inscribes meaning through language, it paradoxically unravels meaning, allowing difference to proliferate within and beyond the text. Literature insists on this plurality and in-definition, twisting understandings of self, other, and society, unraveling neat patterns of signification, and teasing the threads of certainty.

³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 179.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

⁵ Noreen Giffney, ed., *Ashgate research companion to queer theory* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 7.

Conversations of regeneration

In critical accounts of urban regeneration, the sexual is often absented.⁶ There are exceptions though: and I want to begin by introducing some criticism which has informed this thesis in bridging discussions of AIDS, urban regeneration, and queer space.

Writing about New York City in the time of AIDS, Sarah Schulman foregrounds the vitality of queer communities, and explores what is at stake in the remembrance of recent queer history. Schulman frames her arguments around the ‘gentrification of the mind’, arguing that changes to the built environment have erased sites of queer visibility and community, causing the forgetting of recent queer history, including the experience of the AIDS epidemic:

The literal experience of gentrification is a concrete replacement process. Physically it is an urban phenomena: the removal of communities of diverse classes, ethnicities, races, sexualities, languages, and points of view from the central neighbourhoods of cities, and their replacement by more homogenized groups. With this comes the destruction of culture and relationship, and this destruction has profound consequences for the future lives of cities.⁷

Schulman raises questions as to which bodies are encouraged or discouraged to dwell in urban space, which bodies possess the ‘right to the city’, who has access, who becomes dispossessed, and what is at stake in the supposed ‘improvement’ of a city.⁸

⁶ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), Edward Soja, *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

⁷ Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 14. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. Ruth Glass initially theorized gentrification as a rendering of class difference in the built environment and social relations: a homogenizing process as middle-class signifiers of good taste become the norm, in, Ruth Glass, *London: aspects of change*, Centre for Urban Studies, eds. (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1964).

⁸ ‘Right to the city’ connotes a school of critical writing on access to public space, and movements of resistance to neoliberal urbanism, stemming from

topography, and affecting how queer bodies dwell in space: for instance, in the punitive reorganizing of parts of the city with a reputation for public intimacy or sexual commerce. These tacitly – or explicitly - moralizing positions present certain forms of – queer, and otherwise other – living as less desirable or productive than a mythic mainstream. Crucial to this argument is Berlant and Warner’s definition of ‘heteronormativity’ as:

a constellation of practices that everywhere disperses heterosexual privilege as a tacit but central organizing index of social membership...A whole field of social relations becomes intelligible as heterosexuality, and this privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy. This sense of rightness – embedded in things and not just in sex – is what we call heteronormativity...more than ideology or just prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture. It is hard to see these fields as heteronormative because the sexual culture straight people inhabit is so diffuse...that their material conditions feel hardwired into personhood (Berlant and Warner, 1998, p. 555).

Heteronormativity, then, is scattered across culture, time and place: performed, re/produced, and appearing in multiple shifting forms and embedded in ways that are often invisible, overlapping and consequently difficult to unpick.¹⁰ Such states and modes of living come to be seen as natural, right, and desirable, often by those living them. Defining the desirable in this way necessarily casts

¹⁰ Although this definition informs my research, I am interested in how identities intersect and how bodies are simultaneously sexed, gendered, raced and classed, as noted by feminist theorizations of intersectionality, including Berlant’s later work. This terrain has shifted to include what Lisa Duggan terms homonormativity: assimilated and conservative gay and lesbian activism which fails to critique the unequal social relations of neoliberalism. See, Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism”, in, *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 175–94. I therefore often refer to homo/heteronormative, or simply normative, throughout the thesis.

whatever is outside of this as less than desirable, and, by extension, often less than just or natural. Berlant argues elsewhere that, ‘Normativity is a vote for disavowing, drowning out, delegitimizing, or distracting from all that’s ill-fitting in humans: it can never drown out, though, the threat posed by sex’s weird tastes and tonalities to the desire for the everyday to be simpler to live through.’¹¹

The embedding of these norms through everyday life punitively curtails modes of living that fall outside of narrow modes of economic re/production. The neoliberal city welcomes those who can afford to pay to live in its ‘forest of luxury towers’¹², endorsing and reproducing an imaginary of proper living. For others, un-homeliness often characterizes the city’s dominant architectures.

I want to focus attention here on a small section of *Sex in Public*, where Berlant and Warner argue that:

Because the heteronormative culture of intimacy leaves queer culture especially dependent on ephemeral elaborations in urban space and *print culture*, queer publics are also peculiarly vulnerable to initiatives such as...Giuliani’s new zoning law (emphasis added).

Attention has been paid by some cultural geographers, historians and sociologists to queerness and urban *space* – the effects of zoning laws and cleanup missions, for instance.¹³ And arguments of the proscriptive effects of gentrification on

¹¹ Lauren Berlant, “Starved”, in *After Sex? On writing since queer theory*, Janet Halley & Andrew Parker, eds. (USA: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 79-91, p. 81.

¹² Anna Minton, *Big Capital: Who is London For?* (St Ives, Penguin, 2017), p. xiii. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹³ Explorations of the inclusion/exclusion of queer communities from certain public spaces include, from the 1990s, the ‘Binnie and Bell’ critical moment, see for instance: “The erotic possibilities of the City”, Jon Binnie, in *Pleasure Zones*. D. Bell et al, eds., (USA: Syracuse, 2001). For recent arguments of queer space, see Natalie Oswin, “Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 32 (1), 2008, pp. 89-103. All further references to these articles are given after quotations in the text.

London's commercial LGBT venues are well rehearsed.¹⁴ Recently, for instance, writers and journalists have registered a slew of closures of queer bars and clubs as a result of gentrification.¹⁵ Much of this writing and campaigning registers the sanitizing effects of gentrification as shifts in the built environment lead to the closures of erotic and social spaces and their replacement with respectable forms of commerce: multi-million pound – 'exclusive', 'luxury' – homes with advanced security and entry policies, and familiar chains of restaurants, cafes, expensive cinemas, and clothing shops.

Yet the dependence of urban queers on *print culture*, as identified above by Berlant and Warner, has received less attention.¹⁶ In this thesis I turn to London, and to this dependence – and, I argue, *interdependence* – of print culture, queerness, city, and body, to explore how queer print cultures can variously refocus discussions of urban regeneration. By print culture, here, I am getting at the plural and dynamic ways in which texts un/consciously circulate through and extend into culture: in their writing, sharing, consumption, remembrance, or in discourse; and the ways in which this traverses time and space, variously participating in the ongoing production of the city.

The indeterminacy celebrated in the queer texts discussed in this thesis offers marginal writers, readers, narrators, and characters a means of engaging critically with the diverse forms of homophobia and othering manifest in everyday life. Representing alterity, marginality, and playing with ideas of self and other, these texts glimpse a means of becoming 'less than what we really are'; of unraveling

¹⁴ See, Johan Andersson, "East End Localism and Urban Decay: Shoreditch's Re-Emerging Gay Scene", *The London Journal*, 34 – 1 (2009), pp. 55-71.

¹⁵ This has been well documented in recent journalism. See, Esther Webber, "Why are London's gay bars disappearing?", *BBC News*, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-33608000>> . The "Save Soho" campaign has garnered the support of artists and public intellectuals defending venues such as trans cabaret club Madame Jojos. <www.savesoho.com> .

¹⁶ Many geographers, for instance, note the threats of gentrification to liberatory spaces concealed in the guise of rejuvenation. See, Loretta Lees, "The Geography of Gentrification: Thinking Through Comparative Urbanism", *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (2), 2012, pp. 155-171.

notions of identity as something stable and unitary.¹⁷ They acknowledge the potentiality of the ephemeral and the fleeting: the affective and tactical uses of everyday glances, brief encounters, wanderings, resurgent and overlapping memories, desires and stigmatized acts. They trace transient forms of sociability and threads of connectivity that offer sociability or intimacy in the city. This writing of London's queer regeneration inverts stigmatizing discourses of waste and decay mapped onto marginal lives, acts, bodies and psyches, relocating and recuperating potential and value in queer lives, through quotidian *written*, or *read*, modes of resistance.

I explore how literature can function as an affective site which can disrupt the experience of quotidian life: modes of kinship, dwelling and regeneration emerge through textual *production* (the writing of texts), and also through textual *consumption* (their reading). By expressing and enacting the dynamic interplay between text, body, and quotidian city life, these texts allow us to re-formulate dominant epistemologies of urban regeneration. Consuming the city through text, I argue, allows a mode of consumption that can be endlessly reorganized or repeated. This consumption does not depend upon a teleological vision of urban (and more broadly, national) progress; neither does it insist upon endless participation in dominant forms of capitalist exchange, accumulation, or speculation.

Because my emphasis is on hitherto unacknowledged *potentialities* in the literatures I explore, my mode of reading these texts, while *analytical*, does not obey what Eve Sedgwick has called a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'.¹⁸ The story of the punitive and heteronormative functions of gentrification being a well-told one already, I redirect my energies – particularly from the close of chapter one and through chapters two and three - from explicit critique towards something more affirmative: a detailed and close elaboration of the kinds of re-imagining of

¹⁷ Leo Bersani, "Sociability and Cruising", *Is the Rectum a Grave?* (University of Chicago Press, 2010). All further references to this edition are given in quotations in the text.

¹⁸ Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You Probably Thing This Essay Is About You", in *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

queer regenerations such literature permits and encourages. Rita Felski's arguments on the post-critical turn, and Sedgwick's distinctions between paranoid and reparative readings, are useful here.¹⁹ I am not undertaking an extended critique of heteronormative literature or culture. Avoiding reading art merely as *symptom*, I seek instead to recuperate the oft-overlooked potentialities in literature for generating and extending queerness.²⁰

While my approach across the thesis is analytical, its motivation is personal. I have watched gentrification occur over the past decade or more of living in London. Most of the queer venues I visited have disappeared, such as "First Out", the cheap Soho café where Jeremy Reed would read his poetry in the basement, or the "Ghetto", a basement club celebrating gender fluidity and same-sex intimacy. Both sites have been demolished to make way for the Crossrail development. What is apparent is the replacement of such venues with buildings which encourage, in their design and intended function, respectable, orderly, and economically productive movement through city space: paving the way for future performances of respectability and recognizably productive citizenship: including maintaining a nine-to-five job, property ownership, regular sleep/work patterns, performing one's assigned gender, and propagating myths that intimacy does not permeate public spaces.

Yet this is not to say that the city has *necessarily* come to feel any less queer. Queer bodies desiring encounters continually dwell in the city, and new venues and clandestine formations emerge elsewhere. While some spaces of expression have closed, networks take up new paths and chance connections are forged in surprising places. My enquiry pursues the less studied ways in which London's queer culture replenishes and rejuvenates through engagement with texts, and the ways in which this furnishes quotidian life with meaning.

¹⁹ Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

²⁰ Tim Dean, "Art as Symptom: Žižek and the Ethics of Psychoanalytic Criticism", *Diacritics*, vol. 32 (2), 2002, pp. 21–41.

My emphasis on the textual inscription of certain queer spaces is motivated by a concern for inclusivity which certain – commercial – LGBTQ+ spaces today can foreclose. Commercial venues are often organized according to gender, or fetish, are spatially and temporally coded according to logics of profit, and often mediated with alcohol. While no-doubt vital for many of those without space to convene publicly, safely, or convivially, and often important sites in queer history, such spaces can marginalize disabled patrons, the poor, the physically conscious, the substance dependent, trans people, people of colour, women, sex workers, and others (just as they can also *embrace* marginal others). Rather than focusing on queer commercial venues as the locus of queer urban culture, therefore, I see them as a useful component of a much broader, less spatially and temporally determined, set of queer urban networks and modes. As many of these bars and clubs close, *print culture* has often responded to and resisted such circumstances with a less traceable but nonetheless meaningful potentiality, illuminating a queer *resilience* and tactic of resistance in everyday life, and a dynamic form of production. Rather than simply lamenting the disappearance of queer culture, it can be seen to reappear through textual dynamics. These lively print cultures extend imaginaries of the queer city in the recent past, and gesture toward untold futures. Texts have emerged from a context of hegemonic urban change, and work *through* such processes on the page, often implying a critique of these processes by glimpsing queer resistances in quotidian life. I am not interested only in what is at play *within* the text, but the possibilities that are produced by this - to affect change *outside* of, or beyond the text - in the lives of readers: a transformational potential for affective change, which can reformulate the conditions of everyday life. This dynamism is inherent in the creation and experience of texts, and, is a vital mode of urban regeneration.

The epistemological and ontological interrogations enabled by literature (and its criticism) make literature a useful discipline from which to consider the queerness of regeneration. This speculative field can helpfully inform research from other disciplines by opening up a space of unknowingness and contingency, challenging empirical and sociological studies of urban culture. Avoiding reifying categories which submit to the concretizing effects of place and teleological rigidity, this interdisciplinary - but predominantly literary - enquiry

exploits methodological possibilities less available in empirical research, which can productively further discussions of decay, dwelling, kinship, and regeneration in London.

Queer literary regenerations do not prevent the reorganization of the built environment. What follows is not a utopic vision of a future queer idyll. I do not privilege literature here above the social, the sexual, or the embodied, or offer a polemic of literature's capacity to unify a body politic to revolutionary change. Instead, I vouch for its uses as a tool for navigating through a life, which are often non-academic and non-theoretical: quiet, varied, useful ways of coping with the everyday. There is an ethical potentiality in these print cultures. Queer regenerations, I argue, can be ephemeral and unreadable, traumatic and ambivalent, pleasurable and chaotic. But by elaborating them as part of the schema of quotidian urban life, the tensions, complexities, instability, and plurality of the city are brought into relief. There is a tension between espousing these alternative ways of being in time and space, and their never fully becoming: a tension between the unbounded uncertainty of queer, and identifying or seeking to render queer. And, a tension between recuperating queer potentiality in texts, and explaining away their queerness. Rather than solving these tensions away, I analyze them here – paradoxically - from a position of inevitable unknowability.

Regeneration, degeneration, and transvaluation²¹

Thus far I have signalled my area of concern, and also my approach to it. But I want to spend a little longer on the necessity of the relationship between the two - between literatures which queerly resist heteronormative models of regeneration, and my own analytically affirmative and reparative way of approaching these.

²¹ By 'trans-valuing' here, I mean an alteration of the *value* of values. Nietzsche theorized 'transvaluation', or the 'revaluation of all values', in an effort to disrupt the traditional pieties of Christianity. See, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (London: Penguin, 2003).

In an urban context, regeneration is a proxy for economic productivity. A regenerating city is a *healthy* city, and an improving one. Yet *regeneration* also contains biological assumptions which are closely aligned to the procreative. These normative assumptions embedded in the etymology of regeneration are easily overlooked and often blurred in a term frequently deployed in schemes of drastic material and social change. This definitional collapse risks naturalizing value judgments, and ideological moves, such that neoliberal narratives of urban redevelopment can come to seem inevitable, and indeed natural.²² The colloquial deployment of ‘regeneration’, then, too easily attaches the economic to the social and the sexual. Plans to transform the city’s buildings, parks, public spaces, walkways, and other architectures of everyday life are almost always tacitly heteronormative in their imaginaries of the ideal city (and the threats posed to it by unwelcome outsiders), privileging heterosexual lives in their efforts to regulate the movement of bodies through space and time. Moralizing assumptions of community and its preferred or valid forms course seemingly ‘naturally’ through programmes of redeveloping, planning and improving the city, cultivating gentrified landscapes which absent unproductive and undesirable bodies.

Non-procreative, same-sex desire is often – and variously - cast as waste. Gay men and lesbians have been regarded as a potentially seductive influence on heterosexuals and their children, with the former associated with disease and dangerous promiscuity. Across lines of nation and historical time, non-heterosexuality has overwhelmingly been constructed as a perverse and aberrant deviation from a natural and sacral heterosexuality which, as the foundation of a healthy society, maintains, preserves and regenerates itself (whether in the eyes of a God or according to a Darwinist assumption of scientific rationality). The non-heterosexual other is cast as *wasteful* excess in modernity. Judith Roof writes:

²² For a discussion of the seeming inevitability of the workings of global capital, see: Mark Fisher, *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?* (Ropley: O Books, 2009).

while healthy heterosexuality produces the proper reproductive narrative – like reproducing like and increasing (similar to well-invested capital) – perversions produce the wrong story: decrease, degeneracy, death.²³

Degeneracy is a position of debasement, of being cast as ‘one who has lost, or has become deficient in, the qualities considered proper to the race or kind’.²⁴ Nordau medicalized degeneration as a kind of decadence, fuelled by fin de siècle art and literature, which manifested in hysteria.²⁵ And Valerie Rohy identifies how the ‘perversion’ of homosexuality came to be associated with degeneracy.²⁶ It is suggestive of a lack, a failure, and a position of undesirability, according to ethical and moral norms. Heteronormativity conceals the artificiality of its reproduction by casting itself as the natural opposite of this aberrant homosexuality. Rohy notes how:

From the mythology of the institution to the habitus of the individual, the specter of queers’ unnatural reproduction secures heterosexuality’s claim to naturalness; the essential falsehood is not that homosexuality is artificially and retroactively produced, but that heterosexuality is *not* (p. 21).

As modernity seeks to instill progress, it must inevitably cast some as contrary to – standing in the way of – this progress. Zygmunt Bauman has identified this unevenness of modernity’s ‘order building’:

The production of ‘human waste’, or more correctly wasted humans (the ‘excessive’ and ‘redundant’, that is the population of those who either could not or were not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay), is an inevitable outcome of modernization, and an inseparable accompaniment of modernity. It is an inescapable side-effect of *order-building* (each order casts some parts

²³Judith Roof, *Come as You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 35.

²⁴Oxford English Dictionary, “Degenerate, N.1.” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 01/06/2018.

²⁵Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (S.I.: William Heinemann, 1920).

²⁶Valerie Rohy, *Lost Causes: Narrative, Etiology, and Queer Theory* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2015). All further references to this editions are given after quotations in the text.

of the extant population as 'out of place', unfit or 'undesirable') and of *economic progress* (that cannot proceed without degrading and devaluing the previously effective modes of 'making a living' and therefore cannot but deprive their practitioners of their livelihood).²⁷

Bauman highlights how dominant narratives of modernity-as-progress are not benign processes but have a fallout for the livelihoods, social structures, and dwelling habits of those marginal others who become cast as waste through the telling of these stories. Modernity proffers progress, rationality and technological advance, but in doing so it must cast some as *backward*. Order building effects the freedom of bodies to move through, and dwell in, urban environments. Efforts to organize urban space according to ideal forms of citizenship often result in the inscription of borders along lines of class, gender, race, ability, and sexual orientation. Tom Slater argues that, ““Gentrification” as a concept and a political rallying cry has in many places been swept away by an alliterative garble of revitalization, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation...terms that bolster a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress that carves the path for ever more stealth forms of gentrification.”²⁸ The poor, the migrant, the homeless, the sex worker, the queer, and other urban undesirables lack a place in such schema. Unproductive bodies, acts and areas that do not (respectably) generate capital become cast as ruinous to future productivity, putting their histories and viability in the present and future at continual risk of erasure.

Throughout this thesis I use terms such as ‘value’, ‘productive’, ‘regenerative’, and, ‘useful’, as a rejoinder to heteronormative configurations of valuable and worthless lives. By making ethical claims using normative terms such as ‘useful’ and ‘productive’, I seek to recover them from discourses of the city couched in homo/heteronormativity and thereby implicitly (and sometimes explicitly), neoliberalism. I aim to invert homophobic discourses and to queer dominant

²⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives* (Cornwall: Polity, 2004), p. 5.

²⁸ Tom Slater, “Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement”, in N. Brenner, P. Marcuse, M. Mayer, eds., *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical urban theory and the right to the city* (Wiltshire: Routledge, 2012), pp. 171-196, p.172.

debates of the city and its useful, valid forms of citizenship, through attendance to queer experience and its varied forms and functions. What texts, lives, acts, and experiences risk being overlooked or assaulted by hegemonic imaginaries, and how can this be contested by seeking alternative ways of reading and writing the city? Through focusing on queer cultural production, the ordinariness, banality, and ubiquity of queerness in everyday life can be glimpsed, which does not deviate from a prior naturalness, and which participates in the continual re/generation of the city. This is therefore a reparative project that seeks to recuperate the ruins of the city –bodies, acts, spaces, and lives - not by changing them, but rather, regarding them in a different light: as productive, rather than wasteful. In acknowledging the instabilities of subjectivity, and urban experience, we can become less inclined culturally to impose a rigidifying order on the world around us. Texts elaborate these instabilities, and contain an ethical potential, for living-in-difference. As Felski suggests: ‘In our engagement with others, we surely seek not only a recognition of our differences but also an openness to potential commonalities and affinities’.²⁹ Through close readings of multiple texts and genres, I argue that the writing of queer urban regeneration *inverts* dismissals of queer lives and bodies as wasteful and decayed, illuminating the dynamism, resilience, and inherent *productivity* of queerness, and thereby countering homophobic accusations that lives which *fail* to fulfill normative heterosexuality are dangerous, unhealthy, or unproductive deviations from a more desirable heteronorm.

Under a hegemonic rubric of regeneration, London’s buildings are repurposed, its communities utopically reimagined, and exclusive architectures emerge in a spectacular cityscape. These processes continuously reorganize lines of free corporeal movement through urban space. When public spaces are foreclosed, the printed text maintains a vital and dynamic link to alterity, and a force for its cultural *reproduction*. Print culture can engender kinship, belonging, non/identification, and a productive nostalgia for those struggling to cleave a

²⁹ Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 138.

space for dwelling and being in a hostile culture.³⁰ These processes frame queer culture as a vital and productive force, recuperating the potential of decayed and ruined space, and inverting homophobic discourses of waste, disease, and degeneracy. Rohy argues:

Reproduction, after all, extends beyond procreation to replication, replacement, facsimile, substitution...If queerness means difference (undecidability, negativity) as opposed to sameness (meaning, identity) suggested by homosexuality, this might be best called not homosexual reproduction but queer reproduction (p. 100).

Rohy frames queer culture as a proliferation of difference, underpinning and enhancing multiculturalism, and inverting phobic discourses of waste and decay. Building on this notion, I want to recuperate *regeneration*, to detach it from heteronormative assumptions and disfigure it. Rather than seeing regeneration as a benign and natural urban phenomena, I challenge its seductive mythologies of the ideal city by turning to writers and texts which *imagine, embody, and enable*, queer experience; non-procreative forms of *cultural* (re)production that proliferate amid gentrification and offer diverse imaginaries of the city. These quotidian and clandestine modes of regeneration manifest and circulate in less traceable ways than the spectacular built structures emerging across London's skyline. Queer modes of London *writing*, and habits of *reading*, they are understudied in critical discourses of the city in the time of AIDS. I make the claim here for the status of literature in interdisciplinary studies of urban culture, offering new perspectives in critical debates, and new alternative epistemologies of regeneration.

Such writing can complicate notions of what a valued life is or appears as, and where such lives takes place, by proffering models of production that willingly dwell in the city's ruins: derelict or condemned buildings, insalubrious alleyways, council estates, and unlit parks. They often articulate the ambivalence

³⁰ Gilad Padva, *Queer Nostalgia in Cinema and Pop Culture* (Chennai: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Nostalgia is often assumed to be a negative term but I utilize Padva's argument in pointing to its uses in queer contexts.

of daily life, and locate value in spaces that can appear lifeless on first glance. These texts dwell on the bodies that also become cast as ruins as they dwell in space: the queer addict selling sex on the street, the PWA cruising Hampstead Heath, working-class teenagers who fail to desire the opposite sex or successfully embody masculinity. As Heather Love writes, ‘the art of losing is a spectacularly queer art.’³¹ But out of such losses, I argue, come gains in the proliferation of queer culture across time and space, between bodies, in texts and beyond them.

I am, therefore, trans-valuing (and queering) notions of productivity, usefulness and regeneration. Meanwhile there are other crucial terms deployed across this thesis which I use with a sense of the history of their rich and complex theorizations over the last few decades: notably queer space, and queer time.

Queer space

Binnie contends that ‘space is not naturally, authentically “straight” but rather actively produced and hetero(sexualized).’³² While useful, this critical moment reproduced binary understandings of hetero and homo, with queer space posited as something mostly gay and lesbian, rather than bisexual, transgender, or otherwise. Much of the literature in this thesis deals with a similar historical moment – incorporating the 1980s, 1990s and since, and much of it is also gay male writing, in part because of the specific ways in which AIDS impacted upon gay men, culturally and politically. But in this, I am influenced by poststructuralist revisions of queer space which move beyond a sexual politics of recognition, and beyond understandings of queer space simply as resistant or dissident space.

Feminist geographers have been crucial in contributing to contemporary

³¹ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (London: Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 24. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

³² Jon Binnie, “Coming out of geography: Toward a queer epistemology?”, *Society and Space*, 15(2), 1997, pp. 223-237, p. 223.

understandings of the city, particularly the ways in which urban spaces are shaped by norms that govern gendered and sexed practices, but also in the way that certain spaces can alter these morally-constituted terrains. Many have argued the ways in which cities reproduce a respectable and highly gendered moral order.³³ Knopp argues that feminist and queer geographies encourage a reimagining of space, including deconstructing established gendered and sexed hierarchies that inform spatial practices, allowing for example, the reconceptualization of cities, and of ‘boundaries, borders and other spatial demarcations in terms of their roles in constructing socially meaningful group differences and categories’.³⁴

In attending to queer space, I draw upon the recent queer turn in histories of London.³⁵ Yet many of these studies are concerned with Victorian London, or end their focus with the passing of the *Sexual Offences Act 1967*.³⁶ This legislation is relevant to this thesis as a whole, given the ways in which it will have impacted upon the lives of all queer British writers (and readers) in the late twentieth-century and to today, affecting experiences of same-sex desire, self, and how queer bodies dwell in space.³⁷ Although the Act is often cited as a watershed moment in the decriminalization of homosexuality, it also recriminalized same-sex sex; specifically sex in public; same-sex sex between *more* than two men; and same-sex sex involving a male under twenty-one. This recreated the context for the widespread *condemnation* of public expressions of same-sex intimacy, while – paradoxically – allowing highly specific acts to occur

³³ See, Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992).

³⁴ Larry Knopp, “From Lesbian and Gay to Queer Geographies: Pasts, Prospects, and Possibilities”, Kath Browne, ed., *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices, Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 23.

³⁵ See, for instance, Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: perils and pleasures in the sexual metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Morris Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: sex, love, and scandal in Wilde times* (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

³⁶ United Kingdom, *Sexual Offences Act 1967*, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1967. All further references to this text are given after quotations in the text.

³⁷ The Act was certainly still in place while Jarman was alive. Clauses of the Act have been retracted clause-by-clause, sporadically, and after much campaigning, such as the age of consent, equalized in 2000.

in private space. The re-inscription of acts as ‘gross indecency’ and the outlawing of the ‘commission’ of acts between men led to entrapments and arrests throughout the twentieth-century, and, as I will discuss later, ‘purges’ against men having sex with men in public (and sometimes private³⁸) spaces made by councils, newspapers, community campaigns, members of parliament, and police across London boroughs.³⁹ It is important to consider such contexts and the stickiness of their effects when analyzing dwelling, waste and decay in contemporary London, especially as London after 1967 has received less attention in recent queer historiographies than the earlier years of the twentieth-century.⁴⁰

Although Campkin has addressed the cultural geographies and politics of dirt and decay in contemporary London, what remains absent in conversations of the city is a study of how queer London *literature* variously intersects with these discourses, processes, and experiences. This thesis insinuates the literary into urban critical debates dominated by historiography, sociology, and cultural geography. And in doing so I attend explicitly to erotic potential, to sex and its

³⁸ “Law “not designed to govern sexual activity””, *Independent*, 2/12/92. In 1992 fifteen men were arrested at a private, consensual London orgy. All were charged with gross indecency.

³⁹ The rationale of the law was based upon suspicion of the contravention of established norms of decency. ‘Gross *indecency*’ is a succinct signifier of the general wrongness attached to homosexual acts. Its justifications require no elaboration, implying a general understanding and accordance. The Act’s brevity of expression thus privileged vague, unspecified homophobic perceptions of indecency from 1967 onwards, including *unwritten* norms about the kinds of behavior and intimacy that were appropriate in public. Definitions of indecency were open to interpretation, and police often investigated and punished same-sex desire at the request of variously outraged and offended members of the public, leading to arrests, beatings, and humiliating exposure in the media of cruisers and cottagers.

⁴⁰ Exceptions include Matt Cook, *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), Matt Cook & Jennifer Evans, eds., *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Sexuality and Urban Life in post-1945 Europe* (London: Continuum, 2014); Peter Ackroyd, *Queer City: Gay London from the Romans to the Present Day* (UK: Chatto and Windus, 2017); Paul Flynn, *Good As You: From Prejudice to Pride – 30 Years of Gay Britain* (Penguin, 2017). All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

writing. Bersani writes, ‘there is a big secret about sex: most people don’t like it’.⁴¹ Discussion of sexuality in criticism is often trivialized through a tacitly moralizing sleight of hand. Much criticism of London and its writing overlooks the significance of sexuality, including recent works by Phillips and Colombino.⁴² Phillips’s study adopts a linear historicist trajectory in identifying tenets of postwar London writing, attributing trends in literature to population increases and the effects of the Blitz. However, in ignoring the presence of the sexual in the social, and the permeation of *intimacy* into public and political spheres, Phillips misses the *queerness* and slipperiness of quotidian urban life.⁴³ Middleton and Woods have observed how linear historical understandings of time often neglect the complexity of social space, but how, ‘fictional representations of the city can sometimes even reach into those spaces that other representations cannot reach.’⁴⁴ Yet while asserting the uses of literature, Middleton and Woods also neglect the erotics of the city: the function of desire, gender identity and performance, homophobia, heteronormativity, or homonormativity; and how *all* of these affect how *all* urban bodies experience space and time. As Sedgwick tells us, the homo/hetero binary informs, ‘virtually any aspect of western society.’⁴⁵ Criticism that overlooks sexuality risks reinscribing narrow identities of subjects who often feel at odds with these modes. Halberstam has asserted the need to put sexuality back into discourses of postmodern geography, critiquing geographers such as Soja and Harvey for

⁴¹ Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And other essays* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 3. All further references to this edition are given in the text.

⁴² Lawrence Phillips, *London Narratives: Post-war Fiction and the City* (King’s Lynn: Continuum, 2006); Laura Colombino, *Spatial Politics in Contemporary London Literature: Writing Architecture and the Body* (Saban: Routledge, 2013). All further references to this edition are given in the text.

⁴³ For an argument of the permeation of intimacy through private and public life, and the impossibility of its relegation simply to domestic space, the family, or the monogamous couple, see Lauren Berlant, *Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁴⁴ Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, time and space in postwar writing* (King’s Lynn: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 278.

⁴⁵ Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990). All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text.

absenting it from their expansive cultural critiques, and thereby missing opportunities for coming to terms with (sexual) difference.⁴⁶ As some bodies are unwelcome in the city, so these bodies are often unwelcome in writing of the city: representations that repel an assumed heteronormative reader, and are often considered by editors and marketers to be unviable investments or unappealing for an audience. In the following discussions I draw upon critical texts which insist upon the sexual, and I bring conventional literary representations of London into conversation with the lowbrow, the middlebrow, and the non-literary, in an effort to destabilize a narrow consensus of what constitutes valuable literature.

My discussions are informed by the ‘new queer studies’ and its calls for non-identitarian queer critique.⁴⁷ Queer theory is helpful in resisting a false unity, and insisting upon singularities of experience. As Oswin writes: ‘queer identities, even when oppositional or counter-identities, are identities too’ (2008, p. 96). Rather than a simple struggle between heroes and hegemonies, I frame London as a contingent, plural, personal, and often ambivalent urban terrain, including arguments of how what seems hegemonic space often conceals a co-existent queerness. ‘Straight space’ can simultaneously be ‘queer space’, and vice versa.

Queer time

However, I do not wish to consider space without time. Indeed, Doreen Massey posits ‘space-time’, as a ‘dynamic simultaneity’: arguing that one cannot be studied without the other.⁴⁸ And José Esteban Muñoz critiques the

⁴⁶ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁴⁷ See Phil Hubbard, “Between transgression and complicity (or, can the straight guy have a queer eye?)”, K. Browne, J. Lim, G. Brown, eds., *Geographies of sexualities: theory, practices and politics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 151-156.

⁴⁸ Doreen Massey, *For space* (London: Sage, 2005). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

autonaturalizing temporality of ‘straight time’ which tells us that, ‘there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life.’⁴⁹ Munoz uses a queer utopian hermeneutic to interrupt the linear temporal ordering of past, present, future – inspired by Halberstam. This he does in part by cruising through time – snatching examples from across historical moments and bringing them into conversation. In his cruising of utopia, he argues the world-making potentialities of cultural productions. Elizabeth Freeman also disrupts normative teleology, writing, ‘A hiccup in sequential time has the capacity to connect a group of people beyond monogamous, enduring couplehood – and this...is crucial to revitalizing a queer politics and theory that until fairly recently has focused more on space than on time.’⁵⁰ Here, Freeman glimpses a potential for ephemeral sociability to emerge and exist in the queering of time, something which I take up later in the thesis. Freeman’s work on chrononormativity privileges temporal gaps and narrative detours: queer ‘asynchronies’ that can put the past into transformative relation with the present. Her study posits a way of rethinking historical consciousness in erotic terms in order to counter traditional methodologies.

I am concerned throughout with both the writing and the reading of texts, as well as with their content. In this, I situate my arguments in the context of recent queer literary criticism which explores the dynamic relations between texts and their readers, history and sexuality, and the ways in which texts queer space and time.⁵¹ A number of recent studies on reading *backward* have informed my thinking here on acts of queer reading, and the potential for sociality and kinship to emerge in reading. Christopher Nealon, for instance, describes an ‘affect genealogy’, analysing 20th century efforts of gay and lesbian readers to find a

⁴⁹ José Esteban Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 22. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: queer temporalities, queer histories* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 3. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁵¹ Kevin Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: lesbian and gay historical emotion before Stonewall* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2002). All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

place in history by imagining forms of textual kinship across time. These queer bonds do not necessarily take the form of human contact, but allow instead for a looser, ephemeral sense or feeling of kinship. Kevin Ohi has theorized ‘queer literary transmission’: the transmission of queer feeling through modes of reading, which can simultaneously be back and forth or without direction. Ohi writes: ‘this is simply the way I read – pursuing echoes among interrelated, isolated syntactical fragments of greater or lesser length’ (Ohi, p. 31). Like Ohi, my arguments are underpinned by an interest in the dynamics of reading, and the ways in which reading can be framed both as generative, and as a mode of resistance. As the past haunts the present with its textual traces, so Ohi also intervenes in a past text: a reverse haunting (hauntings are usually interventions of a past in a future, and typically function this way as teleological narrative devices). He is a future reader, reading from a personal and unknowable perspective. The process of textual engagement here is a melding of glancing back in time – of dwelling on a past text - and of creating something out of this past in a remodeling of the present. The reading experience is a temporal collage, which does not move clearly in any direction. Ohi’s textual experience serves both to regenerate something and not to regenerate something. It is not a copy of an original. Rather, to regenerate something queerly is also to rewrite it.

Love looks *backward* at queer literature, not as a nostalgic means of *avoiding* the present, but rather of reassessing the present by recognizing what has been missed or omitted in studies of pastness. Love writes of the ‘importance of feeling backward in contemporary queer cultural production’, and that backward feelings serve as an index to the ruined state of the social world:

backwardness has the status of a lived reality in gay and lesbian life. Not only do queers...feel backward, but backwardness has been taken up as a key feature of queer culture. Camp, for instance, with its tender concern for outmoded elements of popular culture and its refusal to get over childhood pleasures and traumas...celebrations of perversion...defiant refusals to grow up, in explorations of haunting and memory, and in stubborn attachments to lost objects (p. 7).

Love gestures towards the role of feeling, imagination, and creative play in producing and approaching texts. And the use of looking into the past through *feeling* and *affect* rather than historicism, which can give a sense of continuity with queer history otherwise unavailable. I take up Love's interest in writing which explores the negative and the non-teleological. The writing explored in this thesis is variously melancholic, utopian, ambivalent, and negative; expressing impossible affiliations, desolation, loss, hope, failure, mourning, trauma, pleasure, absence, play, or the uncanny resurgence of any of the above. Texts can cultivate networks, affects, and kinships across time and place, opening up a space-time of dwelling queerly while reading: in the play of image, narrative, memory, and feeling, during and *after* its event. As well as feeling/reading backward, cultural productions anticipate a queer future of the reader who is yet-to-appear. In this way, queerness is not confined to the page or a narrative, but extends untraceably beyond the text into an untold future, *anticipating* a dialogue with a reader who has not yet arrived. Imbued in this is a queer resilience and futurity. And the reader finds/forms images and connections as they look *back into* the text, retrospectively queering its landscape, finding traces of same-sex desire, or insinuating their own desires into the text. The text does not simply *reflect* queer experience or imagination, but also *invites* and *enables* it. This is the potentiality of the queer text, as a mode of *regeneration* and *production*. These arguments can usefully unpack the biological assumptions – the assumed naturalness – at work in arguments of reproduction and *regeneration*. By evading linear sequencing and refusing a point of origin, such writing blurs ideas of *causality*, as connections extend in multiple directions across time, space, imagination, through a dynamic relation between reader/narrator/text/author/authorial influences.

A queer study of the past is often emblematic of a desire for a different present and future, and, I argue, can help to bring this about in soft and *felt* ways, which are no less potent than the built structures around us. Acts of reading offer a mode of dwelling queerly and of cultivating a psychic space of reprieve from one's immediate surroundings. Reading can work tactically as a mode of resistance in everyday life, subverting heteronorms and imaginatively *producing* queer experience. Roland Barthes writes:

The erotics of thinking, speaking, writing, listening and reading is a chief concern for those of us who engage in an intensely personal and self-reflexive relationship with the discourses we (en)counter and (re)produce. The *jouissance* we achieve from the effort we exert in establishing and disentangling relationships with texts is a momentary gesture of liberation from discourse: it entails a loss of the self we think we know.⁵²

Barthes glimpses the potential for a loss of self in the experience of a text. Engaging with a text becomes an unreadable erotics. These are small everyday victories as described by Michel De Certeau: tactics of resistance deployed by the weak against the strong, which can productively influence how we feel, cope, or make do.⁵³ London's print culture offers readers a rich bank of imagery detailing same-sex desires and acts un/fulfilled by authors and characters.

A note on negativity

My interest in futurity is a queer one, aligned to contemporary queer scholarship on negativity. That is, I disagree with the lacanian and psycho-analytic negativity of Edelman's *No Future*, with its focus on abjection and overt rejection of any sort of futurity, and align my arguments more closely with *affective* models of negativity (such as Munoz's) which are invested in exploring queer ways of coping with everyday life in the present and future.⁵⁴

Munoz has noted how the 'antirelational turn' in queer theory maintains the 'purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference', and thus ignores intersectional discussions of difference that take into account race, gender, and other differences (2009). While this thesis offers discussions largely of the

⁵² Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, London: Cape, 1976), p. 9.

⁵³ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (California: University of California Press, 1984).

⁵⁴ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004). All further references to this editions are given after quotations in the text.

writing of white males, I do approach these from a position of intersectional difference and seek to remain cognizant of these writers' own differences. Reed's failure to meet normative standards of masculinity tinges his urban walks with an underlying risk of violence. Jarman was raised in economic comfort, but died from the effects of a virus that was little understood and grossly stigmatized. Reed as queer sex worker, and Jarman as a PWA: both of these experiences underscore precarity in London's recent past, and point to how, for many, utopia is something that serves a powerful function in daily life. Yet I am interested in the queer sorts of utopia that accommodate failure, rather than those which privilege normative gains.

Berlant has asserted the 'cruelty' of optimism, in the normalizing ways in which it sets out imaginaries of the future, and how cultural – often national fantasies – of happiness and romance foreclose alternative social forms.⁵⁵ Reformulating discussions of the antisocial thesis in queer theory, Berlant and Edelman have pointed to the reductions that arise, 'when negativity is confused with a negation of the social and political alike.'⁵⁶ As Dean writes, the 'shattering of the civilized ego...[is not]...the end of sociality but rather its inception.'⁵⁷ For Berlant, negativity is an endless 'starting over, not out of optimism for projected futures but for being in the world whose pressures are continuous' (Berlant, 2014, p. 25). This is seeking the ability to flourish, 'not later but in the ongoing now' (Berlant, 2014, p. 5). *Sex, or the Unbearable* frames a queer regeneration: that is, a regeneration not based on biological reproduction, the fulfillment of 'cruelly' utopic teleology, or neoliberal narratives of economic progress, but rather regenerations that are partial, constant, fragmented and ongoing, and that accommodate failure. To explore the negative, therefore, is not to dispense with any attachment to ideas of sociability and kinship.

⁵⁵ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 1.

⁵⁶ Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), xiii.

⁵⁷ Tim Dean, "The Antisocial Homosexual", *PMLA* 121 (3), May 2006, pp. 826-828, p. 827.

In exploring the uses of texts for queer writers and readers in everyday life, I emphasize the *feeling* of creating and consuming texts – informed by the recent turn to affect in feminist and queer studies, where, ‘concerns for the combined impasses of post-structuralism and social construction have yielded new approaches not only to corporeality, subjectivity, and agency but to the practices of criticism itself.’⁵⁸ Affect theory is useful, as Berlant describes, because it, ‘focuses not on orthodoxies of normative institutions and practices’, but rather on ‘what’s not trainable about people, who are always creating folds of being otherwise in a way that stretches out and gives unpredicted dimensions to historical and subjective experience.’⁵⁹ In this appreciation of the affective, I draw upon my lived queer experience of London: how I experience dwelling, kinship, and decay in contemporary London, and how textual objects have variously, and tactically, opened up networks of sociality in everyday life

Contexts:

Periodization

Given my focus on *print* cultures after 1981, and the role of the written, printed, material text in everyday life, I do not focus on digitized London, and the expansion of digital culture in the very recent past. I therefore do not discuss millennial shifts caused by mobile phones and social media (which are being registered in some recent fiction), which have had significant effects on the experience of time and place in urban life. This would deviate from the arguments I make here, and should be addressed separately. Instead, I am interested in how understudied queer *print cultures* have intervened in discourses and processes of regeneration in the late twentieth-century, prior to the emergence of these millennial technologies.

⁵⁸ Robyn Wiegman, “Sex and Negativity; or, What Queer Theory Has for You”, in *Cultural Critique*, 95 (Winter 2017), pp. 219-243, p. 225. All further references are given in the text.

⁵⁹ Lauren Berlant, “Neither Monstrous nor Pastoral but Scary and Sweet: Some Thoughts on Sex and Emotional Performance in *Intimacies* and *What Do Gay Men Want?*”, *Women and Performance*, 19 (2), July 2010, pp. 261-73, p. 263.

Most of the texts in this thesis represent London between 1981 and the end of the twentieth-century. Yet some of them have been published very recently, and therefore cannot be detached from these later contexts of their creation. Jeremy Reed's poetry collection, studied in detail in chapter two, was published in 2014, and Reed continues to publish extensively on his experiences of Soho of the 1980s and 1990s, from the context of present-day Soho.⁶⁰ Derek Jarman's *Modern Nature*, discussed in chapter three, was first published in 1991, but was reissued in 2018 by Vintage, with an introduction by Olivia Laing in which she describes the effects of the text upon her own urban experiences.⁶¹ In theorizing queer urban regeneration here, I am interested in the ways in which print cultures extend across time and space, disrupting chronologic norms. And the ways in which texts from the recent past exist in the present, impacting upon the experience of everyday life in this present, and re-emerging in unknowable ways in the future. Rather than remaining in the decade of their interest or production, these texts traverse time and space queerly. Therefore, there is a necessary reflexivity here in discussing the recent past from the perspective of the present, and there is some dialogue and necessary overlap between these decades.

AIDS

My period of interest begins in 1981 for several reasons. Firstly, I argue that conversations of decay, regeneration, and dwelling, in London writing must attend to the effects of the AIDS crisis, given its impact on experiences of time, place, and home. The first cases of AIDS in the UK emerged in the winter of 1981,⁶² and the virus inculcated a 'new moral atmosphere'.⁶³ 1981 was a moment of crisis, fracturing an already fragile sense of security that urban queers had fought to establish since 1967. Narratives of waste and decay were variously

⁶⁰ Jeremy Reed, *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon, Rent and Eyelinered Pussycat Dolls* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2014).

⁶¹ Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (London: Vintage, 2018).

⁶² The first case of the virus was detected and reported before the virus was given the name of AIDS: "Britain's first case of Gay Compromise Syndrome has been reported from the Brompton Hospital", *Medical News*. 7/1/1982. LAGNA.

⁶³ Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2005).

(discursively) inscribed onto bodies, communities, lives and acts. Sites of relative openness in the city – bars, cruising grounds, community groups - were deemed dangerous and contagious. Heightened stigma of marginal bodies produced a rush to expunge corporeal waste. Simon Watney illuminates how media discourses cultivated sensational and stigmatizing representations of people with AIDS (PWAs); through an extensive and sustained homophobic textual output throughout the 1980s and 1990s in mainstream media – a textual production of heteronormativity - circulated nationwide and read by many of the writers in this study.⁶⁴ Yet from this moment of chaos, trauma, and loss came an urgent creativity: producing a wealth of literature, much of which responded to these erasures, and takes on new meanings today as the materiality of the queer city crumbles.

Built regeneration

The second main reason for focusing on London writing since 1981 is that this year saw the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation, beginning a period of deep deregulation of the built environment, characteristic of neoliberalism, which inculcated a drastic reorganization of city space that continues today. In discussing neoliberalism here, I mean the emphasis upon deregulation, privatization, economic liberalization, and state withdrawal that characterized the politics of Reagan and Thatcher, among others in the US and Europe in the 1970s and since. This politics variously retracted post-Second-World-War social democratic promise, embedding capitalism as a cultural logic and an organizing principle of society. Harvey has argued the ways in which these market-led policies and processes, while claiming a *reforming* or *regenerating* agenda, and championing a vague notion of freedom, have instilled greater levels of inequality and delocalization.⁶⁵ However, I am not implying a single system across the globe here. However entrenched it may be, capitalism is

⁶⁴ Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987/1996).

⁶⁵ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

always experienced differently, rather than as a continuous, singular narrative. I am informed by critics including Harvey, but more-so Duggan, who gets at the overlaps between the political, institutional, the intimate, and economic. London after 1981 reflects what Duggan has termed as the ‘twilight of equality’: the consolidation of neoliberal economic policies legislated in the 1970s, and the introduction of marketplace-led logic into institutions which organize contemporary life: government, education, housing, health.⁶⁶ There is renewed interest in the limits, contradictions, and futures of these neoliberal cities which increasingly cater for a global super-rich, a decade after the 2007 crash (N. Brenner, P. Marcuse & M. Mayer, 2012). Questions are increasingly asked of these circumstances by ‘right to the city’ movements, as experiences of struggle in everyday life become ever-present and far-reaching.

Queer regeneration in post-1981 literature

Having defined some of my terms, and situated my study contextually, I can now move to a more precise characterisation of the projects and concerns which connect my corpus of writers, and also say a little more about my own queerly regenerative project of reading them.

I do not explore many well-known London writers, such as Iain Sinclair, who fruitfully mines the history of Hackney but almost entirely overlooks non-heterosexual lives.⁶⁷ There are a wealth of London-centric books, and the genre continues to proliferate and diversify. London’s galleries and bookshops regularly house sections filled with photo-books of London life. I take this instead as an invitation to explore the overlooked *queerness* in London’s literature, and how this can usefully complicate discussions of urban regeneration

⁶⁶ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2003).

⁶⁷To this end, I also do not study the range of books on London architecture and ‘secret spaces’ that decorate the bookshops of London’s galleries and cultural institutions. These texts constitute a dense corpus of popular writing of the city, and tend to focus on architecture at the expense of sociality, or reproduce the narrow terms of community and identity that I seek to avoid here.

by glimpsing, embodying, and engendering alternate life worlds. I have chosen texts and writers that *resist* the homogenization and sanitization of the city by contesting narrow, utopic visions of ideal landscapes and forms of citizenship that exclude minorities. These are generative literary forms which produce alternate ways of seeing, imagining, and *feeling* the city.

Published writers *mentioned* in this thesis who have written the city queerly include, Zadie Smith, Neel Mukherjee, Clayton Littlewood, Jeremy Reed, Derek Jarman, Jonathan Harvey, Alan Hollinghurst, Kevin Elyot, Jake Arnott, Neil Bartlett, Hanif Kureishi, Thom Gunn, Philip Hensher, Andrew Johnson, and Jonathan Kemp.⁶⁸ Much London writing and criticism reflects white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, and cis-gendered experience. Although many of the texts in this thesis are written by men, my selection here is due to an interest in AIDS, which impacted on gay male communities in specific ways. Although the AIDS epidemic affected many women, it was often presented as a gay man's disease in the 1980s, 1990s, and to today. Female same sex-desire does not have the same history of criminalization as gay male desire, and has dealt with many different (and some overlapping) stigmas, which I do not focus on here.⁶⁹ However, I pursue an interdisciplinary, intersectional and queer project, and remain convinced as I write of the inherently unstable relation between sex, gender and sexuality. Calling for an intersectional appreciation of privilege and stigma, Sedgwick highlights the 'tiny number of inconceivably coarse axes of categorization' we have developed to signify marginalization: race, class, gender, sexuality, ability (1990, p. 22). As some forms of privilege are granted others falter in circumstances that carry varying threats and affects: melancholy, trauma, intrusion, abrasion, amusement, fascination, pain, passing, or ambivalence. Privilege is not static but manifests variously across time, place, company; congealing, slipping, sliding, disappearing and reappearing as bodies think and feel their way through a life.

⁶⁸ The length of this study does not permit me to discuss all of these texts in detail.

⁶⁹ I have therefore not included, for instance, the historical fiction of Sarah Waters which deals with female same-sex desire, history, and time in dynamic ways.

Mapping the terrain of the thesis

Chapter One

Chapter one focuses on representations of London's Docklands. This area has a complex relationship to colonial trade and the flow of commodities into the nation. As such, it has often figured prominently in narratives of nationalism and outpourings of postcolonial melancholia, as warehouses and wharves fell into decay after the Second World War. In recent years, spectacular regeneration has occurred along the waterfront, and Docklands is now home to the nation's (and, at the time of writing, Europe's) financial epicenter on the Isle of Dogs.

In this chapter I study three main Docklands texts. By bringing these varied narratives and genres together as a corpus of Docklands writing, an alternative discussion of the writing of the docks emerges, one which moves away from well-rehearsed tropes of Dickensian gloom and dank alleyways.

The first 'text' is Butler's Wharf. Through close readings of unstudied planning documents, I explore how this space was depicted as lifeless, decayed, and wasteful; overlooking its function as a vital site of queer cultural production, and promoting utopic imaginaries of ideal, bourgeois future living. In particular, I consider how certain modes of gazing at the docks were encouraged by regeneration schemes, and how these optics drew upon nostalgic nationalist imaginaries. And I analyze the 'post-regeneration' marketing of these exclusive and expensive homes as a route to successful heteronormative citizenship, exploring the ways in which these domestic models routinized the movement of bodies through urban space-time.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ I limit inclusion of *built* regeneration projects as 'texts' and objects of study largely to chapter one, using planning of Butler's Wharf in Docklands as a case study and example of the contemporary redevelopment projects that are ubiquitous in modern London, rapidly changing topographies and communities. The writing of queer urban regeneration emerges in response and resistance to such projects, and I bring these narratives into dialogue in the chapter.

I move on to Alan Hollinghurst's novel, *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988), exploring how the novel's protagonist moves through Docklands and how his orientation towards and away from others is informed by prior – and stigmatizing – imaginaries and discourses of Dockland bodies.⁷¹ And how Hollinghurst plays with ideas of the performance and re/production of stable identities through this character's dockland *dérive*.⁷²

I then discuss Jonathan Harvey's play, *Beautiful Thing* (1993), together with its film adaptation, of the same title, by Hettie MacDonald (1996). Most often figured as a 'gay' text, I reframe this as a queer Docklands narrative, exploring how it recuperates a potential in quotidian life in Docklands social housing.⁷³ Here, I begin to think through the *habitus* of dwelling as an embodied practice (a central argument developed in subsequent chapters), detaching the notion of homeliness from built architecture and normative domesticity, and exploring the potential for feeling home elsewhere, particularly through tactical engagement with lowbrow, popular queer print cultures.

By drawing together these disparate dockland texts, I complicate ideas of life in the docks, illuminating contingencies and pluralities which have been overlooked in nostalgic renderings of this space, or sociological and empirically organized studies which absent cultural productions. Moving from spectacular structures on the landscape and their marketized narratives of good living, to texts which articulate the often unhomely or uncanny experience of inhabiting domestic, familial architecture, I foreground contingency in the quotidian, using queer criticism to demonstrate the multifarious and simultaneous uses of sites often deemed banal, ruined, or unproductive.

⁷¹ Alan Hollinghurst, *The Swimming Pool Library* (Reading: Vintage, 1988/1998).

⁷² The *dérive* is theorized in, Guy Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*, (London: Atlantic Books, 1956/1997).

⁷³ Jonathan Harvey, *Beautiful Thing*, Michael Wilcox, ed., *Gay Plays 5*, (London: Methuen, 1993/1994); Hettie MacDonald, dir., *Beautiful Thing* (1996).

Chapter two

In chapter two, I turn to Jeremy Reed's Soho poetry, in a single author study. Reed is a prolific London poet who has written numerous novels, biographies, and poetry collections over recent years but who has received almost no critical attention. Drawing upon his lived experiences as a queer street sex worker in the 1980s in Piccadilly Circus, and on Soho's gentrification in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, Reed's epic Soho poem, "White Bear and Francis Bacon" (2014) is a reflection on the destruction of queer space, and the ambivalence of living amid urban chaos.⁷⁴ This marginal perspective helpfully complicates understandings of Soho, disrupting the dominant discourses of decay used to 'cleanup' this territory. Against this backdrop, Reed elaborates the potentialities of poetry, as a means of cleaving a space for queerness and intimacy in everyday life: exploring the dynamic process of writing, reading and remembering as he wanders through Soho streets. Reed's poetry is a reflection on memory, corporeality, dissolution and the precarity of queer sociability. Through modes of reading and writing, Reed queers time, place, and history, and enacts a queer resilience and resistance to his material surroundings, cultivating a mode of being and coping in everyday life. His distinctive creative *over-productivity*, I argue, enacts a queer regeneration of Soho, extending a queer archive to future readers.

Chapter three

Derek Jarman is a recurrent figure in this thesis, and in some ways I have framed the sequence of the chapters around his geographical and chronological

⁷⁴ Jeremy Reed, "White Bear and Francis Bacon", in, *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon, Rent and Eyelinered Pussycat Dolls* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2014), pp. 31-149. All further references to this edition will be given in the text. Some of my chosen texts, such as this, were very recently *written* – published as late as 2017. Many writers in the present are writing about London in the recent past, and open up new readings of the recent past. My timeline therefore includes very recently published literature: writing which has – in the case of Jeremy Reed - emerged in a millennial context, and is therefore undoubtedly influenced by it to some degree, but also writing which is explicitly invested in representing London, and reflecting upon London, in the 1980s and 1990s.

movement through the city. Through the 1970s, Jarman moved between a series of ‘derelict’ dockland warehouses, in a downriver direction as these buildings were regenerated. From here, he moved to Soho. And, consistently in his London life, Jarman travelled north to Hampstead Heath. Therefore, he moves ephemerally through the following discussions – frequently reappearing and disappearing – and coming into focus in the final chapter, gesturing toward the varied ways in which queer bodies move through the city. And, as a PWA, who produced a rich corpus of queer cultural productions – not only through film and painting but also through his diaries - Jarman’s life and work usefully address the concerns of this thesis: regeneration, dwelling, decay, and kinship.

In chapter three, I turn to a close reading of Jarman’s diaries, analyzing his writing of cruising on Hampstead Heath. I analyze how Hampstead Heath functioned as a space of play, possibility, ambivalence, and also refuge for Jarman and many others in the time of AIDS, creating a mode of ‘homoness’.⁷⁵ Hampstead Heath is often constructed as a pastoral space on the fringes of the city, or a site with a rich literary heritage that draws upon the area’s bohemian history and canonical literary residents, such as John Betjeman, George Orwell, Daphne du Maurier, or Samuel Keats. However, while Jarman is not an uncommon name in film studies, attention to his diaries, and in particular, his record of visits to Hampstead Heath, have received little critical attention. Jarman is one of many queer London writers who frequented this space, finding sex, sociability, and a way of coping in a phobic culture.

I divide chapter three between a study of Jarman’s cruising on Hampstead Heath, and analysis of how the Heath was constructed through phobic media discourses, using archival news media sources. I explore how these discourses made Hampstead Heath a space of ambivalence, police brutality, gang violence, and hostile public cleanup campaigns. I present the space as a contested zone in which ideas of the rights to the city, of respectable citizenship, of dwelling,

⁷⁵ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995). Homoness is a co-existent sameness and difference that can exist in social relations: involving dynamic and playful kinship bonds that rely on familiar visual signifiers and codes but are not overly dependent on identity, and can even glimpse its dissolution.

dispossession and abjection were raised in the cruising of bodies through this urban hinterland. In doing so, I articulate cruising as a queer tactical mode of dwelling in urban space, and as a tool of resistance in daily life.

This is not a canon of queer London literature. The texts read here play out different kinds of queer regeneration. They are examples, rather than a comprehensive list. In the following chapters, I study how print cultures illuminate ways of reading and replaying, revisiting and reconstructing the city; foregrounding the malleability of city, self, and culture, and also queering space and time. And, at the object level, I explore how more material aspects of print culture such as book exchange, gifting, recycling, discovery, collection, and display, afford the potential for kinship bonds to develop, arguing that in this way, these objects participate in a spatio-temporal and psycho-geographic extension of the queer city. Bringing urban planning and news media into conversation with novels, drama, poetry, and life-writing, I discuss divergent representations of movement, space, character, perspective, and time, and explore how queer writing and reading offer vital modes of generating connectivity, intimacy, and meaning in everyday life. Through playful movement of narratives across urban space and time, explicit portrayals of marginal lives and inner worlds, representations of the shifting and gentrifying topography of the city, and the interrelation of all these; texts extend queerness to their readerships; problematizing dominant discourses of London's regeneration, and glimpsing alternative worlds.

Chapter One

Structures of feeling: Dockland narratives

Introduction

It began to be an enormous success story, a visible sign that enterprise was alive and well in Britain and showing its paces.

- Margaret Thatcher.⁷⁶

The occult logic of “market forces” dictated a new geography.

- Iain Sinclair, *Downriver*.⁷⁷

Ask not “do you belong to this landscape?” but “does this landscape belong to you.”

- Doreen Massey, *Landscape/space/politics: An essay*⁷⁸

London’s Docklands - a stretch of Thames-side territory reaching downriver and out of the city from Bankside - has occupied the imaginations of many nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century writers. Often, representations of this space have constructed an imaginary of a no-go zone and site of dread danger. Think, for example, of Arthur Morisson’s Thames-side crime novels, Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, and Charles Dickens’s

⁷⁶ Margaret Thatcher, Speech, Limehouse Link Road Project, 1989, Margaret Thatcher Foundation. <www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107833Transcript>. Accessed 08/02/2019. Transcript.

⁷⁷ Iain Sinclair, *Downriver*, (London: Paladin, 1991), p. 265.

⁷⁸ Doreen Massey, *Landscape/space/politics: an essay*, <thefutureoflandscape.wordpress.com/landscapespacepolitics-an-essay>, Wordpress: 2011. Accessed 21/9/2016.

dreary waterside scenes.⁷⁹ Oscar Wilde's Dorian wanders through Bluegate Fields after dark, casting London's east as a space of criminality and deviance, and for the slumming of privileged classes.⁸⁰ Diana Maltz has explored tropes of lascivious sexuality, disease, and primitive subjectivity in Victorian representations of the docks.⁸¹ And Paul Newland has explored the effects of colonialism on dockland imaginaries, noting, 'the status of the East End as a broadly-imagined spatialised referent of Otherness...the low space of the residuum; a criminal space; a sexual space; a space of revolutionary potential; an 'Eastern, Oriental space'; and an Asian space'.⁸² That Iain Sinclair's dockland novel is titled *Downriver* is testament to how London's east and south-east offers a literary topography of otherness, a locus of urban or suburban difference displaced from the inner city geographically and imaginatively. These literatures often depicted the transnational flows of empire, when warehouses served as workspaces for dockers and stores for commodities gathered from overseas. In 1931, Virginia Woolf observed a tired, decayed wasteland, 'empty of all human life.'⁸³ After deindustrialization and containerization, the abandonment of the riverfront's docks and warehouses in the postwar era as 'useful' spaces became a symbol of the nation's blight, encouraging outpourings of 'postimperial

⁷⁹ Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2014), Henry Mayhew, *Selections from London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, (London: Thames Publishing Co., 1960). For contemporary revivals of east London criminality, see, for instance, Alan Moore, *From Hell* (London: Bantam, 1999).

⁸⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (UK: Penguin, 2003). On 'slumming', see, Seth Koven, *Slumming: sexual and social politics in Victorian London* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁸¹ Diana Maltz, "Arthur Morrison, Criminality, and Late-Victorian Maritime Subculture", *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13 (2011).

⁸² Paul Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness* (Netherlands: Rodopi, 2008), p. 272. Newland offers one of the very few extended studies of late-twentieth-century Dockland culture.

⁸³ For recent nostalgic revisiting of Docklands, particularly in life writing and social/cultural histories which have written the biography of this space, see: Christopher Fautley, *Discovering London's Docklands* (Oxford: Shire, 2011), Fiona Rule, *London's Docklands: A History of the Lost Quarter* (Stroud: The History Press, 2019), Peter Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River* (London: Vintage, 2008), Gillian Tindall, *The house by the Thames: and the people who lived there* (London: Pimlico, 2007).

melancholia'.⁸⁴ Richard Hornsey notes a 'growing and continued disjunct between the visible wealth of the west end and the poverty of east end and south London slums' after the Second World war, as 'architects, medical professionals and philanthropic organisations came together in a collective attempt at social improvement.'⁸⁵ Hornsey observes how postwar social modernizing discourses often extended to architectural planning of the built environment, in an effort to influence the behaviour of urban bodies in mid-twentieth-century London.⁸⁶ But how did this regulation of urban bodies – and its resistance occur *after* 1981, and how did earlier imaginaries of danger and decay (mis)inform postwar imaginaries of the docks? Further, what were the implications of this for the ways in which marginalized bodies dwelled in the city?

From the 1970s, speculative property developers capitalized on these narratives of decay, nostalgically presenting postimperial detritus ripe for regeneration, and proposing visions of future use and commercial boom to instigate a spectacular redevelopment of Docklands that continues today. Docklands has been a crucial site in the implementation of neoliberal economic policies through the *enterprising* reorganization of the built environment, including the construction of a hub of European corporate finance on the Isle of Dogs. Although writers have attended to the varied and substantial impact of Thatcherite policies on British culture at large, including on living standards, employment, and poverty, the local legacies of neoliberalism, *and* their representation in dockland cultural production, have achieved less critical attention.⁸⁷ Matthew Carmona notes that while a number of articles on Docklands appeared in geographical and

⁸⁴ Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia of Convivial Culture?* (Wiltshire: Routledge, 2004). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁸⁵ Richard Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London*, (USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 5. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁸⁶ Hornsey explores queer resistance to these efforts through various means, including the subversion of domestic architecture, and clandestine movement through space and time.

⁸⁷ For two explicit treatments of Thatcherism in contemporary London fiction, see Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2015).

sociological journals in the 1990s, interest has since waned.⁸⁸ And although literary critics have explored Victorian writing of the docks, literary and cultural criticism of the recent past is scarce.

Yet there are texts which have registered this shifting topography, and which serve to complicate reductive narratives of a space of decay. In the following discussions, I turn to writing that has emerged from, or dwells on, this territory: to pick at the everyday experience of dwelling in this shifting landscape, as private and public spaces are reorganized, estates are demolished and privately owned high-rises appear on the landscape.

By drawing together a corpus along geographical lines, I move towards unravelling the deterministic mode of *imagining* this place from afar. In using a particular location as my field of study in this chapter, I am not positing a natural character of this place, but arguing against the very possibility of such an idea. I anchor seemingly disparate texts here as a corpus of dockland narratives, which offer a revised conversation of how Docklands has been felt, experienced, imagined, and written in the recent past. Essential to this methodology is a consideration of Docklands not merely as derelict wharves and warehouses, but inclusive of the bodies they contained, and the proximate postwar estates which are *home* to many Londoners.

Initially, this chapter will consider the narrative strategies of urban planning, and its social and material implications, with a focus on Butler's Wharf. Moving beyond canonical and conventional literary forms or classifications of highbrow and lowbrow, I read these unstudied urban plans here as *texts*. Such plans have brought about the spectacular, exclusive, segregated, and antisocial architecture that increasingly dominates London's waterfront, bringing drastic material and social change and contributing to a contemporary crisis of housing. Including them here illuminates the diverse ways in which the story of this place has been told, and turns attention to the construction of narratives of place, and how

⁸⁸ Matthew Carmona, "The Isle of Dogs: Four development waves, five planning models, twelve plans, thirty-five years, and a renaissance . . . of sorts", in *Progress in Planning* 71 (2009) pp. 87-151.

totalizing configurations of locality can drastically affect dwelling, livelihood, and everyday city life.

Nascent neoliberalism in J.G. Ballard's *High Rise*

I want to preface my discussions by moving – briefly – back in time, and offering a quotation from the beginning of J.G Ballard's novel, *High Rise* (1975), which encapsulates some of the concerns of this chapter. This extract describes a development of exclusive private residences in a new waterside high-rise:

Together they were set in a mile-square area of abandoned dockland and warehousing along the north bank of the river. The five high-rises stood on the eastern perimeter of the project, looking out across an ornamental lake – at present an empty concrete basin surrounded by parking-lots and construction equipment...The massive scale of the glass and concrete architecture, and its striking situation on a bend of the river, sharply separated the development project from the run-down areas around it, decaying nineteenth-century terraced houses and empty factories already zoned for reclamation.⁸⁹

Although this novel was published in 1975, six years before the 1981 introduction of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), the novel imagines the emergence of spectacular Thames-side redevelopments. It is a *dockland fiction*, topographically specific in its satire of the emergent neoliberalizing economics of the 1970s. Regarded retrospectively, *High Rise* seems to predict and represent many of the tropes of waterfront regeneration of subsequent decades: staging how new architectures embedded class divisions in material form, and dramatizing - as dystopia - how this limited opportunities for quotidian encounters with difference in Docklands. The speed with which Ballard's tower decays, becoming 'moribund, its vital functions fading one by one' (p. 68) is a comment on the redundancy of its rhetoric. Regeneration quickly becomes ruination. Rather than improvement, there is a resignation to a ruined

⁸⁹ J. G. Ballard, *High Rise*, (London: Flamingo, 1975), p. 8.

future that has already arrived. Ballard's dystopic satire imagines the near-*future* Docklands, unfurling the contradictions of contemporary planning discourses, and taking the reader into future dwelling spaces of the redeveloped docks to critique these visions of respectability and exclusivity. The narrator registers the nascent stages in the construction of a spectacular and striking architecture along the riverfront. Much of this language is typical of dockland redevelopment projects: a perception of current emptiness and 'run-down', '*decaying*' housing, and an anticipation of future rejuvenation. The tower is vested with an aura of expectation: the promise of a different landscape in the future '*reclaimed*' from the failures of the past and present, conjuring ideas of the ownership of space and the right to the city. There is an expectation of new residents: bodies that will bring vitality and form a thriving community. Ballard's towers are a prescient imagination of the idealized dockland spaces proffered by planners, containing car parks, salons, supermarkets, leisure centres and flats, and draped in the rhetoric of *improvement*. This spectacular 'glass and concrete architecture' instantly establishes a discord between the new buildings, 'sharply separated' from existing nearby structures and inhabitants (p. 8). Despite the transparency of these glass-clad, balconied homes in the sky, surrounding communities are rendered invisible, erased from routinized, everyday perceptual fields as the gaze from balconies is drawn upriver to the panorama of the city.

As increasing numbers are repelled from today's London by the escalation of the costs of everyday living, *High Rise* can be seen as a grim prediction of London in the present: its aspirational lifestyles redolent of marketing brochures for exclusivist housing construction all along the Thames, symptomatic of new, 'super-rich' modes of living that are increasingly normalized; domestic spaces that provide all wants and needs under one private, secure, roof.⁹⁰ The high rise affords its residents a sense of superiority and safety against the threat posed by outsiders lurking at the fringes of the development zone. I will go on to show how such redevelopment projects work to undermine the free circulation of

⁹⁰ See, Liam Kelly, "'No social housing' boasts luxury London flat advert for foreign investors", *Guardian*, 14/1/2015.

bodies. Rather than overcoming dereliction, these architectures *instill* a dereliction of the street, as new flat owners become oriented away from others, spatially and temporally. Affective encounters are limited, often taking place inside, between occupants. Individuated into these daily orbits, space is arranged such that people only come together in exclusive sites of sociability, and interactions with strangers or cross-class sociality become less likely.

But for all its satiric predictions of entrenched inequality, the *limitations* of *High Rise* also highlight the need for a more expansive study of dockland literature. The novel's contained world of white, affluent, heterosexist characters, mirrors the homogeneity which it sets out to critique. Beginning and ending in the *High Rise*, the novel is limited in its openness to, and encounters with, difference. The text lacks engagement with the diverse city outside of the building, cultivating what Philip Tew describes as a bourgeois, 'class solidarity [which] remains fundamentally uncomprehending of others' (Tew, p. 151). Despite satirizing yuppie culture, then, the novel entertains the 'problems' of a culture privileged in its whiteness and of economic comfort, mirroring the narrowing of everyday life along lines of class and race that the built environment of the high-rise performs. Such logics persisted in the redevelopment of this space in subsequent decades, as seen in the inculcation of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1981.

Contexts: The London Docklands Development Corporation

The LDDC was created 'in response to the seemingly intractable decline of population and employment in London's former dockside areas on both sides of the Thames'.⁹¹ With its creation, planning controls were relaxed, and private investment was injected into Docklands through corporate and residential

⁹¹ Jamie Keddie & Fran Tonkiss, "The market and the plan: Housing, urban renewal and socio-economic change in London" in *City, Culture and Society*, 1 (2010), pp. 57-67, p. 60.

redevelopments, in an effort to accelerate regeneration.⁹² Central government revoked the planning jurisdiction of local authorities seen as having failed to reverse decline. Academic books and journals, as well as small print-run, local texts have attested to the failures of the LDDC to take the local community into consideration. Susan Brownhill describes the LDDC: ‘with its government-appointed board replacing locally elected councilors, its lack of attention to the views and needs of local residents, its concern to attract high-value developments and its ideology of allowing the private sector to play the leading role in determining the pattern of land uses.’⁹³ Local residents expressed dismay in- *Our Side of the River: Community Views on the Redevelopment of Southwark’s Dockland* (1986):

In July 1981 a new organization came into being. It wasn’t elected by anybody. Most of its meetings are held in secret. It has a great deal of money to spend. Yet the decisions it makes have an enormous effect on the lives of the people of North Southwark.⁹⁴

This report was published, ‘from within the community, produced by people who live and work here’, and included interviews with local residents. The text functioned to offer a space for a more plural discourse of the redevelopment of Docklands. It used interviews, and personal reflections from residents, to produce a discourse populated by multiple voices from underrepresented parts of the community. Key in this text’s production was the inclusion of oral testimony of *residents* in interviews. The Rotherhithe Community Planning Centre, which produced the text, was set up ‘to stimulate a greater knowledge of planning

⁹² The history of the LDDC is discussed in detail in, T. Oc & S. Tiesdell, “The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), 1981–1991”, *Town Planning Review*, 62(3), 1991, pp. 311–330.

⁹³ Susan Brownhill, *Developing London’s Docklands: Another Great Planning Disaster?* (London: Paul Chapman, 1990). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. The LDDC offered only fourteen days for consultation on its plans, yet many tenants’ associations found it difficult to meet more regularly than monthly, in a decade before social media and the internet, and before the mass usage of mobile phones.

⁹⁴ *Our Side of the River: Community Views on the Redevelopment of Southwark’s Dockland*, Rotherhithe Community Planning Centre, 1986, Southwark Local History Archive, PAM 711.31 ROT, p. 3.

issues in the area and to support groups in determining their own views about the future of their neighbourhood' (p. 2), and expressed dismay at how the LDDC was weighted towards redevelopment of the North side of the Thames: with London City Airport, and the development of Canary Wharf. The report asked, 'Is the LDDC really bringing work back to the area? Is it providing new opportunities for the young? Does it respect the riverside communities of Bermondsey and Rotherhithe? Does it promise hope for the future?' (p. 3). What we can see here is an interrogation of the teleology and ideology of planning discourse, a skepticism about the likely realization of claims of 'rejuvenation', and a questioning of the very ethics of such agendas. The report also identified the narrow readership of planning documents, and the need to 'stimulate' a more democratic production of knowledge of built redevelopment, and its impact on existing residents. The title '*Our Side of the River*', points to the ways in which the rhetoric of improvement seemed to stem from the upriver offices of planners, legislators, and heritage organizations. The competing imaginaries of the docks then, are seen here to be rendered in text. *Our Side of the River* communicated this discord to a local audience by printing an interview with, Eddie Oliver, Deputy Chief Executive of the LDDC, who commented:

We are trying to build a new city within the existing city, to make good two decades of dereliction. Our aim is to bring the housing, jobs and leisure which make life worth living...We want people to be part of it, but they have to learn to live at the new high speed, not expect us to slow down (p. 7).

Oliver's story of Docklands foregrounds a utopic futurity, and a vision of inclusion and inevitable progress with the organization of space and time around normative domesticity, economic productivity and acceptable forms of leisure that make life 'worth living'. This is a promise, one which the LDDC wants to 'make good', a phrase which also implies a process of making-good: a remodeling of a downtrodden place and its people according to a set of assumptions of what 'good' is. Oliver states that 'we want people to be part of it', but only on the condition that existing communities *learn* these organizing principles of everyday life. The implication here is that those who fail to follow are unwelcome in this future vision. Further, Oliver's language collapses space

and time: he seeks to 'bring' progress to Docklands, implying that the existing landscape is somehow backward and requires *acceleration* and *incorporation* (or colonizing) into a grand narrative of progress. Discussing contemporary neoliberal narratives of the inevitability of globalization, Doreen Massey diagnoses this understudied 'sleight of hand in terms of the conceptualization of space and time':

The proposition that those countries which don't operate within this system...are simply 'behind', turns geography into history, space into time...We are not to imagine them as having their own trajectories, their own particular histories, and the potential for their own, perhaps different, futures...They are merely at an earlier stage in the one and only narrative it is possible to tell. That cosmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue...What if we refuse to convene space into time? What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories? (Massey, 2005, p. 5).

Massey's observations of globalizations are also in evidence on the local scale of Docklands, which was imagined by developers such as Oliver as simply lagging behind other sections of the river that had already begun to be regenerated. Buildings such as Butler's Wharf were seen as behind on an inevitable, desirable urban trajectory. This logic 'obliterates' the heterogeneities of space-time, relying on a binarizing logic between the good of the economically productive and the undesirable unproductives. Massey glimpses a more democratic discussion of the future city, one that includes multiple voices, and transcends rather than inscribes boundaries of place and identity. This has a democratic implication for lives lived in the city, and the rights to the city, inviting a turn from casual essentialism to a coming-to-terms with, and a living-in, difference. According to *Our Side of the River*, 'In adopting a colour blind approach in its work, [the LDDC] has ensured that black people have not benefited from dockland developments' (p. 27). By reducing the city to a master narrative – blind to difference - the idiosyncracies of daily life in this place were erased, and the

entirety of Docklands drawn into a stigmatizing vision of decay, ignoring the specific needs of different aspects of its communities.⁹⁵ Hollamby argued that, ‘the needs of the capital’s economy have been allowed to overrule the needs of the local economy’, and described the selfishness of the ‘market-led redevelopment’, which wasn’t reconciled with local community needs.⁹⁶ We can see, therefore, the tendency of dockland redevelopment discourses to elide local particularities and the contingencies of a place. I now want to explore these themes – of perspective, gazing, eliding and overlooking - in more detail with a focus on the redevelopment of Butler’s Wharf.

Butler’s Wharf: Re-presenting a landscape for the nation

- *Ships from India...coming from silence and danger and loneliness, past us, home to harbour.*

- *Oddities, beauties, rarities may occur, but if so, they are instantly tested for their mercantile value.*

- Virginia Woolf, “The Docks of London”⁹⁷

Modern life demands, and is waiting for, a new kind of plan, both for the house and for the city.

- Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Elsewhere, the *North Southwark Local Plan* (1983) acknowledged the ‘undemocratic’ agenda of the LDDC on questions of housing and communities, which were ‘not in the best interests of the area’. *North Southwark Local Plan* (1983), Southwark Local History Archive. Collection, P711.3132 HOL. 1983. All further references are given after quotations in the text.

⁹⁶ Ted Hollamby, *Docklands: London’s Backyard into Front Yard*, Docklands Forum, 1990, Southwark Local History Archive, P711.3132 HOL.

⁹⁷ Virginia Woolf, “The Docks of London”, *The London Scene: Six Essays on London Life* (Daunt Books, Cornwall, 2013), p. 7.

⁹⁸ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Frederick Etchells, trans. (London: Architectural Press, 1946).

Political geographer Steve Pile has asserted that, ‘there were (and are) specific geographies to resistance across Docklands, people organized in different ways, about different issues, at different times, in different places.’⁹⁹ Pile participates here in a critical urban conversation of the ‘right to the city’, theorized by Lefebvre and taken up by later geographers such as Harvey.¹⁰⁰ The history and geography of Docklands redevelopment is indeed a complex one that cannot be fully represented in this chapter. Pile observes that these histories are contingent on locality, and as such, I focus here on Butler’s Wharf, which has variously functioned as store for colonial commodities, a space of casual labour, artist’s studios, and in its current state is composed largely of multi-million pound flats.

Declining riverside industry left many dockland wharves derelict after the mid-1960s.¹⁰¹ In Butler’s Wharf in the 1970s, tacit agreements had been made between artists and landowners to occupy the space in exchange for low rents and maintenance work (many artists installed plumbing and repaired leaks), while waiving any rights not to be evicted without notice.¹⁰² The building was heavily damaged by a series of fires in the late 1970s, and these artists – including Derek Jarman – were evicted from their Thames-side work/life/leisure space (I discuss this later in this section). Butler’s Wharf was declared an Industrial Improvement Area in 1981, and planners were actively encouraged by central government to aggressively marketize the riverfront. As developers sought to make the space profitable, it became reimagined as an area of national iconography and presented in terms of a future urban utopia in the narratives of speculators, marketers, and architectural agencies commissioned to design a future space, a building, ‘of national rather than only local importance.’¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Steve Pile, “What we are asking for is decent human life: SPLASH, neighbourhood demands and citizenship in London’s Docklands”, *Political Geography*, 14.2 (1995), pp. 199-208, p. 200.

¹⁰⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); David Harvey, (2003), “The right to the city”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27: pp. 939-941.

¹⁰¹ *Land Use Survey*, 1976, Southwark Local History Archive.

¹⁰² “On the waterfront, the artists are drawing up battle plans”, *London Evening News*, 14/12/1979. Southwark Local History Archive. All further references are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁰³ M. T. Tucker. Letter, 1980?, Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, London Metropolitan Archives, LMA/4460/01/63/015.

Max Gordon, job architect at the Louis de Soissons Partnership (LSP), was commissioned by wharf owners, Town and City Properties Ltd., to plot the future of Butler's Wharf, and to envision a remodeling of the landscape and its function. The *Butler's Wharf Report (Report)* compiled in 1980 by Gordon (it is unclear how much of the *Report* was written by Gordon, and whether he had assistance from other employees) sought to, 'investigate schemes to encourage new and imaginative uses for the buildings on the site', 'an important and significant part of the river scene.'¹⁰⁴ The *Report* sought to persuade the Borough of Southwark of the need for urgent redevelopment of the 1.4 million square feet site of Butler's Wharf, a 'rapidly deteriorating part of London', with the 'introduction of new uses to replace redundant uses.' This included proposals for two blocks of luxury flats overlooking the Tower of London and Tower Bridge, a 180 bedroom hotel, a shopping and leisure complex, office space and shops, and underground car parking, all of which were to be housed on the site. The *Report* sought a great degree of demolition, but also a retention of the building's original features and facades. Although the *Report* was published a year before the establishment of the LDDC, it encapsulates many of the enterprising principles of dockland regeneration that the LDDC embraced, and was revised and much discussed in letters between the LDDC and other interested parties through the 1980s.¹⁰⁵ The *Report* diagnosed the 'site problems', proposing a 'general strategy' for the remodelling of the built environment. The 'strategy' would, 'generate enough capital to...subsidize other uses which will provide employment' and, 'all round activity in non-commercial hours, i.e. evenings and weekends' (*Report*, p. 6). This included building flats, 'sufficiently attractive to provide funds for the development of the infrastructure', 'which will bring evening and weekend activity to the site' (p. 6). By building 'attractive' flats, respectable visitors and inhabitants would be encouraged, securing 'all round activity' of new, respectable bodies: home-owners and economically mobile Londoners whose spending would trickle down into benefits for all (p. 6).

¹⁰⁴ Max Gordon, *Butler's Wharf Report*, 1980, Louis de Soissons Partnership, London Metropolitan Archives, LMA/4625/D/08/027, p. 4, All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁰⁵ See, LMA/4460/01/63/015.

We can analyze both the lexical choices and more general rhetorical strategies of this document. For a start, 'attractive' presumes a general standard of attractive, which casts anything outside of this as *unattractive*. The word choice here signifies a curious mix of conventionally aesthetically pleasing architecture: *clean* lines, new brickwork, polished glass; and also an *economically* attractive prospect, encouraging wealthy buyers to spend on a wise investment which will return a future profit. A sanitized aesthetic is therefore figured here as attractive and profitable. Clean buildings imply clean living, hygienic acts, and recognizably respectable bodies. Here we move from local details to the more general stance and point of view of the text: crucial here is the totalizing vision of the *Report* for the landscape, which sweeps its inhabitants into an organizing vision for the future. The diagnostic tone of Gordon's *Report* claimed an authority and an objective knowledge of the neighbourhood, its inhabitants, and its characteristics. It claimed to speak as truth rather than fiction. And it claimed to speak directly and urgently to questions of national importance, but was only circulated privately to a chosen list of parties, and read by a limited number of individuals. It was written in an authoritative tone, one that claimed an understanding of the landscape and its communities, and diagnosed both its problems and the strategy for their remedy. Any public meetings to discuss such proposals would have depended on the ability of interested parties to first request, obtain, read and interpret the intentions of the plan, requiring literacy and proficiency in English, and familiarity with local planning procedure.

The *Report* can be framed here as a 'strategy', which, according to De Certeau, depends upon the 'notion of a subject of will or power (e.g. a business, proprietor, city) that can be isolated from an environment' (xviii). A strategy assumes an economic or scientific rationality, and generates relations with a distinct exterior, such as the clientele of the report, or its adversaries or competitors. As such, a strategy at once claims authority in its tone, and carves up space and identity as fixed, coherent, unified. This, De Certeau suggests, stages a, 'victory of space over time.' That is, the contingencies of space-time are overlooked in articulating space in terms of stasis rather than as constantly shifting. Such narratives operate according to different sets of discursive rules

than the novel and play I analyze later in this chapter: the plan assumes an authority, it claims to speak a truth, rather than holding up a truth to demonstrate its fiction. This is also a *classed* narrative: a middle-class vision of respectable urban living. Without irony or satire, this vision reproduces ideas of un/desirable bodies in urban space: bodies which increase or decrease the economic value of buildings in a locality, and the wasteful lives that fail to make a substantial, tangible economic contribution, thereby repelling anxious, respectable and wealthy buyers from neighbourhoods.

LSP cited their proposal as ‘one of the largest conservation schemes in London’, framing the plans to redevelop the wharf as conservation, a term which evokes the ecologies of place, and the preservation of the natural environment. Conservation also implies the regular elimination of waste/detritus, and a need to conserve what may be scarce or at risk. As such, it is a term loaded with value judgments about the usage of space, and also one which cleverly suggests a sympathetic engagement with the landscape, by considering its history or function and acting to conserve these elements. Further, the slippage here between conservation and Conservatism is an easy one: with both seeking the preservation of a status quo. This casts a long, selective glance at the building, overlooking its recent functions – home and studio space to artists – which were removed rather than preserved, and finding glimpses of value in an older, now defunct historical usage, traced through the beams, pulleys, and brickwork in the wharf. Further, the deployment of language here subtly frames economically unproductive lives as part of urban waste, and substitutes *dispossession* with a language of *conservation*.

Having emphasised the text of the *Report*, I now want to consider the ways in which it was disseminated and received among a number of different audiences through the 1980s. Close analysis of material in the Southwark Local History Archive reveals how the *Report* was circulated to the Royal Fine Art Commission, the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, as well as heritage organisations, the Victorian Society and Save Britain’s Heritage. In July 1980, the Partnership planned a boat and walking tour of the site for interested parties, staging first a panoramic eastwards encounter with London’s riverscape,

followed by a curated, narrated tour of the site on foot. In a letter to Hermione Hobhouse at the Victorian Society, Max Gordon writes:

[we] have now arranged for a boat to go from Tower Pier, leaving at 12.30 on July 10, to visit St Saviour's Dock and Shad Thames. It is proposed that we disembark at Shad Thames and walk about the site.¹⁰⁶



Figure 1.1¹⁰⁷

The boat tour and subsequent walk was organized and mapped out by the Partnership staff (see Figure 1), which was followed by a drinks reception at the wharf for representatives from The Victorian Society, the Conservation Advisory Committee, and Save Britain's Heritage. London's riverfront is the prime site of visual encounters between the north and south banks, crucial in urban imaginaries. Tower Pier, where the group would meet before boarding a boat, lies on the north bank of the Thames, within sight of what is now the Tate Modern gallery, and adjacent to icons in the story of the nation such as the Tower of

¹⁰⁶ Max Gordon. Letter. 1980. LMA/4460/01/63/015.

¹⁰⁷ Figure 1.1, Annotated map contained in letter from Max Gordon, 1980, LMA/4460/01/63/014.

London. Here, Southwark's borders are in close proximity to Lambeth's National Theatre (opened by the Queen in 1976) and Royal Festival Hall (the site of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the first post-war building in the UK to be Grade I listed in 1981) along the newly developed South Bank, a 'national cultural centre'. Indeed, the map in Figure 1 graphically positions Docklands at the centre of London. This is a recurrent trope in the marketing and planning of Docklands: a graphic reconfiguring of the spatial politics of the city, placing Docklands at the heart of the metropolis. In these representations, other, more conventionally privileged and central parts of the city become peripheral or are simply elided. Yet proximate zones such as the new National Theatre increasingly cast nearby buildings such as Butler's Wharf into a spectacular contrast of downriver decay, and what planners regarded as a depressing reminder of Britain's slowed recovery since the post-war boom years.

From Tower Pier, the boat carried its passengers downriver, underneath the ornate Tower Bridge which frames the Thames in spectacular splendour, bringing into view the newly redeveloped St Katherine's Docks on the north bank, described by Ian Chapman, a sculptor who had lived in Butler's Wharf as, 'like a zoo where Londoners come to see how the jet set live'.¹⁰⁸ Beyond this, the river opened out onto a seemingly uninterrupted spectacle of post-industrial dereliction extending downriver, out of sight. Significantly, movement was in a downriver direction: symbolically moving past the preserved spectacle of the Tower of London, through the ornate Tower Bridge, and on to a scene of material decline. Raymond Williams argues that there is an 'alteration of landscape, by an alteration of seeing'.¹⁰⁹ This particular journey framed a certain kind of *view*, of a nationally significant territory which had been allowed to flounder, but which was the apparent key to the future prosperity of *all* UK citizens. Since the sixteenth-century, 'landscape' has implied some (human) *shaping* (from, *scaping*) of the land, for instance in landscape painting, or, physically in the

¹⁰⁸ John Thirlwell, "On the Waterfront, The Artists Are Drawing Up Battle Plans", *London Evening News*, 14/12/1979.

¹⁰⁹ *The Country and the City* (London: Paladin, 1975). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text).

reorganization and arrangement of a landscape.¹¹⁰ Landscape is, therefore, always shaped, mediated, and so caught up with specific imaginaries and ideologies. Here, the landscape functioned as canvas for a projected nationalist nostalgia, mapping particular meanings onto place in order to lay the foundations of a radical built redevelopment and a utopic future.

This tour staged the vision of the *Report*, presenting attendees with an urban panorama of the derelict docks, cast in spectacular contrast to proximate national iconography. This was a commodification of nostalgia, a means of persuading invited parties of the vision laid out in the report. This aestheticizing distancing was not only spatial in its reduction of the landscape to spectacle, but also temporal, in the superficial rendering of the building's complex past. W. J. Mitchell argues that: 'Like imperialism itself, landscape is an object of nostalgia in a postcolonial and postmodern era, reflecting a time when metropolitan cultures could imagine their destiny in an unbounded "prospect" of endless appropriation and conquest.'¹¹¹ Reducing the docks to its waterfront façade is typical of what Mitchell calls the landscape viewer's 'retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance'. Mitchell's argument points to the workings of nostalgia when regarding landscapes, the colonial regard of 'other' territory as less developed than the civilized west. Mitchell's claims are evident on the local scale of the docks, in the westerly glance from the eminent institutions of the city over the faded glory of the docks, lagging behind in the story of the city's development. Such facadism privileges architectural exteriors and elides local specificity and contingency.

Crossing to the south, the party disembarked to wander through the narrow alleys surrounding the wharf. The party's prescribed walk was an opportunity to evoke the past of the site, and the Victorian Society wrote that: 'The proportions of the street uniquely evoke the quality of nineteenth century dockland; it is an

¹¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, "Landscape, N." *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 01/06/2018.

¹¹¹ W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape", in *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 5-34, p. 20.

awesome and unforgettable townscape.¹¹² Others wrote of the ‘Dickensian feel of the street’. Awed at the ‘unique’ spectacle before them, the Victorian Society letter suggests that the visit is ‘unforgettable.’ Yet the tour also staged a forgetting of the building’s more recent functions, a process of overlooking the potentialities of the present in invoking a nineteenth-century past. After the visit, Hermione Hobhouse, Secretary of the Victorian Society reiterated in a letter the importance of maintaining the ‘robust architectural texture of this important area of London’s dockland’, and retaining ‘the existing fabric’ alongside the ‘urgent necessity of bringing life and commercial activity back into this area’.¹¹³ Hobhouse’s language is illuminating in its attention to the ‘texture’ and ‘fabric’ of the space, suggesting the affective and imaginative impact of a curated walking tour organized as a nostalgic and commercially inflected spectacle. There is an emphasis on the materiality and surface of buildings, the textures of the street and the atmosphere of an urban waterfront, rather than on any bodies that might be dwelling in the building. Hobhouse acknowledges the area’s deprivation, and the need to heritize, but also to rejuvenate the space through commerce. Indeed, Hobhouse is persuaded of the need to commodify these Victorian traces of the past in pursuit of future profit. Commerce will bring life *back* to Docklands. John Maddison of the Victorian Society reiterated this need to retain traces of the building’s past, describing how the tops of the wharf were to be left ‘rather ragged’ in a way that was ‘redolent of Piranesi.’¹¹⁴ Maddison evokes Piranesi, an eighteenth-century Italian artist known for his neoclassical evocations of Roman ruins.¹¹⁵ Piranesi was part of a school of painting that nostalgized ruination. His inclusion in the letter here emphasizes the Victorian Society’s participation in an aesthetic nostalgizing of Docklands as a space of ruination, mystery, and rich in a history that seems to end in the early twentieth-century.

This perspectival trick of the boat tour is also utilized in John Mackenzie’s film, *The Long Good Friday* (1980), in which the spivvish entrepreneur protagonist stands on the deck of a yacht, filled with potential property investors, gazing out

¹¹² Letter, John Maddison, 28/5/1980. LMA/4460/01/63/015.

¹¹³ Hermione Hobhouse. Letter. LMA/4460/01/63/015.

¹¹⁴ John Maddison. Letter. 4/8/1980. LMA/4460/01/63/015.

¹¹⁵ Nicholas Penny, *Piranesi* (London: Oresko Books, 1978).

over the docks. He proclaims: ‘I’m a businessman, with a sense of history...Europe’s capital. Acre after acre of land for our future prosperity. It’s important that the right people mastermind the new London’.¹¹⁶ Mackenzie’s businessman and the Louis de Soissons Partnership are alike here in their recruitment of history to urge a utopic, enterprising futurity. Sweeping the docks into a grand historical narrative and an optimistic vision for the future, the docks were imbued with a global economic significance, built on investment in property and the arrival of new commerce. A shellacked waterfront signalled a buoyant economy and a successful nation, a future promised by new glass-and-steel towers. The landscape becomes viewed as an investment opportunity for prospective customers, a piece of cultural capital. Mackenzie’s businessman and the boat tour both reduce the docks to surface. The flat, barren Docklands are a wasteland and a site for appropriation when viewed through such a lens: a depressing reminder of Britain’s slowed postwar regeneration.

The walking tour staged a gaze out *over* the docks, and, simultaneously, a glance back in time, using the landscape to tell a story of faded national prosperity and to encourage support for the area’s regeneration to restore lost pride. Derelict warehouses become a national blight, symbols of ruined industry and failure. Material regeneration signalled overseas trade and a national economic boom. As such, the renewal of the docks was presented as being in the interests of the nation as a whole, a British ‘we’ who were encouraged to collectively celebrate such developments. In appealing to the *past*-ness of Docklands, calls for regeneration claimed the space as a national one, overlooking local inhabitants as existing dwellings were demolished to make way for an architecture of the future. This perspective therefore both elides and invokes community: erasing any sense of locality amongst dockland communities, whilst evoking what Benedict Anderson describes as the ‘imagined community’ of the nation; framing a national story (which is also, in Mackenzie’s film, a *European* story) – in order to sell the benefits of speculative development and the reorganization of the built environment.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ John Mackenzie, dir., *The Long Good Friday* (Black Lion, 1979).

¹¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (UK: Verso, 2006).

In terms of the future residents of the wharf, the *Report* identified ‘the marketing necessity for the flats to have a view of the Tower Bridge and the City beyond’. This reveals planners’ preoccupations with creating optimal urban panoramas that looked upriver onto the institutions of the nation. Here, the *Report* incorporates national iconography into a domestic setting: making spectacular views a part of an ordinary domestic scene. This was a means of reorganizing the ways in which bodies would dwell in Docklands, facilitating ideal visual encounters with the landscape for the economically privileged. The *Report* proposed to:

take advantage of the one site asset – namely the river frontage and particularly the views...to provide residential accommodation which can be sufficiently attractive to provide funds for the development of the infrastructure (*Report*, p. 2).

Future residents and visitors would view the river from newly built flats, hotels, riverside restaurants or promenades, determining the coordinates and guiding the perspectives of visual encounters with a reorganized landscape. This in turn would stimulate the *infrastructure* of the area, by introducing wealthy residents with disposable incomes.

This value placed on *views* was not unique to the *Report*. The body responsible for Southwark architecture had established a protected perspective around Bermondsey Wall in the 1970s because of the, ‘importance of maintaining the visual corridor to St Paul’s’, regulating ideal visual encounters with the urban landscape.¹¹⁸ Tall buildings were approved around Bankside to capitalise on ‘the excellent riverfront views of St Paul’s Cathedral and of the Inner and Middle Temples, ‘especially the site to the north of the Power Station where a vista of the cathedral’s south face will be opened up on completion of the City’s North Bank redevelopment’ (*Strategy Plan*, p. 40). A dialogue is opened up here

¹¹⁸ Ceri Griffiths, Southwark Department of Architecture and Planning, *A Strategy Plan for London’s Thames-side*, 1973. Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.31 THA. p. 37.

between redevelopment projects in different parts of Docklands, one informing the other. The *Report* anticipates a future ‘vista’ that will be achieved by the North Bank redevelopment across the river. These statements illuminate the value placed on views *out* of the docks *into* central London, a westering turn toward signifiers of national identity, with such views to be capitalized upon by creating as many flats as possible along the river, each with its own private perspective over the north and west of the city. Traditional religious, financial, political, military and juridical institutions such as the Inner Temple and the Old Royal Navy College in Greenwich would be glimpsed from the banks of the Thames, but in a normative domestic setting: from sofas, or balconies.¹¹⁹ Views over key institutions in the construction and maintenance of national identity become valuable assets, such as St Paul’s Cathedral. Anderson has described the ways in which traditional nationalist iconography often bears a strong affinity to religion (p. 10). The symbolic function of religious buildings such as St Paul’s (including the ceremonial recognition of births, marriages, and deaths) links the dead with the unborn, mystifying regeneration through the language of death, immortality, and continuity. Of course, Anderson attributes burgeoning nationalism in part to the long *decline* of traditional religious orders and their ‘automatic legitimacy’, concomitant with the rise of print capitalism. But regardless of how many may or may not have drawn Christian meanings from St Paul’s, its function as an icon of national strength had been reinscribed in the twentieth-century during the Blitz, where many looked to its intact dome as a symbol of British resilience, securing its ongoing role in nationalist myth-making.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ The addition of One Canada Square at Canary Wharf on the Isle of Dogs, which sought to privilege the mechanisms of global finance within the visual tapestry of the nation, arrived later in 1995.

¹²⁰ See Porter, 1994, p. 339.

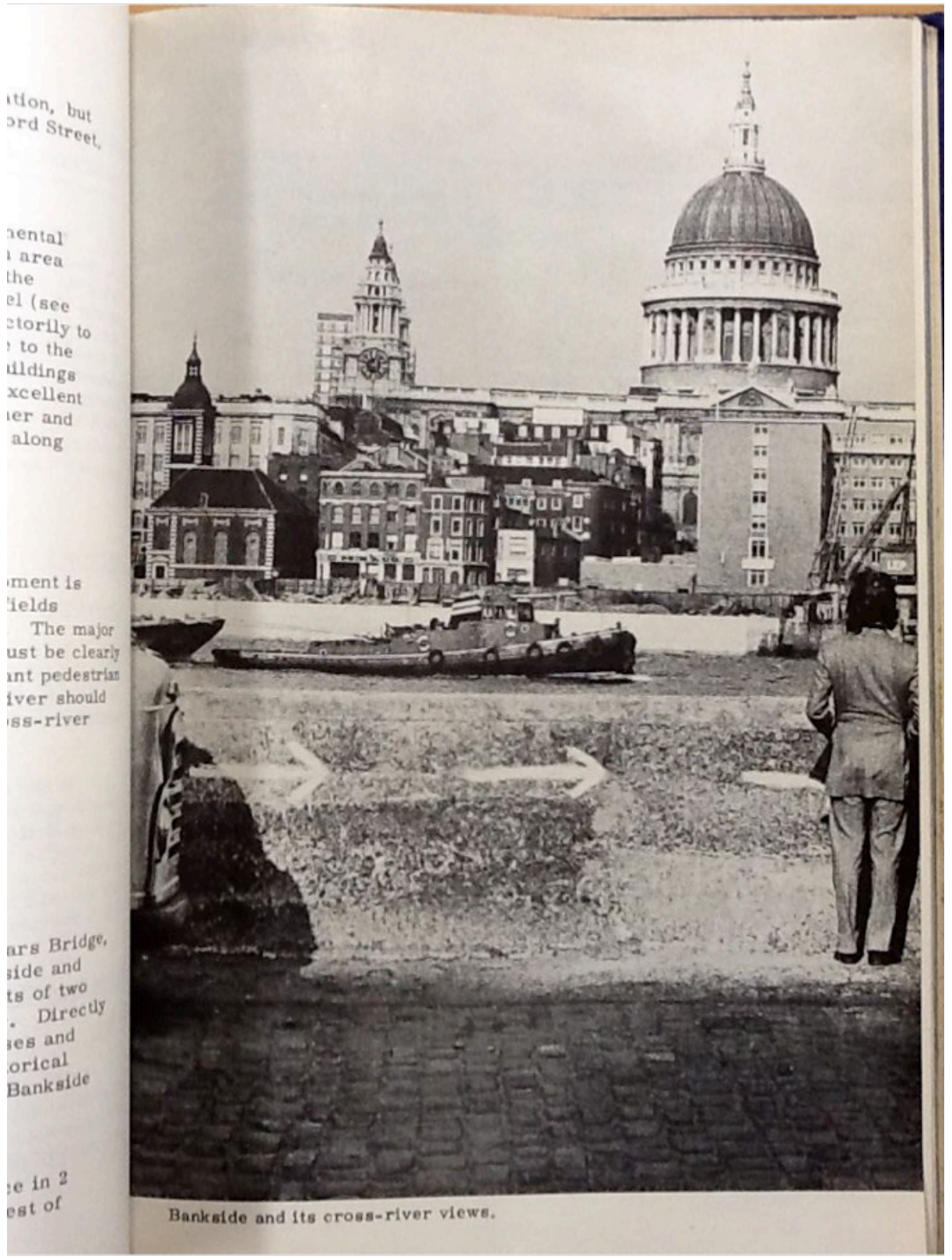


Fig 1.2¹²¹

¹²¹ Figure 1.2, Ceri Griffiths, Southwark Department of Architecture and

In figure 1.2, above, a suited man stands gazing across the river from Bankside to St Paul's Cathedral. In the foreground, cranes can be seen, hinting at processes of redevelopment that were already underway. Emphasising national iconography and the profitability of waterfront perspectives, the image evokes the scopic drive identified by De Certeau which, 'makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text' (p. 92). Such rationalization of the city from afar 'leads to its mythification in strategic discourses'. For De Certeau, panoramic tendencies overlook the multiple modes of urban experience, of the 'ordinary folk of the city... "down below", beneath the threshold at which this above visibility begins.' De Certeau thus critiques a mode of gazing at the city from a deterministic distance which misunderstands the bodies inhabiting a space, eliding the plurality and heterogeneity of lives lived behind or beyond architectural facades, 'the practices that are foreign to the "geometrical" or "geographical" space of visual, panoptic or theoretical constructions... "another spatiality"... an opaque and blind mobility characteristic of the bustling city' (p. 93).

The value of new dwellings was predicated on their perspectives over these buildings, marketizing the ocular and acknowledging the economic value of a nationalist gaze for tourists and property buyers. Paul Teedon has identified the impact of this 'landmarking': the reorganization of the built environment to maximize commercial appeal. Teedon asserts that the over-reliance of the local authority on, 'design-based and architecturally focused landmarking... [to establish the area's reputation as part of central London]... has produced a heavily commodified landscape for (high) cultural consumption.' Crucially, *valued* views always looked upriver onto landmark locations rather than downriver or inland toward suburbia. Easterly or southern views away from the river toward derelict warehousing and 'inter-war' estates, including districts such as Thamesmead, are deemed less valuable as they fail to offer a spectacle of power. These optics illuminate the normativizing tendencies of plans to develop the future city, which overlooked the 'specific geographies' of Docklands identified earlier by Pile. By positioning the wharf as a signifier of national

Planning, *A Strategy Plan for London's Thames-side*, 1973. Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.31 THA.

history, and part of a spectacular Thames panorama, the corporeal and the felt gives way to the organizing and teleological tendencies of a British narrative structure.

These ways of seeing Docklands reproduced the dominant imaginaries of decay discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Fables of nation were regular invocations in strategizing the future Docklands. In 1989, as Margaret Thatcher drove the first pile into the Limehouse link (a road designed to link the Isle of Dogs with the City of London and the national road network), she stated:

...it'll be tunnelling through London's history, including World War II. It really will be a technical triumph. And I hope then we shall drop our typical British reserve...that we might proclaim it as such a triumph, so we might get more such orders abroad.¹²²

By invoking blitzed London in discussions of regeneration, Thatcher's speech recovered fragments of the national past from the soil. Drilling through the earth functions here in a similar way to the mythicizing 'liquid histories' conjured from the Thames in London writing: appropriating cross-temporal historical fragments to construct a narrative of a unified national community, the 'we' Thatcher appeals to.¹²³ Thatcher described Docklands as a 'derelict land left behind by history', yet the key to its spectacular redevelopment was the simultaneous and strategic *re-telling* of history in her rhetoric, repositioning the docks in a historical narrative. Such invocations of nationhood often masked the deterritorializing effects on existing residents. The disruptive effects of spatial reorganization on local communities were presented as part of a broader process of national rejuvenation: part of a 'triumphant' technological operation that would secure trade deals abroad. As buildings were increasingly dismantled and rebuilt, and inhabitants were dispossessed of their homes, nationalist rhetoric implied a sense of stability in the docks, contextualizing regenerative schemes

¹²² Margaret Thatcher, Speech, Limehouse Link Road Project, 1989, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107722>> accessed 1 January 2014. Transcript.

¹²³ For such 'liquid histories' see Peter Ackroyd's *Thames: Sacred River* (London: Vintage, 2008).

within a long mythic history of a unified, coherent community, substituting the local for the national. Invoking Deleuze and Guattari, Owen Hatherley notes how, ‘the Tory-Whig coalition has to always “reterritorialize” in order to make up for the radically “deterritorializing” effects of laissez-faire; its bonfire of old certainties, destruction of communities, and creation of new and hideous landscapes.’¹²⁴ This ‘reterritorializing’ imperative is also in evidence in the language of the *Butler’s Wharf Report*, which framed the wharf’s redevelopment as a ‘national’ question:

At a time when government and local authority funds are not available, when there is a general lack of confidence in the country, this is a unique opportunity to accept the offer of a company, using its own resources to create a new and exciting area...unless radical steps are taken now, Butler’s Wharf will remain an industrial slum...It is of national rather than only local importance...an important site for tourism...if its historic and aesthetic interest is destroyed, this will be regretted by a wider sector of the public (*Report*, p. 1).

Dereliction was anathema to Thatcherite principles of enterprise, and the proposed redevelopment is presented here as a charitable act by a private company ‘using its own resources’ to alleviate the depression of recession. The *Report* issued an ultimatum: ‘whether this area is to be allowed to fall into total decay’, or to be restored to ‘a thriving and useful section of the riverfront.’¹²⁵ ‘Useful’ can be taken here as equivalent to *profitable*. Once more, the potentialities of the building’s function as a site of cultural production, or queer expression and encounter, are overlooked. Eviction of remaining residents was recast as socially responsible rescue from hazardous ruin, and their replacement with a ‘new’, ‘useful’, ‘exciting’ space for tourism and commerce. The building is deemed here as being of ‘national importance’, yet the *Report* was rarely circulated beyond planners at Southwark Council, interested heritage

¹²⁴ Owen Hatherley, *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys Through Urban Britain* (Cornwall: Verso, 2012), pp. xviii.

¹²⁵ Max Gordon. Letter. 27/6/80, London Metropolitan Archives. LMA/ 4460/ 01 / 63 / 013.

organizations or politicians. Its readership was drastically smaller than the very few contemporaneous literary dockland texts, such as Ballard's *High Rise*, despite having a much more immediate and tangible potential effect on the built environment and the dwelling habits of dockland bodies. Its circulation was even more restricted than small print-run, community-generated publications such as *Our Side of the River* (discussed earlier) which were intended to be made available to as wide an audience of dockland residents as possible.

Marketizing history

It is not only planning reports and strategy documents, but also other attendant literatures which promulgated a particular view of Docklands. Publicity brochures which targeted home-buyers provide another example of the rhetorical and ideological moves of the discourse of regeneration. The marketing of Butler's Wharf *after* its built regeneration disseminated images of exclusive, private, domesticity to potential buyers, aiming to: 'provide a sense of the tremendous history of this landmark heritage site.' This marketing of the wharf nostalgized, and commodified, Britain's colonial past:

It was at Butler's Wharf that elegant tea clippers from the South China seas and merchant ships from the Indies unloaded their cargoes...[Butler's Wharf] became affectionately known as 'London's Larder' as through them flowed the seasoning and refinements for dining tables across the country.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Butler's Wharf marketing prospectus (1995?), Prestbury Group PLC, Southwark Local History Archives.



Fig. 1.3. 127

As seen above in figure 1.3, this description was printed over a black and white photograph showing dockers unloading crates from a ship: a scene of late Victorian, homosocial, working-class life. The imperial history of the docks is described here in sanitizing terms of 'elegance', and 'affection'. Displacing colonial commodities to the 'dining tables' of an English past, imperialism becomes a bowdlerized story of sustenance and an invigoration of the British table, rendered through exotic objects rather than bodies, celebrating the introduction of new commodities and eliding the exploitative labour relations embedded in the history of dockland trade, in the United Kingdom and transnationally. The brochure deploys aestheticizing rhetoric to encourage new property buyers, claiming the, 'potential' of, 'contemporary living built on the solid foundations of this historic warehouse'. The history of Butler's Wharf is

¹²⁷ Fig 1.3 Butler's Wharf marketing prospectus (1995?), Prestbury Group PLC, Southwark Local History Archives. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

also, in part, one of colonial trade and exploitation, and many wharves functioned as storage facilities for commodities acquired through slavery: spices, textiles, tea and other commodities. Yet the scrubbing of the surfaces of Butler's Wharf, and their photographic and textual re-presentation in marketing brochures, provoked a forgetting of a colonial past through a banalized retelling. Such marketing can be read as a form of what Gilroy describes as 'postimperial melancholia', that is, a refusal to face or effectively mourn the loss of empire (p. 2). Gilroy argues that this melancholia characterizes a racist present, nostalgically directing attention to the faded domination of formerly colonized territories. He argues that this melancholia is often manifest in aesthetic and cultural productions, and demands that we become interested in how the literary and cultural [...] dynamics of the country [Britain] have responded to [...] the great transformation that quickly reduced the world's preeminent power to a political and economic operation of more modest dimensions' (p. 2). Characteristic of this postimperial melancholia is the idea that the moment things went wrong for the nation was the moment of imperial collapse. If the forest of masts in Docklands had been a symbol of national prowess at the height of empire, its disappearance after decolonization, and containerization in the 1960s, was lamentable. This chrononormative glance back at history suggests a lost homogeneous, harmonious experience of a nation. Nostalgic calls for a reconstruction of the docks signalled not only postwar and postindustrial decline but a *postimperial* atrophy.¹²⁸ These brochures participate in this cultural dynamic that Gilroy identifies, working to reproduce nostalgia, and extending it into culture. Postimperial melancholia, therefore, has not simply been registered in conventional forms of art and literature but is present in many narrative forms including those of urban planning and marketing, which work to structure everyday life and organize cultural memory through the built environment. In regarding these texts as sites of the reproduction of imperialist nostalgia, they

¹²⁸ See also the BBC production of *A Vision of Britain* (1989), in which Prince Charles takes to a boat on the Thames to lament post-war urban reconstruction, using London's riverscape as a canvas on which to project his melancholia at the perceived 'loss' of a coherent national identity. Charles, Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain: a personal view of architecture* (London: Doubleday, 1989), and, Ian Baucom, "Among the Ruins: Topographies of Postimperial Melancholy", *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.2 (1996) 259-288, p. 283.

demand a critical attention. They stage the process identified by Gilroy, by which unsettling histories are, ‘diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten’, allowing significant parts of the populace to ‘imagin[e] that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects’ (p. 52). By eliding embodied experiences of colonialism and concentrating on material facades, troubling histories are erased or reordered in a blurred retelling of the national past.

The marketing of expensive, private, domestic space in Butler’s Wharf, from the 1990s to today, reveals the influence of earlier planning discourses on the city. These discourses, which variously lobbied, narrated, endorsed, and in the case of the LDDC sanctioned, various forms of built regeneration, induced a spectacular stream of demolition and construction, dispossession and speculation. Today, estate agents selling multi-million pound flats in the wharf continue to promote the same features that were mentioned in initial marketing brochures: underground car parking, constant CCTV, secure entrances and exits, a concierge service, material traces of the nineteenth-century, and spectacular views over the city.¹²⁹

Corporeal circulation

A central concern of this thesis is how bodies dwell in urban space, spatially and temporally. So far, I have explored some of the ways in which planning texts constructed ways of seeing Docklands, and their (mis)use of nationalist history, including an analysis of the ways in which heritage organizations were encouraged to move through the docks and to imagine its future. We have seen how plans staged modes of gazing which prioritized buildings rather than bodies, and how this functioned as a form of othering, and a mode of forgetting difficult histories. I now want to study how planning texts imagined ideal forms of domestic life along the Thames, and the implications of this for how bodies

¹²⁹ www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-68189608, accessed 5/12/18.

dwell in the city. How were patterns of movement *through* or dwelling *in* the Docklands strategized by these schema?

The North Southwark Plan (1983), which outlined Southwark Council's plans for the following decade, had cited a need for 'improvements...to circulation patterns' for future citizens of Butler's Wharf. Narrow alleyways and limited riverside access (from the street) were seen as impacting on the flow of bodies into the space, discouraging commerce. 'The provision of open space, a river walk, and retention of important heritage features' had been intended to increase and improve the flow of bodies through the space, as well as, 'opening up dark or remote areas' to improve security (p. 28). The construction of a seven-story block of flats, riverfront shops, an underground car park and a nine-story hotel, it was hoped, would 'enliven the area with new uses': introducing profitable bodies, of tourists, shoppers, private residents or office workers, regenerating the community by increasing the circulation of traffic and capital.

The new architecture of Butler's Wharf prioritized security, surveillance, and routinized, respectable domesticity. As the prospectus for the newly renovated Butler's Wharf advertised to prospective buyers:

24-hour manned security is backed up by constant video monitoring of all entry points. Video entry phones [and] security at the porter's lodge, are provided as standard. At least one underground parking space per apartment is available.

The regenerated building had become a panopticon: a disciplinary architecture which prioritized surveillance from all angles, and the monitoring and recording of bodies seeking access or passing through, thereby regulating access, interaction, and movement. New arrivals had to show their faces before admittance by a porter, and an underground car park supplied subterranean access and departure for residents, removing the need to ever walk outside the building. New residents of the wharf bought small, discrete domestic units, containing a privatized domesticity, while staff were tasked with viewing footage of the building's perimeter from CCTV cameras arranged to monitor comings

and goings, and to identify or inhibit ‘disorderly’ behavior from bodies which did not belong. This technologically mediated gaze at the building’s interior and exterior highlights a disciplining scrutiny of urban bodies. These later incarnations of the wharf - in the flats of the late 1990s - illustrate how ideas of normative domesticity were mapped onto the wharf, becoming organizing principles of everyday life. And further, how lingering notions of a dangerous east-London underclass were reproduced – or at least went unchallenged - in the organization of the late twentieth-century built environment, with an emphasis on the need to protect private property.

In her study of gentrification in New York City in the time of AIDS, Schulman observes how, ‘familial privatization got resituated into big buildings, attached residences, and apartments. This undermines urbanity and recreates cities as centers of obedience instead of instigators of positive change’ (2012, p. 28). Schulman argues that gentrification forecloses opportunities for urban citizens to encounter difference convivially. To live openly to these differences can foster ‘positive change’ in the everyday by stalling and contradicting discriminatory ideologies: misogyny, racism, homophobia, or classism. To construct a spectacular, privatized, ‘vertical city’ is to inscribe class difference on the landscape, producing anxiety, avoidance, and reorienting the movement of bodies in the city. Such deregulated redevelopment is increasingly manifest on the urban skyline, and regularly cited – and blamed - in debates of London’s current housing crisis. Minton notes how ‘London...no longer serve[s] people from a wide range of communities and income brackets, excluding them from expensive amenities and reasonably priced housing and forcing them into intolerable conditions or out of the city altogether, raising the question of who is the city for?’ (Minton, 2017, p. xvi).

Discussing post-regeneration dockland architecture, T. Butler notes how:

although strong, long-established communities exist in many of the dockland’s council estates, these sit side by side with the more transient and part-time residents occupying many of the new apartment blocks...They did not wish to become integrated into their neighbourhoods, or become friendly

with their neighbours; rather, they simply wanted “efficient” living arrangements with minimal commitments.’¹³⁰

New residents of Docklands were often ‘transient’, ‘part-time’ or resistant towards getting to know those living in stigmatized social housing. This rendering of economic inequality in material form inscribed a Benjaminian image of dialectical contradiction on the landscape. As Matthew Taunton observes of postwar London, ‘there is a determinate geography of class in the city that shapes and is shaped by the distribution of housing types and tenures’.¹³¹ Brownhill has observed that the, ‘Docklands indeed became the spatial expression of the enterprise culture’ (p. 17). However, while an injection of capital coursed rapidly through new developments, such exclusive domesticity, premised on the exclusion of outsiders and the provision of a contained mode of living, did not extend the benefits of ‘regeneration’ to neighbouring dockland communities.

The introduction of restaurant space and shopping space that necessarily operated according to commercial licensing laws further entrenched the corporeal regulation of Butler’s Wharf; privileging shopping, domesticity, and respectable, visible, heteronormative sociability in bars and restaurants. This vision for the landscape was not wholly explicit. The normativizing effects of such schema are often tacit and unconscious, permeating culture in ways that are often only visible to and felt by (sexually, racially, or otherwise) marginal bodies as they seek to move through the city differently; underscoring the city’s ‘differentiated mobilities’, and the ways in which certain bodies are privileged with an ease of movement through, or dwelling in, the city based upon their ability to perform or pass as a narrow set of identities. Massey describes how, amid the flows and interconnections of space-time, there is a complex ‘power geometry’ at work, ‘in relation to...flows and...movement’:

¹³⁰ T. Butler, “The middle class and the future of London”, in, M. Boddy & M. Parkinson eds., *City matters: Competitiveness, cohesion and urban governance* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004), p. 147.

¹³¹ Matthew Taunton, *Fictions of the city: class, culture and mass housing in London and Paris* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 3.

Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it [There] is, in other words, a highly complex social differentiation. There are differences in the degree of movement and communication, but also in the degree of control and initiation. The ways in which people are placed within time-space compression are highly complicated and extremely varied.¹³²

The desire for 'circulation' mentioned repeatedly in various plans and proposals instilled commercially inflected routines into the neighbourhood, structuring patterns of daily life by providing service jobs, and guiding waterfront routes through retail outlets. Such methods do indeed expand opportunities for circulation, but a circulation of capital rather than the free circulation of bodies through urban space-time. According to Richard Sennett, the determination of the use of space by modern planning represents, 'a naïve view of what the "good city" is.'¹³³ And Campkin acknowledges that, 'many urban theorists have argued convincingly for the positive values of informality within cities, and for less controlled and predictable approaches to urban management.' According to Campkin, these 'orderly ideals' of modern planning have the effect of 'denying urban complexity, inhibiting innovation and positive forms of sociability.'¹³⁴ I am not suggesting here that dockland bodies were simply automatons, following prescribed routes through space. Such proscription will always be subverted. As Turner writes,

What happens in the city of tomorrow when all space is thought through and rationalized in advance? What happens when there is no such thing as uncertainty? What happens when it all becomes predictable? People will find

¹³² Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 156. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹³³ Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), p. 83.

¹³⁴ Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*, (Cornwall: I.B. Taurus, 2013), p. 74.

their own alternative geometries, strategically, tactically, finding new ways of operating. There will always be the opportunity to create danger.¹³⁵

This gap between abstract strategizing and lived experience betrays the normativizing logics of such planning discourses: the assumption that there is a natural way of moving through city space. The strategies of regulating dwelling and circulation patterns in such texts as the *Butler's Wharf Report* and the *North Southwark Plan* express a chrononormativizing tendency. Freeman argues that chrononormativity is, 'the use of time to organize individual bodies toward maximum productivity' (p. 3). Dana Luciano relates the organization of time to the body, describing '*chronobiopolitics*' as: 'the sexual arrangement of the time of life' of populations.'¹³⁶ A chronobiological society endorses 'teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals' (p. 9). We can see here how the redevelopment of Butler's Wharf sought to strategize the ways in which the wharf was used, spatially, temporally, and corporeally, encouraging experiences structured by capital, such as walking through shopping arcades or eating at restaurants.

These elements underscore the routinization of corporeal circulation in the city: the mapping out of proper behaviours, and the scrutiny of outsiders who appear as though they cannot afford to dwell in such zones of exclusivity and respectability. Such projects failed in their objective to enhance the *circulation* of bodies through the city, producing hyper-commercial ground-floor space, and exclusivist enclaves of private property, which continue to limit the possibilities of urban wandering and chance encounters in such spaces.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Mark Turner, "Zigzagging", in, M. Beaumont & G. Dart, eds., *Restless Cities*, (Oxfordshire: Verso, 2010), pp. 299-315, p. 314.

¹³⁶ Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), p. 9.

¹³⁷ By circulation here I am gesturing toward types of urban experience where difference and multi-culture are encountered in the quotidian as an ordinary aspect of the city.

Dwelling in ruins: Derek Jarman at Butler's Wharf

We have seen how Butler's Wharf was variously presented as a site of social and material decay to incentivize hegemonic improving agendas, which prescribed a spatio-temporal ordering of everyday life.¹³⁸ But how did the vocabularies of dirt, decay, and waste utilized in these plans work to cast *out* existing inhabitants? What of the queer uses of this space, overlooked in the planning of the site's future? What is especially striking, when researching these plans in the Southwark Local History Archives, is their complete elision of Butler's Wharf's function as a site of cultural production throughout the 1970s. For instance, *Butler's Wharf: A Revitalisation Strategy*, described the Wharf as, 'one of the best remaining fragments of London's nineteenth-century dockland.... The warehouses in the Butler's Wharf area finally ceased to be actively used in March 1972.'¹³⁹ Butler's Wharf was coded as derelict space used for 'storage', a 'transitional zone', of 'mainly obsolete commercial warehouses' - imbued with 'investment potential'.¹⁴⁰ This strategy incorrectly claims the dereliction of the building after 1972. Through the 1970s, Derek Jarman - along with seventy or so other artists - lived at the wharf. Jarman's decade in the Docklands has invited recent queer historiographical and cultural geographical attention from Cook (2014), and Turner (2011),¹⁴¹ attesting to the creation of a thriving centre of urban (counter) cultural production by artists at the wharf. Social, cultural, political, emotional, and sexual functions were thus overlooked by a logic which prioritized tangible financial gain above other uses of space. According to the strategy above, the building's vital *content* is *floorspace*. The dynamism of the space - its corporeal contents - are stripped away. Instead, square footage is the vital component, the potential foundation for a regenerated future. De Certeau describes how: '*space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined

¹³⁸Ceri Griffiths, Southwark Department of Architecture and Planning, *A Strategy Plan for London's Thames-side*, 1973 (Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.31 THA).

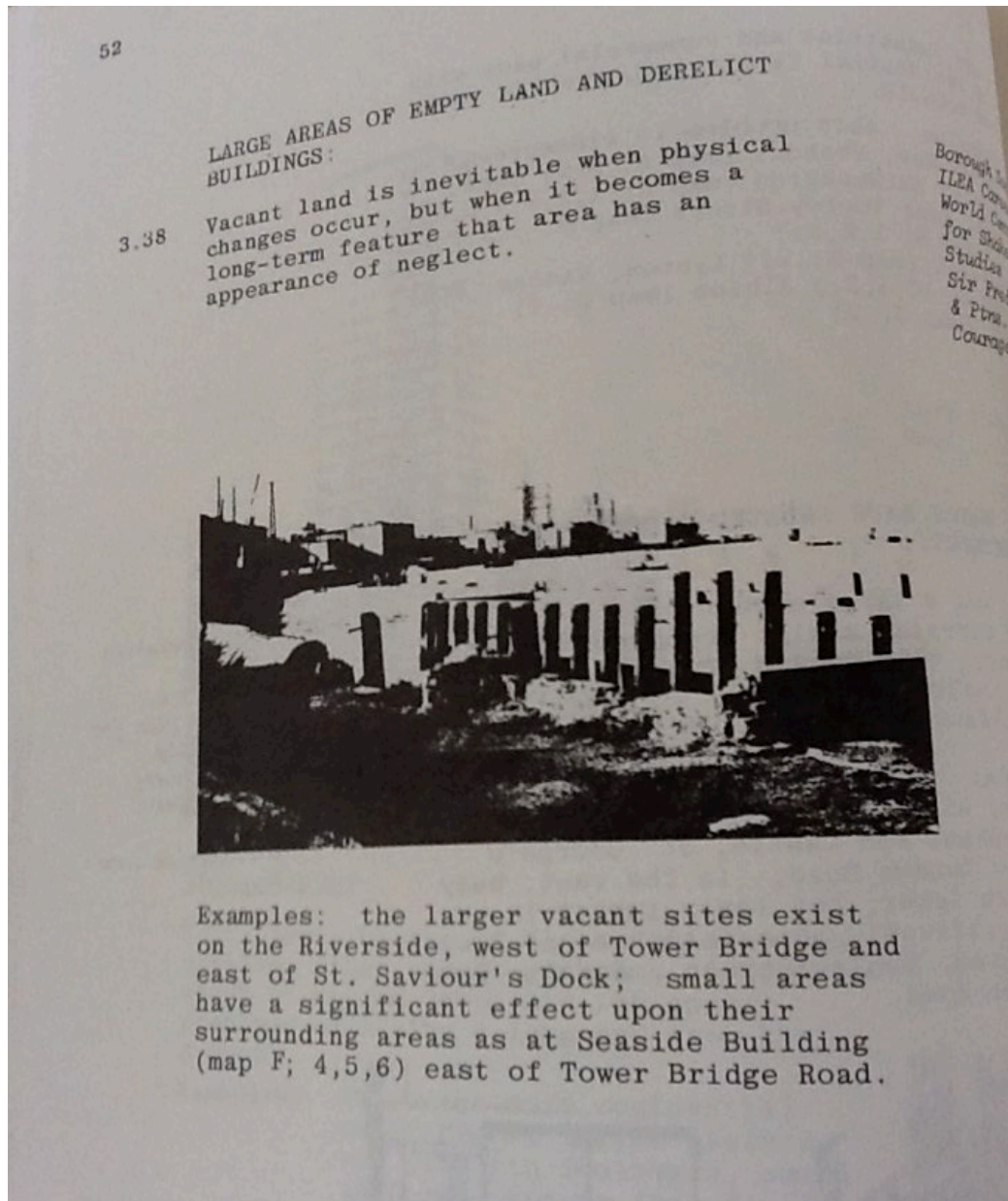
¹³⁹*Butler's Wharf: A Revitalisation Strategy*, 1984, Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.312 BUT, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.312 BUT.

¹⁴¹ Mark W. Turner, "Derek Jarman in the Docklands", in, John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel, eds., *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 77-97.

by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers' (p. 117). De Certeau distinguishes the stasis and rigidity of a *place*, and its spatializing through lived experience. This is inverted by the strategizing of the wharf, displacing potentiality to the future, emptying out buildings of any function and turning lived *space* into a lifeless, decayed *place*.

Fig.1.4¹⁴²



¹⁴² Figure 1.4, *North Southwark Plan*, June 1983, London Borough of Southwark (Southwark Local History Archives, PAM 711.312 HOL).

The area was depicted as a failed wasteland: ‘vacant land is inevitable when physical changes occur...when it becomes a long term feature, that area has an appearance of neglect...and... a significant effect upon...surrounding areas’ (See Fig.1.4 above). This significant ‘effect’ implies a dragging down of the area by dilapidated aesthetics. Such configurations of place invest value in appearance of buildings, hinting at a bourgeois ideal of respectability which valorizes refurbishment, renovation, and rejuvenation of place. The corollary of this is the idea that the regeneration of an area will have gradual (economic) benefit for those most proximate to it: the introduction of wealthier residents, and the multiplying of opportunities for spending in a place, create a trickle-down effect as this imagined future wealth somehow seeps across a locality, indiscriminately stimulating its economy. This implies a collective benefit for a local community to be gained from regeneration schemes. Private flats, shops and hotels would improve the appearance of the neighbourhood, constructing new ways of experiencing the docks for imagined tourists, employees and residents; strategizing movement along future riverside walks, parks, viewing platforms and balconies, and promoting spending, such that a ‘new urban form will take shape.’

The overlooked, multivalent modes of queer dwelling at Butler’s Wharf are recorded in journalist Duncan Fallowell’s account of a wharf film screening in 1974:

Derek Jarman is at home holding a private view of his films for about 150 people...‘The Arabian Trilogy’...Soubrettes, hustlers, coryphees, transvestites jostle on stone landings - there is a party upstairs round an enormous indoor pool filled with candles and Bohemian jitterbugs to the Thunder Lights. They want to turn this part of the wharf into an off-beat drive-in cinema.¹⁴³

‘Off-beat’ gets at a non-normative use of space, suggesting a jarring of rhythms, and a different mode of dwelling – in space and time – than in the heteronormative standards prescribed by a dominant British culture. Those

¹⁴³ Duncan Fallowell, *Spectator*, 15.6.74.

inhabiting the wharf at this time were unmoored from ordinary domestic forms, or the stable direction of the birth family. In 1975 Andrew Logan hosted the Alternative Miss World competition at the wharf, an annual drag ball. The ball's spectacular costumes and performances playfully foregrounded the limitations of identity-based knowledge, problematizing the notion that the communities inhabiting this part of the city were homogeneous, necessarily unified, or static groupings.¹⁴⁴ Invoking Butler's theorizing of performativity, Lise Nelson writes that: 'by disrupting the assumed correspondence between a "real" interior and its surface markers (clothes, walk, hair etc) drag balls make explicit the way in which *all* gender and sexual identifications are ritually performed in daily life.'¹⁴⁵ As drag problematizes the assumed correspondence between a physical exterior and a felt interior, so such events highlighted how the corporeal contents of Butler's Wharf could not be interpreted solely through discourses of decay, redundancy, waste and unproductivity that characterized narratives of the building's exterior. Queer modes of dwelling in Butler's Wharf challenged the logics of re/development that were being mapped onto the space by planning departments. Dianne Chisholm writes that queer space:

demarcates a practice, production and performance of space beyond just the mere habitation of built and fixed structures. Against the domination of space by abstract constructs of urban planning and the implantation of technologies of social surveillance, queer space designates an appropriation of space for bodily, especially sexual, pleasure.¹⁴⁶

At Butler's Wharf, Jarman found offered such a space of sexual pleasure, as well as one of domestic dwelling and creative experimentation. He describes this sexual appropriation of the wharves in his diaries: 'the forecourt where we made all the Super 8s – stark naked boys having it off all along the river wall.'¹⁴⁷ The

¹⁴⁴ Royal College of Art, *After Butlers Wharf: Essays on a Working Building* (2014).

¹⁴⁵ Lise Nelson, "Bodies (and spaces) do matter: the limits of performativity", in *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6, (1999) pp. 331-53, p. 339.

¹⁴⁶ Dianne Chisholm, *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁷ Derek Jarman, *Smiling in Slow Motion* (London: Century, 2000), p. 10.

image Jarman commits to his diary contrasts with a dominant mode of representing the docks in cultural production, which, as we have seen, is often nostalgic and orientalist in its fascination with the trading of Victorian commodities and the ‘Dickensian’ aspects of the docks. Jarman’s domestic dwelling privileged a promiscuous sociability, advancing a hospitality ethic that readily welcomed strangers regardless of sexual orientation or economic means. Cook has acknowledged how, for Jarman during the 1970s:

There was a sense of living in the gritty heart of the city and yet on the edge – of the Thames and of respectability. For much of this period Jarman was flitting between these and other places across the city...disrupting ideas of permanence and settled domesticity that are so attached to ideas of home...this related to a positively conceived promiscuity which was key to his queer identity (2014, p. 230).

Cook illuminates the mixed uses and meanings of this space: an expansive queer configuration of home: a dynamic space-time, rather than a genealogical configuration of domesticity that prioritizes respectability or reproduction. ‘Dereliction’ had a use value for Jarman, offering a space to carve out a new life. Turner writes that, ‘One of the things that drew Jarman to warehouse living was the possibility for a world – or lifestyle, at least – beyond the reach of conventional heteronormative private property and ownership’ (2011, p. 81). Turner’s and Cook’s studies usefully highlight these non-normative uses of Docklands, which became untenable as warehouses were replaced with homogeneous and prohibitively expensive private living spaces.

In 1979, Debbie Angelo wrote a newspaper feature on the thriving artistic community in the wharf, describing:

Butler’s Wharf in Bermondsey looks like Jack the Ripper country. Menacing shadows cast a chill over the narrow streets, with their barred windows and rattling gantries. But the apparent dereliction of these Victorian warehouses off Shad Thames is hiding thriving commercial life. Now this bustling,

successful colony has been told to pack its brushes and tools – and find a new home.¹⁴⁸

Andalo's feature highlights the tendency to invoke Victorian culture in representations of Docklands, and common tropes of dank dereliction. Yet Andalo is also alert to the corporeal contents of these buildings and includes photography of artists at work inside the wharf to demonstrate its 'thriving' production, noting how Maurice Agis's, 'giant plastic inflatables were on show for 10 weeks outside the National Theatre earlier this year.' Thus, these artists' presence and production were not unknowns, with many cultural productions tangibly furnishing the waterfront further upstream for the entertainment of leisure-makers and theatregoers, or utilizing the wharf as filmic landscape.¹⁴⁹ Andalo's language enlivens the space, productively acknowledging the simultaneity of decay and life in the docks, and avoiding the 'deceptive' facadism of planning discourses which overlooked its recent use by the 'seventy or so 'painters, dancers, sculptors, photographers, printmakers and filmmakers' in the Butler's Wharf Association.

Docklands offered Jarman varied pleasures. Before Butler's Wharf, he lived in a disused corset factory at 13 Bankside (prior to this building also being redeveloped), a little further along the river: 'the light from the river reflected in sinuous patterns on the beams, the phosphorescent stars on the glasshouse glimmered...At moments like this the room transformed and glowed upon the waters.'¹⁵⁰ Yet by 1989, when Jarman returned to Butler's Wharf for an exhibition of his art at the Design Museum, he witnessed a newly commercialised scene:

¹⁴⁸ Debbie Andalo, "Why Riverside Art Could Go Up In Smoke, *South London Press*, 7/12/79.

¹⁴⁹ Butler's Wharf features as a backdrop to a number of Derek Jarman's films. See, Derek Jarman, dir., *Jubilee* (1978). For more on Jarman's filming at Butler's Wharf, which included *In the Shadow of the Sun*, *The Art of Mirrors*, *Sulphur*, *Arabia*, *Green Glass Bead Game*, *Beyond the Valley of the Garden of Luxor Revisited*, *Death Dance*, see Tony Peake, *Derek Jarman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 195. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁵⁰ Derek Jarman, *The Last of England* (London: Constable, 1987).

strange to be back at [Butler's Wharf]. The money has gilded the heart of it though the old iron gates that I unpadlocked each evening are there and the graffiti that says John Dale Stalag is still on the door of the furniture warehouse, everything else is scrubbed, all the fun vanished. (quoted in Peake, 2011, p. 483).

A recent history of queer film-making, sexual experimentation and sociability has been 'forgotten' in the 'gilding' of the building's heart. Jarman *also* invests the fabric of the building – its iron gates and graffiti - with meaning, but very differently to the planners of the building's redevelopment. Jarman's record of the space is a private one, which can never be fully communicated to his readership. Rather than being incorporated into a national history, Jarman's queer history is a personal one that evades a narrative structure. The 'gilding' of the heart in the quote above serves as a corporeal metaphor: the heart might be identified as the (ex) inhabitants of the building: its workers over time, including dockers, and Jarman's peers, friends and lovers who furnished the building with a sense of home. Rather than achieving a mixed, vibrant community, the introduction of exclusive enclaves of private, protected housing reduced corporeal flows through Butler's Wharf and its surroundings, minimizing opportunities for chance encounter, or for sociability among strangers. Movement through the building was suddenly only available to those who could afford it. The removal of these bodies and the re-ordering of Butler's Wharf as private property, with its gilded traces of a colonial past provokes Jarman's nostalgia for a more disorderly mode of dwelling in ruins:

I've often walked along the river past my beautiful studio in the warehouse on Bankside which was demolished for redevelopment, back to Butler's Wharf at Tower Bridge. Bankside's a wasteland now...Four forlorn designer trees in a handkerchief of grass are the only visible sign of 'improvement.' Everything else is destroyed...Butler's Wharf is undergoing the same improvement. Further down, the council estates have been scrubbed and privatized and a sea of folksy little houses have invaded the gutted wharfs. The old warehouses have been transformed into the most expensive riverside homes. After this

there are miles of desolation with the odd post-modern office building...Much of the film was shot on these locations (*Kicking the Pricks*, p. 199-200).

Jarman's *Kicking the Pricks* recalls Butler's Wharf and its surrounding areas in 1986, as he was finishing his film, *The Last of England*.¹⁵¹ In this quote, he satirizes and inverts the discourse of decay in which Docklands was represented by developers. The 'improvement' of the waterfront – its redevelopment – has paradoxically created a wasteland. Escaping this, Jarman moves further downriver, first to Butler's Wharf, and then to filming further on, where *desolation*, rather than a depressive invitation for built regeneration, is instead key to queer creativity. Jarman's riverfront walks in the 1980s produce a stark contrast with Fallowell's earlier account of visiting the wharf, and Jarman's screening in the 'off-beat drive-in cinema' of the 1970s, projecting his filmic collages - of 'stark-naked boys' dancing, performing, playing and fucking - onto the walls of the wharf. Twenty years later, security cameras still record bodies moving through the wharf, but their intention is to discipline the movements of bodies through space-time.

Each of the divergent texts discussed so far focuses on the same locality, illustrating the contesting and colliding imaginaries of this site. Simultaneously, a single warehouse along the Thames occupied the imaginaries of multiple parties: figuring the space as epicentre of a bohemian living quarter and queer sexual and artistic experimentation, and derelict ruin which dragged down the reputation of London's South-East. It is worth pausing here to make a disclaimer, and to tighten up the object of my critique. I am not seeking to posit a binary between utopian queer dwelling and essentially harmful redevelopment projects. New developments can enliven cities, if enacted democratically and taking into account plural and particular needs and desires of existing residents and the intersectional experiences of urban bodies. Furthermore, artistic communities (often white, affluent artists such as Jarman) may have contributed, to some degree, to the exclusion of working-class communities by provoking gentrification in the docks. It is tempting to argue simply that artists

¹⁵¹ Derek Jarman, dir., *The Last of England* (1987).

automatically rejected the profit-driven meritocratic ideals of Thatcherism and the 'property-owning democracy' in favour of 'bohemian' living. Yet the cultural productions of artists such as Jarman arguably attracted developers, turning attitudes toward the docks (for some, at least) from distaste to curiosity and excitement. Jarman's '1,000-foot terrace on the Thames where we can film undisturbed in the sun' was a glaringly attractive prospect for developers who placed a premium on waterfront space, and the artists of Butler's Wharf were arguably complicit in provoking processes of regeneration that ultimately forced their own, and others', eviction. As Jarman wrote in his diaries: 'The riverside was my world for another nine years, before the invasion I pioneered with Peter [Logan] turned the few remaining buildings into DES. RES.'¹⁵² Jarman here makes explicit the linkage between his 'invasion' of the space and the subsequent invasion of developers. Iain Sinclair's narrator makes a similar observation in *Downriver*:

When artists walk through a wilderness in epiphanous 'bliss-out', fiddling with polaroids, grim estate agents dog their footsteps. And when the first gay squatters arrive, bearing futons...the agents smile, and reach for their chequebooks. The visionary reclaims the ground of his nightmares only to present it, framed in perspex, to the Docklands Development Board (p. 17).

Of course, it was not simply 'gay squatters' who were responsible for multiplying the cultural capital of Docklands. Sinclair, too, is a privileged dockland wanderer, and his topographical obsession with East London has played a similar role in facilitating gentrification. If his texts are not framed in Perspex, they *are* printed, sold, and circulated as a form of Docklands tourism. Despite his criticism of a neoliberalizing commodification of the landscape, Sinclair risks being incorporated into these same modes, laying the foundations for yet more redevelopment projects. But it is reductive simply to blame artists for dockland gentrification. Again, binary logics, of hegemon versus heroes do not work here. Rather, what is revealed is a combination of complex and intersecting factors that demand attention when studying the city. Schulman

¹⁵² Derek Jarman, *Dancing Ledge* (London: Quartet, 1991), p. 126.

(2012) argues that while urban artists cultivate cultural capital which does attract speculative developers, it is often deregulation of planning controls, and tax breaks for property developers that provoke gentrification.¹⁵³ Schulman attributes significant responsibility to local government policy:

the theory behind blaming the artists was a feeling that somehow their long-standing presence had suddenly made the area attractive to bourgeois whites who worked on Wall Street...no understanding of how deliberate policies, tax credits, policing strategies and moratoriums on low-income housing were creating this outcome (p. 34).

Gentrification is caused by multiple factors, including the *permission* granted to re/develop existing territories, and the lack of voice given to marginalized groups in discussions of future urban spaces. I am pointing here to the disparities in concurrent and contesting visions of this space: between how residents such as Jarman viewed the Wharf, and how these occupants were entirely overlooked by those with the power to impose new models of dwelling. Lifestyles deemed economically unproductive rarely register as significant enough in the attentions of councils or planners seeking to raise incomes through lucrative prospective developments. Planners, in looking to the past to justify a neoliberal future, overlooked the potentiality and lived experience of the present. Imaginaries of postimperial decay served a neo-imperialist model of regeneration on a local scale: a contemporary (dock)land-grab which overlooked *lived* experience in the *present*.

A recent report from an affluent estate agent's notes that, on the contemporary riverfront, 'Developers are focusing on well-designed, high-quality apartments to fill a void for this type of stock in London...modern high-rise homes near the

¹⁵³ This criticism of artists is common but the role of local government in allowing developments to occur is becoming increasingly apparent in contemporary London. Media Release, "Mayor announces proposals to further transform Royal Docks", 16/03/2016, <www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-proposals-to-transform-royal-docks>, accessed 05/03/2017.

centre...(like) New York and other global cities.’¹⁵⁴ There is a purity of architecture privileged here – the glass and steel ‘vertical townships’ predicted by Ballard’s *High Rise*, which have taken form and come to dominate the landscape in subsequent decades. But I suspect that these shallow discourses of aesthetic purity, and singularity of form/function/purpose, mask anxieties about strangers and others in urban life. In the following section, I explore ideas of strangeness and its attachment to Dockland bodies further. And I focus on the ways in which textual representations of embodied queer experience can unsettle reductive imaginaries mapped onto the Docklands, intervening in narrow discourses of decay and regeneration.

The Swimming Pool Library (1988): replaying the past queerly

So far we have seen how planning discourses and marketing texts constructed a narrative of decay to promote a utopic future of respectability and exclusivity. I have explored how such planning rhetoric overlooked the corporeal, creative, and queer vitality of Butler’s Wharf, and how regeneration projects prescribed the orderly and commercially inflected movement of bodies through the docks. A recurrent theme in this chapter has been the collision of the psychic and the geographic. What does movement through place, space and time reveal about the city? How is such movement guided and prescribed, such that some pathways (material and imaginative) can become obscured. How does inscription, textually and architecturally, facilitate forgetting in its selection and organization of elements, as ‘straight’ paths are laid out by a dominant heterosexual culture, producing the notion that non-normative lives ‘deviate’ and are thus *deviant*.¹⁵⁵ Ahmed describes how these normative lines, ‘direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion.’ These lines, ‘are...performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken’ (2005, p. 16),

¹⁵⁴ James Roberts, Tom Bill, *Southbank 2014 and Beyond*, 2014? (Knight Frank Limited Liability Partnership, <knightfrank.com/Research>), p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 16. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

including the ‘vertical’ family lines of genealogy and birth, and ‘horizontal’ lines of marriage, which in turn replicate the vertical. Turner uses Le Corbusier as an example of how straightness has functioned, for some, as a guiding principle; a moral compass in planning urban life, insisting on the straight line versus the lazy, zigzagging pack donkey: ‘Straight not bent. Direct, not meandering. This will be the route of the new modern man’ (Turner, 2010, p. 305). But Turner goes on to ask:

what if chance, disorder and drift point to alternative experiences of modernity, in which altogether different, queerer urban experiences might be enabled and explored? What if there are other kinds of connections, interesting and significant ones, that not only cannot be made along the straightened line, but are actually hindered by it (p. 306).

I want to turn here to some of these ‘other kinds of connections’ in queer dockland writing, using literary examples from the recent past. What possibilities are offered by more conventional literary genres (here a novel and later, a play and its film adaptation) – for imagining Docklands and the life within it? The first of these texts is Alan Hollinghurst’s novel, *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988). My interest here is in the novel’s protagonist Will Beckwith, and his brief walk through London’s east, which stages an erotic and historically inflected gaze at the docks. Here, through a close reading of *Swimming Pool*, I explore how stigmatizing imaginaries of place can become attached to the bodies inhabiting these places. I argue that such attitudes sediment; gathering in place and seeping into social attitudes towards urban bodies: traces of stigma which linger spectrally, structuring ideas of place and identity. What does this say about the ways in which imaginaries of Docklands have been variously conditioned in the twentieth-century, and how does this representation of a conditioned gaze in the novel disrupt these ways of seeing urban space and bodies?

But before we begin to read, it might be helpful to back-track a little in order to point out a critically overlooked history of *homo-erotic* gazing at the docks in art and literature. Representations of male dockers through the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries have fetishized the hyper-masculine, available (for a price),

(assumed) heterosexual, working-class male: the binary opposite of the effeminate, upper-middle class homosexual. As Hornsey notes, ‘in the dockside pubs, lodging houses, and hostels that clustered around the Thames to the south and east, a rugged bachelor street culture had developed among young labourers drawn to the city by its promises of casual employment’ (p. 7). London writers have variously nostalgized and reinscribed this mythic, sexually available, and macho figure of the docker. Poet Jeremy Reed (whom I’ll discuss in chapter two) writes in *White Bear and Francis Bacon*: ‘I’m into TRTs/ (tattooed rough trade) pulled from the London docks’ (2014). Reed nostalgically invokes the docks as a site of trade, contact, casual homosocial labour, and a transnational flow of bodies, highlighting residual representations of ‘rough-trade’ from the nineteenth-century. The masculine trade is ‘pulled’ from the docks, dredged like a submerged wreck, conjuring an object slippery and saturated with its sticky surroundings. Reed draws upon a historical imaginary that reaches back to exiled poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, who wandered the ‘interminable docks’ in the 1870s, with Rimbaud pornographically sketching men as he went, admiring the boys loitering outside urinals, and wondering, ‘I don’t know what else they must do to people who know to pay a little extra’.¹⁵⁶ Rimbaud suggests a clandestine, coded form of sexual procurement here, between men who ‘know’ to ask for or offer ‘a little extra’, at this, ‘gigantic overflowing toilet...with *every vice on offer*’ (Robb 2000, p. 186). London’s east is where Wilde’s Dorian Gray disappears by night, succumbing to the lascivious offerings of the docks, visiting opium dens and other ‘dreadful places near Bluegate Fields’ (Wilde, 1891/2003, p. 135). Such representations cast their onlookers as slumming sexual tourists gazing at desirable male objects. Houlbrook details how these notions continued in the twentieth-century, with an interviewee recalling how the Greenwich Baths functioned in the 1950s as a space of ‘local dockers and factory workers who genuinely go to the baths to avail themselves of the facilities but are not averse to enjoying the other facilities’ (Houlbrook, 2005, p. 101). Houlbrook notes: ‘it was precisely this dangerous edge, the thrill of social transgression and the opportunities to pick up rough trade that often propelled those middle-class men

¹⁵⁶Graham Robb, *Rimbaud* (Kent: Picador, 2000), p. 186.

– men like Kenneth Williams – to make the journey south of the river’ (p. 101).¹⁵⁷

In the 1970s, Derek Jarman recalls his partner Keith spraying him with cologne before he went cruising on Hampstead Heath: ‘then everyone would be able to smell this poof not some fantasy man from the docks.’¹⁵⁸ The *unscented* Jarman is a tall, virile cruiser from the docks, a dangerous, potentially violent icon of masculine sexuality and a fantasy figure to be pursued. *Scented*, however, he is spoiled: a predatory, feminized, ‘poof’, an abject queen, and repellent stranger, or louche middle-class dandy. The ‘fantasy’ invests Jarman with traces of the industrial, homosocial heritage of the docks, reproduced and transposed onto his physiology and carried across London as butch masculinity borrowed from the docks (overlooking his privileged upbringing on the south coast). Of course, the fantasy here is acknowledged, playfully revived, staged, and indulged as fetish. Inhabiting this zone of post-industrial ruination, gay men often revived fantasies of rough-trade, playfully eroticizing the landscape.

I mention this history to illustrate the enduring eroticizing of working-class male bodies dwelling in these spaces, and so to provide some of the hinterland of Hollinghurst's novel. Indeed, the *regeneration* of Docklands has not simply seen the rejuvenation of the landscape in urban redevelopment projects, but also the reproduction of this queer gaze in art and literature. Both are forms of urban regeneration, one imagined, one material: but each has re-inscribed interdependent ideas of identity and place. Hollinghurst also plays with these localized configurations of sexual identity, carried over into late twentieth-century London.¹⁵⁹ Nostalgic evocations of these traces of past same-sex desire betray the author's own fascination with this past (Hollinghurst's M. Litt thesis at

¹⁵⁷Rodney Garland also mentions these baths, advertising London's queer topography to his readers, in, Rodney Garland, *The Heart in Exile* (London: Four Square Books, 1961).

¹⁵⁸*The Times*, ? 19/6/2000. LAGNA.

¹⁵⁹For more on the totalizing tendency of flanerier, see Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (UK: Reaktion Books, 2003).

Oxford in 1980 focussed on Ronald Firbank and E.M. Forster).¹⁶⁰ Will Beckwith, the protagonist of *Swimming Pool*, is commissioned to write the biography of Lord Nantwich, an elderly aristocrat he initially meets in a public toilet. As Will reads Nantwich's diaries, he nostalgizes Victorian, Hellenistic models of same-sex desire, invoking the spatial coordinates and sexual geography of fin-de-siècle London for Hollinghurst's own readers. Will's speech, reading habits, and movement through the city conjure the historical gay figure of the white, metropolitan, aristocratic male wanderer. Lord Nantwich sponsors the Boys Boxing Club in Whitechapel, a homosocial mode of dockland philanthropy, where Shillibeer, the manager of the club, carries a 'patina of East End commerce and grime' (p. 131). And like Wilde's Dorian, the young aristocratic Will, white with golden curls, must travel eastwards from west-central London to reach the docks, which he regards with privileged disdain. Will's journey is one across space but also *time*. As well as a horizontal, eastwards journey, Will moves backwards to a Gothic imaginary of East London, in his anticipation of crime, danger and potential erotic encounters with rough-trade: a primitive maleness and regressive articulation of gender.

Let me track Will's journey a little here, to illuminate the ways in which his movement through the city is informed by prior narratives of place. Coming out onto the streets of this 'strange neighbourhood' from the underground, Will feels 'vaguely abashed' (p. 130). When a bus passes on its way towards the 'Victoria and Albert Docks', Will recalls the galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, wondering:

How different my childhood Sunday afternoons would have been if, instead of showing me the Raphael Cartoons (which had killed Raphael for me ever since), my father had sent me to the docks, to talk with stevedores and have them tell me, with much pumping and flexing, the stories of their tattoos (p. 169).

¹⁶⁰ The description of Will's listening to Wagner on p. 16 evokes a pivotal scene in E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (UK: Penguin, 1971/2000). Hollinghurst's thesis is titled, *The Creative Uses of Homosexuality in the Novels of E.M. Forster, Ronald Firbank and L.P. Hartley* (MLitt. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1980).

These moments demonstrate how Will's *orientation* towards or away from bodies is informed by his understandings of place. The docks carry prior associations and meanings for Will. Structured from afar, they guide his movement into this alien space, and his anxious regard toward surrounding bodies. He fantasizes about the 'stories' of the stevedores, nostalgically invoking an eighteenth-century Spanish word which emphasizes the transnational trading history of the space. Will laments the absence of tactile encounters with 'pumping' and 'flexing' men in his adolescence, when his encounters with such physiologies were limited to, and mediated through, the sketches of Raphael on staid gallery visits. The narrative here mimics this mediation of eroticized physiology through the artwork - evoking a sense of masculine posturing for the novel's reader, along with tropes of queer London, such as the closeted gay man visiting galleries to regard male physiology.¹⁶¹

Here, we see how Will's movement through Limehouse is guided towards the spire of St Anne's Church. Designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, the building is an iconic symbol of graceful urban design.¹⁶² The appearance of this building in Will's movement through London's east is used to emphasize the relative architectural poverty of the space, in comparison with the elegant streets of west and central London which occupy the majority of the novel. It introduces a spectacular disjunct, between the familiar lines of the Gothic masterpiece, part of a grand historical narrative of the city, and the dereliction of the council estate which Will journeys towards. Looking at the towers, Will: 'wondered why they had been forced up to twenty storeys or so when they could easily have spread across the empty ground which they now overshadowed' (p. 169). Will invokes a Forsterian lament of the encroachments of suburban architecture on the landscape,¹⁶³ while the names of the towers - Casterbridge and Melchester -

¹⁶¹ For more on the gallery and museum as Victorian cruising ground, see Houlbrook, 2005.

¹⁶² See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (UK: Penguin, 2000).

¹⁶³ See E.M. Forster, *Howard's End* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1929) for descriptions of the encroaching city on the pastoral landscape.

allude to Thomas Hardy's fictional, pastoral Wessex,¹⁶⁴ emphasising the charmlessness and *lack* of the estate, which falls short of traditional English landscapes: 'I thought of the tracks that threaded Egdon Heath, and of benign, elderly Sandbourne, with its chines and sheltered beach-huts' (p. 169).

Will's movement through the churchyard, and his admiration of Hawksmoor's Gothic lines, is quickly shifted by the appearance of a boy, producing an encounter charged with erotic and dangerous potential:

it was strangers who by their very strangeness quickened my pulse and made me feel I was alive...Yet those daring instincts were by no means infallible: their exhilaration was sharpened by the courted risk of rejection, misunderstanding, abuse (p. 132).

Will is excited by 'strangeness', the emphasis here being on affective response to encountering others, and the element of risk which brings a pleasurable thrill. What characterizes this moment is a contrast between aesthetic regard of material objects (the church), and a desire for the thrill of tactile corporeal exchange. As with the Raphael cartoons versus the flexing stevedores, Will juxtaposes the young man's 'dull sexiness', propped up against a spectacular Hawksmoor church. In each instance, it is the body which exerts the overwhelming draw on Will, structuring his movements through, and affective experience of, the space. Indeed, it is his pursuit of a disappeared lover that leads him on this eastwards journey in the first instance. Yet at once, Will collapses his aestheticism and erotic desire into one in his regard of the bodies he finds here. These men are sexy because they are working-class. Exoticism is eroticism for Will, who treats the 'indolent' 'youth' with 'affected nonchalance such as I would have shown equally under the gaze of a mugger or a pick-up...[I] sauntered up the half-open fan of the steps beneath the tower' (p. 132). His 'affected' posing and 'saunter' up the faded stair, clutching a copy of Ronald Firbank's *The Flower Beneath the*

¹⁶⁴ Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1886/1964).

*Foot*¹⁶⁵, render him in the role of feminized homosexual, curiously gazing at the rough-trade before him (the note of seduction emphasized by the image of the fan). The boy speaks in a ‘tight, mean’ and ‘pure Cockney’ voice: ‘you’ll need a lot more than that if you want a nice bit of bum round ‘ere’ (p. 134).¹⁶⁶ Rather than mere cruising, the boy, alert to Will’s visible signs of wealth, recognises the potential to earn money, suggesting a commercial, corporeal transaction, a ‘trade’. The boy’s construction in terms of meanness, and his opportunistic eye for money, is typical of stereotypical representations of working-class men as pliable – potential sex workers - as noted by Houlbrook:

working-class men were to be found, seeking – and being sought by – older, wealthier men. Trade, in the first instance, denoted precisely this kind of commercial sexual transaction. Combined with the adjective “rough”, “trade” described men [who were] working-class, “normal” yet available, and unequivocally manly (Houlbrook 2005, p. 170).¹⁶⁷

Houlbrook identifies dominant configurations of same-sex desire in the early twentieth-century: the notion that, in an encounter between two men across social class, only the older, predatory partner would be the *desiring* party, and that the younger male is either opportunistic – a morally dubious spiv or rent boy – or else a heterosexual innocent corrupted by a deviant (as was assumed in Oscar Wilde’s trial, for instance).¹⁶⁸ Occurring in London’s east, this encounter is doubly strange and fearful. Cruising the toilets of Kensington Gardens at the beginning of the novel leads Will to an enduring, edifying relationship with Lord

¹⁶⁵ Ronald Firbank, *The Flower Beneath the Foot* (1923/ London : Penguin, 2000).

¹⁶⁶ P. J. Keating’s *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) details the evocations of Cockney speech by ‘slum writers’ to evoke class divisions, mobilised by Rudyard Kipling, W. Somerset Maugham, among others.

¹⁶⁷ See also D. Bell, who discusses the sexualization of ‘white trash’ in “Eroticizing the Rural”, D. Shuttleton, D. Watt and R. Phillips, eds., *De-centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 83–101.

¹⁶⁸ See, Kaplan, 2005).

Nantwich, defining the arc of the novel. The cross-class encounter in Limehouse is unnerving, quickly discarded, less significant than the earlier interaction with Nantwich. Limehouse serves in the novel as a site for the nostalgic reconstruction of a historical encounter between an affluent homosexual and frightening ‘trade’.

The young man Will encounters is frightening, in part, because he is a loitering male in a working-class location. The man’s location in place influences Will’s movement both *towards* the young man, as an object of desire, and his instinct *away* from him, as a potential mugger or abuser. As Ahmed writes: ‘orientation for me is about how the bodily, the spatial, and the social *are entangled*’, and, bodies, ‘are not just moved by their own orientation, but by the orientation of others, and the orientations we have toward others’ (2006, p. 3). Ahmed’s argument is useful here in illuminating how the social and the spatial impress upon the corporeal. This works here to mediate Will’s affective response to another body. Aroused yet anxious, Will ultimately draws the moment short and abandons the encounter, continuing on to the council estate in search of Arthur Hope, his young black teenage lover who has disappeared after being stabbed. Notable here is how anxiety over a body is roused by the way the young man dwells in place, akin to Mary Douglas’s definition of *dirt* as, ‘matter *out of place*’ (emphasis added).¹⁶⁹ And, how a culturally constructed strangeness is met with worry and avoidance, depicting how such constructs limit encounters with difference, and opportunities for living among difference as an ordinary aspect of an urban multi-culture.

Hollinghurst’s preoccupation with black male physiology, and its fetishization in his novels, has been noted by critics. Brenda Cooper describes these representations as, ‘gay fetishes, magical, sexual objects feeding the fantasy life of white men; they are entwined, knotted and welded both to class and race, to

¹⁶⁹ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1966). I explore these ideas of dirt in chapters two and three. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Empire and the attractions of slumming.’¹⁷⁰ David Alderson has noted how Arthur is constructed by Will according to a fetishizing, othering imaginary:

Arthur is idealized in his primitivism, and this idealization is an integral factor in all of Will’s desires, directed as they are towards those he clearly regards as his social subordinates, black and working-class characters alike, whose lack of ‘cultured’ sophistication permits Will to invest them with precisely this eroticized innocence...the perceived primitivism of the colonized or socially inferior male subject is...attribut[ing] to his pre-cultural condition a greater degree of animality figured in that sexual potential.¹⁷¹

Alderson suggests that Will’s racialized and classed gaze at these ‘primitive’ men invests them with a ‘pre-cultural’ condition of animality. However, Alderson’s analysis can be furthered by a topographical emphasis on this moment, as a *dockland* encounter. The geographical coordinates of the space function in the novel to emphasize a queer cultural history. Rather than simply a ‘pre-cultural’ racist construct, therefore, Hollinghurst is tapping into the distinctive cultural geography of Docklands and its corollaries: hyper-masculinity and slippery sexual availability. It is a classed, gendered, *and* racialized othering. It is Will’s fascination with the history of empire, and with working-class physiology, that makes the Docklands such a space of desire and thrill, given its topographical significance in the story of British colonialism, and its history as a predominantly working-class part of the city.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Brenda Cooper, “Snapshots of Postcolonial Masculinities: Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Swimming-Pool Library* and Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*”, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 34 (1) 1999, pp. 135–157, p. 140. The fetishizing – and also the ambivalence – of the colonized figure is a subject explored in detail by Homi K. Bhabha in, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁷¹ David Alderson, “Desire as nostalgia: the novels of Alan Hollinghurst”, David Alderson and Linda Anderson eds., *Territories of desire in queer culture: Refiguring contemporary boundaries* (Glasgow: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 32.

¹⁷² The Docklands is the site from which Marlowe departs for Africa in, Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Penguin, 2007). Cooper notes the tendency in Hollinghurst’s writing for, ‘Conradian metaphors of degradation linked to black bodies’ (Cooper, p. 144).

Arthur's ironical surname of 'Hope' conflicts with the surroundings of his home, where the stillness of the day is 'odorous', 'cursed' by the sounds of pop and reggae, culturally other music that jars with the classical references scattered across the rest of the novel (p. 170). On the estate, Will is surrounded by a group of National Front skinheads. As Will constructs the strangeness of these surroundings, so the skinheads identify Will as other by his 'parody voice, pickled in money and culture' (p. 172). His (effete, homo-) sexuality is obvious to the leader of the group, who gives: 'a strange, private smile...a smile that seemed to say he knew my game, he knew what I liked' (p. 172). Once again, this stranger is arousing, dangerous, possibly even available:

One of them, slobbish, with moronic sideburns, and braces hoisting his jeans up around a fat ass and a fat dick, was very good. I looked at him for only a second; a phrase from the Firbank I had been reading came back to me: "Très gutter, ma'am" (p. 170)

Will's Firbankian regard of the working-class male as 'très gutter' couples excitement with anxiety in an intrigued gaze. Firbank's novel falls open in front of him as he is knocked to the floor:

standing on end, its pages fanned open. There was a peculiar silence of several seconds, in which I thought they might be calling it off. I read the words "perhaps I might find Harold..." two or three times (p. 174)

There is a femininity to the description: the novel 'fanning' open, conjuring a flapping open of a fan, as though the blushing Will seeks to cool himself provocatively before the skinheads. Will is a queer flower beneath the feet of the National Front skinheads. As he is beaten, he reads the sentence before him over again to distract from his present torture, the novel offering a campy reprieve, while Firbank's line, 'perhaps I might find Harold', emphasizes Will's isolation in this moment, and has a suggestion of a homosocial longing for the absent Harold. He is a queer figure *out of place* in the city, an intruder upon the skinhead's patch. Again, such intrusions are classed and gendered. Rather than drawing simplistic and reductive caricatures, *Swimming Pool* conveys the

experience of being intersectionally other, demonstrating how various types of body experience marginalization in quotidian life. Although Will regards others narrowly and fetishistically, and although he is variously privileged, he also experiences homophobic and femme-phobic violence, inviting critical reflection on intersectionality, and emphasizing the potential violence of reading people according to their self-presentation.

Throughout his downriver journey, Will's attitudes and orientation towards or away from bodies are interlinked with his preconceptions of place, and historical markers of dockland identity. Will's imaginaries of the erotic docks are a part of his understanding of queer London: its sexual geographies and coordinates. He expects to find certain types of bodies dwelling in certain parts of the city. Arthur's voice in the novel is minimal, and he is largely reduced to the physiology of black male. And, rather than dwelling in the docks, the novel quickly returns to the secure, familiar central/west urban topography. In characterizing men of Docklands as rough-trade, whether the young man in the graveyard; beautiful, dangerous Arthur; or the hyper-masculine skinhead with the knowing look in his eye, Hollinghurst plays with the gaze *at* these people from afar. Thomas Waugh, in his analysis of the role of trade in the 'gay male imaginary' notes that, in the dualism of effeminate queen and masculine trade, the trade is the object of desire: 'The queen looks, the trade is looked at.'¹⁷³ It is an erotics of looking and of othering. Hollinghurst plays with this history, which functions here to emphasize Will's naivety, as a man who sees the world from a perspective that today reads as colonizing and essentializing. The narrative hints at the myopia and violence of viewing city dwellers as a reductive set of types, determined necessarily (and negatively) by their surroundings. *Swimming Pool* foregrounds a limiting gaze at Docklands, corporeally and architecturally. Hollinghurst alludes to the erotic history of this gaze, a fetishizing of bodies within the docks based on their geographical location. This literary imaginary of dockland rough-trade reveals the enduring association of the docks with danger,

¹⁷³ Thomas Waugh, "Cockteaser", in J. Doyle, J. Flatley, J.E. Munoz, eds., *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham: NC, 1996), pp. 51-77, p. 54. For further examples of trade as 'looked at', see Roland Barthes's account of the pleasures of regarding rough-trade in, *Incidents*, R. Howard trans., (Los Angeles: Berkeley, 1992), p. 59.

and of its working-class inhabitants with criminality, tapping into a broader history of reductive presentations of working-class lives in literature. The sediment of historical narratives over time is seen to seep into a contemporary imaginary, structuring feelings of strangeness, unease, and influencing Will's affective experience of, and orientation in, east London. This perspective in the narrative is displaced onto a character, opening up a critique of the limited gaze that is being presented to the reader.

Will performs some of the key ways of seeing the docks that I have described so far in this chapter. Implied in his anxious, fearful regard of otherness based on location and inherited assumption, is an overall critique of place-based knowledge. The novel's staging of these fetishistic assumptions through the character of Will exposes the limits and misrecognitions of authentic identity, whether race, class, gender based or otherwise. This rendering of Will subtly endorses alternative ways of seeing space and those who occupy and produce it, extending to the reader an invitation to interrogate inherited imaginaries of the city's localities, and underscoring how such models must always involve an excess of meaning and experience that cannot be contained within such frames of understanding. Of course, some parts of the docks have geographical specificities that make them distinct, and locally determined communities do exist in London. But definitions of community which are premised solely on locality overlook their inherent intersectionality. Localized communities in London are not *essential* and unchanging over time, but always contingent and constantly shifting. What is hinted at in Will's playful eroticizing of working-class men are the gaps between, and excesses of, these identities.

Here we can begin to connect my reading of Hollinghurst's novel, with my analysis of the planning documents and property brochures in the first half of this chapter. Each was informed by historical imaginaries of the docks. And each articulated the movement of bodies through this topography, for instance in the curated walk planned by the Louis de Soissons Partnership. The plans and brochures assumed an objective stance in their derision of the docks, and drew the reader, and the prospective buyer, into a mythologized, imagined national community, geared towards respectable citizenry and property ownership. In

Swimming Pool, however, the fetishizing of working-class physiology, though anachronistic, is self-consciously written into the text by Hollinghurst, making use of the playful potential in the novel form (and in fiction and literature more broadly), and the scope for irony, authorial detachment from narrative/character voice, and the multiplicity of interpretation enabled by post-structuralist and post-essentialist criticism.

Noting the echoes of the (elder) character of Lord Nantwich's colonial past in Will's pursuit of exoticized black men through London, John McLeod argues that, '*The Swimming Pool Library* both indicates and ironizes the culpability of gay cultural life in the neocolonialism that marks and mars the postcolonial metropolis.'¹⁷⁴ McLeod suggests that by *exposing* Will's racist assumptions in the text (McLeod alludes very briefly to class as well), Hollinghurst, asks critical questions about these exploitative relationships.

Hollinghurst's evocation of tropes of Victorian fiction, therefore, is not equivalent to possessing a Victorian morality or understanding of identity. Indeed, the author's D.Litt thesis was titled 'The *creative* uses of homosexuality in *E.M. Forster, Ronald Firbank and L.P. Hartley*' (emphasis added). Rather, this section of the novel is useful in *portraying* (rather than simply offering) a nostalgic, erotic lens which enacts a reductive rendering and casual dismissal of urban 'others'. The easy dismissal of lives lived in such suburban spaces as somehow less valuable, cultured or informed than those lived in metropolitan centres can often result in the conclusion that such spaces are failed, worthless and in need of reform. As we saw in my discussion of the carefully choreographed Thames journey conducted by the LSP, the panoptic view of this landscape from afar can lead to a misunderstanding of the multivalent quotidian lives lived in its ordinary environments. The architecturally deterministic eye of urban planners, or the reduction of dockland bodies to masculine fetish, overlooks the chaotic illegibility of subjectivity, and the complexities of lived

¹⁷⁴John McLeod, "Race, empire and *The Swimming Pool Library*", Michèle Mendelssohn and Denis Flannery, eds., *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 60-78, p. 61.

experience beyond surface signification. Regarding the Docklands as a concretized landscape of fixity rather than a space-time of flows and multiple identities risks colonizing lives, whether in assuming the identities of its inhabitants along lines of race, class and gender, or in dismissing the space as failed and calling for its built regeneration. Elaborating the ordinariness of diverse experiences of urban life through fiction (and across multiple genres, as I will go on to discuss in later chapters) can work to unravel the reduction of the city (and questions of its past, present and future) to terms of waste, decay, productivity, value, and development - and to twist the ways in which such terms are mobilized.

Hollinghurst's *novel* then, through its inscription of the flawed protagonist's closely rendered movement through and registration of his urban contexts, allows us to decipher a set of ways in which Docklands and related environments have been encoded, and to limn too the outlines of a critique of this. But the unveiling of the limitations of Will's viewpoint - interesting as it is - tends to remain at the level of *critique*. And, further, critics seem undecided about how willing Hollinghurst is to try to resolve this tension in his work. Although pointing to the author's *awareness*, there is also an observation that, for all its ironizing, little *changes* in Hollinghurst's novels with regard to cultural constructions of race and class, and their entrenchment in everyday life. McLeod notes, '*The Swimming-Pool Library* cannot be fully detached from this problem in its black characterizations, but its racial politics are not fully defined by it too.' This argument, to me, seems something of a dodge. Exposing the writer's ambivalence can read like an apology on behalf of Hollinghurst. However much characters such as Will might be ironized, ultimately the novel allows a white writer to benefit commercially from fetishizing race and class for commercial consumption.

So far, we have seen the potential offered in a novel - through first-person narrative - for an extended interrogation of a character's reductive gaze at others, as well as the ways in which other writers and historical imaginaries influence Will Beckwith's problematic gaze at working-class, black, gay men. This mode of critique has been counter-posed with planning discourses which, with limited

audiences and an assumed objectivity, also conjure misunderstandings of urban space and urban lives. In turning now to a *play*, and its cinematic adaptation, from the 1990s, I want to explore some other ways of bringing everyday London life *to life*, and the collective experience of being in an audience and experiencing depictions of queer life in drama. In the following section I begin to trace a more positive set of ways in which Docklands has been represented. Jonathan Harvey's play *Beautiful Thing* and Hettie MacDonald's film adaptation of the play (also titled *Beautiful Thing*),¹⁷⁵ depict the Docklands from *within* (the staging of *Beautiful Thing* recreates the architecture of the estate on stage, while the film used genuine Thamesmead interiors): recreating, and dwelling in (and on), working-class domestic spaces which Will never sees in his brief dockland *dérive*.

Coming out of the concrete: *Beautiful Thing* (1993), and the potentiality of the present

Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity.

- Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.¹⁷⁶

The planning documents discussed at the beginning of this chapter showed us the ways in which London's Docklands was constructed as, 'a mixture of inter-war estates and...unused derelict docks' (*North Southwark Plan*, 1983). The previous section has shown us how Victorian imaginaries of Docklands were resurrected and evoked in late twentieth-century imaginaries of this place, and how the

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Harvey, *Beautiful Thing*, Michael Wilcox, ed., *Gay Plays 5*, (London: Methuen, 1993/1994); Hettie Macdonald, dir., *Beautiful Thing* (1996). Although I discuss specific parts of both the stage production and the film version, I refer to both throughout as *Beautiful Thing*. Often I discuss film and stage versions of *Beautiful Thing* at once. When I am only referring to the film or to the play, I indicate this. All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁷⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Malaysia: Blackwell, 1991), p. 87. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

construction of postwar estates as dangerous no-go zones stigmatized the lives of those living on these estates, and worked to structure the orientation of bodies *away* from working-class localities. These estates were rarely mentioned in Southwark's planned future, which focussed on the commercial potential of riverside warehousing, and overlooked the everyday lived experience of thousands of dockland residents.

In this section, I move from Butler's Wharf, and Will's walk through London's East, several miles downriver to Thamesmead, a council-housing estate in the Docklands. *Beautiful Thing* allows us to go further than earlier critiques, articulating queer domesticity on Thamesmead. Through a geographically specific reading of this *Docklands* text, I will analyze how it reorients the narrative perspective away from the planner's totalizing vision of the docks from afar, complicating dominant ways of seeing this space. By doing so, I consider how this text articulates the contingencies, intersections, and potentialities of daily dockland life.

The Thamesmead estate emerged from the post-industrial ruins of south-east London's Docklands in the late 1960s, and was initially narrated in terms of utopian futurity as 'a town for the twenty-first century'. But by the 1990s, the estate was commonly depicted as a symbol of the failures of post-war planning, and a receptacle of wasteful lives. *Beautiful Thing* stages quotidian life on this estate, and its *potentialities*. A coming-of-age romance between two teenage boys – Jamie and Ste - Harvey's play recovers a positive, and queer, model of domesticity. This queer home-making, and its representation in Harvey's play, usefully inverts stigmatizing narratives of (dockland, and homosexual) waste and decay. Representing the everyday life of queer youth on the estate, its tensions and hostilities are indeed rendered, but in a more complex urban vision than, for instance, Will Beckwith's; one which recuperates the lives lived here, and articulates how queer bodies, in moving through the city, utilize tactical resistances as a means of getting by in daily life.

In the opening scenes of the film, Ste is confronted by a group of girls who interrogate him about girlfriends, while Jamie experiences homophobic abuse on

the football pitch. These encounters encourage a turn *inward* to private domestic space, and Jamie runs home to engage with – and escape through – other narratives, on television and in music. He watches *Algiers*, a tale of illicit love, and shouts lines from *The Sound of Music* around the flat.¹⁷⁷ In arguing that *Beautiful Thing* recuperates domestic dwelling, I am not positing this as a regression or a *closeting*. Rather, the domestic interior can be playfully used to express, explore, and extend queerness. And it allows this to happen on Jamie's terms, in his own time and space.

Yet the proximity of family members and 'paper thin' walls hinders free expression of sexual difference. Ste complains:

Your mum and Tony on the other side of that door. My man and Trevor next door. I got an auntie in Gravesend. Thought we could go there one night cause she's deaf, but that don't feel right either.

Ste's fruitless search for privacy demonstrates how queer bodies can often feel a sense of unhomeliness at home. The teenage boy's anxiety about being with his lover in a family home is produced by a narrative of the rightness of heterosexuality – one reinforced through derision of same-sex desire by family, school peers, teachers, strangers, and dominant cultural narratives – a rightness with which he does not identify. This context leads to a feeling of lacking: a lack of a place in which to be intimate, and also a sense of failing to fulfil the standards by which a life is judged to be right, good, valid, successful, or productive. The space the boys eventually create is part domestic interior, part imagined. Their playful production of space as a means of making-do is emphasized in the film production through fantastical visuals: a rainbow rising over the estate at the close of the film, and a dreamscape in which the estate leads to an idyllic garden; elements which manipulate the landscape as a means of cleaving a space for expression free from stigma.

¹⁷⁷ John Cromwell, dir., *Algiers*, (1938), and, Robert Wise, dir., *The Sound of Music* (1965).

The panoptic visibility of Thamesmead results in Jamie and Ste's anxious performances of heterosexuality and their adoption of playfully coded language to mask their relationship. A resignation to the insurmountable homophobia of the home or the victory of such architecture over the boys' expression would only serve to condemn this space. Instead, Jamie tactically appropriates his bedroom as camp heterotopia, adorned with rainbow coloured lights, rainbow balloon, a chandelier, and posters of female Hollywood icons and pop stars.¹⁷⁸ According to Foucault, a heterotopia, entered by crossing a spatial border, is at once outside of yet located within reality: 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites...are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.'¹⁷⁹ Jamie uses material objects and signs to create camp collages on the walls, imaginative expressions which offer metaphysical escape from constraint, and a sense of comfort away from the violence of school life. Ste, cast out of his home by a hyper-masculine father and brother, also takes refuge in Jamie's bed. Ste later produces a gift of a beanie hat for Jamie, who responds, 'My what a pretty hat, it's the prettiest hat I ever seen Mr. Stephen. Does this mean we're engaged?', appropriating the language of courtship from the mainstream Hollywood cinema he watches at home. In the bedroom, a large poster of the Queen is placed near an even larger one of Madonna, playing with monarchic iconography, but also hinting at a subversive uses of 'queen' (within a gay male lexicon) that Jamie is perhaps not yet aware of. This playing with signs of gay culture in MacDonald's film suggests the possibility of a queer future which Jamie has not yet arrived at, but one which some viewers will be familiar with. Further, some viewers will also be familiar with Jamie's feeling of longing for a different kind of experience; of a future which is more open and less hostile outside of the heterotopia of the bedroom. In such moments, *Beautiful Thing* opens up moments of identification between character and viewer: quasi-dialogic moments in which queer feeling can seem to move between representation and reality, or past and present.

¹⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", trans. J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1, (1986) pp. 22-7.

¹⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1, (1986) pp. 22-7

The boys playfully subvert their daily performances of masculinity and heterosexuality as they sit in bed reading *Hello!* magazine. This scene – in the play and the film – glimpses the possibility of ordinary same-sex intimacy in domestic space. On the other side of the bedroom door, Jamie’s mum Sandra watches *This Morning*, the presenters Richard (Maddeley) and Judy (Finnigan) an enduring example of the stable heterosexual couple who have been a regular presence on terrestrial television for several decades.¹⁸⁰ Jamie and Sandra’s experiences of home are co-existent, and Jamie’s queer use of space is ironically enabled by Sandra’s assumption that sexuality is absent when two boys share a bed. These clandestine everyday actions ‘manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities’. This is a tactical mode of making-do. As De Certeau describes, tactics concern:

the situations imposed on an individual...of making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires – an art of manipulating and enjoying (1988, p. xxii).

Coming-out narratives often signify a departure from heteronorms through a spatio-temporal journey *away* from home, frequently to a metropolitan centre. Similarly, much queer urban scholarship has dismissed suburban space as hetero-familial, occluding non-urban lives by privileging the inner city as a site of community and resistance. *Beautiful Thing* subverts the conventional coming-out trajectory, pointing to how, for working class queers, physical escape is often not practical or possible. The coming out in this film occurs in the spatiality of Thamesmead, where it manages to find a level of acceptance. Although the text draws upon tropes of romance narrative (embrace and resolution), and might be seen as upholding family values, *Beautiful Thing* does something queer with domesticity. By accommodating the coming-out and its aftermath *within* the suburban home, the text refuses this passage into a better future *elsewhere*, uncovering the role for domestic space in exploring queer subjectivity: it holds a distinctive place in Jamie’s queer life and is a part of how he marks out that queerness. Jamie and Ste’s queering of domesticity overcomes the

¹⁸⁰ *This Morning* (ITV, 1988-).

heteronormative implications in the home's architecture. It may not be the ideal space to express their sexuality, but it nonetheless offers some opportunities for the realization of non-normative sexual identities. As Timotheus Vermeulen and Martin Dines have observed, the:

generic spaces of suburbia are enlivened by the embodied knowledge and sensuous geographies experienced by the people who actually live there...Increasingly, visual and literary representations focus on how people work out 'habits of being' within their own lives and daily interactions with space and place.¹⁸¹

Indeed, Harvey and Macdonald's representations allow audiences to pay attention to representations of everyday life in Docklands in order that these 'sensuous geographies' can be glimpsed. *Beautiful Thing*'s characters articulate this 'embodied knowledge' of the estate. By locating life in this riverside space, alternate ways of seeing the landscape are offered than those proffered in the planning discourses discussed earlier in this chapter.

The estate's interiors offer refuge from public derision of non-normative sexualities, for reading gay literature and expressing felt difference through camp collages – of film and music posters - on bedroom walls. Two working-class adolescents, Jamie and Ste do not have the resources to make their own home through the purchase or rental of private property, or to legitimately access queer venues (though they do manage to enter the local gay pub). Jamie's queer home-making is a mode of making-do. This model of home posited in *Beautiful Thing* is not geographically confined, as spaces for kinship also emerge elsewhere on the estate and beyond: in the gay pub, for instance. 'Home' exists both inside and exterior to the estate: a shifting, tactical and metaphysical mode of dwelling.

¹⁸¹ Timotheus Vermeulen and Martin Dines, eds., *New Suburban Stories*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 12. Thamesmead, several miles downriver from Butler's Wharf, might fall into this category of suburban, although it is also relatively proximate to the center of the capital, and therefore can be said to straddle both categories, or to blur the boundary between them. It mixes elements of urban, suburban, and new-town.

Describing the material surfaces of the quotidian, Lefebvre distinguished between ‘perceived’, ‘conceived’, and ‘lived’ spaces (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). Jamie can be seen to dwell in the *lived* space of the imagination, rather than aspiring towards an ideal *material* version of home in these perceived or conceived spaces. This lived space, according to Lefebvre, is unreadable, unknowable, and uncontrollable (p. 40). Again, this mode of home-making is one of making-do. Cultivated and lived by Jamie, it eludes analysis. But staged/screened, it illuminates the contingencies of quotidian dockland life, and therefore gestures toward the potentialities of these marginalized places. Unlike the queer erasures enacted by planning, or the fetishistic slumming of Hollinghurst’s narrator, Harvey’s text regenerates the queerness of the docks for its audience: staging it in the theatre, while Hettie MacDonald’s film adaptation of the text takes the audience into the domestic interiors of the estate, illuminating the lives lived on *estates* that were entirely overlooked by speculative developers.

Cook argues that queer expressions in London’s *interior* spaces have been overlooked, and that the domestic interior shows additional ways in which queer people have oriented their sense of themselves – behind closed doors and apart from the more public spaces of the city: ‘bars, clubs, toilets, cruising grounds, courtrooms and protest and pride marches’ which have received more critical attention (2014, p. 5). According to Cook, the domestic interior is a place where identities were established, expressed or contested, which:

troubles existing histories of home and family which almost entirely neglect queer lives...lives which don’t fit neatly into the sweeping social and cultural modes of describing the recent past...[which was] more contingent and less monolithic than is often assumed (p. 5).

Although a closet of sorts, the bedrooms of Thamesmead offer a space of material, imaginative and sexual experimentation. In his queer home-making, Jamie interrogates assumptions about home’s capacity to reflect and produce the individual, a deliberate home-making which speaks of a determination to find permanence and stability. But significantly, this model does not insist on the type

of individual that *should* be produced at home. Jamie's configuration of home finds potentiality in 1990s estate life, representing appropriation rather than condemnation of these sites, and circumventing their planned uses. Macdonald used the estate's authentic interiors as locations when filming *Beautiful Thing*, taking many viewers further into these spaces than they have been or are likely to go, to illuminate the everyday experiences of dwelling on the estate and producing a collision of different life experiences between reader, author, and character. *Beautiful Thing* presents multiple experiences of home-making and also un-belonging, across intersections of race, gender, class and sexuality. Leah is a young black woman living with a religious mother, eager to explore bisexuality. She has an obsession with the music of the Mamas and the Papas, and through her singing of Mama Cass lyrics uses text in similar ways to Jamie and Ste: as refuge, as relief from pressures of the present, and as a creative mode of tapping into a sensibility that suits her. Sandra struggles against the social stigma of being a single parent and of being read by others according to the narrow, negative stereotyping of women who raise children without fathers. Although these are not the main characters of the text, their representation gives their characters a depth of interest. The text thus becomes a site for the production of meaning. The film's screening, or the play's staging or reading, reproduces this story and extends it into the world across time and space.

Anxieties of influence: beautiful things on stage

On seeing the stage production of *Beautiful Thing*, *The Times* theatre critic Benedict Nightingale wrote:

Concrete paving, grey stucco walls, drab doors...and, as a feeble protest against the gloom, a few flowerpots and plaster dwarfs...a council estate in Thamesmead...as unlikely a setting for a play called *Beautiful Thing* as Buckingham Palace's gardens would be for *Les Miserables*.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Benedict Nightingale, Review, *The Times* (3 August 1993).

Nightingale's snobbish derision of Thamesmead relies upon stereotypical signifiers of working-class domesticity: grey, concrete exteriors of those who cannot afford the right type of brick or stone. Even the gnomes are a commonly derided motif of poor taste, drawn here in stark contrast to Buckingham Palace's gardens: the epitome of respectable heterosexual domesticity in a nationally organized community. The evocation of *Les Misérables* conjures Victor Hugo's tale of dispossession and abject poverty, but also one which is rendered in highly aestheticized musical productions, tickets for which can be prohibitively expensive.¹⁸³ Thus, Nightingale's familiarity with working-class life is filtered here through the stage. The review highlights a function of the text – dramatized for Nightingale – which is to produce a collision across social class, here between character and theatre-goer. Nightingale writes of the element of surprise that the text brings to its audience, that beauty can exist and thrive on Thamesmead. The text's extension into culture, whether in print, on screen, or staged, engenders moments of rupture: a chance for classist assumptions to be challenged, if not changed. *Beautiful Thing* transposes these elements of Docklands – architectural, social, sexual – onto a central London stage, bringing parts of Docklands to an audience unlikely ever to go there.

A member of the council responsible for Thamesmead education wrote to the Duke of York's Theatre in 1994 to complain of feeling 'intimidated' by gays in the audience and finding, 'the sight of older men with young lads sickening, if legal...[and] neither relevant nor...in any way typical of the young people with whom I am in contact.'¹⁸⁴ The councillors' response to the staging of the play also suggests the uses of the *theatre* as a space of queerness. Although audience members included the homophobic councillor, his commentary suggests a visibly queer audience, hinting that the production of the play in 1993 was a moment for queers to group together in public to witness rare representations of queer life in a mainstream public venue, and in cultural production. The staging of the play publically was a means of drawing together queer bodies into a convivial public space, to participate in a shared experience. The audience of *Beautiful Thing* would potentially have found a space for home – or of *feeling* at-home - in the

¹⁸³ Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, (London: Penguin, 1982).

¹⁸⁴ *Evening Standard*, Letter to editors, 24/11/1994, p. 43.

theatre during the play's performance: the rendering of queer domesticity on the stage spilling over into the audience.

My own first experience of *Beautiful Thing* was a DVD borrowed from a gay flat-mate, offered as something I 'must see'. The film felt dated. Elements of the production showed the film's low budget. Yet the reason my flat-mate had offered the film was because it extended a representation of same-sex intimacy in a working-class community, unusual in a heterosexist culture, the dominant elements of which function to discourage or conceal the circulation of such representations. It became clear that the text has a small but enthusiastic following among gay audiences. I use these examples here – of the staging of the play, and my own introduction to the film - to illustrate the varied and dynamic ways in which texts regenerate queer London for readers: whether staged, screened, or printed. Audience/reader interaction with the text becomes a creative, dialogic mode of travel across time and space. These regenerations work differently to the oft talked about building projects that occur around the city. They work around these regenerations. And they can work in resistance to their effects: whether this is a deliberate intention of the writer or reader, or an incidental effect as the text expresses the city's dynamic simultaneity and plurality.

Ros Jennings's discussion of the staging of *Beautiful Thing* demonstrates this capacity for a form of sociability that extends from the text to include readers/audience members. Jennings recalls watching the play in Gloucester:

both its "unoriginality" and its positive/uplifting tone made the beleaguered [because of a recent homophobic attack] queer audience of Gloucester feel able to make connections to a (albeit temporary) "positive experience" in relation not just to the film's textual construction but also with the other queers in the room that night.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Ros Jennings, "Beautiful Thing: British queer cinema, positive unoriginality and the everyday", in, R. Griffiths, ed., *British Queer Cinema* (Wolverhampton: Routledge, 2006), pp. 183 – 194, p. 193.

Describing the experience of watching the play, Jennings identifies a, ‘mode of textual connection between the film and...viewers’ (p. 192). This recollection describes the collective spectatorship as a moment of kinship, and a collective affective response to the play, but also to the audience’s local context. Indeed, the play has a remedial effect, for Jennings at least, in staging an unraveling of homophobic logics. The profound *use* of this is emphasized in the traumatic context of the violently homophobic attack in Gloucester that some audience members are working through. We can see here some of the ways in which texts *regenerate* queerness, functioning as productive sites, and furnishing cultures with representations of quotidian same-sex desire, or other ways of living a non-heterosexual life. These representations elaborate the ordinariness of difference in urban life: its inevitability, ubiquity and vitality.

These representations have broader democratic implications, countering deterministic portrayals of estate residents as an unproductive or criminal underclass leading valueless lives. Indeed, this was Harvey’s intention:

Two public schoolboys punting through Cambridge in cricket whites might have been exciting to watch, but it had very little to do with my personal experience...I wanted to redress this imbalance. I also wanted to redress the idea that if you are working-class and gay that you ended up getting kicked out onto the streets and sell your body for two Woodbines and a bar of Caramac (Harvey, p. 210).

Harvey’s comments reveal a desire to draw upon lived, queer, autobiographic experience in cultural production. He seeks to redress the class ‘imbalance’ of drama, literature (and other cultural forms) weighted as it is towards the representation of middle-class life, which is often also a reflection of its creators; an imbalance which can work to produce unrealistic, voyeuristic, or stigmatizing portrayals of working-class experience, or simply *no* portrayals of a working-class.

Estates such as Thamesmead were often singled out as containers of societal *waste*. Characters often deride young single mums as ‘slag’, illustrating the

potency of social stigmas, and Sandra imagines moving upmarket and upriver into neighbouring, gentrifying Rotherhithe, an area of accelerated redevelopment and a geographical marker of success, stating: ‘one day I’ll be rich enough to take me out of here...I’ll be glad to get off this bloody estate...temporary licensee of a pub in Rotherhithe. Nice little flat above it.’ Sandra wants something ‘nice’: to own a small piece of the good life, which is figured here in terms of property *ownership*, as opposed to council tenancy, tapping into normative configurations of class, aspiration, teleology, and good living which is organized in part around economic signifiers and their arrangement in domestic settings. In 1993, the year in which *Beautiful Thing* was first staged, Prime Minister John Major lamented how:

In housing, in the '50s and '60s, we...destroyed whole communities and replaced them with tower blocks and we built walkways that have become rat runs for muggers. That was the fashionable opinion, fashionable but wrong.¹⁸⁶

Major’s speech cast postwar social housing as dangerous. Architecturally, he sees estates as escape routes for the slippery, verminous criminals who live on them. Rather than regarding these spaces as lively, they have instead ‘destroyed’ the nostalgically remembered communities of pre-war Britain. Yet dismissals of the estate often relied upon its architecture, rather than accounts of everyday life. Major’s speech is chrononormative, invoking a national community as a way of making abstracted arguments: a sleight of hand by which the local can be swept up into a reductive tale of national pride versus failed lives, eliding the dynamism of lived experience.

Vermeulen and Dines observe that suburban spaces have often been imagined against the city, conceived in inferior terms. By representing these spaces through ‘a new discourse which seeks equality, not based on illusions of sameness, but on the mutual acknowledgment of difference’ (p. 4), these places can be seen not as *lesser* to, but as *different* from; a more democratic mode of

¹⁸⁶ John Major, speech, 1993 Conservative Party Conference, 8/10/1993, John Major Archive, <<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1096.html>> Accessed 08/02/2019. Transcript.

imagining spaces and the bodies within, which emancipates suburbia from derision as simplistic and soulless, racist, sexist, or as barren counterpart to the urban story. This is not to posit a binaristic difference between city and suburb, which repeats the move of carving up space along geographical lines and segregating individuals by social class. Rather, the dimensions of a basic, convivial sameness beyond essential categories of identity, and a simultaneous appreciation of alterity, might be offered. This simultaneous sameness and difference is glimpsed in the staging of quotidian Thamesmead life: Sandra's experience as a single mother, Leah's navigation of her bisexuality and religious upbringing, Jamie's desire for Ste and the ways in which he queers his own domestic space, and tactically evades the normativizing architectures of a homophobic culture. This is a co-existence of sameness and difference, rather than an either/or model. This moves towards convivial encounters which elaborate what Gilroy describes as a 'radical openness' in his critique of the workings of, 'closed, fixed, and reified identity' in British culture (xiv). This reified experience overlooks the, 'gains brought about in...civil society by an unkempt, unruly, and unplanned multicultural'. The intersectional experiences and unstable subject positions of multiple characters in *Beautiful Thing* – and their staging for the audience – extend a representation of this multiculturalism into present/future audiences, inviting interrogations of notions of a unified national community, and exposing the contradictions and fabrications in essentializing narratives of place and community.

Harvey's comments above are useful here, in underscoring the privileging of the highbrow, not only in cultural productions, but also in critical writing and pedagogy. Such modes risk the dismissal of texts like *Beautiful Thing* as lowbrow, or middlebrow. Yet Jennings notes that, despite the film's aesthetic unoriginality, it is rich in value, 'precisely because of its function as a kind of metaphorical "comfort food"...*Beautiful Thing*'s filmic world is that of the everyday, of daily struggles and small triumphs' (p. 183). For Jennings, there is a 'positive unoriginality' in films often dismissed on aesthetic grounds. In their very unoriginality, 'the films in question often provide a space of gentle subversion and resistance' (p. 185). Positive representation is often associated with what is un-queer: assimilationist models of gay and lesbian identity, or

normalizing political aims such as marriage. Jennings argues instead that despite the ‘positive unoriginality’ of *Beautiful Thing*, and its offering of optimism to the audience/reader, the text is polysemic: ‘In its combination of denaturalization and “positive images”, *Beautiful Thing* works in the most queer of ways to invite its audiences to replace their certainties with questions’ (p. 193). To dismiss the text as utopic neglects its subtle questioning of representation and performance, and its exploration of the uncertainties and contradictions involved in identification.

Yet while Jennings notes this subversive potential in the text, they do not attend to the text’s local context, and the cultural politics of Docklands. This overlooks the potential that the text contains for interrogating the dominant logics of regeneration at work in Docklands in the recent past: narratives of derelict wharves and lawless estates, which have eased the passage of drastic dockland redevelopment. Harvey’s play and MacDonald’s film recuperate *Thamesmead* as a site of potentiality, experimentation, and play. The queerness of the text, therefore, carries a greater potential than that acknowledged by Jennings, which is to intervene in its local context and to glimpse alternate ways of seeing this space that resist discourses of waste and decay.

Queer textual circulation, and modes of reading

We saw earlier how *The Swimming Pool Library* performs *influence*, and its potentially corrosive effects: placing limits on intersectional kinships by reproducing past stigma in the present (classism, neocolonialism, racism).¹⁸⁷ And above, we can also see the homophobic anxiety over the potential of *Beautiful Thing* to seduce, corrupt, and *influence* its audiences. *Beautiful Thing*’s characters, however, elaborate a more positive representation of textual influence. This is seen in the boys’ purchase and consumption of a copy of *Gay*

¹⁸⁷ *Influence* is a recurrent trope of homophobic constructions: that queerness risks influencing/corrupting a vulnerable heterosexual populace (particularly its young). For instance, Dorian Gray’s *influence* by the yellow book in Oscar Wilde’s, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Times magazine – which gestures toward the potential for kinships between queer men to emerge in the present, specifically through the medium of the *Gay Times* classified adverts. The uses of such influence are emphasized by the cultural context of the play: staged a decade after AIDS had first appeared, and several years since the introduction of Section 28 of the Local Government Act, which outlawed any positive mention of homosexuality in schools, and when sex between men was criminalized before the age of twenty-one.¹⁸⁸ Jamie and Ste’s relationship is thus illegal, stigmatized and navigated without education, evident in their misunderstanding of sexual references in the magazine. *Beautiful Thing* underscores both queer textual circulation, and queer resistance in daily life, in these acts of reading. The magazine is stolen from a newsagent and smuggled into the house by Jamie (he is too ashamed, and possibly too young, to buy it). It is read furtively behind the bedroom door. Yet the magazine content – specifically the contact ads at the back of the magazine – suggest the possibility of conviviality and sexual experience to be had elsewhere, of an expansive queer sociability.

¹⁸⁸ Local Government Act 1988, section 28. <Ops.gov.uk> Accessed 6/6/2018.

GAY times
CLASSIFIEDS

SEPTEMBER 1992

Send your reply in an envelope and write the box number of the ad you are replying to IN PENCIL (see illustration) in the top right hand corner. Place this envelope in a larger one, together with TWO LOOSE FIRST CLASS STAMPS. You may reply to more than one box number at a time in the larger envelope, but each reply must be accompanied by two first class stamps. Send to: GAY TIMES, GROUND FLOOR, WORLDWIDE HOUSE, 116-134 BAYHAM STREET, LONDON NW1 0BA.

We will continue forwarding replies for two issues inclusive of the current issue on sale. We cannot act on your behalf, or give the advertisers' names and addresses out. We will not forward replies not accompanied by stamps, and we cannot take any responsibility for the return of photos etc. sent through the post. If circulars are discovered among any box replies they will be intercepted. Personal advertisers should tell us if they receive any unsolicited advertising among their box replies.

CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

The editors reserve the right to refuse or amend an advertisement without giving a reason. No refunds can be made on advertisements which have to be amended or altered. No advertisements intending or appearing to intend to solicit for sexual purposes will be accepted. Advertisements are accepted on the understanding that they are submitted by and addressed to persons over 21 years of age.

CLASSIFIED ADS for inclusion in GAY TIMES Number 169 must reach us by first post on the 10th of September for publication in October 1992

REPLIES to Classified/Personal Ads in this issue will not be forwarded after November 2nd 1992.

COVER PHOTO
from issue 4
OVERLOAD
photo by
Studio Andros

PERSONAL ADS

WOMEN'S PERSONAL

- Lonely Black Female. Seeks friends for evenings out or fun in. Colour unimportant. Box 4827.
- York/Anywhere. Straight acting girl, seeks gay friends for friendship/romance. (18-23). ALAWP. Box 4828.
- Peter Pan's Sister. Seeks "Wendy", playmate, someone to cuddle and help to restore Timberbell (the magic in both our lives). Box 4829.

MIXED PERSONAL

- US Male. 27, seeks Irish/Continental EEC female for mutually beneficial arrangement. ALA. Box 4607.
- Attractive, intelligent Asian man, seeks an English/Irish lesbian for mutually beneficial arrangement. Box 4826.
- Birmingham/Anywhere. Big guy, 34, tall, sincere, genuine, with good sense of humour, seeks understanding female, 27-35, for long term relationship. Non smoker please. ALA. Box 5107.
- Two Fun Guys. One Brit, one Yank, aged 22 and 23, looking for two young ladies (one British, one American, for mutually beneficial arrangement, possible marriage. If interested, please write to Mike Brown, PO Box 1156, Orland Park, Illinois, 60462, USA. (Address in UK available after initial contact).
- Attractive British Guy. 22, seeks American female for mutually beneficial arrangement! Complete discretion assured. Box 5109.
- Midlands/Anywhere. Attractive (38) heterosexual female graduate, seeks wealthy, sophisticated gay man, for mutually beneficial friendship. Box 5110.
- West Country. Big guy, early 40s, bearded professional, seeks slim, feminine bi-woman, for fun and friendship. ALAWP. Box 5138.
- Bristol/South West. Tall, dark, extremely good looking gay guy, British, 25, seeks similar, slim, feminine female, for mutually beneficial arrangement. ALAWP. Box 5140.
- Berkshire/London. Gentle, independent woman, seeks gay man/couple to share friendship, fatherhood and parenting. ALA. Box 5141.
- Is there a non smoking lesbian lady within 100 miles of Harrogate, interested in friendship with a professional, graduate with a professional, divorced, with adult family. Likes include Modern Jazz, swimming, Classical music and sports car. ALA. Box 5142.
- American male, 43, living in UK, seeks British (or EEC) female for mutually beneficial arrangement. Box 5143.
- Frenchman. 26, seeks friends and is looking for accommodation in Brighton from October '92. Please write to: E. Brunel, 86, One Poudsich, Roederbergweg 43, 4000 Frankfurt 1, Germany.
- Av Pair Wanted. For professional couple, 27/29, dog, cats, start 1993. Driving license a plus. Write with photo to: SOX GMBH, Lindenstr. 69, D-5000, Cologne, Germany.
- Gay Male Nurse. 31, bearded, is looking for gay friends. Write to: Frank Meyer, Weendohr Weg 2, D-2000, Hamburg 20, Germany.
- I am a 24 Year Old Student. Tall, slim, handsome, German, looking for British guys 21-30, for correspondence. Friendship. Write to: A. Meyer, Rottmarstr. 1, D-8, Munich 2, Germany.
- Two Friends. (29/33) are looking for gay and lesbian friends worldwide to write letters and to visit each other someday. Write to: Pasituch 49, D-W 7403, Ammerbuch 1, Germany. Tel. 68 41
- Russian. 21 years old, 6ft 4ft tall, slim, attractive, loving and sincere, looking for caring, protective guys (DDs) willing to offer support, friendship and guidance. Write to: Edward Sobotov, UL, Bushova, 010, KV 2, P Ostravskoye, Kostromskaaya, Chelab 157960, Russia.
- Romanian Student. Very good looking, 24 years old, 1.78/65, dark blond hair, blue eyes, wanting boyfriend, 24-40 years old (especially from ethnic milles). Please write with photo in English, French, Italian, to: George Hinciu, CP-39-24, Bucharest, Romania.
- Handsome Ghanaian. 25 years old, self-employed, masculine, seeks penpals, all ages. Write to: Mike, Box 148, Mamprobi, Accra, Ghana.
- Bulgarian. 24 years old, speaks and writes both Spanish and English. Hobbies include, music, cinema, theatre, literature. Needs tenderness and love. Write to: Vladimír, PB 60, Sofia, 1799, Bulgaria.
- Brussels. Englishman abroad, quiet, affable, humorous, professional, 38/1.70/67, lives history Arts countryside. Seeking similar friend in Belgium or Europe, for companionship and more. Box 5144.

ALA means all Letters Answered, please do not put this unless you intend to do so.

GAY TIMES SEPTEMBER 92 3

Fig 1.5, *Gay Times*, September 1992.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Figure 1.5. *Gay Times*, September 1992 (Hall Carpenter Archives, HCA/Journals/21G).

The classified adverts at the back of *Gay Times* have multiple functions: placing people seeking sex, intimacy, contact, conversation, or epistolary sociality, in contact with others. In the case of the following: ‘US male, 27, seeks Irish/continental EEC female, for mutually beneficial arrangement’, a man seeks a woman for the performance of a stable heterosexual union, presumably in order to meet the standards of citizenship and to be accepted as a European, and American, citizen.¹⁹⁰ The writer seeks a partner for a clandestine performance of a heteronormative myth, tied to national belonging. These collated adverts, from writer addressed to stranger, inviting a reply, reveal a transnational network of queer voices. Set aside from the magazine’s editorial content, they occupied numerous pages of the magazine, contributing to the costs of printing, distribution, and staff wages, on an international magazine with a minority readership. As well as ‘contact’ adverts, the back pages extended to queer friendly businesses – solicitors, builders, security guards, escorts, and insurers – offering varied support for stigmatized lives. This variety works against the lazy stereotyping of queer print cultures – and classified adverts – as being solely sex-based. Indeed, Figure 4. reveals the cartographic function of the magazine: offering readers the coordinates of queer bookshops across – North and West – London.¹⁹¹ Jamie and Ste make use of this function: learning the address of their nearest gay pub, “The Gloucester”, which they visit, and reading the contact adverts which offer a glimpse of other queer lives across the city and elsewhere. Such glimpses, gleaned through reading, were vital in a culture where images of queer life were scarce. Leafing through classified ads, the two characters encounter a liminal form of kinship that crossed spatial terrains: a pre-digital interconnectedness that circulated through phone boxes and post-boxes, circumventing the public scrutiny of same-sex desire as strangers used the magazine to initiate clandestine, often epistolary relationships.

¹⁹⁰ *Gay Times*, September 1992 (Hall Carpenter Archives, HCA/Journals/21G).

¹⁹¹ Housman’s remains open as a ‘radical’ bookshop, but the only LGBT bookshop that remains from this list is Bloomsbury’s “Gay’s The Word”.

Drummond St. 5. Sat women's late. Warren St

Kennington Rd. women's cocktail

153 Lee High men only £2.50 Wed-Thurs 7-ht, Sun noon-

UB Upstairs opposite Highbury men's night with ft, LLGC, 69 monthly Fri disco. Women's tea, Farringdon

ational social s for afternoon at The Angel

ptford Centre, nly all nighter, es. £3 B4 mid-afe, video.

at Camden Rd. NW1. 071 4-7pm. Euston

69 Cowcross Sat till 12, Sun bar on 1st fl.

Lime Grove, 3.30-11.30pm.

ty bar, Queen W2. Entrance 50p. Tues disar with mixed be.

Industria, 9 397 Women's 1 Circus tube. lge. Town Hall 71 326 5100. ub. Guest DJs m-3am. £3 B4 to dancefloor. h tube. don Women's WC2 Women-

BOOKSHOPS

BOOKMARKS 265 Seven Sisters Road, N4. 081 802 6145. Radical bookshop. Finsbury Park tube. ▼

CLONE ZONE 1 Hogarth Rd, Earls Ct. 071 373 0598. Gay-run shop selling large selection of cards, magazines, sex aids including dental dams. Mon-Fri 10am-7pm. Sat 9.30am-8pm. Sun 1-7pm. Earls Ct tube. ▼

COMPENDIUM 234 Camden High St, NW1. 071 485 8944. Gay & lesbian section in basement. Camden Town tube. ▼

GAY'S THE WORD 66 Marchmont St, WC1. 071 278 7654. Mon-Sat 11am-7pm; Sun 2-6pm. Russell Sq tube. t

HOUSMAN'S 5 Caledonian Rd, Kings Cross, N1. 071 837 4473. Mon-Fri 10am-6pm; Sat till 5pm. Kings Cross tube/BR. t

LOVEJOYS 99 Charing Cross Rd, WC2. Mon-Sat 10am-10.30pm. ▼

PAGES OF FUN 16 Terminus Place, Victoria, SW1. Mon-Sat 9am-10pm. Opp Victoria Stn. ▼

PIPELINE BOOKSHOP 37 Neal St, Covent Garden, WC2. 071 240 3319. Extensive gay & women's sections. ▼

RED & GREEN BOOKS Riverside Studios, Crisp Rd, W6. Arts complex bookshop. Hammersmith tube. ▼

SILVER MOON WOMEN'S BOOKSHOP 68 Charing Cross Rd, WC2. 071 836 7906. Wide range of women's/lesbian publications including good erotica and crime fiction sections. ▼

SISTERWRITE 190 Upper St, London N1.

ZIPPER 283 Camden High St, NW1. 071 284 0537. Large range of gay books, magazines, leather, clothing, postcards. Gay Times, HIM, Vulcan, on sale. Mon-Thurs 10.30am-6.30pm; Fri till 7pm; Sat 10am-6.30pm. Camden Town tube.

ussion group for women 27-45. Call Mike/Fat. 071 731 5709. Clare 081 470 6370.

EALING COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LESBIAN & GAY SOCIETY. Meets Mon 6pm (term time). Call Students Union: 081 579 5000/840 0863.

EALING GAY GROUP Details: Jim/Alan: 071 385 6376; Peter/Neil: 081 998 6708. Write: PO Box 130, London W5 1DQ.

EAST LONDON LESBIAN & GAY SOCIAL GROUP Meets 1st & 3rd Sat monthly, Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Rd, Stepney, E1. Entrance through side gate, Stepney Green tube, Limehouse DLR. Details: John: 081 555 8767.

FANTASY YOUTH meets Sun, 3-6pm to promote safe SM practices. All under 26s welcome. Call 071 229 5672. Sun only.

FAT ANGELS FRIENDS For big men & their friends & admirers. Meets Weds 7.30pm at The Empire, Little Turnstile, Holborn WC1. Details: John 071 401 3568; Roger: 081 656 5325 or SAE to FAF, c/o The Empire.

FIFTY PLUS PROJECT Social & support group for lesbians & gay men over 50. Write FLAG Project, c/o Age Concern Newham, 505 Barking Rd, Plaistow E13 8PS. Call Jo or Paul, 081 471 5151.

THE FRIDAY GROUP Social, cultural, campaigning group for black lesbians & gay men. Details: 081 678 6606; 081 678 6897; 081 673 3920.

LONDON FRIEND 86 Caledonian Rd, N1. Helpline Mon-Sun 7.30-10pm 071 837 3337. Women's helpline: Tues & Thurs 7.30-10pm 071 837 2782. Full access. **Cairde**. Irish lesbians social & support group meets 2nd & 4th Sun monthly, 6.30-8.30pm. **Changes** women's coming out group, 1st, 3rd, 5th Mon monthly, 6.30-8pm; **LAFS** (Lesbians at Friend on Sundays), social group, 1st & 3rd Sun monthly, 6pm. **Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous**, 3pm, Sat; **Onyx** social/discussion for black lesbians/lesbians of colour, 2nd & 4th Sun monthly, 6.30-8.30pm; **Shakti**, for South Asian lesbians, gays & bisexuals meets fortnightly; **Turning Point**, men's coming out group, 1st, 3rd, 5th Weds monthly, 7-9pm; **Fusion**, multiracial non-cruisy gay men's social group meets Sat 8-11pm, call 889 5162, **Bisexual Group** Fri 8pm, Write BM/BI, London WC1N 3XX; **Orientalisms** Pacific Asian support group, 3rd Sun monthly, 2-5pm; **Cypriot lesbians & gays**, 1st Sun monthly, 2-5pm. "Ethnic minorities will receive a warm welcome". Kings Cross tube.

LONDON LESBIAN HUMANIST ASSO-

7.30-10pm.

HOLLOW GROUP S Meets Wed Venue whe

HOUNSLO Meets 2nd Andy/Jim 0 Rachel 081

HOUNSLO HELPLINE

HYDE PAR every Sun, Corner, Mar Sharley: 081

IMAGES O Urban Studie Peckham SE workshops to 9pm. Call Ka

IRISH LESE Irish Women; Church St, N1

IRISH GAY social group r at LLGC. Mee Arms, Poland; (Mon 7.30-10

JEWISH LES 081 203 4029.

JEWISH YO at LLGC 2nd & Call 071 706 3

KENTISH TO Meet Thurs. Ca

KINGSTON & SOCIETY Wr Surbiton KT6 6F

KINGS COLL SOC Meets M Strand Building hole.

LAMBETH YO Thurs 6.30pm. C 3101; 071 274 7

LESBIAN FEM support group. BM/GYM, London

LESBIAN & C Caribbean, Asia Asians welcome Theobalds Rd, W tube.

LESBIAN & GAMENT N London Central: Cecil 07 Liz/Geoff: 081 98

LONDON LOCAL GROUPS

Fig 1.6¹⁹²

H. G. Cocks traces the history of the personal ad – used to solicit intimacy or some form of sociality – as far back as the seventeenth century, and cites how, in the nineteenth-century, classified ads were perceived by some as a ‘grave threat to the nation’s morals.’¹⁹³ Cocks notes the uses of classified ads especially for those who felt alienated by normative courtship rituals. In the nineteenth-century, Kate Thomas has explored how the extension of the postal network enhanced this epistolary potentiality, and, ‘laid the cultural foundations for the experience

¹⁹² *Gay Times*, September 1992 (Hall Carpenter Archives, HCA/Journals/21G).

¹⁹³ H. G. Cocks, *Classified: The Secret History of the Personal Column* (Chatham: Random House Books, 2009), p. 3.

of interconnectedness in everyday life which is the hallmark of twentieth century telecommunications.’¹⁹⁴ This offered a means of tactical subversion and communication for queer people, enduring through the twentieth-century: ‘The reformed Post Office brought everyone into connection with anyone: accessible, cheap, and anonymous, the post was almost immediately understood to engender queer interfaces’ (Thomas, p. 6). There is a queer potential/possibility/process in the democratic and market structure of the postal service – the postage stamp implies that the correspondence will be delivered regardless of the content, to whomever, and will be handled by multiple strangers. Published in 1993, *Beautiful Thing* represents a late-twentieth-century moment prior to mass-digitization and the millennial time of social media, in which print cultures were a vital means of elaborating, engendering, and extending queerness. And the play represents the multiple functions of a lowbrow or middlebrow queer print culture in quotidian life: educative, erotic, intimate, or otherwise. These adverts brought queer lives into a network of epistolary exchange, for those who felt the need to ‘reach out, to create communities and contacts beyond the reach of familial authority and sometimes out of sight of the law’ (Cocks 2009, p. 177).¹⁹⁵ Among the small-circulation texts stored in the Hall-Carpenter Archives, in an early edition of the magazine, *Man To Man International Forum*, a writer claims:

the main thing is that from ‘holding out a friendly hand’ which we did in Issue 1, we can now claim that we are *shaking hands* with many thousands ‘out there’, in cities, towns, villages; in mansions, houses, semi’s, flats and bed-sits all over the UK.¹⁹⁶

These cultures of letters illustrate the part which the magazine could play in complex negotiations of subjectivity and same-sex desire. Yet in 1982, Bryan Derbyshire, editor of *Capital Gay*, ‘London’s bright weekly paper’, lamented the destructive effects of panic around AIDS on queer urban print cultures:

¹⁹⁴ Kate Thomas, *Postal Pleasures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁹⁵ This is represented in the relationships of Nick Guest in Hollinghurst’s, *The Line of Beauty* (2005).

¹⁹⁶ *Man To Man International Forum*, December 1975, [HCA/JOURNALS/21G](#).

At the moment of writing this, there is a purge going on. Gay magazines are the target, and especially those with contact ads. Someone, somewhere, has taken the decision to wipe out contact ad magazines...publications like *Zipper*, *Him* and *Men Cruising Men* do have editorial comment and provide a means for readers to meet without running the risk of being thrown in the nick for soliciting.¹⁹⁷

The context of AIDS emphasized how material magazines were both objects of potentiality and anxiety. Jamie fears the discovery of *Gay Times* by his mum, and hides it under his mattress. As an object which makes same-sex desire visible, Sandra is distraught when she discovers the magazine. When she confronts Jamie in tears, he responds: ‘You think I’m too young, it’s just a phase, that I’m gonna catch AIDS and everything’. Sandra’s anxiety is a heterosexual one, tapping into ideas of queer texts as a means of engendering and extending queerness – seductive and dangerous objects of influence, particularly when, as seen here, they fall into the hands of naïve adolescents. Rohy has detailed this familiar trope of homosexual literature’s corrupting influence, as perceived by a phobic mainstream. But Rohy asks: ‘what happens when we embrace the abject tropes of homosexual reproduction...[the] modern bestiary of homosexual causes – bad influence, trauma, “evil reading”, contagion, choice, recruitment’ (p. 5). Rohy overturns these homophobic tropes to explore how these facets of homosexual ‘reproduction’, or, *regeneration*, ‘might prove perversely useful.’ Indeed, Sandra’s anxious response to the magazine also underscores the (re)generative potential of queer print cultures, and the *vitality* which they extend to their queer readers. Panicked and homophobic responses to AIDS fractured conventional familial relationships, and gay men often sought kinship structures outside of the family. And it is here where the vitality of the text comes into play. The magazine serves a cartographic function, mapping a set of queer coordinates that lead Jamie and Ste to the nearest gay pub in Greenwich, where they are inducted into non-familial sociability by a drag queen, an expansive version of family that offered the possibility of feeling ‘at-home’. I want to build upon Cook’s notion of queer domesticity here, to argue that homeliness is not limited to domestic

¹⁹⁷ Bryan Derbyshire, ed., *Capital Gay*, Volume 6 (1982), p. 4-5, HCA/JOURNALS/21/G.

space. It may seem an enclosed space of commerce, or suggestive of a nostalgic model of gay identity, but the pub functions as a space of education and shared experience of sexual difference amid hegemonic prescription and homophobic abuse. The pub disrupts the permanence and settled domesticity attached to material homes, drawing together connecting threads in the ways queer people thought about home and family, arising from their social, cultural and political positions, and the ways they had to self-consciously negotiate a place within local, urban and national cultures. It glimpses the uses of queer venues as sites of sociability and convening in public places in a moment of virulent homophobia. And further, the text helps to facilitate a queer homemaking in its cultivation of non-familial sociality. By insinuating a copy of *Gay Times* into *Beautiful Thing*, the play's characters are awakened to the queer city. Harvey gestures to these clandestine yet expansive queer networks, articulating a vital means of connectivity which would have resonated with many readers/theatre-goers/viewers, and which elaborates the varied (re)generative functions of queer texts.

This is an expansive, mobile concept of home, not so much an aspiration towards a material dwelling invested with a particular meaning as an attempt to feel at-home in everyday life. As Ahmed writes: 'Loving one's home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one's body...home as *overflowing* and *flowing over*' (2005, p. 11). Jamie's queerness is experienced *within* the domestic, but also elsewhere, geographically, imaginatively and socially. *Home* is dynamic and multiple, shifting and tactical; as Jamie re(constitutes) spaces which provide some kind of ontological security. The text serves a useful reminder of the positive affective potential of these sites, highlighting contradictions in the narratives of property developers and politicians who presented Docklands as a failed wasteland in order to advance regeneration projects: deterministic narrations of space and the bodies within which concretize the subjectivity of Thamesmead's inhabitants. *Beautiful Thing* attends to the possibilities of a space, producing a usefully non-invasive mode of approaching dockland communities, which is largely absent from the drastic reorganisation of this territory in the recent past and today.

In positing a resistance to the built redevelopment of the docks, it might seem tempting to articulate a sense of long-standing community, or a territorialized sense of neighbourhood uprising. Harvey's dockland narrative, however, offers a flexible understanding of the boundaries between places and the relationship between a surface and its contents. This contrasts with traditional understandings of turf politics and a hostility towards outsiders that characterized working-class politics of resistance elsewhere in Docklands. This was seen, for instance, in the election of the BNP's first councillor on the Isle of Dogs in 1993, on a campaign which deployed the slogan 'rights for whites'.¹⁹⁸ Ideas of home that are not premised on geography are useful here. Belonging to a community, be it on a local or national scale, often provokes a place-based essentialism, and is based on belonging within a certain territory. This can lead to misconceptions of fixed identity, and of fixed communities, where what might really exist is a group of bodies negotiating all number of circumstances. This has often played into the division between the un/productive types of citizenship in sites such as Docklands. Harvey's articulations of feeling at-home, and of complicating received understandings of dwelling that privilege private property, are of use in a city in the midst of a housing crisis, demonstrating both the uses of social housing, and tactical appropriations of space and alternative models of home-making and dwelling; an attempt, as Massey puts it, 'to take back the landscape through reversing the terms of belonging' (2011). The text allows us to glimpse the dynamism of quotidian urban life and acts as a call for care when interpreting other people's life experiences. Condemnations of estate life as necessarily failed ease the passage of redevelopment projects that threaten urban diversity, avoiding the construction of new social housing. Texts such as *Beautiful Thing* stage a refutation of this rhetoric.

Conclusion

The Docklands carries an etymological suggestion of *enclosure*. To dock is to moor, land, to fix together. It is a point of encounter, a temporary merging of

¹⁹⁸ See William Raban, dir., *Island Race* (1993).

otherwise disconnected elements. It therefore also carries the potential for a rupture of ties, and a casting away. The Docklands' history is of encounters between divergent lives, classes, races, sexualities and paths. By briefly attaching seemingly disparate narratives together as a corpus of Dockland narratives in this chapter, untold stories about the topographical significances of these texts, and an underrepresented part of London in studies of the city, are glimpsed. Some of these narratives have been retold more readily or loudly than others, but drawing them into a loose network here can usefully attest to the multiple and often unreadable contingencies of identity in space-time. Bruno Latour's 'actor-network-theory' is useful here, in its insistence upon local connections.¹⁹⁹ Latour seeks to alter the social landscape away from abstract and reductive power pyramids towards a 'networky shape' in which the landscape is kept obsessively flat, to emphasize a multiplicity of simultaneous local connections (p. 178-9). By emphasizing *connections*, the will to narrate space is disrupted, such that what was above or below comes to be side-by-side. There is a democratizing potential in this regard of locality: an appreciation of contingency and multiplicity. By grouping literary and non-literary texts together in this chapter, a heterogeneous interplay of disconnected voices is heard, of intersecting life paths, narratives and histories, simultaneously coursing through a shared geography. This is a way of seeing the city that attends to its 'sensuous geographies', its echoes, affects, obscured facets and ordinary differences. The search for meaning in place often constructs the identities of its inhabitants, congealing space, time, narrative, meaning and subjectivity. Assessing these texts together can complicate such attempts to fix meaning within a set of coordinates, and is a way of defamiliarizing the divisions between the bodies that inhabit these spaces, illustrating the extent to which social division has been sown on the landscape, and into the routines of everyday urban life dockland life in the recent past. In focussing on this locality from multiple perspectives, its dominant lines of signification lose their coordinates, complicating both localized and national identities. This site specific methodology is not concerned with investing a particular significance in the fabric of the built environment. Rather, it is an

¹⁹⁹ Bruno Latour, *Localizing the Global: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

attendance to overlapping stories, a reminder that the story of a place is not an easy one to write.

As we have seen, narratives and characters situated within Docklands can complicate and critique hegemonic modes of regeneration, enacting a queer regeneration of London through cultural (re)productions which extend into the world and circulate through culture in discourse, memory, and the culture industry. In these texts we find characters living in ‘decayed’ zones; recovering a potentiality in dismissed lives and ruined spaces, and illuminating ways of making homes and making-do through tactical appropriation and resistance rather than spectacular built change. Such writing elaborates urban life without a clear beginning or end point, or a singular mode of interpretation, but rather ceaseless connections and crossovers of meaning, which resist chronological causality and linear life narratives. This is not architectural regeneration, which reproduces familiar patterns of life by implanting structures on the landscape, or the hetero-familial forms of ‘reproductive futurism’ that cherish traditional genealogies. Rather, queer regeneration is the continual re-population of the city by ‘cultural reproduction’ that attends to the non-normative²⁰⁰. The literatures of this chapter, and the chapters that follow, enact this queer mode of reproduction, comprised of promiscuous bonds that take multiple forms, including; remembrance, modes of reading, walking the city, life writing and fiction (and the spaces between), kinships and encounters. All of these reproduce and foster queer bonds and forge personal, unreadable paths through the city. I insist here upon the value of such modes of regeneration, not premised on economic profit or efficiency, the commodification of everyday life, mythic narratives of ideal citizenship imbued in new domestic architecture, or any other means of inscribing hegemonic visions of futurity. Rather, queer regeneration is loose and *unformed*, finding value in cultural kinships and affective fields of relation which

²⁰⁰ Here my argument is informed by Pierre Bourdieu’s – albeit somewhat deterministic - concept of ‘cultural reproduction’, and its description of the cultural transmission of inequality, and how cultural norms are inherited across generations. See Pierre Bourdieu, “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction”, Karabel, J. & Halsey, A., eds., *Power and Ideology in Education*, pp. 487-511 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

are inherently diffuse. Literature variously remembers and misremembers, populates, creates, stages, circulates, and regenerates, queer London.

I have shown in this chapter how bodies became cast as waste simply by inhabiting Docklands, whether 'derelict' wharves, or its council estates. And the ease with which ideas of failed lives can be collapsed into ideas of failed places. I have also begun to trace the varied uses of texts in quotidian life, many of which are tactical, affording the reader or writer a means of disrupting their own experiences of the city, and of queering time, place, or history. In chapter two, I will develop these ideas through close readings of Jeremy Reed's epic, autobiographic, Soho poem, *White Bear and Francis Bacon*. Reed's experience as a queer Soho sex worker in the time of AIDS is represented in his poetry. His mode of creativity extends queerness through print culture, quietly unfolding an often overlooked experience to the reader.

Chapter Two

Archiving Soho's queer ruins: Jeremy Reed's poetics of Piccadilly Sex Work

Sweet Thing had a more instinctive knowledge. He understood capitalism on a visceral level. His body was trade, he was business made flesh.

- Jake Arnott, *Johnny Come Home*.²⁰¹

"Our motto is: edgy not seedy"

- Steve Norris, chairman, Soho Estates.²⁰²

It is obvious that local authorities in Soho and in other parts of London are fundamentally failing to safeguard social and affordable housing, and equally allowing market forces to change areas rapidly with little consideration to residents, particularly those who may have less cultural and social capital and may be less able to voice their concerns in a way that 'matters'.

- Sanders-McDonagh, Peyrefitte, & Ryalls, "Sanitising the City".²⁰³

²⁰¹ Jake Arnott, *Johnny Come Home* (London: Sceptre, 2006), p. 85.

²⁰² Hardeep Sandher, "King's of Soho: James and Norris's Soho Transformation", *Property Week*, 22/06/2012, <www.propertyweek.com/features/kings-of-soho-james-and-norriss-soho-transformation/5038644.article>. Accessed 12/11/2017.

²⁰³ Erin Sanders-McDonagh, Magali Peyrefitte, Matt Ryalls, "Sanitising the City: Exploring Hegemonic Gentrification in London's Soho", in, *Sociological Research Online*, 21 (3), (2016), p. 4.

Introduction

Like the Docklands, Soho has experienced dramatic changes to its built environment in the recent past. In the same year that the LDDC was created, the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed in London, stoking anxieties over sex publics which sparked efforts to ‘clean up’ Soho. Mort notes how the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act (1982), ‘empowered local authorities to control the sexual marketplace’, such that by 1984, three years after the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed, the number of Soho sex premises had shrunk from sixty-one to thirteen.²⁰⁴ Councilor Young, Chairman of the Westminster City Council Environmental Committee, commented: ‘There is no slackening of our support for the “Clean Up Soho” campaign’ (Mort, p. 156). Both Docklands and Soho, therefore, have been – differently – depicted as decayed in order to allow for clean-up and redevelopment projects that promote respectable and exclusive urban living. The effects of neoliberal fiscal policy and deregulation and the new architectures of glass and steel are plainly visible when wandering through both localities. Yet while much of the redevelopment rhetoric of Docklands has focused on material surface, it is corporeality and sexuality that has caused moral panic and provoked efforts to change Soho. And it is this distinct erotic topography that has also occupied writers, including poets such as Jeremy Reed, who is the focus of this chapter.

Soho has fascinated cultural geographers, sociologists, and historians. Judith Walkowitz notes Soho’s long history as a space of transgression.²⁰⁵ Matt Houlbrook’s history of early twentieth-century queer London highlights the district’s long lascivious appeal: ‘an enduring locus of immigrant, underworld, and working-class sociability...a nocturnal space in which the conventions of respectable urbanity could be discarded’ (p. 7). Houlbrook writes that Soho

²⁰⁴ Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 157. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²⁰⁵ Judith Walkowitz, *Nights Out - Life in Cosmopolitan London* (Yale University Press, 2012).

allowed for a, ‘distinctly queer urban culture...Different modes of queerness – different ways of understanding sexual difference – converged at the same sites’ (p. 266). Farson’s pop-cultural history is one of 1980s faux-Bohemia.²⁰⁶ Binnie identifies Soho’s reputation in the early 1990s as the ‘gay commercial district’ of London, a ‘queer space’ where LGBTQ people felt safe expressing their sexual rights.²⁰⁷ More recently, Sanders-McDonagh, Peyrefitte, and Ryalls (2016) argue that Soho is being sanitized as part of larger gentrification processes which risk stripping a diverse space of its cosmopolitan character (2016). Their article claims that, ‘hegemonic gentrification’ is drastically altering the queer terrain of Soho (p. 364). McDonagh et al focus on the remodelling of around 60 acres of mixed use land owned by Soho Estates with the privileging of respectable forms of business and residence. The trope of ‘sex sells’ is curiously malformed here: it is a superficial, sanitized, and highly aestheticized rendering of Soho’s erotic past that becomes profitable. These, ‘super-gentrifiers not only displace certain “undesirable” populations, but...the private sector is increasingly given carte blanche to alter social and spatial practices, impacting on notions of inclusive citizenship in the city’ (p. 4). Many new, sanitized businesses ironically trade on Soho’s reputation as an erotic space of transgression and entertainment, while limiting the sociality of the street and public space, as commercial space becomes desexualized and highly routinized while trading on an aesthetics of ‘edginess’.

Soho’s recent literary representation, however, has received little critical attention. As Soho has been variously scrutinized, raided, shut down, or knocked down, a concomitant, resistant *regeneration* of an increasingly at-risk queer culture has occurred in print. A panoply of texts have emerged which react explicitly to the shifting landscape, and the disregard of civic authorities and planners for queer spaces. This chapter, through attention to Reed’s Soho poetry, explores the possibilities of this textual production - which variously records,

²⁰⁶ Daniel Farson, *Soho in the Fifties* (London: Joseph, 1987), in which he writes of: ‘dark Italians huddled in earnest discussion and several pale young artists and poets searching half-heartedly for jobs.’

²⁰⁷ Jon Binnie, “Trading Places: Consumption, Sexuality and the Production of Queer Space”, in *Mapping Desire*, D. Bell, G. Valentine, eds. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 182-199.

recreates, memorializes, celebrates, recuperates, elegizes, and nostalgizes Soho's dwindling queer topography. Recent literature that has emerged either *from*, or *about* Soho, often explicitly registers and responds to hegemonic processes of urban regeneration led by logics of financial investment and profit, and the outward, visible respectability that is often superficially entwined with these tendencies. Soho's queer print cultures constitute an alternative mode of regeneration. Reed's poetry is emblematic of this in elaborating the multifarious functions and contested meanings of Soho, articulating the lived experience of dwelling in this landscape of 'hegemonic gentrification', and the possibilities for coping with, and tactically resisting, such phenomena. Gentrification is an oft-invoked term which can feel well-rehearsed and generalizing. Interdisciplinary readings of urban print cultures can, I suggest, problematize these generalizations and offer a means of figuring regeneration's marginalia.²⁰⁸

Returning to Berlant and Warner's statement (quoted in the thesis introduction) that queers are, 'especially dependent upon ephemeral elaborations in urban space and print culture', I want to pull at the interrelation of these aspects: of urban space (as well as time), the body in space-time, and textual practice, production, and consumption. Reed's poems explore the interrelation and interdependency of city/body/text. They articulate and enact this relationship, and can usefully further critical discussions of the city that are often desexualizing and mono-disciplinary. In this chapter, I bring the literary into conversations of the regeneration of Soho, to expand these conversations and to enhance their interdisciplinarity. Reed's understudied poetry, I will show, can alter the ways we theorize the reproduction and reorganization of Soho, elaborating alternative epistemologies of urban regeneration, and refocusing attention on how marginal bodies are affected by changes in the built environment.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ I do not dispute that gentrification is occurring, and I am critical of it as a broadly banalizing phenomena, but I see the problem as in need of a more plural and interdisciplinary analysis, which, I argue here, that a study from a literary critical perspective can work towards.

²⁰⁹ Rather than simply theorizing regeneration, I also seek to perform it in the following discussion. I am interested here in the *practice* of queer regeneration, as enacted through writing.

My interest in Reed, and Soho, while critical, is also personal, and comes from my own experiences of dwelling in millennial Soho, which, for several years was an integral part of my quotidian social, cultural, laboured, domestic, and sexual experience. Familiar sites where I would meet others, for intimacy, erotic labour, exchange, conviviality, and collective experience, have almost all disappeared. Of course, the spatial flight from provincial confines to metropolitan cosmopolitanism is a well-rehearsed trope in gay writing: what Mort describes as a, ‘symbolic home-coming celebrated by generations of homosexual men on reaching London’ (1996, p. 187). I am not seeking to reinscribe this ‘home-coming’ trajectory here. Indeed, rather than homeliness, Reed articulates the experience of Soho as one often characterized by ambivalence and tension: of inhabiting a space that blurs the boundaries between sex and work, commerce and creativity, intimacy and alienation, and safety and risk. His registering of urban change details the complexity of this space, and how drastic shifts to the architectures of the city also entail the closures of spaces which had offered sociability, conviviality and comfort, concomitant with a sense of ageing in a community and job that privileged youth.

My study of Reed is prefaced by a survey of some recent Soho writing, evidencing this queer literary dimension to conversations of Soho’s regeneration.

Recent Soho literatures: life writing

Clayton Littlewood’s memoirs of running a sex shop on Old Compton Street, *Dirty White Boy* (2008), followed by, *Goodbye to Soho* (2012), elegize a lost space and lifestyle, and lament a shifting locality less open to chance, but one which continues to trade on myths of bohemia.²¹⁰ The first volume takes place in 2007, and the second in 2008 (the shop closed in 2008 following the global financial crisis and ensuing recession). Littlewood’s diaries are nostalgic for the

²¹⁰ Clayton Littlewood, *Dirty White Boy* (London: Dirty White Boy Press, 2008); *Goodbye to Soho* (London: Dirty White Boy Press, 2012). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

camp characters who passed by the shop, and the text contains a glossary of terms, many of which are Polari, registering the traces of this fugitive postwar language that persisted – amongst a few - in quotidian sociability on the streets of Soho into the twenty-first century.²¹¹ The title *Goodbye to Soho*, echoes Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), in which Isherwood loosely fictionalized the fading decadence of Berlin: queer sex work, life in tenement flats, a bohemian cross-class sociability; representing a city on the cusp of catastrophe.²¹² Littlewood's 'goodbye' is attributable largely to a decline in sales after the crash, and a shifting marketplace which was moving increasingly away from the erotic towards catering for mainstream leisure and tourism. Yet the text ends with a note of optimism: the acknowledgements page closes with Littlewood's conviction that Soho will 'rise again. It always does' (*Goodbye*, p. 251). He alludes to the vitality that bodies bring to a space, and the capacity for these bodies to override spatial determinants. I agree with Littlewood's conviction that the space will regenerate. Yet at once, the dramatic reorganization of the built environment has mostly removed traces of the 'old Soho' which he recalls. I locate the potential for Soho's regeneration not in the *built* environment, but in many, often surprising, forms, including literary ones. These – often autobiographic - texts extend queer Soho to future readers: they contain a potential to revivify queer space, experience, history, feeling, and memory, and to engage with audiences across time and space. Such phenomena complicate ideas of the sweeping banalization of Soho: demonstrating how texts extend into culture, and participate in its re/production as they are read.

Littlewood reveals the sociability of his work-life environment. His daily interactions with sex workers act as part of a support system and a means of surveillance against their 'dodgy' clients. Melissa Tyler's sociological research, based on field-work and interviews in Soho, draws similar conclusions about the

²¹¹ Paul Baker writes the history of this language in *Fantabulosa: a dictionary of Polari and gay slang* (London: Continuum, 2002). I discuss Polari later in the chapter.

²¹² Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* (USA: New Directions, 2008).

function of Soho public space as a site of queer sociability.²¹³ While acknowledging the difficulties associated with performing this kind of emotional, sexualized labour in a recognized site of sex work, Tyler argues that the space of Soho itself, and the co-location of sex shops and sexual commerce in such a small area, allow those working in the area to create communities of support. One of her interviewees states that, ‘staff from the sex shops and sex workers constituted a working community’ (*Working in the Other*, p. 913). In another article by Tyler, an interviewee remarks: ‘Everybody, especially the businesses, everybody practically knows each other and everyone looks after each other’s back, so it is a little community’.²¹⁴ These articles explore the blurring of the commercial with the sensorial: the purchase of items designed specifically to stimulate erogenous zones of the body. They invite the question of when is a shop a sex shop, and when is it not? And what constitutes a sexed space? It is useful to pull at these boundaries between supposedly respectable urban space, and its seedy, deviant flipside. Sanders-McDonagh et al argue that, because of the ‘inclusion of such diverse populations in [Soho sex shops] including women, but also queer and trans folk, sex workers, LGBT and the BDSM community’, these sites ‘defy bounded hierarchies around sex, shopping and respectability’.²¹⁵ Littlewood’s diaries of Soho shop-keeping extend this social space to the reader: allowing them to imagine a queer street filled with queer bodies - less available today. Such texts can remind sceptical readers of the possibilities for sociability and living-in-difference in urban space when confronted with spectacular rebuild projects, or detritus that leads to the area’s dismissal by many: ‘I look below me, at the packed coffee tables: tourists chattering, guys cruising, and at the end table a star from my New Romantic past, Pete Burns, sipping coffee with a friend’

²¹³ Melissa Tyler, “Working in the Other Square Mile: Performing and Placing Sexualized Labour in Soho’s Sex Shops”, *Employment and Society*, 26 (6), 2012, pp. 899-917.

²¹⁴ Melissa Tyler, “Glamour Girls, Macho Men and Everything in Between’: Un/Doing Gender and Dirty Work in Soho’s Sex Shops”, in, Ruth Simpson et al, eds., *Dirty Work: Concepts and Identities*, pp. 65–90 (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2012).

²¹⁵ Erin Sanders-McDonagh & Magali Peyrefitte, “Immoral geographies and Soho’s sex shops: exploring spaces of sexual diversity in London”, *Gender, Place, and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* (2018), 25.3, pp. 351-367, p. 363.

(*Goodbye*, p. 173). Glances exchanged, strangers meeting, cruising, conversing at coffee tables, watching the crowd, and dwelling in space over time: the cumulative experience of urban loitering/wandering is an accretion of encounters with others. Loitering in public space is reframed through such records of experience: not simply a criminal act, but a means of overcoming loneliness.

Littlewood's memoirs would be considered by many to be 'lowbrow.' Middlebrow at best: lacking in aesthetic interest or formal sophistication, and consequently, unworthy of critical attention. In overly attending to a text's literary merits, less formally sophisticated texts such as these risk omission from teaching and critical discourses of the city. Yet these texts are inscriptions of at-risk queer experience, and insist upon disreputable figures and insalubrious content. These narratives unfold models of value that are not solely predicated on financial gain, or respectability, and locate significance and potential in Soho's recent queer sex publics, as sites of kinship, encounter, exchange, and conviviality. Furthermore, such texts have an appeal that extends beyond those simply seeking the highbrow or literary to include those interested more broadly in queer culture.

Neil Bartlett's *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar Wilde* (1988) is a work of autofiction: part memoir, part history of queer London, gathered from fragments seen in libraries, overheard in bars, or found in books recommended by friends or lovers:

So I began to try and learn my own history, and did it in exactly the same way as I learned my way around contemporary London. You hear a man talking about a pub, or you read an address in a paper, or sometimes you simply follow someone you fancy and discover a whole new part of town. You know that your knowledge is quite arbitrary. Your knowledge of the city is shaped by the way ex-lovers introduce you to their friends, by the way you hear someone's story simply because he happened to be in the same place as you at the same time (Bartlett, p. xxi).

Bartlett describes the intertwining of city, text, and body, which is one of my main areas of focus in this chapter. And the precarity of the city streets where these writers find pleasure, meaning, sociability, sex, work, conversation, education. As a gay man writing in 1988 about Oscar Wilde, much of Bartlett's engagement with his contemporary city is based in Soho, as he seeks out Wilde's former haunts such as Kettner's. Bartlett employs a promiscuous methodology, gathering a clandestine history through informal means as well as through archival research: conversations, urban wanderings, memories. Knowledge production is figured, or *disfigured* here as 'arbitrary.' Bartlett's methodology is a democratizing one, which de-privileges hierarchies based upon literariness, and finds a place for the clandestine, the erotic, the disregarded, and the furtive in knowledge exchange and production. In Bartlett's mode of gathering, a conversation with a lover or a stranger on the streets of Soho can be as useful as a day spent at the British Library.

Recent Soho literatures: novels

Zadie Smith's *NW*, a more conventional 'literary' novel, is mostly situated in and around Willesden, North London.²¹⁶ Yet a character's brief and seemingly incidental *dérive* through Soho illuminates how hegemonic gentrification of Soho undermines a pre-existing but less visible erotic topography. Felix visits the West End to sell a car to Tom, a 'tall, skinny white boy', 'sort of in the creative industries' (p. 121). Tom embodies privilege in many ways - heterosexual, white, upper-middle-class. He reveals his casual racism in assuming that Felix, as a working-class black man, will sell him weed as well as buy his car. The character of Tom satirizes the professional media class who occupy Soho offices and perform aloof technologized roles, such as 'cutting-edge brand manipulation.' Felix's experience of the West End stresses the tensions and ambivalences

²¹⁶ Zadie Smith, *NW* (London: Penguin, 2012). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

experienced by marginal bodies in quotidian urban life: including the micro-aggressions experienced by a person of colour, and the classed and racist assumption that a black man from ‘ungentrified, ungentrifiable’ Willesden must sell drugs to pay for cars. This is emphasized when Felix sees his reflection in a car mirror in Soho. Momentarily, he doesn’t recognize the face of the ‘scared child’ looking back at him. Such moments suggest the felt experience of moving through the city where one’s difference is marked out by various embedded cultural norms, and how this relates to the accretive aggressions, traumas, violences, and varied modes of othering experienced by marginal bodies across a life.

NW’s brief elaboration of London’s West End engages with a complicated local erotic history (both same-sex and opposite-sex). Felix visits Annie Bedford in her Soho flat. She is related to an Earl, conjuring the landed gentry who carved up parts of London.²¹⁷ And as ‘Miss Annie’ her moniker carries associations of domestic service, with its long history of inscribing race and class difference. Annie’s flat is within a brothel, signified by the downstairs door from the street always being open, and the ‘girls’ standing outside it. This moment in the text highlights erotic topography: ‘walk-up flats’ are so-called because they allow brothel clients to walk through an unlocked, unmarked door at street level without knocking, before travelling upstairs to the brothel rooms or reception. Ironically, this also inverts the traditional geographies of domestic service: here, ‘above stairs’ is a space that merges the domestic with the erotic and the commercial, rather than a space of affluent domestic leisure. The term ‘walk-up’ reveals the anxiety over loitering in a public space which has a sexualized reputation, and the anxiety of being seen to consort with shamed bodies and their litany of associated acts. The open door, located in the heart of Soho, carries a site-specific meaning, offering a passage between the street and a private interior space where erotic transactions can be negotiated, circumventing public vigilance of bodies that linger, rather than bodies which move through space in a respectably productive or acceptably leisurely fashion. The men and women who visit sex workers in Soho are often anxious about being seen in a part of the city

²¹⁷ Such as the De Walden’s in Marylebone, or The Earl of Bedford, who financed the building of Covent Garden.

famed for sexual commerce. The spatiality referenced here serves as a reminder of the perverse incongruity of loitering bodies in urban space.²¹⁸ The ‘girls’ standing at the doorway paradoxically uphold and subvert ideas of productive bodies in space-time: their bodies are commercially available, but they are also not *visibly* productive – merely standing. Loitering is a perverse form of marketing/publicity, outside of normative, respectable, ‘good’ capitalism and legitimate advertising in a proper place.

Felix reflects, ‘How did he ever come to know this place? Unknowing it would just be the restoring of things to their natural, healthy state’ (p. 138). Felix’s reflection highlights how meanings become attached to, and embedded in, places. And how in turn, assumptions are made about the bodies and the types of life experiences found in particular parts of the city. This ‘natural, healthy’ state of things – the family time of Willesden, is exposed as something fragile: ‘he had never been sure if upstairs truly was a separate world’ (p. 138), revealing a scepticism that the erotic ‘upstairs’ of the city can be successfully cleft from the street. This is an anxious thought: that Felix’s model of London, the ways he makes sense of the city, are indeed fragile, and something he is not quite willing to overturn.

Felix’s *dérive* occurs in time with the replacement of Soho’s erotic topography (Annie’s building included) with new, sanitized domestic spaces to be sold to London’s super-rich. A rude estate agent knocks at Annie’s door, raising contemporary tensions between local landowners seeking to ‘improve’ Soho, and residents/locals/pilgrims who oppose this transformation. The scenes in Soho introduce the ‘ladies’ of the brothel, and the ‘twinks’ dancing around in Heaven, and outside G-A-Y bar. These silent figures are jarring in the text, lacking the interior lives afforded to other characters. Nonetheless, Felix’s wander from North-West, to West-One, to West-Central, and back again, elaborates how

²¹⁸ Hornsey discusses the devious potential of the mid-twentieth-century male wanderer: ‘Queer men and their activities appeared as an undetectable presence within the metropolis, spreading their malignancy through little more than a candid smile, a casual loiter, or a craftily inscribed zigzag across the surface of the city’. Hornsey, 2010, p. 116.

corporeal movement through urban space-time pulls at the threads of proper meanings attached to place. Felix remarks to Tom: 'He lives in NW...and you'd be wrong to dismiss it...it's actually very diverse.' Felix refutes the dismissal of working-class, largely immigrant (Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Irish - my own family included, and, Eastern European) areas of Kilburn, Willesden and its surrounds as a cultural wasteland. Further, Felix's city walk signifies the collision of sexual possibility, non-monogamous intimacy, outlawed commerce and built regeneration in Soho, marking it here as a contested space, of contradictions and colliding life-paths.

Philip Hensher's *The Emperor Waltz*²¹⁹ traces lost modes of connecting queer lives and bodies (characters drift between activist meetings in pubs, gay bookshops and community centres, or the wards of hospitals treating PWAs). This novel revives a faded topography: enlivening it with characters who explore the tensions of being queer in the time of AIDS, and hostilities toward LGBT businesses: the gay bookshop is raided, and stock including E.M. Forster's *Maurice* confiscated by detectives pursuing an obscenity charge. In its plot, the novel dramatizes lived events, evoking the history of Gay's the Word bookshop in Bloomsbury.²²⁰ Hensher knowingly dramatizes queer literary heritage: a party at the bookshop is attended by writers Maureen Duffy, Maggi Hambling, Adam Mars-Jones, and Angus Wilson (names which will be familiar to many queer readers of English literature). And characters meet in Soho bars that no longer exist, tracing a topography which once extended to St. Martin's Lane (but has since retracted due to numerous closures of venues). Hensher's novel represents a flourishing scene of sociability, but also a community in epidemiological crisis, experienced alongside phobic and confused responses to AIDS: familial rejection, workplace dismissal, denial of benefits, avoidance; all of which highlight the useful function of queer spaces where other bodies can meet and encounter one another.

²¹⁹ Philip Hensher, *The Emperor Waltz* (St Ives: Fourth Estate, 2014).

²²⁰ Some meetings of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners at Gay's the Word have also been dramatized in, Matthew Warchus, dir., *Pride* (2014).

In its non-linearity, which reaches broadly across historical time (non-chronological chapters vary between AD203, 1983-1998, ‘last month’, and 2014/1933), *Emperor Waltz* makes a claim for the world-making potentiality of literature. The text conjures spaces since disappeared, removed because they were deemed to have no economic value. But narrative attention to the affective bonds between queer characters in these spaces elaborates an alternate system of value. Wasteful space is seen afresh: Soho exists in these pages as a sacred site of queer pilgrimage for those wanting to walk down Old Compton Street and experience relative freedom; where gay bars, shops, and LGBT friendly businesses make being visibly queer – relatively – safe, or at least safer than many other locations in the city. Characters use these sites to furnish their lives with meaning, and to cultivate a sense of being at-home often less available elsewhere. Police raids, media homophobia and violence all detail a persistent disciplining of non-heterosexual desire perceived as threatening the stability of good straight living. All of this has the dual effect of dramatizing the value of queer space on the page, and reinforcing this affective, social, cultural, psychological and political value for readers through the creative process of reading. By creating characters and populating places with queerness, and representing/dramatizing what is at stake in processes of (hegemonic) urban regeneration, the novel enacts a regeneration of a past queerness in the present.

Another recent Soho novel, Jake Arnott’s, *Johnny Come Home* (2006) plays with the title of the 1975 television documentary which sensationalized male same-sex desire, and suggested an epidemic of paedophilia in Piccadilly Circus.²²¹ Arnott’s novel is a call to Johnny to *come* home. It is an invitation, rather than a message to flee. The novel’s young sex-worker protagonist, Sweet Thing, who lives in a squat, can find connection in Soho - a home of sorts:

Night was coming down. The rain had stopped but the streets were still wet and slick, like black vinyl. He didn’t want to go back to the squat, not yet. He told the driver to drop him at Piccadilly. The Circus, the pagan circle of Eros,

²²¹ Jake Arnott, *Johnny Come Home* (London: Sceptre, 2007). John Willis, dir., *Johnny Go Home* (1975).

the Dilly. He felt at home here beneath the blazing advertising hoardings, ENJOY COKE and CINZANO (p. 195).

Johnny Come Home reimagines and recalls rent boys in 1970s Piccadilly Circus, men who spoke polari, and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). It treads the same topography as Reed's poetry, which we will shortly explore: the 24 hour Boots chemist, the Wimpy, Playland, Old Compton Street, Piccadilly Circus. And the same practice of meeting a gaze, cruising, picking-up 'trade': 'Faces passed slowly by. A flicker of eye contact here and there. He saw how they looked at him, how they saw him' (p. 198). Arnott captures the furtive, loaded glances – the queer mode of capturing the attention of passing strangers and signalling desire. He records the practice of cruising, soliciting, loitering: the queer politics of bodies moving through space. And the homeliness, sociability, multifarious eroticism, and ambivalence of street life in Soho. But Arnott's text is indicative of the trend towards reproducing narratives which equate male sex-work with desperation, deprivation, substance abuse, and the figure of what Reed describes as the 'mean teen on the run.' Formally, the novel is a series of short chapters which, although written in the second person, gather events over a short space of time, and are at times diaristic. This rapidity emphasizes tense, precarious movement through city space: including the triggers of a hyper-stimulating environment which rub against Sweet Thing, aggravating, agitating, stimulating, numbing, or intoxicating.

Recent Soho writing: poetry

Turning to poetry, Richard Scott's recent collection, *Soho* (2018), constructs Soho differently.²²² The neighbourhood becomes the locus of the collection. Unlike the novel form, poetry is not so in hoc to story, and is less reliant upon the ordering principles of narrative. Scott – and, as I will discuss, Reed – make use of these aspects in their writing of place. The poem "Pastoral" (p. 37) is deliberately jarring in a collection of poems situated in Soho. The title invokes a

²²² Richard Scott, *Soho* (Berwick Upon Tweed: Faber and Faber, 2018).

literary genre which, as Raymond Williams has noted, disguises historically entrenched power imbalances by over-attending to the naturalness of the landscape as a space of beauty, working to conceal the inequality of many rural labour practices (1975). The beautiful countryside has often functioned as a literary trope which belies grimy tales of feudalism, landlordism, and centuries of unresolved class struggle. Scott alludes to this illusion in *Pastoral*:

Fuck me everything
Seems so simple this early

Early is early in the morning, but also suggests an earlier time – the trap of simplicity rendered by temporal distance. ‘Seems’ suggests the illusion, one which provokes the exclamation, ‘fuck me!’ (also a command or a plea to a lover) – the shock of the trick unravelled. Like Smith’s *NW*, the poem cites a return to normalcy as its narrator *leaves* Soho. This space is unviable in the long-term. It is a locality characterized by unsustainable, unhealthy excess, abandon, abuse, and reckless transience: ‘tell me how many men / came inside you last night’. A night of sexual abandon is followed by a disembodied, disciplining voice the following morning. For some readers, this question carries echoes of visiting the sexual health clinic after barebacking to request post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), the drug which inhibits sero-conversion. Family time, and respectable, (re)productive time, are the preserves of the suburbs which the poem’s narrator is returning to. His journey evokes the homophobic assumption that queer spaces are unproductive and wasteful zones, which in turn eases their replacement with commercial spaces that serve (in both senses of the word) myths of capitalist productivity, efficiency, and profit; valorized as the life source of a national community. The retreat to the hegemonic organizing principles of daily life is represented here as a *retreat* through metaphor: the blue sky of daytime, the wait for the bus – the clicking minutes – all signal the return to routinized time. *Pastoral* merges space and time. The bus minutes click *down*. And the poem is also temporally specific in its mention of a recently closed gay fetish bar, *MANBAR*. This is clearly not present Soho. Scott subtly writes a retreat to the suburbs and a boyfriend – to a more acceptable, longer form of relationship, which also forecloses the opportunity to answer the earlier question

(how many men came inside you last night?), pointing to how as queers, the freedom to discuss our lives is context-dependent, often localized and brief.

What Scott's representations of Soho reveal is the stickiness of shame attached to Soho's erotic topography, which has functioned as a site of fleeting sexual encounters and commercial sex since the nineteenth century. This erotic topography has provided both cultural cachet for bourgeois artists, while also provoking an anxiety that fuels a dominant, reactive hetero-regeneration: a 'cleaning up' of the built environment and all its putrefaction which Scott conjures.

These recent Soho narratives, and in particular, those published since the turn of the twenty-first century, recreate a place in text which is – geographically - continually disappearing and reappearing. They reconstruct everyday life at the scene of drastic spatial change, illuminating the plurality within the locality, and overlapping, intersecting experiences of London. Whilst material spaces are threatened or closed in Soho's recent past and today, literature *extends* into the world, offering a means of encountering a queer experience.²²³ Queer reading, or reading queerly, becomes a way of queering everyday life. The ways in which a text may twist meaning and understanding through language exceeds the page. If queerness is indeed unhinged from spatial and temporal fixity, queer textual practice can function as a means of extending queerness, through a dynamic interplay between writer, culture, text, and reader. What I am claiming here is the significance of literary (which is not the same as 'highbrow') texts in critical conversations of urban regeneration. For writers, readers, narrators, and characters, textual production and consumption offers ways of working through the cultural and material erasures that follow drastic urban redevelopment. The texts which I have just discussed above explore how lives – fictional or real – are variously affected by built regeneration. They show a more complex urban experience than a simple binary between respectable capitalism and unproductive waste, usefully intervening in discourses of the city. And, they underscore the

²²³ The extent of these spaces and their closure is evidenced in the listings pages of gay scene magazines from the 1980s and 1990s, such as *BOYZ*, *Gay Times*, *Gay News*, and, *Pink Paper*. See Hall-Carpenter Archives, HCA/Journals/21/G.

corporeal – which is often dangerously overlooked in conversations of the ideal city which drown out the particularities of the social and the local in their attendance to capital.

Jeremy Reed in Soho: queer cultural history

Reed's cultural history, *A Secret History of Piccadilly Rent Boys* is part cultural history and part auto/biography, piecing together a loose chronology of queer male sex work in Soho through fragments of 'Dilly boys' oral testimony, including Reed's own. The text does not include a bibliography.²²⁴ Much of its historical referencing is *necessarily* speculative. However, it is more productive to consider the reasons for these absences than to dismiss Reed's work as unviable historiography. Halberstam asserts the uses of such queer literary-historiographical approaches:

The project of subcultural historiography demands that we look at the silences, the gaps, and the ruptures in the spaces of performance, and that we use them to tell disorderly narratives (p. 187).

Reed's chapters on Wilde are necessarily speculative because the sexually explicit content of the Wilde trials was not made public - beyond confirming that Wilde committed gross indecency with known Dilly boys – for fear of outraging public decency.²²⁵ Explicit novels that Reed draws upon, including, *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, and, *Teleny*, were anonymously published.²²⁶ Despite living with a sex worker in St James's Square, William Burroughs left little trace of association with the Dilly, and this relationship is absent from posthumous

²²⁴ Jeremy Reed, *The Dilly: A Secret History of Piccadilly Rent Boys* (London: Peter Owen, 2014). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²²⁵ Ed Cohen, *A Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (USA: Routledge, 1993).

²²⁶ *Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, (Canada: Badboy, 1995), John McRae, ed., *Teleny* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1986).

biographies. Burroughs only vaguely invokes a fetish for trade in his novel, *Queer*: 'The trouble with me is...I like the type that robs me.'²²⁷ Reed seeks to overcome these biographical ellipses by insisting on this aspect of Burrough's life, recalling his own friendship with the writer and visits to his home: 'He paid John Brady /His Duke Street live-in Dilly rent /£5 a day - Bill on bankable words'. Reed's topographical specificity and insistence on place is precisely because this history of commercial sex is so unwritten. It is a way of writing forgotten, uncomfortable, secreted parts of a life back into the stories we tell about London.

Almost all of Reed's oral history interviewees for his *Secret History* asked to remain anonymous, fearing the repercussions that these testimonies might have on their post-dilly lives. Reed describes the need to 'dematerialize' when working at the Dilly:

the paradox of the Dilly was that to sell you had to be seen, while at the same time you risked being seen in return by the wrong people – plainclothes police or *agent provocateurs*. It's the tension contained in this act of needing to dematerialize in the process of making yourself available that so characterized the idiosyncratic body language of Dilly boys – the dualistic smoke-and-mirrors performance that describes rent watching and being watched (*Secret History*, p. 141).

Although since retired from dilly labour, many of Reed's sources still carry the shame of having sold their bodies, structuring their isolation in later life. Anonymity was not only a means of avoiding the law but it had an emotional dimension. This melancholy and lingering feelings of shame produced by the enforced closeting of sex workers is understudied. Sally Munt describes shame as an enduring pain:

²²⁷ William Burroughs, *Queer*, (New York: 1987), p. 33.

Shame is a very sticky emotion, when it brushes you it tends to leave a residue to which other emotions are easily attached, namely envy, hate, contempt, apathy, painful self-absorption, humiliation, rage, mortification and disgust... many of the [stigmatized] groups are common targets whose victimization remains historically long-lasting, typically: the underclass and the urban poor, rural labourers and peasants, ‘gypsies’ or Travellers, homosexuals, sex-workers, and racial enmities enacted by ancient colonial dictat.²²⁸

This shame not only has a long history of being attached to sex workers and queers, but also persists in how both narrate their lives, and the information they disclose to people about their pasts. Dennis Altman notes the risk to career longevity involved in declaring a relationship with sex work: ‘For a young researcher to openly admit either to buying or selling sex would risk career advancement in academia.’²²⁹ I have written in my own experiences of erotic labour and edited them out of this chapter many times. Many responses are trivializing or phobic, regarding sex work as unsavoury, or not work at all. Some tenets of radical feminism regard it as necessarily damaging or exploitative.²³⁰ Others assume it must be the result of a dysfunctional childhood. I am not disputing that there are many instances of people trafficking in a global sex trade, or that many sex workers have experienced violence, and indeed that all of us experience the emotional labour of being stigmatized and criminalized in some way. However, I am concerned here with the experiences of consenting queer male sex workers, and my research emerges from a conviction that it is not productive simply to re-inscribe stigma, but rather to consider this subcultural trade as an understudied mode of urban experience and encounter which can yield useful insights into studies of the city and its literature. And further, that it is pertinent to discussions of London’s decay and regeneration to shed light upon a historically marginalized group of inner city subjects at the nexus of

²²⁸ Sally R. Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame*, (Cornwall: Ashgate, 2007), p. 3. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²²⁹ Dennis Altman, “Introduction”, in Aggleton and Parker, eds., *Men Who Sell Sex: Global Perspectives* (Cornwall: Routledge, 2015), pp. xiv-xx, p. xix.

²³⁰ The discord between sex worker activists and many radical feminists is on-going.

conversations about sexuality, subjectivity, desire, AIDS, agency, morality, and the future urban landscape.²³¹

Representations of dilly experience are few, and often sensationalizing. First-person accounts of rent are especially unusual. Reed's is certainly one of the most explicit and prolific autobiographic accounts/representations of queer erotic labour in print in the UK.²³² What, to many, is invisible, becomes the object of interest for Reed. Reed's 'Notorious Dilly boys', who he writes about in his *Secret History*, were only really known in Dilly circles. They were otherwise unwritten, or in print as vectors of a moral crisis, or as police statistics for 'gross indecency' arrests. The illegality and stigma of this trade forced rent and clientele alike to pass unnoticed amongst the crowd.

Reed's Soho poetry: *White Bear and Francis Bacon*

Reed's poetry crystallizes all of the themes that I have been discussing in this survey of recent Soho writing. Yet Reed's interest in Soho's sex publics is sustained and explicit, rather than fleeting or functioning merely as a trope of eroticism in a larger London novel. He is committed to the study of the corporeal and the urban, and the relationship between their parts. His poetry lingers in Soho, loitering over time, but unlike the novels listed above, is not constrained by narrative ordering of time. Furthermore, Reed can be set apart from these other writers in his distinctive *overproductivity*: his oeuvre of Soho texts is extensive and sustained, attesting to the vitality of queer textual production in/of

²³¹ I explore these arguments in more detail in, Patrick Preston, "Fictions of Selling Sex: New Literatures of Queer Sex Work", Dewey, S., Crowhurst, I., Izugbara, C., eds. *Routledge International Handbook of Sex Industry Research* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 477-485.

²³² First person accounts/representations, or sustained characterizations, of male sex work are less common in recent English than American literature. In American literature, see, for instance, David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2017), John Rechy, *City of Night* (London : MacGibbon & Kee, 1964).

London. And this corpus is explicit in its response to changes in the built environment. Yet these texts are largely unknown and almost entirely unstudied.²³³ Reed is productive, but not profitable, at least not in a conventional capitalist sense. As such, he is suited to a study which seeks to problematize hierarchies of value and taste.

Reed's work includes novels (*The Grid*, 2005), autobiography (*Lipstick, Sex and Poetry: an autobiography*, 1991), essays, cultural history (*The Dilly: A Secret History of Piccadilly Rent Boys*, 2014), biographies (*John Stephen: the king of Carnaby Street*, 2010) and poetry. Recent poetry collections include, *This is How You Disappear: Elegies* (2007); *Bona Drag* (2009); *Sooner or Later Frank* (2014); *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon, Rent and Eyelinered Pussycat Dolls* (2014).²³⁴ *Piccadilly Bongo*, (2010), is a collaborative effort, published with an accompanying CD of Marc Almond's Soho songs.²³⁵ *Anaconda Johnny* (2015) places Soho poetry alongside photography from Jamie McLeod.²³⁶

"White Bear and Francis Bacon", Reed's epic Soho poem (118 pages in length) - the main focus of this chapter (although I do also introduce other poems at points) - elaborates a recent queer past and the collisions of daily life and spectacular built regeneration at length, forcing its reader also to *dwell* on

²³³ At the time of writing, the only recent critical study of Reed's work is a study of one of his novels: Goran Stanivukovic, "Queer Early Modern Temporalities and the Sexual Dystopia of Biography and Patronage in Jeremy Reed's *The Grid*", in, *Identity and Form in Contemporary Literature*, Ana Maria Sanchez-Arce, ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 229-242.

²³⁴ Jeremy Reed; *The Grid*, (London: Peter Owen, 2008); *Lipstick, Sex and Poetry: an autobiography* (London: Peter Owen, 1991); *The Dilly: A Secret History of Piccadilly Rent Boys* (Croydon: Peter Owen Publishers, 2014); *John Stephen: the king of Carnaby Street* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010); *This is How You Disappear: Elegies* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2007); *Bona Drag* (UK: Shearsman Books, 2009); *Sooner or Later Frank* (England: Enitharmon Press, 2014); *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon, Rent and Eyelinered Pussycat Dolls* (UK: Shearsman Books, 2014). All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

²³⁵ Jeremy Reed, *Piccadilly Bongo, with a CD of Soho songs by Marc Almond*, (UK: Enitharmon Press, 2010). All further references to this editions are given after quotations in the text.

²³⁶ Jeremy Reed & Jamie McLeod, *Anaconda Johnny* (London: Pulp and Pigment Print, 2015).

Soho.²³⁷ Using epic and lyric forms to construct Soho allows Reed to linger on a space he has inhabited over several decades: a space of labour, leisure, dwelling, kinship, and also one which has variously decayed, and regenerated. Reed therefore draws upon the 1980s and 1990s, but he writes with experience of recent, millennial Soho (the poem was published in 2014). And, as Reed makes clear, his lyrical methods are entwined with the experience of the street in the present: he writes poetry on the move – out walking, or sitting in cafes in the heart of Soho. *White Bear* therefore represents the autobiographic, often melancholic experience of wandering through Soho in the present: witnessing radical built and cultural shifts, and reflecting upon the absence of familiar bodies; all of which foregrounds the intersections of sex, the built environment, regeneration, AIDS, and queerness. In this, we see how city and self are not static but ‘always in the process of becoming’ (Massey, 2005). There is, as I will show, an ethical potential in this nostalgic reflection on urban change, which gestures toward a convivial multi-culture and the inevitability of living-in-difference. Rather than reductive, Reed’s nostalgic glance back at Soho’s recent history highlights the inevitable complexities and contingencies of the city’s constant regeneration, the fissures and excesses in many of the hegemonic shifts to Soho’s built environment, and their reductive imaginaries of utopic urban life.

Dwelling in the city/body/text

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the characters of *Beautiful Thing*, negotiate a queer sort of dwelling in the city, and experiment with queer home-making beyond domestic architecture by melding the psychic and the geographic. Here, I build upon these earlier discussions of dwelling, exploring how textual production and circulation offer readers and writers tactical modes of dwelling in city space-time. My writing here is informed by – and seeks to join – recent works of queer criticism on pastness, and the potential of literature to

²³⁷ “White Bear and Francis Bacon”, in *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon, Rent and Eyelinered Pussycat Dolls* (UK: Shearsman Books, 2014), p. 112. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

furnish understandings of past, present, and future.²³⁸ City, body, and text, I wish to show here, produce, and are produced, by one another. Thus, in order to effectively study Soho, it is imperative here that we also attend to its bodies and its print cultures as interrelated elements.

Soho is a site where Reed dwells – moving through it on a daily basis – and also a subject on which he dwells across most of his writing. Reed’s autobiographic poems often depict him wandering through Soho, registering the commingling of bodies, affects and lingering memory traces as he moves through streets and alleys; reacting to the sudden appearance of memories as he turns a corner or happens upon a street name. In *White Bear*, the repetition of, ‘I met a man, ah ha, another man...’ at the beginning of multiple stanzas, not only provides the poem with its rhythm, but also gestures to how the repetitious encounters that occur on the street impact upon the form of the poem. This repeated line is colloquial, evoking the oral tradition of epic poetry, and conjuring the figure of an urban wanderer for the poem’s reader. Walking through Soho, Reed writes:

I write...
for sheer compression, it’s a quantum thing
the attraction of images
that pull in different space-times, but co-exist
through imagination as dominant
long-range correlation of particles (*WB*, p. 88).

Reed’s sense of connection to the city extends beyond the social to a micro, cellular level, a part un/conscious composition which suggests the stickiness of the city. It is a ‘quantum’ relationship – a physics term suggesting energy and physical charges - between body and street. Reed reacts to the street’s chemistry, and his poetry explores the synesthetic entanglement of the body and the city. The rush of the crowd and the anxious negotiation of the transaction, the fear of arrest or violence, and the ‘aberrational orgasmic high’, variously induce rushes of cortisol or dopamine (*WB*, p. 113). Reed extends his body into space-time and

²³⁸ I am informed here by arguments in, Freeman (2010), Love (2007), Munoz (2009), Nealon (2002), Ohi (2015), as discussed in the thesis introduction.

is at once shaped by the space-time he occupies. He measures his reactions to this on the page, as words become a quasi-scientific tool of detection, recording the impulses his body detects:

The body extended
To its local geography
Through words, the acquisitive imagery
I pull from inner space.

Acquisitive suggests an accretion of urban and imaginative material as Reed wanders: it sticks to him, emerging from inner and external space. He ingests fumes that make their way into the poems as chemical acronyms:

The speed and air pollution in my blood
Carbon monoxide (CO) nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
Ground level ozone (O₂) particulate matter (PM 10)
Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) hydrocarbons
Cocktailed into my in-breath and out-breath (*WB*, p. 79)

Reed here defamiliarizes basic acts of survival. Breathing becomes a moment of ingesting urban pollutants, inhaling and exhaling the city. As a micro-organism entangled in a gargantuan sprawl, Reed is a part of the city, a collection of cells within a larger body. His corporeality is inseparable from London's material fabric. Laura Colombino writes that, 'Bodies are produced by the urban space they inhabit...with its arrangement - which, in the contemporary city, is moulded by the power of capital and capitalism - it influences the organization of bodies, from the construction of high-rises to the geographical distribution of labour' (p. 1). Although the relations between Soho bodies are indeed moulded by capital, I would also argue the inverse of Colombino's claim: that urban spaces are necessarily formed *by* bodies, not just in terms of their construction in the built fabric, but in their remembrance, and continued composition as spaces. And, furthermore, that spaces are also re/produced, and indeed re/generated, by *texts*: impacting on the imaginaries of urban writers, readers, listeners, wanderers. For future readers, Soho is experienced and filtered through Reed's experiences,

memories, fictions, myths and lyricism: he furnishes the imaginations of his readership with the topography of Soho:

A subverter
Of corporate owned geography, the blood
Soaked into London sites, and today I read
On Soho steps, outside Blake's house,
On Marshall Street (*WB*, p. 138)

The city is a text, which Reed reads closely. As a subverter of 'corporate owned' geography, Reed exposes the alternative uses of Piccadilly Circus as queer sex public, which tactically subverts claims to ownership of space, demonstrating that the right to the city extends to those who use it: London as a *host* space rather than an owned space. He memorializes a seemingly nondescript site in Soho, the steps of a block of flats on Marshall Street, the most recent incarnation of the site where Romantic urban visionary William Blake once lived and possibly wrote poetic responses to the chaos and iniquities of London life.²³⁹ Reed is in search of the outlaw/ed. Yet despite sitting on the steps of William Blake House (the sign is above street level, and today requires a glance upwards from chain restaurants and cafés to reveal its literary heritage) for inspiration, opposite a 'soundboarded wall' which shields a new development, it is through Blake's poetry; the material, printed text, rather than the building, that Reed seeks commune with the historical figure. The artwork has outlived the poet and his home, but it continues to structure Reed's movement through the city, investing the nondescript concrete steps with a mythological significance. Blake's poems have a generative potential in Reed's present, lending poetry to the grimy steps of Marshall Street in the metaphysical traces of a long dead artist. Once again, Reed's work glimpses here the interdependency of the corporeal, psychic and geographic. Depicting Reed as the living poet on blood soaked steps, the one-time home of a romantic rebel, Blake's blood (imagined, of course) here suggests a fraught history of resistance, and the many contesting wills at-odds in the city. And absorbed *into* the city's fabric it reveals the indelible, embedded

²³⁹ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).

relationship of the body and London, and a literary genealogy that extends its branches metaphysically across the city.

If Reed is mesmerised by bodies in London, then we must also say that Reed's London *is a body*: subdivided, with interdependent organs and a circulatory system. A multitude of indecipherable, invisible neurological connections and permeable membranes. The city as body is not an uncommon metaphor for describing London's zones and flows of traffic, and the chaos of modernity.²⁴⁰ London's underground is a 'whining discourse of tubes/ hardwired into the city's diaphragm' (p. 56), and the body-city is sustained by the urban actors that flow through its chambers and compose its organs. Yet London is also *ingested* and inhaled by the bodies that inhabit it, and partly constitutes those bodies as it accretes *in* them, biologically, affectively, un/consciously: shaping physical health, mood, memory, encounter.

Reed posits this interdependency in an article on Proust, arguing that Proust's usage of uppers and downers is reflected in a textual contraction and dilation, which mimics the writer's physiological stress. Reed describes Proust's creation of an 'interworld', which dismantles barriers between the imagined and the real.²⁴¹ It is a cultivation of a mode of being in the world, a remedial creative practice which allows the writer to better cope with his surroundings. There are multiple 'interworlds' created here: in Reed's readings of Proust, and in my readings of Reed. Proust is writing about his experiences of dwelling in a house, Reed dwells in Proust's textual worlds – fascinated by his psycho-physical suffering and by his close relationship to male sex-work (Proust owned a male brothel). Proust was, 'the horrified annotator of his own dissolution' (p. 173), and, 'in his writing [he] lived outside time, occupying a space in imaginative permanence' (p. 169). Proust's sickness led to a compensation in literature, a site where he could create a world and a space to dwell. Nocturnal Paris excursions by carriage gave imaginative fuel, 'to build a cathedral in his bedroom and to make wild roses

²⁴⁰ Ballard's *High Rise* (1975), for instance, figures dockland high-rise tower blocks through a series of corporeal metaphors.

²⁴¹ Jeremy Reed, "Marcel Proust, Drugs and Creativity", *European Gay Review* 8/9, pp. 162 – 178 (London: Verlaine-Rimbaud Publishers, 1992), p. 163.

grow there' (p. 175). I dwell here in Reed's mythology of the city. These interworlds are curiously interpersonal, metamorphosing as they emerge. In his close reading of Proust, Reed extends connections between writers across time and space. Reed's essay extends into culture: I found it on the second-hand shelf of the Lesbian and Gay National Archives; an example of how texts are variously circulated through culture: recycled, donated, sold, borrowed. This mode of transmission is often incidental, but can yield new paths through the city: imaginative, erotic, geographic or historical. In this seemingly banal aspect of the printed text – its material resilience over time – is a potential for regeneration: as the text is picked up, read, discussed or written about, it extends a queer trace into a future, cultivating sensate and ephemeral connections in urban space-time. Munoz describes something similar in *Cruising Utopia* (2009). Discussing Frank O'Hara's poem "Having a Coke With You" and Andy Warhol's drawing *Coke Bottle*, Munoz takes the seemingly banal object of the Coke bottle, and suggests that the quotidian act of 'having a coke': 'signifies a vast lifeworld of queer relationality, an encrypted sociality, and a utopian potentiality' (p. 6). The quotidian act of sharing a Coke – in person, or in an artwork – 'trumps fantastic moments in the history of art', connecting queer artists and audiences by bringing to life what for many people is a 'locked-down dead commodity.' There is a 'queer world-making potential' in these quotidian moments. In the dead commodity, Munoz suggests that O'Hara and Warhol can, 'detect an opening and indeterminacy' and find a potentiality in the 'anticipatory illumination of certain objects' (p. 7). Picking up a discarded queer text from a second-hand bookshelf and reading from it can carry a similar potentiality: creating a queer relation between characters/writers/readers/others that comes alive in the moment of reading. The writers discussed in this thesis variously find such queer modes of connection in urban texts: phone numbers scratched onto toilet stalls, notes passed furtively, classified adverts placed in gay magazines, the archives of the dead, diary entries of others, scenes and traces and metaphors in novels, plays, and poems: as print cultures quietly, often invisibly, participate in the regeneration of the city.

Reed finds a possibility of dwelling in art, which is also, in the case of queer art, a dwelling in ruins: the ruins of the city, and the ruinous lives that deviate from

normative configurations of good living. Soho's mews' and yards are 'urban data coded into [Reed's] genes', 'the years I've left back there are hologrammed /molecularly into me' (*WB*, p. 97). As Grosz writes, the body, 'must be seen as a series of processes of becoming, rather than as a fixed state of being.'²⁴² Indeed, London is an, 'iambic diary in [Reed's] nerves' (p. 61). London is imprinted onto/into Reed's body in a textual metaphor, accumulating as a *diary* of London, private, personal, and (metrically) inscribed in/on Reed's body. City and body are thus interdependent and intertwined, the urban iambic penetrating the limbic. These textual metaphors are inscribed throughout *White Bear*:

the line dusted by foundation,
rain, light pollution, fine particles, chance,
ultraviolet radiation,
blood tracking from a finger, sticky leak
congealing in Pentel...
a West End poem.

Reed absorbs the street; participating in an, 'urban lyric chemistry' (*WB*, p. 138), composed of particles of pollution, the soundscape, sunrises and sunsets, glances, clothing. The lyric is immersed within this scene, and emerges from it: the West End poem a mix of ink, blood, make-up, imagination. The sunlight warms the skin, fuelling anxiety about ultraviolet damage and the ageing of his commodified body. As his body extends outwards into urban space, Reed draws the city inwards on his in-breath: furnishing his memory and constructing urban visions through a haze of accreting fragments: flakes of paint, UV radiation, nitrogen-dioxide and other particulates: the aurality/orality/physicality of city life. 'Foundation' has a structural meaning: the foundations of the building projects Reed witnesses. But it takes on another meaning here, suggesting the make-up that Reed wears. And the 'line' of poetry is dusted, evoking the psycho-active stimulation of a line of cocaine snorted. Made-up, stimulated, out wandering: the double-meanings of Reed's language evoke the stimuli of city streets.

²⁴² Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 3.

This relationship between the corporeal, the city and the text extends to other queer Soho artists. Francis Bacon was an early patron of Reed's, and a recurrent figure in *White Bear* (including, of course, in its title). Bacon's story is a 'genetic book in an alley', 'you swallow or interpret it' (*WB*, p. 91). This description carries sexual undertones, of the painter 'swallowed' in an alley. And it frames influence through the textual metaphor of a genetic *book*, combining Bacon's DNA with a text in an image which emphasizes transmission, inscription, and the longevity of print. For Bacon, creativity also involves bringing the body and the city onto the canvas, mixing blood – whether his own or of the rough-trade he liked to grapple with - into his paintings. Recalling conversation with Bacon, Reed quotes the painter: 'I mix it drunk / it's Dean Street purple, metabolized booze / molecularized in paint' (*WB*, p. 50).²⁴³

Soho cultural productions are thus indelibly stained with the DNA of bodies. A punter, 'shares a trace/ of semen in the poem's mix' (*WB*, p. 132). If the city is a body, Reed and other dilly boys inhabit its conative underbelly, 'under the street, all of us there/ underworld outtakes skinned of social place' (*WB*, p. 77). This subterranean living evokes Mary Douglas's definition of dirt as, 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966). Outcasts are figured here as 'outtakes', extracted from sanitized stories of the city, 'skinned' of their proper place in the social fabric. These 'outtakes' invoke the cinematic city, of Dilly boys cut from the reel of an ideal London and forced underground to ply their trade invisibly through looks and coded speech. This distinction between the above and below of the city, weighted with moralizing tendencies, recurs across the poem:

the law
of encounters one of accepted signs
transmitted on a rainy day
below the stairs (*WB*, p. 89)

²⁴³ Bacon's voice is remembered here by Reed from a prior conversation.

The transaction negotiated ‘below the stairs’ conjures historical domestic geographies: of working-class service to a privileged elite who lived above stairs, connoting a relationship which denotes the silencing of marginal voices over time, and the elision of less privileged histories and lives in representations of the past. The ‘law of encounters’ invokes the language of scientific rationalism, such as Newton’s Law, and empirical terms which map the body. And it suggests the illegality of ‘gross indecency’. The signs exchanged on the street are only ‘accepted’ in the sense of assent given between two otherwise unacceptable men, vulnerable to arrest or violence. The experience, paradoxically, is a shared sense of isolation, a kinship forged through loneliness. In Reed’s Soho, marginal bodies are contaminants of the ideal, healthy urban body, of which Soho is the diseased, disorderly, infected zone:

Dave, Robert, Johnny, Bill, Andy and Jake
as fucked up supernumeraries
part of the mortmain of ephemeral facts
condensed into the west End dirt

Capitalizing ‘End’ but not ‘west’ here gives a note of finality and also emphasizes the notion of Soho as a sink or receptacle, collecting dirt. Mortmain, a French word, can be translated as, ‘dead hand’, and refers to the ownership of property after death. It’s meaning brings the corporeal into relation with private property and ideas of the ownership of space. The West End is the moral and physical *end* of the city, despite its centrality, a space of self-inflicted death. Of course, dilly boys did not leave property, wills, or legacies; and supernumerary implies a wasteful surplus, without use or value. Condensed into the dirt and detritus, these men are the *decay* of the West End, ‘the damaged in the city’s brain/unplugged from its neurons’ (*WB*, p. 46). The list of names here reinforces a sense of condensation through metre, in a macabre stanza which piles up wasted bodies into a mountain (vaguely evoked in the sounding of mortmain) of waste. It is a promiscuous line, six names listed consecutively in an orgiastic rendering of Reed’s memory which links sex (‘fucked up’) to death. These men may be fucking, but piled up here as urban waste, they are also ‘fucked up’.

Normative culture *brands* dilly boys with the stigma of their shamed work: ‘dirt and glitter/ and the black railings at the Dilly/ flaking paint into every rent boy’s palm’ (*WB*, p. 57). Dilly boys were (and sex workers often are) mistakenly calculated as contaminated bodies because their sexual availability was more apparent, in a naïve view which presumes that non-sex workers necessarily have less sex than sex workers, or only have monogamous sex, that workers do not use prophylaxis, or that their days and nights are entirely sex based (and that the days and nights of non-sex workers are not).

As outlaws, these men necessarily conducted their work illicitly. The micro impulses connecting dilly boys and clients were their gazes, coded speech and physical encounters: a glance in one direction, a meeting of eyes across the crowd, and, on the inside, the rush of adrenaline or cortisol. The returned gaze was a moment of rupture in the act of passing in Piccadilly Circus, communicating a strange familiarity and erotic intent between two men in the circus crowd:

brown-eyed Bill who looked my way
and turned away furtively, came on back
affirmatively, it was in his look,
the need to bring his loneliness back home.

(*White Bear*)

The echoes of ‘looked/‘look’, ‘furtively’/‘affirmatively’, ‘back’/‘black’ mimic the urban dance between two ‘familiar’ strangers cruising each other, and the subtle, repetitious exchange of glances in cruising to communicate some common ground. Such muted communication was a means of circumventing police surveillance and the scrutiny of passers-by; avoiding shaming comment in the street, or violent reactions to a same-sex show of attraction in the ‘dangerously monitored’ circus (*WB*, p. 54).

Gazing is a contentious subject when considering representations of sex work, which have typically recreated the privileged perspective of the ‘john’, rather than giving agency to the worker. Thomas Waugh describes a dualism at work in

the late twentieth-century American ‘gay-male imaginary’: of effeminate queen versus the masculine hustler, with the latter figured as the object of desire (for both queens and women): the to-be-looked-at.²⁴⁴ Andy Warhol’s, *My Hustler*, for instance, fetishizes and overtly eroticizes the body of the hustler as ‘trade.’²⁴⁵ Elsewhere, Roland Barthes wrote of the pleasure of eye contact with ‘rent boys’ outweighing the joys of physical contact: ‘Since mere eye contact and exchange of words eroticizes me, it was that pleasure I paid for.’²⁴⁶ As well as physical satisfaction, sex workers provide cultural capital for privileged artists to profit from, often in texts which produce a nostalgic gaze at (exaggeratedly) classical proportions, reducing them to commodities bought rather than lives lived.²⁴⁷ While the gaze at trade is so often a fetishistic or voyeuristic one, it also signifies the separation of the john from the world of the dilly boy. It is a solitary, silent mode of gazing desirously at another, a perspective that, in its invention of knowledge of another also reveals the lack of such knowledge, underscoring the distance between Reed’s lived experience and the stereotypical subjectivity mapped onto him, or read into him, by clients. This one-way projection of fantasy onto the body or subjectivity of trade reduced them to a silent, brooding masculinity. But in the above quotation, Reed *inverts* this dominant gaze, returning it to the clients who cruise him on the street, scrutinizing the minutiae of their movements for a trace of ‘weirdness’, a hint of a violent potential in a closeted client’s eyes. Reading meaning into Bill from afar - ‘it was in his look’ - the look suddenly becomes impregnated with meaning, a symptom of *need* deciphered by Reed. This disrupts the tired trope of the hot-tempered hustler, an anxious and fearful presence. It not only inverts dominant representations of sex work but also attributes a power to the sex worker, identifying vulnerability in his client, and altering his behaviour to secure a transaction. By personalizing his own experience, insinuating and insisting on the ‘I’ throughout his lyricism, and in subtly meeting the john’s gaze, Reed writes the *affective* experience of queer sex work, giving voice and agency to an undersold figure in literature, and

²⁴⁴ Thomas Waugh, “Cockteaser” in J. Doyle, J. Flatley, J.E. Munoz (eds), *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham, NC, 1996), p. 54.

²⁴⁵ Andy Warhol, dir., *My Hustler* (1965).

²⁴⁶ Roland Barthes, *Incidents* (Paris : Seuil, 1987).

²⁴⁷ See Derek Jarman, dir., *Caravaggio* (1986), and, Paul Cadmus, *Playground* (1948).

producing a poem (and multiple other works) which tells a story of quotidian city life that is often overlooked or voyeuristically misinterpreted.

There is an ethical potential here. The poem shifts perception of the reader from dominant imaginaries of rent in literature to the experience of marginality in everyday life. Writing his body into text, Reed regenerates this experience, extending it through print culture into future discourse. The queer mode of dwelling which Reed finds through creative writing is extended to the *reader* as an alternative way of inhabiting London. This practice of poetry is psychogeographic: a mode of dwelling on, as well as dwelling *in*, Soho. A stranger to most of his readers, and many of those he encounters on the street, Reed describes the sensation of being excluded or feeling ashamed that is a familiar feeling for many: of having one's difference asserted and rendered abnormal by normative culture. The poem speaks to queer readers, producing a strange sense of familiarity in the act of reading. The text becomes a useful tool in a contemporary culture that enforces silence on queers: rendering familiar experience in the face of erasure.

Here, and across *White Bear*, Reed illustrates the myriad forms of his work, foregrounding how eroticism exceeds a narrow, specific set of genital acts. Indeed, the bodies of the Dilly boys he lyricizes are variously fetishized, commodified, spectacularly performative, visually arresting, eroticized, ordinary, failing, absent. Throughout *White Bear*, Reed details the permeability of his body, vulnerable to the impressions and pressures of the space that he inhabits. While a physical exterior offered a useful canvas on which to paint masks – rough-trade, androgyne alien, femme boy - neither body or mind is a cohesive, authentic or singular unit. Rather, city forms body and body forms city, a permeability and interdependency illuminated in these representations of ephemeral queer encounters, which emphasize the collage and collision of city, body and poetry; blurring the separation of body and market. Men who frequent the Dilly have ‘money in their come/Like rhinestones twinkling on a sleeve’ (*WB*, p. 55), and:

At least a blow job liberates

Me into uncompromising reality
My own cellular architecture
Out of which I organise poetry
Ejaculated by a mean punter
Into a currency, he shares a trace
Of semen in the poem's mix,
It's permanent inside my books (*WB*, p. 132)

The architecture described here is corporeal rather than built. Poetry is ejaculated by the punter: illicit sex becomes material for writing, and the unreadable chaos of the cellular, paradoxically, becomes an organizing principle for the production of poetry. Reed turns his work into *currency*, profiting from sex, and turning the illegal into art sold and written about in this chapter, a monetary and cultural currency:

my writing hand an investment
in underworld shares, washed Dilly money,
dollars printed by London light –
and written on by poetry (*WB*, p. 55)

But Reed's capital is 'dirty money', muddied by proximity to sex. Reed's shares are in the 'underworld' – useless in a mainstream society that does not acknowledge their value unless they are first 'washed'. And, as an income, the money is also washed: a term for money laundering, connoting profit gained illegally, which is filtered through more 'respectable' markets, which surprisingly includes the poetry collection. As a dilly boy, Reed is extant from 'respectable' society, perceived broadly as an unwelcome, insidious presence in London. Yet simultaneously he is part of a thriving urban economy, bolstering the circulation of capital through the city's commercial centre, and revealing the contradictions in the anxiously moralizing definition of 'dirty' money. These commodified bodies moved necessarily invisibly (to many) through the city: 'Queer London was secret as blood/mapping the arteries' (*WB*, p. 91). Again, bodies are the living components of the city, flowing beneath, sustaining and supporting. Queers do not simply inhabit but are *constitutive* of 'Queer London'.

For these spaces to exist at all, bodies must be present. Yet as Soho is redeveloped, queer bodies are less freely able to populate it, and its potentiality as site of kinship and encounter limited.

This context of drastic material redevelopment further underscores the ethical dimension of Reed's compensatory queer archiving. Regardless of elisions on the landscape, alternative modes of inscription thrive: here through remembrance and poetry. There is a recuperative possibility in the interdependent relationship between body/city/lyric. This relationship is characterized by *inscription*, not on the built landscape, but in Reed's poetry. Inscription connotes materiality, a permanence and a carving out of space, as *White Bear* illustrates:

He's in me though, linked to my narrative
Like mitochondria, sex stays
As something written into memory
And sold adopts a spiral twist
In chemical pathways and bought retains
A biographical receipt
A printout recording the time and place
As detailed as the grainy map...
...Body shopping (*WB*, p. 88).

Crucially, therefore, the spatial redevelopment of Soho as sanitized space does not remove the *inscription* of prior queer moments in memory, affectively, or in texts; emphasizing the potency of the work of art as a mode for intervening in and complicating discussions of urban regeneration. Sex is 'something', *written* into Reed's memory: Reed does not seek conclusions about its meaning but points out its resonance as a memory conjured in fragments as he wanders Soho streets. The lines above use images of inscription: 'written', 'receipt', 'printout', and, 'map.' A 'biographical receipt' is retained by clients (yet Reed does not know the name of the man he encounters). The poem plays with ideas of biography, exploring what forms it can take, and how clandestine commerce and queerness shift the conventions of autobiography. As the man is oblivious to being written into the poem, so Reed does not know the man about whom he

writes, only the memory of a sensate, silent encounter. The ‘narrative’ is dependent on a physical encounter between two bodies in a specific time and place. Mitochondria uses ‘mitos’ from the Greek meaning thread, suggesting micro, biological connectivity between men. The man is ‘in’ Reed, perhaps sexually, but also as memory. Sex is *written* into a memory, attached to a moment in a place. As Reed wanders through Soho in the present, he simultaneously wanders along these ‘chemical pathways’, remembering earlier happenings. The biographical receipt exists un/consciously as memory, but also materially, in the poem. The Dilly will therefore always be a repository of memories of Reed’s earlier sex-work, seen in moments where he wanders through the Dilly as an older man, using ‘reverse time’ to ‘retrack the event’ and remember men met: ‘like someone reversed back to seventeen/And looking out for the one face, my own?’ Or in observing older clients revisiting the space to recapture scenes of lost youth.

Since its genesis Piccadilly Circus has been intended as a place of shopping, its neat rows of gas-lit window-fronts intended to lure gentile customers in the nineteenth-century, cultivating commodity fetishism.²⁴⁸ It was Piccadilly’s reputation as the epicentre of aspirational shopping, with the adjoining Burlington Arcade, Regent Street and neighbouring Jermyn Street, which attracted shoppers seeking products that signified affluent, good living, something re-inscribed in the twentieth-century with the installation of giant digital marketing screens in the Circus. This reputation remains largely undisturbed, with Piccadilly Circus attracting transnational crowds daily, its roads gridlocked with sightseeing tour buses. The only sanctioning of anything suggestive of queer sex publics by Westminster Council is the annual Pride Parade, which funnels through for a couple of hours each year in a spectacular display of sexual difference and increasingly, displays of corporate virtue²⁴⁹; entertaining or bemusing passers-by who stand gazing behind metal barriers demarcating the separation point of queer celebration from shopping. Yet as Lefebvre notes: ‘Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures...give rise for

²⁴⁸Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 2000).

²⁴⁹ The largest floats on the parade are now sponsored by companies including Google, Amazon, Spotify, Facebook, as well as banks.

their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 87). Indeed, metal barriers do not preclude moments of identification or contact, or eyes meeting from different sides of the street. It is the bodies moving through the Circus that spatialize the proper place of Piccadilly Circus: including Dilly boys, johns, and others who created queer space as they wandered through Soho, defamiliarizing the borders they crossed and unravelling the proper uses of the street. In *Secret History*, Reed describes Piccadilly Circus as:

topographically subverted by rent into a gay microcosm in which successive generations of youth has gone to the black-and-gold painted railings selling sex out of need, desperation, curiosity, rebelliousness, criminality or whatever impulse takes you there, quite literally offering love for sale in an arena of life-threatening theatre conducted in the face of the totally unsuspecting going about their normal self-regarding lives (p. 18).

As bodies move through the city, they problematize the narratives and proper usages mapped onto it. Furthermore, Reed's writing mimics this process. His street poems 'cut across' what the totalizing map of the city 'cuts up' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 121), unravelling the map's arrangement of places and organization of knowledge. Piccadilly Circus, for all its policing and embedded heteronormative hostility towards queers, was a space tactically subverted by those who loitered, looked, spoke polari, dressed according to a code, or who simply hummed a lyric as they passed through. Indeed, Reed's Soho lyrics mimic this spatializing of places by depicting the narrator as wanderer, but also in the way that the *reader* wanders through the poem, finding their own personal moments of identification on the page, distracted by a thought between lines, or insinuating their own history or memory into their reading of the text. As De Certeau notes: 'an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs' (p.117). The 'story' or poem is mobile, spatializing Soho as it moves through locations. And as Reed spatializes places, so the reader can tactically spatialize the *text*, emphasizing the myriad ways in which the queer archive is constantly re/created or re/adjusted.

It is reductive to discuss Piccadilly Circus as a space of tourists leisurely shopping when it has persisted for so long as a site of corporeal capitalism and a site of tactical everyday resistance (resistance precisely against this reductive perspective). If bodies create space, then ignoring such bodies, or simply erasing them, bowdlerizes histories of place. Reed's corpus insists upon this history, ensuring its persistence. By theorizing the relationship between the city, body and text, Reed produces a queer memorial in his own work, and in the imaginative experiences of his readers. The text is extended to a future queer reader, and when read, participates in a re/generative process.

Trading in encounters, Reed meets multiple actors and develops fleeting and lasting ties, often with local artists (*WB*, p. 108). Extant from networks of family and romance, he finds a loose sociability in ephemeral meetings with strangers. The city wanders around Reed as he loiters on the meat-rack, and he cultivates a cumulative psycho-geography, gathering impressions over time as memories stick to the materiality of the Circus. The locality of the city becomes part of Reed as he extends into space. Reed meets Derek Jarman – who had moved from the docks to Soho after fire had destroyed Butler's Wharf - pissing in an alley:

A single flow wattage red light
Burning outside a model's door...
...His HIV advanced
To an emaciated atrophy...
...Both of us urgent in our rip
Against a wall he saw as neighbourhood
A Soho sited in his brain
And hardwired to his sexuality
Like William Blake on Marshall Street
Hallucinating London like a drug a psychoactive capital
Ingested for neurofeedback
...
The two of us that furry Soho night
Randomising a piss vocabulary

In a still undeveloped yard

Maria's red light glowering on alert (*WB*, p. 109).

The city is *sited* in Jarman's brain. It takes multiple forms, including imagined. Jarman sees his own particular version of London, a cumulative affect rather than a collection of buildings. This is ingested, and fed *back* to Jarman 'psychoactive[ly]'. But the encounter is also fed textually -via Reed - to the poem's reader. The reader's imaginative encounter with Soho therefore mimics Jarman's 'ingestion' of Soho. Reed is creating a moment of hallucinatory and queer transmission between himself, Jarman, and his own audience. The encounter and moment of exchange is 'randomised', and 'neurofeedback' conjures the crackling of radio waves, suggesting a partial, or missed communication. This erotic encounter - between two men with their dicks out in a murky mews - is enhanced by the glow of 'Maria's' red bulb in D'Arblay Mews: 'a still undeveloped yard' (*WB*, p. 109). Maria's red light – a standardized form of advertising commercial sex in Western cities, signals sexual availability to men with 'rubbered need'; a prophylactic *need* heightened since the emergence of AIDS. The yard is 'undeveloped': open to chance, but also to speculative development. Yet it is also on the verge of something frightening; and carries a possibility of contagion. There are multiple threats here: the material city at risk of redevelopment, Maria's erotic work at risk of further criminalization or eviction from Soho, and Reed and Jarman's alertness to AIDS. There is a parallel between city and body: both experiencing a profound fragility and uncertain future. These bodies are all of a sudden vulnerable to an epidemiological crisis and to the erosion of 'safe' spaces previously enjoyed by marginal (un)citizens, as the city was reorganized according to desexualizing/rejuvenating imperatives.

Soho's decline is not due simply to changes in the built environment but also the disappearance of familiar bodies such as Jarman's. Momentary encounters – a chance meeting in an alley - give meaning to Reed's daily life. He wanders away, 'with Derek's voice/like a soundtrack in my head,/its emotional timbre glowing in me' (*WB*, p. 109). The 'timbre' is like glowing timber, with an affective firing up, fuelled by an encounter between men which evades normative patterns of

sociability. Reed is suddenly alert to the potentialities of the city, produced in these fleeting but nonetheless meaningful encounters, which he retains a memory of, returning to them: ‘in moments of inspired need’ (*WB*, p. 110).

This *need* is felt in response to the erasures of queer culture occurring around Reed in the built environment. The insalubrious history of Soho had long perturbed Westminster elites, and the conservative tones of the *Sexual Offences Act 1967* were conjured once more in phobic responses to the AIDS crisis. Given that moralizing sex panics were directed towards those seen as most responsible—gay men, drug users and sex workers – then the metropolitan spaces and practices associated with queer sex publics were seen as facilitating this ‘gay abandon’.²⁵⁰ This in turn leveraged ‘cleanup’ projects (which I will discuss more in the next chapter in relation to Hampstead Heath). Johan Andersson has noted the introduction of a ‘hygiene aesthetics’ in Soho bar culture in the 1990s: a homonormative aesthetic reaction to discourses of contamination.²⁵¹ Andersson highlights the ‘clean chromed surfaces, white walls and minimalist furniture’ of Soho, noting that, ‘these bars were built and designed at a time when gay venues were still stigmatised as contaminated spaces through their association with AIDS’ (p. 55).²⁵² *White Bear* registers this rapid foreclosing of Soho’s erotic queer culture concurrently with a spectacular built regeneration:

Marty, Kenny, Johnny won’t be back
The same again, they’re like my afternoons
Empty of meaning...
Mostly Soho’s dead,
the yards, the alleys (*WB*, p. 36).

²⁵⁰ Rupert Haseldon, “Gay Abandon”, *Guardian*, 7/9/1991. A particularly fatalistic article.

²⁵¹ Johan Andersson, “East End Localism and Urban Decay: Shoreditch’s Re-Emerging Gay Scene”, in *The London Journal*, 34.1 (2009), pp. 55-71, p. 55.

²⁵² This continues today, evident in the aesthetics of “56 Dean Street”, a Soho sexual health clinic which is overtly sanitized, with white walls, polished steel, glass, and black-and-white framed photos of Raymond’s Revue Bar and other Soho sex premises hung from the walls.

The internal rhyme of the first line above is again insistent on *inscribing* queer lives into historical memory. Until recently, these yards and alleys were home to venues such as “The Ghetto”, a basement club on Falconberg Court, which hosted nightly queer, kink, trans and fetish events. This has since been demolished, replaced with fences screening the Crossrail development: a gigantic excavation site awaiting the installation of a futuristic vision of urban connectivity. A new commercial district has been invented in the surrounding streets, of chain restaurants, luxury apartments and offices, marketed as ‘Midtown’, evoking the once shabby now chic district of Manhattan via enthusiastic advertising banners stuck to lampposts. Other proximate queer venues have also disappeared: “Trash Palace”, a queer bar above a Chinatown restaurant, “The Astoria”, or “79 CXR”.

Until 2014, Walker’s Court was home to Madame Jojo’s, a queer cabaret venue which hosted regular events for drag kings and queens. The venue was forcibly closed by Westminster Council (in the same year that *White Bear* was published), and Soho Estates has since made plans for a comprehensive redevelopment of Walker’s Court:

replacing entrenched illegal sex shops with a restaurant, a 155 seat cabaret theatre, retail and nightclub uses, and Soho Estates’s headquarter offices. The proposed scheme will enhance the architectural features of Walker’s Court, reduce the opportunity for criminal activity, and brighten the atmosphere of a sometimes intimidating alley. The Raymond Revuebar neon sign will be painstakingly repaired and reinstated and the handsome buildings within the development will be restored while buildings past their useful economic life will be replaced with exceptional architecture.²⁵³

The promise is one of spectacular built space. Only economically useful premises are included in this future vision. The narrative is also a desexualizing one. The sex shops are not included in the vision of economically productive futurity. Neither are the flats above where sex is sold. The vision is one of

²⁵³ “Walker’s Court”, Soho Estates, <<https://sohoestates.co.uk/projects/walkers-court/>>, accessed 01/02/2018.

acceptably useful premises: a heteronormativizing vision in which intimacy is figured as private, and sex publics are presented as a decayed, insalubrious and unwelcome part of the city's future. That the sex shops and other known usages of Soho have drawn the community to this space (for few can afford to live in Soho) is not acknowledged. Or the risk that in removing such venues, Soho will no longer attract the vibrant mix that it has thrived upon. Such popular metropolitan zones are indebted to the queer pilgrims who do not *live* there, but who come to populate it by day or night, turning it into a thriving space. The Soho Estates Plan seeks to remove unwanted, unsafe, and undesirable traces of sexuality from the landscape, but it also plans to retain, polish and restore the 'Raymond's Revue Bar' neon sign within its new commercial premises. This sanitizing vision of futurity sees developers with access to civic planning boards attempt to desexualise the 'seedy' Soho of Reed, Jarman, and Almond, while commodifying built symbols of this same sex-fuelled past (and present), including the neon sign which signalled the epicentre of Paul Raymond's localized table dancing empire.

Increasingly, Soho is mapped out as a respectable space for young professionals. Yet this 'edgy not seedy' reorganization of space deploys a normativizing logic which falsely separates public and private worlds. Berlant has identified the 'Victorian fantasy' of a non-intimate public, and the respectable, private intimacy of the domestic: a logic which figures sex as a part of subjectivity rather than a publically accessible (counter)culture.²⁵⁴ Rather than something that can be contained in the domestic, Berlant argues that, 'intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation. Its potential failure to stabilize closeness always haunts its persistent activity' (p. 2). The attachments that come enigmatically in varied spaces, including the street, or at work, often only register as 'residue' in everyday life, yet Berlant argues that these can be framed as affective resonances with hidden meanings (p. 3). Intimacy, 'can be portable, unattached to a concrete space: a drive that creates spaces around it through practices. The kinds of connections that *impact* on people, and on which they depend for living (if not "a life"), do not always

²⁵⁴ Lauren Berlant, *Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 3.

respect the predicable forms' (p. 4). Indeed, *White Bear* illuminates the ways in which intimacy permeates the public spaces of Soho through complex networks of exchange that evade straightforward detection or proscription, *including* through print cultures: the printed text – portable, silent – further engendering intimacies between queer bodies.

The rapidity of Soho's redevelopment provokes Reed's nostalgia, and an introspectiveness in response to alienation in the present. Reflecting on these dwindling publics in Soho life, *White Bear* finds a elegiac tone:

Queer London was secret as blood
Mapping the arteries, I miss
Its cellars, palare, the corridors,
East and West choked with sailors,
Rent, barebackers, bikers, dockers,
And me crawling on my knees
For mercy. (*WB*, p. 91).

The queer London that Reed remembers took place in 'cellars, corridors', and was navigated through the use of 'palare'. This London is subterranean, existing beneath the proper or presentable rooms, 'above stairs', and utilizing fugitive language. 'Palare', or polari, also evades surety in its mobility, secrecy, and the multiplicity of its meanings.²⁵⁵ Though rarely in use by the 1980s, this clandestine, colloquial language had been in use amongst sailors, vagrants, those working in circuses, and queer men earlier in the twentieth-century: a linguistic collage which implies a mobility, and one which borrows, doctors, and insinuates. Although localized in its dilly usage, this hybrid slang language was accumulated from different historical periods and had multiple, translocal, and transhistorical uses. Polari was a disruptive lexicon, functioning between the lines of normative culture and evading scrutiny: part of a queer London which

²⁵⁵ Numerous queer critics have looked to language to indicate that vocabulary, intonation, and expression have a long history in building alternative communities. See, William L. Leap, *Word's Out: Gay Men's English* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

was 'secret as blood.' Reed places himself in this queer past, 'crawling on my knees/For mercy'. The line's meaning works against its connotation of pleading to a deity or religious authority for forgiveness. Rather, acceptance is found by crawling amongst detritus, putrefaction, and outcasts. The line also reads as if the narrator is giving oral sex: on his knees, 'choke[d]', subservient and surrounded by the hyper-masculine figures of sailor, docker, biker, and other rough-trade. Queer London is Reed's subject matter, emphasizing London not simply as a nation's capital, or a mesh of architectural forms hugging a river, but also a collection of bodies, including bodies living a queer life. London is inextricable from Reed's body, through which he derives an understanding of the city. Queer London exists at the level of the corporeal, a 'mapping' of the 'arteries'. The paradox of this 'map' is that it cannot be fully mapped. A map within the self, informed by the external world as it rubs against the body's senses, which is never fully revealed to its subject. Blood is never static, it quickens and slows, coagulates or thins, and exceeds scientific knowledge. This blood sustains Reed's thought but evades his understanding, attesting to the fragility of human understandings of self, body, and other. Reed 'miss[es]' the queerness of Soho, but 'I miss' is also an error, a misjudgment, or the failure to follow a direction.

Queering history

So far, I have considered how Soho, for Reed, is invariably entwined with his own corporeality, affect, un/conscious, and is also indelibly inscribed in *White Bear*. In attending to *White Bear*, a marginal queer quotidian experience is glimpsed, one which is often elided from critical studies of the city.²⁵⁶ Yet Reed's writing disturbs tradition and consensus in other ways. Now, I turn my attention to these other types of textual resistance, beginning with an analysis of how Reed queers history. By picking out historical figures and placing them in his own literary landscapes, Reed invents an explicitly queer history, challenging

²⁵⁶ That is, many studies of London overlook the significance of desire and sex. Many also presume a heterosexual audience or write from a heteronormative position. And further, recent studies of sex work in London rarely attend to queer or male experiences. Reed's writing thus intervenes in several useful ways into existing critical discourses.

the literary consensus around canonical figures such as Shakespeare, and re/generating discussions of the history of desire in London and its writing.

Reed's relationship to the past is not simple or 'straight.' He responds to desexualised criticism and historiography by playfully inventing sexually explicit encounters of historical figures. Reed plucks well-known literary figures from the past and adds them to his textual collage. In *Dorian*, Dorian Gray is reimagined and revived as a sado-masochist living in Paris.²⁵⁷ In his 'hallucinatory' novel *The Grid* Shakespeare and Marlowe cruise Elizabethan rent boys. Reed returns to this theme in *White Bear*:

...Round the back of St Giles Church
Shakespeare and Marlowe came together in fog,
It's in my hallucinated novel *The Grid*
ISBN 978-0-7206-1303-2 (Peter Owen)
And in their shocking reality,
Disease, desire, lawless punk outlaws
Using a blade or stick
To turn a trick.' (*WB*, p. 58)

In this quote from *White Bear*, Reed insinuates a sexual union between the two writers who 'come together', citing *The Grid*, as source, cultivating an intertextual network of his own writing. Mythologizing and queering Shakespeare's biography in *White Bear*, Reed inserts rewrites of sonnets from Shakespeare's fair youth sequence into the poem:

When in the boredom of my wasted days
I turn up photos of old movie stars
Most of them dead, the others bitchy gays (*WB*, p.81)

²⁵⁷ Jeremy Reed, *Dorian: A Sequel to The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (Guildford: Peter Owen Publishers, 1997).

The above, written in iambic pentameter, invokes Shakespeare's *Sonnet 106*: 'When in the chronicles of wasted time.'²⁵⁸ Reed specifically turns the word *waste*: reflecting on 'wasted days' suggests sickness and, followed by the photos of dead movie stars, invokes Hollywood actors and the Dilly boys who cultivated James Dean aesthetics. Shakespeare wrote of 'the chronicles of wasted time', and Reed is chronicling a moment when bodies and lives were cast as waste. And the melancholy of a sense of time perhaps wasted, brought on by increased mortality in the AIDS crisis. Furthermore, Reed's own writing is vulnerable to a dismissal as waste. Jeremy Noel-Tod has observed Reed's lukewarm critical reception:

Deprecated by some for his *poète maudit* persona... His glances towards more fashionable themes such as AIDS, cross-dressing, and pop - and drug- culture in general were judged by most critics not of his coterie as a distraction from his real capabilities as a poet.²⁵⁹

A '*poète maudit*' is, 'a poet rejected by the literary establishment or who writes outside the mainstream of poetry...shunned or repudiated by contemporary society, esp. as being outside the bounds of decency or good taste.'²⁶⁰ Indeed, Reed's poetry is almost entirely overlooked. Reed is marginal in part because some of his poems are not aesthetically great. But also, I'm convinced, it is because he writes explicitly about erotic labour and same-sex desire: both themes that can limit a text's mainstream appeal. Reed's rewrites of Shakespeare chronicle queerness in *resistance* to erasure. Rewriting Shakespeare's *Sonnet 98*, Reed writes:

Not marble, nor the glitzy trashy graves
Of pop stars will outlive this muscled rhyme,
But you'll shine brighter each time a word saves
The bite that makes poetry into crime.

²⁵⁸ William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 106", in, *The Norton Shakespeare* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

²⁵⁹ Jeremy Noel-Tod, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 509.

²⁶⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, "poète maudit, N.1", *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 01/06/2017.

When war crunches a city to meltdown
And looters rock subsiding masonry
You'll still live on as a rumour in town
Compact in my resistant poetry
And outlive death like that and enmity
At who you were because you're in my lines
That for some reason win posterity
In a world where only corruption shines.
You're like the summer pop lovers recall
Thinking back to when they had it all' (*WB*, p. 87).

This sonnet also invokes Shakespeare's *Sonnet 55*: 'Not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme'.²⁶¹ Reed pits poetry against the materiality of the city. The opening line is a refusal of official meanings vested in monumental spaces: of marble headstones on 'graves', or the 'glitzy, trashy' commerce, Nash facades and mortality of Piccadilly Circus, a space which is figured here as the grave of spectacular commodity fetishism in a ruined city 'crunched' into 'meltdown' and looting. Ruined marble, trashed graves: a crumbled, chaotic zone. It is also a city at war. Yet the queer enemy elegized here becomes as much simply because of 'who [they] were', suggesting the phobic, majoritarian misunderstanding of AIDS; a government that sought to quarantine people with AIDS (PWAs), and that willingly allowed their deaths by disavowing the reality of an epidemiological crisis. The poem allows the dead to endure beyond built space: living on through 'rumour' and lyric as the material city is plunged into chaos. The sonnet within the poem serves a memorializing, archiving function here. Spoken about 'in town' evokes Soho's campy cosmopolitanism – the dandy, or 'man-about-town', and a localized homosocial subculture: positing clandestine, oral forms of remembrance as a significant mode of queer historical memory alongside the written word. The nostalgic closing couplet – of poppy summer reminiscence - is optimistic despite the scene of death and destruction, for the resistant poem's ability to transmit a memory of

²⁶¹ William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 55", in, *The Norton Shakespeare* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

the queer city into the future. Reed explicitly identifies poetry's regenerative function here:

You'll still live on as a rumour in town
Compact in my resistant poetry
And outlive death like that and enmity
At who you were because you're in my lines

In such ways, poetry resists erasure and insists upon queerness whenever or wherever it happens to be read. Death and stigma are defeated by the inscription of a marginalized life in verse. Indeed, the lyric is likened to musculature: 'this muscled rhyme', such that the poem is figured as a healthy, vital, body that will 'shine brighter' each time it is read or recited: a symbol of potency in a climate of crisis, amid a crumbling city of 'subsiding masonry.'

Reed uses this rewriting of Shakespeare to suggest a long history of queer urban sex work: 'There's nothing new babe in turning a trick' (*WB*, p. 75). His explicit tone, obsessive recording and will to archive are a reaction to historical elisions common to many twentieth-century, autobiographical, queer writers compelled to write a textual imprint of same-sex sexual contact, and ruminations on life in a shaming culture which continually refuses to admit them to official, national memory.²⁶² Of course, Reed is playfully imposing a narrative on the past, and falls foul here of the rather un-queer tendency to map contemporaneous models of sexual identity onto the past.²⁶³ Yet this predilection for crafting sexually explicit mythologies and attaching them to historical icons of the canon is a playful one, and also gestures to a melancholic reaching into the past: a yearning for traces of queer history, which so often is met with absence and elision. Reed's glance back into the past signifies a longing to see images of queerness in the

²⁶² Derek Jarman, Christopher Isherwood and Edmund White, and many more, register an emergent openness of tone and subject matter in autobiographical and autobiographical post-Stonewall queer literature. Although this openness is of course more available to these men given their whiteness, (middle) class, and gender.

²⁶³ Stephen Valocchi "'Where Did Gender Go?': Same-Sex Desire and the Persistence of Gender in Gay Male Historiography", *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 18.4 (2012): 453-479, (p. 457).

past, while acknowledging the impossibility of speaking of a distant queer past with any certainty. Further, it underscores the phobic conditions he experiences in the present: the longing is a backwards one, but also expresses a hope for a more hospitable *future*.

This is not to suggest that Marlowe and Shakespeare do not offer a rich source for the discussion of same-sex desire. Woods has discussed Marlowe's 'erotic geography', and the prevalence of gift-giving in his work, for instance in *Edward II*, which alludes to relationships based upon the exchange of goods for intimacy.²⁶⁴ Further, the Elizabethan staging of Marlowe and Shakespeare's plays concentrated on the physicality of boy players, and, as a dramatic strategy, can be compared to the reduction of the male sex worker in literature to unspeaking object of desire, and oftentimes, a desire of youth. The Elizabethan stage was a site of gender performance, of passing, the wearing of masks (literally and figuratively) and the slippage of identity categories. Reed's erotic labour – a mode of work which also emphasizes gender performance, subversion, playing, and passing – is entwined with his queer readings (and rewritings) of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Acting and seducing were a part of Reed's embodied experience of Soho. Re-writing past texts offers a means of working through some of these experiences on the page. As he looks askance at the past, Reed embodies Stephen Collis's description of the scholastic anarchist, characterized by:

the production of radically open, decentralized (collage-based), and non-linear texts, deeply critical of the institutions and institutionalization of literature and the authority of authors and "authorized" versions of history.²⁶⁵

By writing about Shakespeare – indeed, by fictionalizing Shakespeare's sexual experiences with rent boys (and with Marlowe), Reed is deliberately engaging in

²⁶⁴ Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 87-91, p. 90. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text.

²⁶⁵ Stephen Collis, *Through Words of Others: Susan Howe and Anarcho-Scholasticism* (Canada: English Literary Studies Editions, 2006), p. 10. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text.

a controversial conversation about how much, or how little, same-sex-desire can be read into Shakespeare's work. Thus, Reed's choice of material is a means of intervening in, and disrupting, a critical consensus that has often downplayed the significance of the sexual in discussions of aesthetics and literary merit. The sonnets are at the centre of, 'an enduring controversy about sexual meaning' (Woods, p. 99); a canonical crisis about the life of its hero; and an ongoing national crisis of masculinity. Reed's creative re-imaginings and re-generations take up these ideas and fly with them, refuting refusals of the possibility of Shakespeare, and Marlowe's, same-sex desire. In this, his writing elaborates an ethics of queering literature, criticism and pedagogy: illuminating how texts variously offer a space for queerness to flourish, exist and extend into culture across time and space, in ways that underscore the inequalities of the past and present.

Dwelling in writing

We have seen so far how Reed's writing *resists* the desexualizing tendencies of mainstream histories of the city - in his *Secret History*, in his novel *The Grid* and in his rewrites of Shakespeare's sonnets in *White Bear* - by making explicit stories of same-sex desire and clandestine queer commerce in Soho. Yet Reed's writing also serves as a mode of resistance in other ways. On a personal level, Reed *writes* as he moves through the city. Writing becomes a mode of dwelling in space, a mode of home-making in an increasingly alienating and oftentimes lonely city. It is a tactic of resistance, and a means of getting by in daily life. Traversing historical time through creative writing offers Reed the means to tactically withdraw from his spatial surroundings. Reed wanders through Soho with pen and paper for company. The *practice* of poetry is a mode of inhabiting the city queerly, blurring Soho's spatial and temporal boundaries, reconnecting with memories, and partly dissociating from his immediate surroundings. This is also a state of affective arousal and attunement, in which writing is deployed both as a mode of story-telling for future readers, but also as a mode of coping with, and dwelling in, city space.

Reed's mode of collage allows fragmented, often ambiguous connections to accrete across his work: personal connections between the reader identifying with queer characters/figures, autobiografictional connections between author and text, and inter-textually as Reed repeats, invokes or cites from his own work. Reed's backward glance to Shakespeare is not a deterministic one, seeking to trace a line of queer experience from the seventeenth-century to our own. Rather, the potential for identification with the past paradoxically emerges through a *dissociative* reading which queers both past and present to recalibrate the terms of dwelling in the city. The connections which are forged in memory and committed to the page also exceed the text and exist in the present in the act of reading. Reading involves inhabiting the text, tactically manipulating and mutating the static writing. Such mutations undermine authorial authority, and characters become susceptible to alterations as the reader both identifies *with* characters, and *augments* them to their own purpose, insinuating personal memories and histories into the text in a heterogeneous, often opaque relationality between text and reader.

Further, Reed's writing serves as resistance to desexualizing stories of the city in its unconventional modes of gathering sources. He threads together disparate, mythological and un/written connections, drawing together the story of a subcultural, unpublishable erotics, using sources gathered over time, through word of mouth, or received in the post:

John Carter's

"Piccadilly Persona", the best poem

Ever sent to me about rent

(Published by JTC Books PO Box 2422

Reading R6 30 4FL

ISBN: 0-952-8000-0-4)...

Like a 1980s Marlowe

Head full of "Tainted Love" as soundtrack

To dirty money (*WB*, p. 46).

Dilly narratives are seen to circulate here through microphone (the lyrics of the 1980s group Soft Cell, fronted by Marc Almond),²⁶⁶ mythology (Marlowe) and the postbox (Carter's poem posted to Reed). Reed alerts the reader to the location of Carter's poem (although it is very difficult to track down), offering the ISBN as a coordinate on the grainy map of queer London. This dynamic, talkative, ephemeral mode of recollection draws together street encounters, song lyrics, fleeting mentions and glances as a means of gathering history. Surprising elements such as the ISBN number become an aspect of Reed's poem. The ISBN offers a traceable link to a hard-to-find text by another writer, but is also remade into something new. The citation *is* cited, but improperly: being as it is here a part of the poem – contained in a stanza - rather than, say, a footnote. This disrupts the conventions of sourcing, locating, and citing, symptomatic of Reed's rebellion against literary hierarchy, and the 'anarcho-scholasticism' of his writing, which endeavours, '*formally* –...to upset all discursive hierarchies' (p. 18). Reed's queer methodology locates significance in the quotidian and in modes of knowledge production and exchange that exceed institutional frameworks. Despite offering the ISBN to Carter's poem in his own poem, it is unlikely to be included in English departmental reading lists or even libraries. The poem is once again generative, inviting its reader to explore other queer texts, and offering up the coordinates of a potential, future queer literary journey, akin to earlier Soho texts such as Thomas Burke's map of Soho, the coordinates of which located secretive sites of illicit queer activity.²⁶⁷

There is a sense here of a transient connectedness across time and place, between Marlowe, Carter, Reed, Almond, and Reed's readership. The description also evokes a sense of the 'dynamic simultaneity' (Massey, 2005) of everyday life, the head full of 'Tainted Love' as 'soundtrack/To dirty money', offers an image of a sex-work transaction in which the worker's head is filled with Almond's lyrics: a

²⁶⁶ Soft Cell, "Tainted Love" (1981).

²⁶⁷ Thomas Burke, *The London Spy: A Book of Town Travels* (London: Thornton-Butterworth, 1922). Burke coded London's queer topography for his readers. Reed mentions Burke's text in *Secret History*, p. 52-3.

soundtrack to ‘tainted’ erotic labour. Almond’s lyrics offer an identificatory listening experience to a maligned urban body, illuminating how the text lingers in memory after reading, and offers a mode of making-do in quotidian life, with lyrics serving as a quiet companion during a transactional encounter. A queer song sung by a queer man about mismatched desire: ‘don’t touch me please’, the lyrics are appropriated and conjured in Reed’s moment of physical exchange with a client. This is similar to the way in which Reed experiences Carter’s poem, and glimpses London’s queer regeneration through textual production, circulation, and consumption. The identification with the lyrics is partial and personal: it does not insist on mimicry, but rather a strangely familiar feeling, alluded to through lyric by Almond, which resonates with Reed’s experience of London life. Such modes are vital for those with limited access to a sense of community, or anxiously perceived as a threat/criminal when identified in urban space. As Almond’s sentiment extends a connection to Reed, so Reed’s lyric extends a contact of sorts to future readers, offering an identificatory experience – again, partial and personal – to those who have experience of erotic labour. All of this helps to tell a queer story of Soho: the multiple and often furtive forms of sociality that have persisted here. In these ways, Reed’s corpus complicates discourses of kinship in London, illuminating the surprising forms that this might take, and the potentiality of relations often deemed as morally decayed.²⁶⁸

AIDS and the archive

As a younger writer than Reed, I find myself encountering writers such as Adam Johnson for the first time via Reed’s corpus, which illuminates a rich field of written responses to AIDS from artists working through their reactions to it. These reputations are always at risk from posthumous de-sexualisation by editors, marketers, publishers, booksellers, critics, or reviewers.²⁶⁹ Increased

²⁶⁸ This potentiality is theorized in: Cassandra Avenatti and Eliza Jones, “Kinks and Shrinks: The Therapeutic Value of Queer Sex Work”, pp. 88-95, in, M. Laing, K. Pilcher & N. Smith (eds.), *Queer Sex Work* (Cornwall: Routledge, 2015), p. 91.

²⁶⁹ Books considered ‘too gay’ are often regarded as lacking commercial viability, while editors may pre-empt an audience’s distaste for representations of

mortality due to AIDS produced a felt need to write and record experience for many queer people. Woods writes:

HIV will be seen to have shaped, not only the subjects of gay art, but also its forms...even those who are working in traditional forms and genres – the novel, the elegy – have had strategies dictated to them by the state of their health. The simplest and yet the most extreme of these effects has been the need to trim one’s artistic ambition to the possibility that one has not long to live...AIDS literature...is generally still characterized by a sense of urgency (Woods, 1998, p. 367).

Woods argues that the experiences of PWAs impacted upon the creative process. This is useful in further highlighting the interrelation of the corporeal and the textual. Yet what often happens is not a ‘trimming’ of ‘ambition’, but rather, an urgent over-production by writers responding to crisis: a rapid generative mode, which results in an extensive output. This is not only the case with Reed’s work. For instance, Neil Powell writes in the afterword to Adam Johnson’s *Collected Poems*: ‘His work developed rapidly...a perpetual hunger for knowledge and experience...he lived with hectic urgency, as if on borrowed time...bury[ing] his juvenalia in subsequently inaccessible places - self-published pamphlets and fugitive bits of the gay press.’²⁷⁰ Powell describes the effect of Johnson’s diagnosis with HIV as: ‘a kind of quintessential distillation or concentration...he wrote, with even greater urgency.’ Reed and Johnson both demonstrate this ‘urgent’ creativity in a moment of crisis and erasure of queer sex publics. In chapter three we will see this also with Jarman’s furious diarising of his experience in the early 1990s, and the preoccupation with creating a queer archive recalled at various moments in his journals. But unlike Jarman’s journals, which had a mainstream publisher, Powell asserts the uses of the ‘fugitive bits’ of the gay press, gesturing toward the vital uses of clandestine queer print cultures in the time of AIDS (as we have already seen with the function of classified

same-sex sex. These factors are discussed in more depth in relation to Derek Jarman’s diaries in chapter three.

²⁷⁰ Adam Johnson, *Collected Poems*, Neil Powell, ed., (Exeter: Carcanet, 2003), p. 85.

advertises in *Gay Times* in chapter one). Reed invokes these ‘inaccessible places’, including a fragment of a letter he received from Johnson in *White Bear*: ‘11/2/92, /Dear Jeremy...’ (*WB*, p. 67). By including Johnson’s words in his own poetry, Reed historicizes queer epistolary networks that circulated amongst writers and readers during the AIDS crisis, a mode of archiving which resisted both the corporeal vulnerability caused by AIDS and changes to the built environment of Soho (changes which were, in part, an anxious response to the virus). Reed insinuates his elegy for Johnson, *Outside Foyles*, into *White Bear*:

The edge of this page bleeds into
Adam Johnson, who joined AIDS departures
At 28 - my elegy
“Outside Foyles” recreating his blond look
And love-heart face burnt down by plague, his cells
Retro-virused from semen-banks
Propagated on rainy Hampstead Heath
Under the lit up orgy tree,
A blue bonfire with knotty oak antlers
And Adam facing the red glow
Of flame, bareback sex, anonymity,
The brutal sweat of HIV
The morning after, volcanic fever,
 A reinhabited body
Morphed by undercover policing of the genes -
 Adam as a thin survivor
Virus-carrier Brompton cemetery
 Outlaw for a resistant poetry
That infiltrated through pamphlets

To weirdo off-planet outtakes like me...

...Adam's line

Taking its pointer from Gunn dominates

By impacted resilience (*WB*, p. 66).

Reed's imagery draws on the new association of sex and death. Johnson is 'burned down', razed from the landscape that he cruised. The red glow of the fire faced by Johnson illuminates barebacking, which had only recently come to be associated with death, and the fire suggests the fever of his infection, as well as facing some diabolical fear. Hampstead Heath propagates 'semen banks', in a description that blends the pastoral – the rolling green banks of the heath – with the clinical image of medical sperm banks, conjuring ideas of fertilization and family-making. Taking sperm from banks here involves a potentially fatal risk, inverting the traditional procreative use of sperm banks. The cruel paradox of the virus is that it is a regenerative force, multiplying at a cellular level during seroconversion. Like the virus, poetry is resistant and resilient: a form of textual regeneration in response to corporeal precarity. Johnson is, 'Outlaw for a resistant poetry.' And Johnson's voice is extended to Reed via 'pamphlets', again highlighting the 'fugitive' queer cultural production that worked around these circumstances. Reed is again making an explicit claim for poetry's function as a mode of resistance to the erasure of queerness, and further, a mode of *regeneration* of queerness. Johnson's material is *buried* in these pamphlets, pointing to an extensive yet largely untraceable written legacy. This is an ephemeral form of archiving, at once written but also dependent on unwritten social connections. The politics of queer archiving relies not only on the written word but the oral circulation and dissemination of stories spoken amongst strangers, including by the bonfire on Hampstead Heath, pointing to the ways in which texts circulate dynamically through culture, as literature extends knowledge, memory, and a world-making potential into quotidian life: passed on, gifted, shared, spoken, overheard, studied, appropriated, and recuperated.²⁷¹

²⁷¹Jason Ruiz and E. Patrick Johnson discuss the recent resurgence of queer oral historical research, as well as noting its problems, including: 'the systems of

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida discusses a, ‘compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement’.²⁷² What I am suggesting here is that the queer archiving manifest in Reed’s writing, which I also extend in the writing and arranging of this thesis - does articulate a ‘homesickness’, yet is also aware of the impossibility of an origin, and therefore does not long for such a return as Derrida argues above in his deconstructive reading of the archive. To queer the archive is exploring the desire to record what has, historically, been erased, and the will to look back and catch glimpses of same-sex desire in the past, yet to do so with an appreciation of the constructedness of gender roles, and the mutability and unreadability of desire. This turn to the past does not seek a coherent tale of culture or history, but recognizes past fictions. As Derrida argued, the archive’s creation is also its destruction. As poems cut up history, so they cut up conversations, reflections, memories, quotations, song lyrics: a collage of sources gathered from Reed’s encounters, conversations, memories and reading, insinuating into the text moments *unremembered* by official, national, sanctioned forms of memory to generate an alternative history that isn’t chronological or teleological but is a form of gathering across historical time, seeking traces that often resist detection, bounded as they are in shame, secrecy and a history of illegality. It is dependent on various modes of interaction, is personalized imaginatively, and to some extent always remains unwritten. Archives do not just exist institutionally or textually, but transcend, transfigure and exceed such borders. Reed’s poetry demonstrates how it can occur through speech acts, glances, affect, queer renderings of history, marginalia, and unpublished correspondence; and he acknowledges his inability to commit it entirely to the

power that course through oral historical encounter, the limits of “community” as a framework for understanding queer worldmaking, and the narratological problems that arise when participants remember their personal and sexual lives.’ See, Ruiz & Johnson, “Pleasure and Pain in Black Queer Oral History and Performance: E. Patrick Johnson and Jason Ruiz in Conversation”, *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 1 (2), 2014, pp. 160-180, p. 160.

²⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 91.

printed page. AIDS increased the urgency to transcribe textually, and *White Bear* offers this written testimony: an archive of experience and feeling in a moment when corporeality and geography were at risk.

Reed's poetry contributes to the 'doing' of queer archiving. His is a record that cannot be played or pulled from a library catalogue, but which engenders connections that cut across time and place, offering an indefinite means of textual interaction to his readership, extending from the page and melding with imagination, remembrance, and reconstruction, in a loose mode of never fully determinate assemblage. The printed pages of the poem become a Latourian 'networky' shape when read or heard: to be pulled at, twisted, and turned in surprising, *useful* ways, rather than split, torn, or arranged into coherent narrative (Latour, p. 174-5). Through these modes, the queer potentiality of the text emerges as antidote to the experience of loneliness, and the melancholia induced by the antisocial encroachments of the contemporary city: its new dwellings, businesses, and public spaces arranged to order the bodies it seeks to contain; privileging private equity, respectability, normative sociability, and perceptibly profitable movement through space and time. The possibility of kinship, extending from the page, is a vital one in these circumstances.

Munoz asserts that, 'The archive is not simply a repository; it is...a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity'.²⁷³ Indeed, *White Bear* glimpses this complexity, and the multiple forms, or formlessness, of the queer archive, as Reed captures the ways in which others around him gather and assemble their own personal archives. These archives tell alternative stories of London; stories that will not be officially recorded, and which often disappear without trace, but which are nonetheless generative of meaning and history, however ephemerally. These personal networks of other queer figures that Reed encounters gesture toward the intersecting and overlapping paths of strangers,

²⁷³José Esteban Munoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts", in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 8.2 (1996), pp. 5-16, p. 13.

and the complexity of queer print networks which expand in ways that are often untraceable:

Bussed in
To 44 Bedford Court Mansions
To my favourite orange sunshine kitchen
 Alan's high-rise of spilled papers,
Erotic drawings, stories, music scores,
 Polythene bags like body bags
Of rent boy photos all over Soho
 Isolated into his shoot
As missing persons, disinformation
Heaped on the kitchen table as outlaws
 Who sold the only thing they had
A skinny habituated body (*WB*, p. 63)

Reed's visit to Alan's flat offers an opportunity to view his friend's collection of queer ephemera: the drawings, stories, photographs and disorganized stacks of paper which constitute his personal archive. This recollection defamiliarizes normative forms of memorialization – permanent structures planted on the landscape which include, for example, the built monument of Eros in the centre of Piccadilly Circus, dedicated to the Earl of Shaftesbury. Alan's photographs are relegated to 'body bags' in the kitchen, part of a 'high-rise' of queer ephemera. There is a sense of retrospection here, with the heaped memories compared to stacked bodies following a disaster. These modes of memory are kept secret, posing a risk of blackmail or public shaming if revealed to others. The boys in the photographs do not form a collective family album, or give a sense of genealogical frameworks, but suggest anonymity, transience and ephemerality. Neither are they hung proudly on walls or framed on a mantelpiece. Paradoxically, they are a personalized memorial to anonymous, marginal bodies, figures cast out and unremembered by mainstream society. Sex workers often experience/d a profound sense of social isolation, produced by non-regular working hours and necessary secrecy in a culture which shames and criminalises

their work. But Alan's collages of desire and memory are no less valuable for being stuffed haphazardly into a bag and hidden. In the loneliness of the bachelor flat, these material traces of past encounters generate a valuable sense of kinship for Alan, whose quotidian domesticity illuminates how the imagination and the artwork can function to overcome forces of social exclusion in everyday urban life.

Alan is not alone in memorializing the dilly through what I term here as 'trash collages':

Another man...

...Made the basement out a gallery

Of rent boy photos, marked the dead

With red crosses and their obituaries

As clippings - he'd been through the lot as rent

Without compassion, shot up crystal meth

Under the arches, missing person photos

Tacked up on the walls (*WB*, p. 43).

In the home of one of Reed's clients, Dilly boys are isolated and silenced in print - their bodies permanently available in the 'gallery' found in a basement: subterranean and concealed. The unnamed man's collection is compassionless, eroticised, and bound up with his secretive conative impulses, symbolically confined to the basement. Such pictures may be the only traces that some of these men (for rent 'boys' are of varying ages), who lived lives of *disinformation*, left behind them. As 'outlaws' they were *out of* the law, necessarily untraceable and often invisible as a tactic of avoiding arrest, and despite working in hyper-visible, monumental metropolitan spaces, their criminal status resulted in the 'smoke and mirrors' performances that often rendered them invisible to the un-inquisitive eye. These photos are fragments threaded into Reed's collage as mementoes of the multifarious, often undetectable directions of queer will, which

draw numerous marginal actors into relation in unexpected ways, cutting across time and place. These formed personal and often mysterious networks of memory, fantasy, desire and identity. Oftentimes, queers do not leave wills, or wills are ‘straightened out’ after death; as the dead, together with their legacies and possessions, are recuperated into a lapsed genealogical network, absenting ephemeral fuck-friends, lovers, and other non-normative kinds of sociality that furnish many queer lives with meaning. Reed’s writing breaks a tradition of silencing Dilly encounters which reaches back into the nineteenth-century.²⁷⁴

Sedgwick has described the linear temporal trajectory of heteronormative thinking, ‘characterized by a distinctly Oedipal regularity and repetitiveness’ (2002, p. 147). But we have seen so far, through a reading of *White Bear*, how AIDS counterposed the teleological promises of normative urban regeneration, jarring linear models of time and forcing queer imaginaries to look back through the recent and distant past to recover a sense of locality and security. Reed’s regeneration of lost voices presents an alternative imaginary of regeneration to that proffered by the neoliberalizing of the city through deregulation, the embedding of private equity in the city’s foundations, and the speculative redevelopment of the built landscape. It is a clandestine (re)kindling (part old, part new) of a metaphysical landscape which proffers kinship not through built space but a commingling of built spaces, historical recollection, and imagination. As spaces for dwelling are destroyed, and new, exclusive homes are spectacularly embedded across the city, a distinct mode of home(o)-making emerges through cultural productions. Dislocated, and provoked by a desire to disruptively engage with historical narratives, it is both textual, and also offered as a way of being in urban space, offering artists such as Reed a means of coping with sudden death, extensive loss, profound homophobia, and material shifts in the city. Indeed, the Soho that Reed inhabits contains fewer and fewer friendships as time passes. Some die, some retire from dilly work or simply leave without trace, while Soho is subject to a built overhaul. And, Reed writes with the awareness that at the close of the twentieth-century the internet will cause the

²⁷⁴ As detailed in, Neil McKenna, *Fanny and Stella: the young men who shocked Victorian England* (London: Faber, 2013).

street to seem a less chance-fuelled and sociable place.²⁷⁵ For all the people passing through Piccadilly Circus, it becomes ever lonelier. Yet loneliness, it would seem, is far from contingent on a proximity to bodies. It is through archiving his personal queer history, and mining the archives of others, that Reed recuperates a sense of sociability or kinship.

Tactics of reading

What I have said so far considers Reed as a writer - including a re-writer – and an archivist. But of course both of those roles also imply another, that of a *reader*. Reed is moved to write poetry by the poems that he carries with him as ‘comforters’ and ‘companions’, which refute the urban visions (of gentrification) that he confronts in the present. Having explored above how forms of queer *archiving* can re/generate kinship bonds – by recuperating connections which may no longer be physically possible – I want to explore other ways in which Reed’s Soho poetry can engender sociability, kinship, and forms of connectivity. In particular, how acts of reading can facilitate forms of queer kinship. This potentiality is a cornerstone of my thesis argument: that queer print cultures are *generative*, and indeed *productive* of queer London; and, that by framing queer print culture in this way, conventional understandings of urban regeneration can be disrupted, and homophobic discourses that dismiss queer lives as wasteful can be refuted.

I want to frame the text here as a locus of *dwelling*, a means of passing time and reorienting feeling for queer readers, and of locating a sense of home in a material city which can feel destabilizing. That is, I will explore how readers dwell in texts, imaginatively loitering in literature as a mode of getting by in daily life. Felski writes that, ‘ordinary motives for reading – such as the desire

²⁷⁵ As I have discussed in the introduction, post-millennial, digitized London is not a part of my concern in this thesis. Yet it is worth noting that although *White Bear* is concerned with the period 1981-1995, it was *published* in 2014 and so does emerge from this later cultural context.

for knowledge or the longing for escape...are either overlooked or undervalued in literary scholarship' (2008, p. 14). Felski locates a potential in reading for the disruption of everyday life, however small or personal this may be. Describing the liveliness of reading, Felski suggests that, 'texts...are unable to act directly on the world, but only via the intercession of those who read them' (p. 18). 'Intercession' implies an intervention of one on behalf of another, and a transmission; whether of ideas, feeling, or experience. This is not the transmission of ontological certainty, master narratives, or stable meaning, none of which are offered by literature. Rather, intercession is complex and never fully decipherable. The readers I gesture towards here are not a unified body, but varied in identity or non-identity, and experience. They are bodies with psyches and blood, that move and feel their way through the city, physically and imaginatively.

In recollecting his own 'life of reading', Edmund White writes: 'Reading is at once a lonely and an intensely sociable act.'²⁷⁶ For Reed, writing is similarly sociable. A self-styled outlaw, Reed often seeks out the unpublished and unpublishable, gathering fragments of letters, or moments remembered from conversation. This expansive conception of literature moves beyond conventional understandings of the literary as necessarily highbrow. Instead, Reed finds use in, and draws influence from, a variety of forms: song lyrics, letters, graffiti scrawled on the rails of the meat rack, obituaries. As a 'street writer' who scribbles his poems as he wanders through London, the pen and paper, or the printed book, provide a layer between Reed and the other inhabitants of the city. That Reed walks the streets with just his pencil, or some scrunched poems for company highlights the sudden erasures of a social scene in a Soho which is being drastically and rapidly redeveloped. It is through utilizing poetry and other literary forms – his own or of others - that Reed works through these shifts and overcomes his loneliness, and he observes this function of print culture in the lives of others:

²⁷⁶ Edmund White, *The Unpunished Vice: A Life of Reading* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p.1.

Before he died

Johnny read bits of your gift, the Sonnets

Gummed with KY (*WB*, p. 37).

Johnny blurs across different texts. A cipher or pseudonym, this ephemeral Johnny has become synonymous with the dilly boy. Johnny is the Johnny of the documentary *Johnny Go Home*, Almond's song *Johnny Come Home*, and Arnott's novel of the same title. Here, Reed writes how Johnny, dying in hospital, read from sonnets – sticky with lubricant - gifted to him by Reed. And, in "Soho Johnny":

Your poems...

...Stick with me...

when out

City-busy...

...they come up

As comforters, familiar lines

Like street names mapping out a place (*Piccadilly Bongo*, p. 19).

Johnny's remembered poems serve a quasi-cartographic function, serving as a map through which Reed interprets London life. They offer familiar lines to follow: not the lines of the family tree, but lines on the page, and lines of memory, desire paths that offer a means of orientation in urban space-time.²⁷⁷ However ephemerally, this is a mode of orientation, an anchor in urban chaos. The poems are *sticky*, their lines and content familiar, traces of a past that Reed carries through the city. The Soho songs and poems that Reed invokes depict people and places that he knows or has known, a comforting antidote to 'city-busy': the experience of sensory overload brought on by an aggressive mixture of traffic fumes, congestion, heat, trauma, desire, movement, noise, scrutiny, fear,

²⁷⁷ The term 'desire path' is used in landscape architecture to describe paths that people tread over time, deviating from planned routes through space. See, William Lidwell et al., eds., *Universal principles of design* (Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2010).

aggression, arousal, putrefaction, smog, sex, and the constant noise of construction.

These descriptions stress the potential for poetry to engender kinship in a hostile city. The page extends an invitation to read, blurring experiences of the present, and bringing the reader into conversation with a past in order to augment the possibilities of the future. As Reed struggles to find connections in modern Soho, the poetry remains in his pocket. Love writes that, [by] clinging to ruined identities and to histories of injury, queers defy the call of gay normalization [and] refus[e] to write off the vulnerable, the least presentable, and all the dead (p. 30). Here, Reed is clinging to the material text, and the poems *stick* to Reed. Love acknowledges the uses of texts which do not insist on positive articulations of queerness. Such texts are often dismissed as overtly negative and therefore counter-productive in the pursuit of LGBTQ equality. However, as Love continues, ‘These texts do have a lot to tell us...they describe what it is like to bear a “disqualified” identity, which at times can simply mean living with injury - not fixing it’ (p. 4). The counter-normative force of queerness, Love argues, lies in its capacity to contest the redemptive futures mainstream gay liberalism proffers in the discourses of positive affect. Carrying sonnets in his pocket ‘gummed with KY’ (*WB*, p. 37), Reed romanticizes and revels in urban waste and shamed sex publics.

Reed also recovers meaning and identity in this disorientating present through listening to Marc Almond’s music. Almond, the singer in 1980s synth-pop group Soft Cell, has written numerous songs explicit in their reference to Soho’s erotic topography. Their lyrics produce Reed’s *reorientation* out of the mundane present, offering something familiar to identify with when walking a street suddenly stripped of its potential for sociability:

At least I’ve thrown some shapes
to those who care, like the first time I heard
Marc Almond’s voice and found inside its tone
A correlative suffering, a blue
Inflection touching me so deep down I

Could use his voice as a stairway to rainy Soho
St Anne's Court, Green Court, Brewer, Wardour Street,
Networking arteries for broken hearts
 And eyes full of blue and ruby sequins.
 It lives in me as resources, a pull
 Into its vocal gravity
 That opens gateways in my poetry,
 “Sleaze”, “You Have”, “Stories of Johnny”, a pop
 Integrated into time and place
 Relocated to a memory zone (*WB*, p. 37/8).

Reed describes “You Have” as ‘a rain-diced Marc Almond torch song based in the Soho alleys off the then Raymond Revuebar at 11 Walker’s Court, a song for a dead boy, the vocal lifting the rain-drenched gutter into the sky’ (*Secret History*, p. 24).²⁷⁸ In his song, Almond sings of wandering ‘out along the rain washed streets’, ‘wrecked and wild’, in ‘ever-crushing loneliness’. It is a love song that takes place on the streets of Soho, with Almond’s pleading voice ricocheting down a cavernous alley, telling of how desire can narrow perception of exterior surroundings and produce a feeling of disorientation, leaving the singer stumbling, blind, traipsing through alleyways. Almond recounts urban queer subcultures in his lyrics, lending poetry to the city’s wasted lives. Reed’s mentions of Almond’s influence give an insight into the poet as a consumer of other queer texts. “Sleaze” celebrates ‘pulling a trick’ in ‘inner Soho after hours’: ‘Take me in your backroom/and you pay for what you get’.²⁷⁹ The song illustrates a sex-work subculture as a mode of urban kinship: the ‘little Spanish hustles’...‘Hanging out on the street together / selling our meat together’. Almond finds magic in these moments, but his song is also melancholic: ‘Feeling used/treated like shit/ Dolores Del Rio...all washed up’. Del Rio, a Spanish speaking film star, symbolizes in her faded glamour the Spanish hustlers washed up on the curve of the Dilly.

²⁷⁸ Marc Almond, “You Have”, *Vermin in Ermine*, 1984.

²⁷⁹ Marc and the Mambas, “Sleaze”, *Bite Black and Blues*, 1984.

Almond's is a pop: 'integrated into a time and place/relocated to a memory zone' (*WB*, p. 38). The lyrical thus becomes implicated in the geographical, structuring Reed's everyday movements through London. Almond's 'stairway' transports Reed into an imaginatively reconfigured Soho, the vocals shaping experience of the street. A grimy gutter is furnished with significance through Almond's lyrics, part of the topography of a love story, giving meaning to the place, and Reed a sense that he is not alone wandering through these spaces.

Reed's reading/listening habits demonstrate a quotidian tactical resistance to the chaos that surrounds him in the present. The familiar lyrics are a means of manipulating everyday life: aural stimulation of neurological pathways, or evocation of memory. This is a means of accessing blues to deal with contemporary situations: a mode of working through urban life by engaging with a genre populated by urban 'outtakes'/outcasts or melancholy figures expressing disillusionment or depression. Accessing the blues offers Reed a moment in which to tune into the rhythms of other poets and lyricists, and to identify with songs of loneliness, misapprehension, loss, or exclusion. These are tactics, 'clandestine forms taken' by 'individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline"' (De Certeau, p. xiv). *Tactics* must be seized 'on the wing', and 'constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities' (p. xix). These tactics can occur through quotidian processes such as reading, listening, or cooking, achieving 'victories of the "weak" over the "strong"' through tricks and maneuvers. Reading, for instance, is an active, *relational* process between reader and text, allowing the creation of a microcosm, a separate world of meanderings and creative freedom for the reader, offering a means of escape from tangible realities or the disorder of the present. Reading is a private collision of the words on the page with the desires and memories of the reader. Drifting across the page, there is improvisation and an 'ephemeral dance' as the reader insinuates their pleasure into another person's text. De Certeau describes the text as a 'rented apartment', and reading as being, 'a subtle art of "renters"' (p. xxii), a spatial turn of phrase that takes on a new meaning in the context of Reed and Almond's texts: the rent boy renting the text for their own pleasure. Reed's tactical engagement with Almond's lyrics allows him to disorientate from the shock of a shifting city and to continue to find pleasure in a startling present.

Listening to music, noise ‘bleeds’ into neural stimulus, in another collision of text and body. Wandering through a changing Soho, and encountering loss – of familiar places and people, Reed finds comfort in the lyrical; and by engaging with singers across time and place he finds an alternate way of being. The seemingly simple and ordinary act of reading/listening thus offers a means of engaging with the past in the present to reconfigure possibilities for the future.

For queer readers, Reed’s poetry can generate feelings of identification: a feeling of sameness, perhaps, or of kinship; whilst simultaneously acknowledging non-identification and difference, and the plurality and unknowability of shifting subjectivity. This simultaneity of sameness and difference is akin to a rhyme: a partial repetition, or a likeness rather than a reflection. It is an identification but also a ‘disidentification’. According to Munoz, disidentifications are, ‘descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship.’²⁸⁰ Reed is a stranger to most of his readers, but describes the sensation of being excluded or feeling ashamed that is a familiar feeling for queers: of having one’s difference asserted and rendered abnormal by normative culture. These moments of identification extend to the songs gathered by Reed across his work. Sung by strangers, bought and enjoyed by many, the songs offer meaning to Reed by furnishing his quotidian experience with a queer sentiment sung by others. Reed writes his “Dilly Top Ten” in the form of a poem:

Marc Almond	You Have
Morrissey	Piccadilly Palare
Dusty Springfield	What Have I Done To Deserve This?
The Rolling Stones	Cocksucker Blues
The Ginger Light	Piccadilly Bongo
Sandie Shaw	Girls Don’t Come
David Bowie	London Boys

²⁸⁰ José Esteban Munoz, *Disidentifications: queers of colour and the performance of politics* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

The Libertines	Dilly Boys
The Only Ones	Out There In The Night
The Pretty Things	Honey I Need ²⁸¹

There are no enthusiastic claims to be made about this poem's stylistic complexity or aesthetic sophistication. Many of Reed's poems are formally simple to an extent that would be frustrating to many critics. This poem seems merely a list of famous artists and their less famous songs. However, this does not preclude the poem's use or diminish its appeal. As discussed in the introduction, filtering a discussion of Reed through literary convention and an emphasis on the aesthetic merits of his poems (although these are by no means absent) overlooks the richness and queerness of his oeuvre. Reed's is a *dilly* top ten, of songs which speak to the experience of being a queer sex worker in Piccadilly Circus, either explicitly in Morrissey's and the Rolling Stones' songs, or abstractedly in the 'blues' of Dusty Springfield, reworked by the Pet Shop Boys: 'Since you went away, I've been hanging around, wondering why I'm feeling down.'²⁸² The loss, loitering, and depression sung of by Springfield are all familiar to Reed. "Dilly Top Ten" plays with sanctioned, public forms of memorialization, such as the weekly pop music chart broadcast on national radio. The Stones, Bowie, Springfield, Almond have all been archived in this chart history, yet these queerer aspects of their work have been omitted. Many of the songs listed reference queer sex work, rare in a mainstream music industry that has traditionally silenced same-sex desire.

It is this generative potential in Reed's work - to unearth unprinted/unprintable/out-of-print texts - which is testament to the multiple uses of his queer archive. By doing so, he broadens a queer kinship, pointing towards marginal texts, making them traceable for future queer readers who have struggled to find texts that mention such experience except from a phobic or pathologizing stance. Reading is a mode of dwelling on/in the text, affecting experience of the present. This dwelling in literature is a queer sort of home-

²⁸¹ "Dilly Top Ten", *The Glamour Poet Versus Francis Bacon*, p. 25.

²⁸² Pet Shop Boys with Dusty Springfield, "What Have I Done to Deserve This?", Parlophone, 1987.

making, of use to Reed in a Soho which can feel hostile and alien as he moves through its millennial streets, and of use to his readers. By carrying poems with him, he accesses a repository of an earlier, queerer Soho: which conjures memory and interjects into the present to complicate the stories being told through hegemonic gentrification taking place around him. What emerges here is the potential for texts of all kinds to disturb dominant narratives of the city's regeneration, and to tell alternative stories of London.

To revisit the past - through poetry, song, or other cultural forms – in order to cope with the present is of course, a sort of nostalgia: for a lost place, or experiences that cannot be fully recaptured. Yet Gilad Padva has asserted the *uses* of nostalgia for queers:

reinventing or retelling the past is a major part of the creation of a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender heritage...In their coping with prevalent bigotry, prejudice, ignorance, discrimination, and diverse sorts of homophobia, sexual minorities gradually develop their own legacy, which is interwoven with their members' private and collective memories, dreams, anxieties, and nostalgia...Under these circumstances, the past has an institutional role in the formation of a distinguished culture with its own, often re-discovered history and revived collective memory.²⁸³

Padva's articulation of nostalgia uses terms such as 'creation', 'coping', and 'reviv[al]', positing the *uses* of nostalgia in the present, as a dynamic rather than a regressive mode of dwelling in London. Padva gets here at the vitality of queer cultural production, which often emerges from a context of trauma, and which contains a potential to generate queer futures through creative engagement with the past. Building on Padva, I want to frame Reed's nostalgic mode not as something regressive, but instead as a generative force which contributes to the extension of queer history, culture, and kinship. Often Reed's Soho poetry suggests an experience of introspection and loneliness. Nonetheless, it possesses

²⁸³ Gilad Padva, *Queer Nostalgia in Cinema and Pop Culture* (Chennai: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 7.

a recuperative potential for its readership. Reed's depression is generative of art that can furnish the lonely city. Readers familiar with loneliness as a characteristic of contemporary London life can find a mode of connecting with other queer voices through print culture, in an ephemeral and often clandestine sort of sociability.

Conclusion

Returning to Berlant and Warner's statement, quoted in the thesis introduction, that heteronormativity leaves queer culture, 'especially dependent on ephemeral elaborations in urban space and print culture' (*Sex in Public*, p. 562), we have seen in this chapter some of the ways in which Reed's poetry expresses this dependency: his own, as well as that of those around him, and his readership. These elaborations are ephemeral because of, among other things, the threat of homophobic violence, tenuous legal provisions for LGBTQ people, public shaming, and the precarity of queer spaces in a city where property prices are grossly inflated and non-heterosexual intimacy is rarely welcomed. We have seen how marginal bodies are variously cast as anathema to the regenerating city. The queer publics that existed in Soho's streets, alleys, car-parks, cafes, bars, flats, backrooms, basements, cottages, garden squares and circus's were all vulnerable to projections of ideal futurity that cast them as unproductive. The (mis)uses of Soho were (and are) depicted as damaging to the city's health. Yet with the razing of LGBTQ commercial sites in Soho, and the banalizing of the built environment, the role of print cultures is underscored: the ways in which the production and circulation of texts, and small acts of reading and writing, can variously disrupt the experience of the material city, telling alternative stories of London, its history, its types of dwelling, and its forms of kinship. These kinships are cultivated by other means than mere proximity; including writing, reading, listening and the exchange of cultural productions, across places and historical moments.

Reed's poetry therefore elaborates the potential sociality of literature. Textual production and consumption can be generative of queer kinship networks. They

inscribe untold queer history for future readers, creating networks of meaning and memory. Rather than a catalogue of lowbrow poems and wasted lives, *White Bear*, and other Soho literature, can be considered as a vital and resilient facet of queer culture, both resisting and creating the conditions of quotidian urban experience. In such ways, the conversation of urban regeneration is shifted. Lives typically elided from discussions of London's future are foregrounded. Writing the quotidian experience of dispossession experienced by urban (un)citizens, Reed interrogates homonormative, heteronormative, and whorephobic ideas of community, good citizenship, and productive living.²⁸⁴ *White Bear* resists hegemonic gentrification by complicating the assured simplicity and sweeping moral judgments with which neighbourhoods are interpreted as either thriving or floundering, problematizing the notion that redevelopment is a necessary force for social good, or that the ruins of late modernity can or ought to be replaced with something 'better'. Reed's texts, interlinked with the body and city in an interdependent relationship of the textual, corporeal, the sexual, and spatial, points to the inability of urban clean-up projects to successfully rid the city of its queer spaces; the arbitrariness of claims to ownership of space; and the city's inherent quickness to subversion. Indeed, Reed writes: 'London doesn't belong to anyone.' The rights to the city are not owned by property owners, but extend to all those who use the city. With 'ephemeral elaborations' ever at-risk in a redeveloping city, the reliance of queers on print culture remains, emphasizing the need for narratives such as Reed's, which complicate assumptions about how marginal and stigmatized lives operate, archiving their significance in everyday life for those involved and recuperating the negative as a mode of city living which is far from antisocial.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ The term whorephobia is used in sex-work discourses to connote a fear of, or repulsion towards, sex workers. In using this word I seek to recuperate it from its stigmatizing usage, and use it from the perspective of my own lived experiences of sex-work based phobia/anxiety/panic.

²⁸⁵ If queers tactically appropriated the proper place of Piccadilly to create 'the dilly', the same might occur in new incarnations of Soho. Technologization now allows the rapid defamiliarization of normative, planned uses of space, including through mobile apps such as Grindr. However, my interest here (and Reed's interest) is in the function of queer *print* cultures prior to this moment.

Chapter Three

Cruising Hampstead Heath in Derek Jarman's diaries: constructing homophobia, queer home-making, and kinship in the time of AIDS

Introduction

Are you still at ease in the country, where strangers are uprooting your woods?

- Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*.²⁸⁶

Did cruising start in the fifties? It's such a post-war term, did Epstein cruise his wife in the Soho cafes pre 1914? I've never been adept at cruising, particularly the streets, out of misplaced propriety.

- Derek Jarman, *Smiling in Slow Motion*²⁸⁷

The body out of place is the body that endangers those who are in place (the stranger is not only loitering, residing improperly, but is assumed to be loitering with intent).

- Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*²⁸⁸

Chapters one and two explored some of the ways in which queer print culture regenerates London, including re/producing and extending queerness through tactical modes of reading and writing. In chapter two, I took an underexplored writer and analyzed his representations of an often-studied place. Here, I take a familiar figure in discourses of British queer culture, Derek Jarman, but I turn to his relatively unexplored diaries, and to an underexplored theme within these

²⁸⁶ *Deutschen Sprache*, 1860, quoted in Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (St Ives: Penguin, 2003), p. 127.

²⁸⁷ Derek Jarman, *Smiling in Slow Motion* (Reading: Vintage, 2001), p. 222. All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²⁸⁸ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Wiltshire: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 16.

diaries: Jarman's cruising of Hampstead Heath. Jarman's writing illuminates how the Heath functioned as an erotic and queer space of dwelling, kinship and intimacy. Like Reed, Jarman used autobiographic cultural production to work through his experiences of a phobic culture. In this chapter I show how Jarman's writing of Hampstead Heath complicates established histories and imaginaries of a place, articulating the ways in which the Heath functioned – ephemerally but vitally – for queer men in the time of AIDS.

Let me begin by briefly introducing some of the more normative imaginaries of Hampstead Heath. This broad green space in North-West London, owned and maintained by the Corporation of London, has occupied the imaginations of British artists and writers since the late eighteenth-century. Adjacent to Hampstead Heath, Keats House (on Keats Grove) commemorates the brief residence of the Romantic poet in the form of a blue plaque and a museum. Next-door, Keats Community Library holds an extensive collection of 'London' texts: the sub-category of Hampstead occupying an entire shelf of titles that inscribe popular myths of the Heath, and its place in a national, pastoral, and highbrow cultural story. This Hampstead shelf also holds many recently published local histories and memoirs, with titles such as *Hampstead Faces*, *Hampstead Memories*, and, *Walking Literary London*.²⁸⁹ A walker's map published by The Highgate Society and distributed via the library encourages its readers to take to the Heath, from South End Green on one side to Golders Hill Park on the other: 'the circuit provides a refreshing opportunity to re-connect with nature and to explore those aspects of Britain's heritage which can't be found in the centre of so large a city.'²⁹⁰ This quote points to the tendency to frame Hampstead Heath within a national story, as a site which has inspired some of Britain's 'great' artists. The guide informs its reader of how Hampstead's views and wild weather inspired John Constable's landscape paintings and Romantic sensibility, and

²⁸⁹ Emmanuel Goldstein, *Hampstead Faces, Volume 1* (London: Hampstead Village Voice, 2013), E. Emerson et al, eds., *Hampstead Memories* (London: Pumpkin Seed Productions, 2000), Roger Tagholm, *Walking Literary London* (London: New Holland, 2004).

²⁹⁰ Richard Webber, ed., *Section 4: South End Green to Golders Hill Park* (London: The Highgate Society, 2012). The Highgate Society lobbies central government on planning policy, working with developers and planning departments to 'ensure high standards', p. 27.

how, in the nineteenth-century, ‘Charles Dickens was said to have read manuscripts in [Jack Straw’s Castle]’, (p. 20). Here, an encounter with national heritage is offered on a *circuit*, which guides movement through space, similarly to the curated walking tour which I discussed in chapter one, although in an apparently more bucolic setting here.

What this guide does not mention is that ‘Jack Straw’s Castle’ also signifies the fringes of a gay cruising ground, to those familiar with the subcultural history of the Heath. The *1982 Spartacus International Gay Guide* includes the Heath in its listings, under ‘cruising’: ‘Hampstead Heath – big and beautiful but AYOR. Can be wild at night as the popular press often reminds us. Path from Jack Straw’s Castle to Bull & Bush Pub.’²⁹¹ Although the guide gestures towards a path leading to the cruising ground, the emphasis here is on the Heath as untamed, and as a space of nocturnal surprise.

Although queer representations of Hampstead Heath are surprisingly few, several gay male writers have situated fictional characters here in the recent past to illuminate this socio-sexual site. Campkin and Andersson note that literary representations of cottaging ‘are deserving of our attention, not least because they point to some of the underlying historical, social, and psychological factors that have influenced certain men to seek sexual encounters in these spaces.’²⁹² These arguments from cultural geography usefully point to the plural meanings that emerge in the writing of cruising, and what this might tell us about the cultural politics of the city. Adam Johnson’s poem, “The Playground Bell” describes visiting the West Heath:

²⁹¹ John Stamford, ed., *Spartacus International Gay Guide 1982: For Gay Men*, (Amsterdam: SPARTACUS, 1982), p. 675. *Spartacus* is an annual gay men’s listings publication –this edition printed in the year in which AIDS began to be acknowledged widely. ‘AYOR’ is the acronym of at-your-own-risk, which Jarman knowingly used as the title for one of his autobiographic texts, invoking a subcultural gay lexicon as he satirically warned prudish readers about his own text’s queer and erotic content. *At Your Own Risk: A Saint’s Testament* (Reading: Hutchinson/Vintage, 1992/1993).

²⁹² Ben Campkin and Johan Andersson, ““White Tiles. Trickling Water. A Man!” Literary Representations of Cottaging in London” in *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, eds., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), pp. 208-218, p. 208.

I went, on summer nights, to Hampstead Heath,
Where pints of beer at Jack Straw's Castle gave
To sex under the tents of holly trees –
Shadows of hands that flowered through the dusk:
No names, no contracts, but each parting hug
Was less a token of civility
Than an act of love.²⁹³

Johnson evokes a queer subculture which moved outside of normative frameworks of space and time, contrasting with the chrononormativity of the ringing of the playground bell. The final line of the poem is '*December 1992*', marking the date of its creation, but also introducing a wintry and elegiac quality, as Johnson remembers summer nights spent here. This locates the poem within the time of AIDS (the poem's first word is 'death'). The use of the past tense gives a sense of a time of pleasure having passed. But there is also a rendering here of beauty, in the hands which 'flower' in the dusk. This queers the typical flourishing of plants in bright sunlight, and describes the body, and same-sex sex, in naturalistic language. The men who flower at night are rendered as delicate and natural, here, and there is love expressed in their physical contact. In a broader cultural moment of a crisis in the queer community, Johnson gestures to the function of Hampstead Heath as a space of queer vitality, conviviality, and kinship.

Jonathan Kemp's *26*, a collection of alphabetized erotic episodes, includes an encounter on the Heath, a Batailleian exploration of desire and the limits of language in representing the untranslatable experience of sex.²⁹⁴ The Heath is also suggested in the title of Thom Gunn's poetry collection, *Jack Straw's Castle*, denoting the pub which marks the move between the 'main' Heath and the West Heath, and a popular entry point to the cruising ground.²⁹⁵ Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2005) explores the homosocial aspects of the

²⁹³ Adam Johnson, *Collected Poems*, (Exeter: Carcanet Press Limited, 2003).

²⁹⁴ Jonathan Kemp, *26* (Brighton: Myriad, 2011)

²⁹⁵ Thom Gunn, *Jack Straw's Castle* (London: Faber, 1997).

men's bathing ponds (located at another part of the Heath to the larger cruising ground on the west Heath) representing a heterotopic space of erotic conviviality, cruising and courting. Hampstead Heath is the direction in which characters often disappear off-stage in Kevin Elyot's play *My Night With Reg*.²⁹⁶ What these texts share is introducing the Heath as on the fringes of something else. Its function is tangential, to one side, its appearance fleeting, as a topographical signifier of promiscuity. When the characters depart the stage for the Heath in Elyot's play, for instance, it is widely understood by those who have heard of this space that they do so seeking sex.

Unlike the literature mentioned above, however, Jarman's diaries *return* to, and *insist on*, this place, offering first-person accounts of lived experience, recorded with a sense of urgency in multiple volumes of Jarman's life-writing. His diaries record almost nightly visits to the West Heath in some months: the wilder (in being more overgrown than other parts of the Heath, but also as a site of erotic abandon) section known for queer cruising. Here, Jarman and other men would gather, wander, fuck, or talk; perhaps spending an hour, or the night, in this wooded space. In the previous chapter we saw how Reed's poetry helps to shift discourses of Soho by shedding light on an underrepresented urban minority largely absent from histories of London. Jarman's life-writing also brings an experience to the page which is rarely detailed in literature or in critical conversations of the city. The secrecy of cruising makes it something that is difficult to approach through many modes of research. The uses of literature, therefore (and of life writing in particular) in representing such clandestine experience, are underscored once again here.

In their explicit accounts of same-sex intimacy and the erotic potential of public space, Jarman's diaries *fall*, distinctly *outside* of a strong literary tradition of 'Hampstead' writing: of Keats, or Betjeman, on the bucolic Heath.²⁹⁷ None of Jarman's work – or any of the queer texts mentioned above – is kept by the Keats

²⁹⁶ Kevin Elyot, *My Night With Reg* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2014).

²⁹⁷ Or in contemporary fiction, the 'Hampstead novel', which signifies a bourgeois and heteronormative urban landscape. See, Joseph Brooker, *Literature of the 1980s: After the Watershed* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 45.

library, and none of the texts it holds mentions the reputation of this space as a site of same-sex intimacy, which, as gay guides such as *Spartacus* reveal, has extended transnationally for decades. The absence of this history from the library is noticeable to the queer wanderer familiar with the local erotic topography; and the arrangement of these texts on the shelf, in a library adjacent to the Heath, demonstrates the often unconscious desexualizing of stories and histories of place, which work to erase same-sex intimacy as they reproduce sanitizing accounts of the city.²⁹⁸ This chapter challenges these myths of one of London's most famous green spaces, exploring the use of this space by queer men in the time of AIDS as a vital site of kinship, and analyzing what this reveals of wider processes at work across the city, including the heteronormative bias in the organization of space, time, institutions, and bodies. Rather than urban development causing the dispossession of established communities, as in Docklands, or in Soho, I explore here how the already dispossessed find a sense of homeliness in this urban hinterland: which is not a space of domestic dwelling, but which nonetheless offers a queer sort of home to its cruising visitors. It is a space which, unlike the sites of previous chapters, is less characterized by built architecture, and instead curiously formed through the ephemeral interactions and movement of queer bodies cruising through space-time.

Principally, I am interested in the writing of cruising in Derek Jarman's autobiographic texts written between 1986 and his death in 1994; *Kicking the Pricks*, documenting 1986 and 1987; *Modern Nature*, documenting 1989 and 1990; *Smiling in Slow Motion (Smiling)*, which begins in 1991 and ends in 1994; and *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament (AYOR)*, first published in 1992, but which moves – tangentially - between each decade of Jarman's life.²⁹⁹ These diaries are a record of Jarman's everyday life after learning of his seropositivity,

²⁹⁸ Hornsey writes of the functions of London public libraries in influencing understandings of place. p. 163.

²⁹⁹ Derek Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks* (London: Vintage, 1996); *Modern Nature* (Wiltshire: Century/Vintage, 1991/1992); *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament* (Reading: Hutchinson/Vintage, 1992/1993); *Smiling in Slow Motion*, Keith Collins, ed., (Reading: Century/Vintage, 2000/2001). All further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.

and elaborate how this affected his creativity and lived experience of London. As with chapters one and two, my interest is in the period preceding widespread use of the internet from the late 1990s, which has radically shifted how cruising occurs (by creating digital means of meeting strangers).³⁰⁰

But before turning to Jarman, I use the first part of this chapter to analyze the public contexts of debate - about AIDS, public sex, and promiscuity, as represented in print media - in which his writing was situated. A study of these debates will help to inform later discussions about how the diaries *intervene* in these contexts, and to perceive the necessity for the particular *forms* that Jarman's writing takes on. Drawing upon my research at the Lesbian and Gay News-Media Archive, and the Hall-Carpenter Archives, I explore below how readers' letters to editors, opinion pieces, and headlines all worked to re/produce stigmatizing notions of queer bodies as contaminants across tabloid coverage through the 1980s and 1990s, and how this impacted upon the movement of bodies through Hampstead Heath (and other parts of the city), producing a fear (and realization) of homophobic violence. This will frame my later argument that the Heath was a vital territory for queer sex publics in a time of heightened precarity. The breadth of sources and voices in the chapter is intended to reveal something of the structures of feeling, and multiple uses and imaginations of London's landscape, at this time; and how contesting imaginaries and discourses of the Heath were in simultaneous circulation.

Stigmatizing discourses, and the spatiality of infection

In the time of AIDS, Andersson has argued that print media, 'stigmatized London's gay venues as dangerous and contagious spaces associated with violent crime and sexual disease.'³⁰¹ We have already seen in chapter two how this

³⁰⁰ The emergence of the internet opened up spaces for online cruising, contributing to a gradual decline in the numbers of people using public spaces. For instance, the website Gaydar, which promoted itself as offering men, 'What you want, when you want it', was launched in 1999. <www.gaydar.co.uk>.

³⁰¹ Johan Andersson, "Hygiene Aesthetics on London's Gay Scene: The Stigma of AIDS", in, B. Campkin and R. Cox (eds), *Dirt: New Geographies of*

occurred in Soho, leading to ‘clean-up’ operations and the closure of many commercial sex premises and sites of affective potential. Newspaper narratives contrasted queer waste and decay with the respectable national traits of heteronormative propriety and productive citizenship. Simon Watney details how newspapers in this period were a key site of the circulation of misinformation around AIDS.³⁰² Prior to mass internet usage, with governments muted on the crisis and with no state organized or sanctioned same-sex sex education, newsprint was a locus of debate.

Discourses linking gay men with disease were nothing new. Writing on literary representations of cottaging, Campkin and Anderson observe: ‘historically, the legal establishment mobilized an image of homosexual men as dirty and contaminating through reference to the soiled space of the cottage’; which they trace as far back as 1726 in British media coverage (Campkin and Andersson, 2009, p. 210). Woods traces a long history of ideas of sickness and plague being attached to gay men, and how models viewing them as either ‘self-destructive pervert’, or ‘diseased-victim’, had been popular ‘for half a century at least’ prior to AIDS (Woods, p. 370). Nunokawa writes of a, ‘gentler, and perhaps more pervasive homophobia’ than the panics of the 1980s and 1990s, which is, ‘namely a deep cultural idea about the lethal character of male homosexuality’.³⁰³ Efforts to elide signs of same-sex desire from London’s landscape in the recent past were underpinned by a broader and deeper homophobia which had taken many forms throughout the twentieth-century and before.³⁰⁴

Cleanliness and Contamination (2007), pp. 103–112, p. 103.

³⁰² Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987/1996). All further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

³⁰³ Jeff Nunokawa, “All the sad young men: AIDS and the work of mourning”, in Diana Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 311-323, p. 311.

³⁰⁴ Enacted in such legislation as the *Sexual Offences Act 1967*, and *Section 28* in 1988.

For many, AIDS validated prior campaigns against sex publics, and called for their fortification. Bodies, their fluids, and sexual detritus were all potential contaminants, with a ‘killer fever’ threatening neighbouring, respectable communities.³⁰⁵ On the ‘clean’ side of this imaginary binary,³⁰⁶ British heterosexuals were regarded as vulnerable to infection via contaminated blood, including that imported from overseas, particularly from the United States.³⁰⁷ Transmission was often considered a result of dwelling in, or travelling between, cities.³⁰⁸ The problem was perceived as one of urban or foreign sex, of the mobile and promiscuous transporting the virus between marginal/other and mainstream territories, overlooking the ordinariness and banal ubiquity of same-sex sex in everyday life, as well as heterosexual seropositivity. Phobic anxiety was less concerned with queer deaths than the contamination of mainstream society by queers: the prevention of which required containment and management, while letting the virus run its course outside of these zones.³⁰⁹ As George Gordon wrote in the *Daily Mail*, ‘The public is now demanding to live disease-free with the prime carriers in isolation.’³¹⁰ A public panic that ‘normal’ citizens were at risk of infection through state neglect gathered pace, and the *Mail on Sunday* published a call to action: ‘The matter is extremely urgent. Every necessary step must be taken at once to secure this literally vital supply of clean blood.’ The *mixing* of queer blood into the *main-stream*, its ‘spread into the general population,’ risked the body of the nation and its collective health.³¹¹ Watney notes this tendency for newspapers to construct ‘an ideal audience of

³⁰⁵“Contagious Confusion”, 8/11/83, *Guardian*. ‘Killer fever’, *Birmingham Post*, 23/4/83. LAGNA

³⁰⁶ Cases which did not correspond with this hetero/homo binary were presented as surprising oddities. See, “Grandmother’s death worsens AIDS fear”, *Telegraph*, 14/6/83.

³⁰⁷ Andrew Veitch, “Extra £30m could have kept out AIDS”, *Guardian*, 3/5/83.

³⁰⁸ ‘the clustering of the cases in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Isolated cases have been reported from other parts of the United States and from northern Europe, but in these cases the men concerned had either visited one of the three cities or had had a sexual partner who had been there.’ Tony Smith, “Gay Compromise Syndrome”, *The Health Services*, 23/6/82.

³⁰⁹Some pathologists refused to carry out postmortems on the bodies of PWAs, while police wore surgical gloves and masks when raiding London’s gay bars. *Sunday Times*, 12/6/83. LAGNA.

³¹⁰ George Gordon, “Haunted by the epidemic of fear”, *Daily Mail*, 31/5/1985.

³¹¹ “A new plague hits the world”, *Daily Mail*, 26/4/83; “AIDS emergency”, *Mail on Sunday*, 1/5/83.

national family units, surrounded by the spectacle of the mad, the foreign, the criminal and the perverted' (p. 84), and to produce 'an astonishing torrent of anxiety concerning bodies and sex'. Coverage was overwhelmingly speculative and future directed, demonstrating an, 'inability to conceive of Aids in the *present*, as it is experienced world-wide by millions of people' (Watney, p. 78).

Just as same-sex desire entered the space of the tabloid newspaper as an intrusion, so the queer body became an increasingly abject figure on the urban landscape; and the spatiality of these anxieties can be traced through various efforts to reorganize urban space. The virus became imagined through borders between respectable, heterosexual, public and private space, and visible queer spaces which came under fire. These included bars, clubs, cottages, saunas, streets.³¹² As Fuss writes:

The language and law that regulates the establishment of heterosexuality as both an identity and an institution, both a practice and a system, is the language and law of defense and protection: heterosexuality secures its self-identity and shores up its ontological boundaries by protecting itself from what it sees as the continual predatory encroachments of its contaminated other, homosexuality.³¹³

We can see the re/inscription of homophobia in the print media articles mentioned so far, and how, from 1981 onwards, AIDS panics and an increased phobia towards queer male bodies further stigmatized sex publics, which many regarded as a threat to the health of proximate, and legitimate bodies of Londoners. Media narratives of the city affected embodied experiences of, imaginaries of, and everyday orientations within, London; and they worked to re/generate the stigma of queer promiscuity and PWAs. As Watney writes:

³¹² As well as the border between Britain and the rest of the world, particularly Africa, and American cities such as New York and San Francisco.

³¹³ Diana Fuss, "Introduction", in Diana Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 2.

AIDS is not only a medical crisis on an unparalleled scale, it involves a crisis of representation itself, a crisis over the entire framing of knowledge about the human body and its capacities for sexual pleasure (Watney, p. 9).

This ‘representation’ implies an active, making process. That is, the process of selection, structuring, and the making of meaning. The effects of this were plural. As well as structuring negative feeling towards queers in phobic stories, these discourses had a re/structuring effect on London’s material landscape; affecting the city’s differentiated mobilities, narrowing access of marginal bodies to certain spaces.

But how did these phobic narratives – ideas of waste and contamination – consolidate efforts to remove visible traces of same-sex desire from Hampstead Heath? I want to attend now to the quotidian zoning of space and the regulation of bodies according to privileged standards of in/decency. Tensions on the Heath between everyday leisure-makers, cruisers, those in-between, planners, journalists, and police illustrate the plural imaginaries of the city. Contests over this stretch of land and its ideal function were a contest *for* space, for the rights to the city and to public freedoms.

During this time, Hampstead Heath was constructed discursively and from afar in the public imaginary, often regarded in terms of mystery and anxiety. Scandalizing media representations of cruisers depicted their experience as a rabid pursuit of dangerous sex acts and criminal ‘gross indecency’, overlooking the varied uses of the Heath. Under the headline, ‘Deterred by gays’, the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* printed a reader’s letter:

I resent the fact that Hampstead Heath has acquired a reputation for being a recreation area for the activities of gay people. I used to go for long walks through Hampstead Heath during the summer...I don’t now because the media has made me aware of the activities of homosexuals...it is a public area and should be used respectfully.³¹⁴

³¹⁴ “Deterred by gays”, *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 16/8/91.

The reader/writer, who previously walked the Heath unawares, takes issue with – and contributes to – media representations of the Heath as a site of gay deviancy. The reader has not *seen* any acts, and perhaps would have been unlikely to on daytime dog walks, but they are nonetheless deterred from visiting the Heath by the *possibility* of encountering queerness, as raised through print media. The potential of encountering sexual ‘others’ is enough to reorient their quotidian habits. In 1984 the *Finchley Times* carried a headline: ‘Glebeland Gays Must be Outed’, citing gay cruising in a park a mile north of the Heath: ‘Homosexual lovemaking, kissing and cuddling on the Glebelands...has spurred an outraged woman into action.’³¹⁵ The complainant, Natalie Holmes, stated: ‘If you walk through the woodland you can see them in the bushes. It made me feel ill.’ Holmes’s anxieties around this space are of witnessing taboo sexuality, of seeing bodies that she believes to be otherwise absent from her daily life. Men who use the toilet properly, without detectable intimacy, help to maintain the status quo, participating in good citizenship and demonstrating the proper use of public spaces. Yet walking the park, Holmes is reminded of other, erotic uses of the space. It is her proximity to, and perception of these other bodies that rouses her revulsion. The visible commingling of same-sex ‘lovemaking, kissing and cuddling’ provokes Holmes’s ‘outrage’, highlighting the diversity of emotional intensities roused by cruising grounds. What is made clear in Holmes’s ‘campaign’ is the sense of rightness attached to her standards, reinforced by the newspaper that prints the story, and the police and council who investigate and act on the matter, each endorsing and inscribing desexualizing principles that condemn ‘lovemaking, kissing and cuddling’, which, when occurring between men in public, can be reinterpreted as acts of *gross indecency*, emphasizing the multiple points at which prescriptions against same-sex intimacy are entrenched in everyday life.

This anxiety of proximity raises the spatial dynamics of abjection in everyday life. The headline, “Glebeland Gays Must be Outed”, illuminates the spatiality of the closet, and the ways in which it is constructed from without by

³¹⁵ *Finchley Times*, 08/84?. London Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

heteronormative society, forcing queers into marginal spaces. When these people are outed and brought to the attention of others, they must be *geographically* outed: *displaced* and moved on. Indeed, two months after this article was printed, the same newspaper carried the headline: ‘Homosexual sex haunt closed by council’.³¹⁶ Readers, journalists, council and police had cooperated to effect a foreclosing of same-sex intimacy. This cooperative effort, instigated through a ‘letter to editor’s’ in the newspaper, demonstrates the ways in which dominant heteronormative print cultures could effect the reorganization of the built environment, and how homophobic concerns of members of the public were taken seriously and acted upon by public institutions. The language of the headline alludes to the temporalities of cruising, and the ways in which cruisers dwell in space over time, provoking anxiety as loitering bodies. But it also likens gay men to specters haunting heteronormative public space; pointing to the fragility of mythic heteronorms (and the notion that same-sex intimacy is anything other than an ordinary aspect of everyday life), the paranoia of homophobia, and unwittingly evoking the uncanny aspects of abjection: the haunting possibility that the *menace* might come from *inside* the subject, rather than the external object of disgust.³¹⁷

Fears of dirt and contamination thus have a structuring and ordering effect on how we engage with the material world around us, how bodies are invited into spaces or prevented from entering, and how zones of cleanliness are established and maintained. Cohen writes:

filth represents a cultural location at which the human body, social hierarchy, psychological subjectivity, and material objects converge. Standing at a theoretical crossroads, filth is at once figurative and substantive.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ *Finchley Times*, 18/10/84. London Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

³¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

³¹⁸ W. A. Cohen, “Introduction: Locating Filth”, in *Filth: Dirt, Disgust and Modern Life*, W.A. Cohen and R. Johnson, eds., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) vii- xxxi.

Campkin and Cox note how urban narratives of dirt and contamination are located within and constitutive of space and social relations:

notions of dirt and cleanliness can be said directly or indirectly to influence the arrangement and occupation of all interior and exterior space, informing the minutiae of human behavior and actively influencing relations between people.³¹⁹

Campkin argues that in eliminating dirt, ‘we are involved in a perpetual spatial and visual process of arranging and rearranging the environment’.³²⁰ The categorizing of unwelcome others leads to efforts to expel abject corporeal waste. Yet efforts to *eliminate* abject waste are not what they claim to be, but rather a ‘perpetual arrangement’, or rearrangement. Casting out is simply casting aside, or moving on: as the homeless, sex workers, loiterers/cruisers, and other ‘antisocial’ bodies are moved from one part of the city to another.

Campkin uses the term ‘urban trash’ to describe this interplay of factors in the construction of dirty spaces, which, ‘traverses matter and human beings, the city’s fabric and its inhabitants’ (p. 77). His definition glimpses the ways in which ‘cultural, social, political, historical and economic factors’ all interact in the production of spaces of abjection, and how, ‘our perception of an urban place as “dirty” is constructed through the combination of different, yet inextricably linked, things, people and conditions at specific locations’ (p. 78).

We can connect these cultural, spatial and social productions of understandings of waste, dirt, and decay, with writings about those who cruised the Heath. Indeed, as Campkin writes: ‘Responses to stigmatized public spaces – including obsessive surveillance, the patrol of boundaries, or closure, parallel the psychological processes of abjection at a social level’ (p. 77). PWAs were

³¹⁹ Ben Campkin & Rosie Cox, eds., *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), p. 4.

³²⁰ Ben Campkin, “Degradation and regeneration: Theories of Dirt and the Contemporary City”, in Ben Campkin & Rosie Cox, eds., *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 68-79, p. 70.

perceived as a threat to cleanliness, or to life itself, simply through their presence, and sites of public sex consequently came under increased surveillance.³²¹

The format of the newspaper enabled it to host complaints, campaigns and community efforts to successfully close park toilets across numerous London boroughs, and increase monitoring activities in green spaces throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Parents wrote of being ‘sickened’ by their children encountering homosexuals, and campaigned to ‘rid our parks of sordid people.’³²² It was the presence of supposedly *dirty* bodies that led to calls for the area to be salvaged and cleansed. The *Evening Standard* acknowledged the numerous aggressive campaigns against loitering in public, describing a ‘War on park gays’ in 1986³²³, while the *Sunday Mirror* described the use of ‘police girls’ (female police officers) to ‘trap sex pests’:

Undercover policewomen are being used to smash gay vice rings plaguing parks, heaths and other open spaces...[the] Use of women officers was ordered following complaints by gay rights activists about policemen acting as “agents provocateurs” wearing tight trousers, leather jackets and even make-up to lure gays into compromising situations.³²⁴

What this illuminates is the discursive production and reproduction of the city: in the naming of im/proper acts, forms, habits, and the inscription of degeneracy onto bodies that do not meet standards assumed to be natural, right, and proper.

³²¹ David Bell, “Fragments for a queer city”, in R. Holiday et al. eds., *Pleasure Zones: Bodies, Cities, Spaces* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp. 84-103, p. 88.

³²² “Sickened by what my children saw”, *Barnet Press*, 20/7/06, “Rid our parks of sordid people”, *Barnet Press*, 17/8/06. London Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

³²³ *Evening Standard*, 15/12/86. Toilets were closed in London en masse through the 1980s, while smaller public parks such as Russell Square were fenced and locked at night. Some councils began monitoring the amount of time spent by police in toilets, citing police harassment. See, “Time Called on Toilet Watch”, *South London Press*, 14/6/85, ‘Police Sweep Against Gays is Attacked by Haringey’, *Ham and High*, 14/6/85.

³²⁴ Chris House, “Police Girls Trap Sex Pests”, *Sunday Mirror*, 14/9/86.

These discourses helped to reinscribe the terms of condition of entry to certain spaces, deciding which bodies are un/welcome, and effecting freedom of movement through urban space. The discursive production of the city has a profound impact on quotidian experience when moving through the world as an other.

In the *Daily Mail*, Lynda Lee Potter lamented a ‘the death of green space’, which she attributed to PWAs and cruisers:

I’m told that keepers...now have to wear heavy gloves when picking up rubbish for fear of being infected by AIDS from discarded syringes...There are no barriers to impede the weak and sick, the deranged and wretched from plundering the depths of human degradation.

The beautiful parks and commons created by the Victorians and Edwardians to bring peace, beauty and the joys of nature into the lives of city dwellers are no longer havens. They’ve been despoiled by litter, graffiti and monopolized by gratification seekers whose response to the beauties of nature is to destroy it.³²⁵

Heath-land is defined as a form of wasteland, yet Potter imagines its wasteful aspects here as the bodies, lives and traces of PWAs. It is the people on the land that are waste, polluting and denaturing the landscape, turning ‘places of refuge’ into ‘potential death traps’. Potter deploys many familiar tropes of homophobia, including the equation of queer sex publics with ‘gratification’ and hedonism, rather than any plural modes of sociality or affective significance. These are unwelcome bodies, dwelling in a state of ruin, which spreads around them and damages the overall, intended aesthetic effect of such green spaces. Potter fetishizes the propriety of Victorian and Edwardian parkland, the orderly movements of bodies through public spaces along strictly demarcated, normative lines of class, gender, race, sexuality. Potter advocates a version of nature mediated by civic planners and introduced carefully into the lives of ‘city

³²⁵ Lynda Lee Potter, “The Death of Green Space”, *Daily Mail*, 17/7/92.

dwellers’, cultivating ‘havens’ of leisure. This is a fantasy of the spatial restoration of morality, of built barriers to the human degradation she finds in London’s parks. The park keepers are on the front-line of this battle, their ‘heavy’ gloves forming a barrier between the skin and the disgusting. Potter finds a greater example set by the civic administration of Paris, where the ‘monopoly of transvestites, prostitutes and junkies’, the ‘perverts’ of the Bois de Boulogne, have been ‘swept’ off of the landscape by police, and the built environment reorganized by erecting nocturnal traffic barriers to prevent pleasure-seekers from parking. Potter imagines AIDS in binary terms, as something affecting only the most abject of the city’s citizens, and appeals for material borders between diseased and healthy bodies.

These bodies on the landscape were an uncanny sight for writers such as Potter and Holmes: ghostly presences moving through the trees and repressed bodies returning to haunt the urban consciousness. Nicholas Royle argues that the uncanny represents drives which are often repressed for the sake of cultural continuity.³²⁶ Indeed, hegemonic urban *regeneration* condemns that which problematizes the continual movement towards the ideal city, casting out unwanted waste. In 1980s and 1990s London, as we have seen, queer male bodies were variously constructed as *obstructions* to the regeneration of urban and national health. AIDS-phobic narratives worked to repress and displace these bodies.³²⁷ The cruising ground stages the spectral return of these fearfully repressed bodies: nocturnal presences wandering in and out of focus.

The repression of queerness draws borders; psychically, physically, legislatively and discursively, which combine to exert pressure on bodies. Yet these bodies cannot be removed because their removal is predicated on myths of unified identity, which overlook the ‘excesses, gaps, overlaps and dissonances’ (Sedgwick, 1990), and the inevitable, ordinary *failures* to live up to these myths.

³²⁶ Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Midsomer Norton: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.

³²⁷ A similar pattern of circumstances has been registered in other metropolitan – mostly American – cities, such as San Francisco and New York City, where ACT-UP, or AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, campaigned against PWAs being denied access to housing.

The uncanny return troubles the notion that human behavior can be curtailed within or outside of such borders un-problematically. Royle describes the uncanny as: ‘a crisis of the proper and natural, [the uncanny] disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside. The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality’ (p. 2). Queer bodies exposed heteronormative myths by illuminating the ordinariness and *normality* of same-sex intimacy: it occurs everywhere. Cruising thus highlights the faults and fissures in these fictions of the city. And this was something which its actors *exploited*, and staged, night after night. It was in this strangeness that cruisers found their unhomey homes: a comfort in strangeness, and a vital way of being in the world. These loitering bodies created and made use of the queer potential in cruising, which itself was often an uncanny experience for the cruiser, full of repetitions, mimicry, and encounters which exposed the contradictions in performed identities. Paulina Palmer has noted how the uncanny has often represented ‘perverse’ sexualities in literature through these tropes of repetition and performativity, challenging conventional views of reality as unitary, and suggesting phenomena that lie outside the explicable.³²⁸ This was the experience of Jarman and other cruisers, the encounters where subjectivity loses coherence, defying linguistic interpretation. A simultaneous experience of the un/homey home: a comfort with strangeness which, according to Royle: ‘makes the familiar (the self, desire, memory, sexuality, everyday language and behavior) uncomfortably, even frighteningly unfamiliar...teaches us to be uncertain, to question, to experience, in strangely new ways’ (p. 24). The strange becomes ordinary, and out of this might arise our appreciation and awareness of - and comfort with - the unknowable in and outside of ourselves and others, presenting new ways of seeing and inhabiting the world.

Recuperating promiscuity

These observations help us to reframe and recuperate cruising as a useful mode of urban experience in a hostile cultural moment. This is especially useful when

³²⁸ Paulina Palmer, *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

considering the ways in which the mythologized openness of the 1970s - what Holleran has described as the 'age of promiscuity' - was blamed for the epidemic.³²⁹ Douglas Crimp has noted the conservatism which crept into queer politics during the 1980s, critiquing writers such as Andrew Sullivan who sullied sexual openness, advocating monogamy and marriage and a turn towards 'assimilationist' social gains rather than any radical queer politics.³³⁰ Jarman wrote: 'Heterosoc, imprisoned by monogamy in the ruins of romantic love, is quite dumbfounded when faced with our plurality' (*AYOR*, p. 4). And Watney argues:

...now that the syndrome is so evidently seen not to be confined exclusively to blacks, prostitutes, IV drug-users and gay men, we can only expect yet more frantic retrenchments inside the imaginary fortifications of monogamy, with even more hysterical denunciations of "the promiscuous." (p. 95)

As many scrambled to rationalize the AIDS epidemic, Ben Gove notes how queer male promiscuity fell victim: 'it is not promiscuity *per se* that is usually condemned within normative discourses, but rather, the promiscuous sexuality of specific cultural groups - particularly...promiscuous gay men.'³³¹ Many journalists cultivated the equation of promiscuity with AIDS. The *Sunday Times* claimed: 'Those most at risk appear to be homosexuals indulging in a particularly promiscuous lifestyle'³³², while in "Mother Nature and the Plague", the *Observer* reported:

it seems to be promiscuity *itself* that is the cause. After a few hundred 'tricks', or new sexual contacts, the body just doesn't want to know any more, and nature proceeds to peel you wide open.³³³

³²⁹ Andrew Holleran, "Steam, soap and sex", p. 99, *The Advocate*, 6 October 1992.

³³⁰ See Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: essays on AIDS and queer politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002).

³³¹ Ben Gove, *Cruising Culture: Promiscuity, Desire and American Gay Literature* (Bodmin: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), P. 8

³³² Will Ellsworth-Jones, "Mystery new killer disease", *Sunday Times*, 5/9/82.

³³³ "Mother Nature and the Plague", *Observer*, 1/5/83.

'Tricks' reinforces the link between AIDS and casual male-male sex, using a term associated with anonymous sex.³³⁴ In *The Telegraph*, Sean Day-Lewis described AIDS as 'the price of promiscuity.'³³⁵ Bersani sees in the public discourse of the crisis a similarity between the representation of queer men and of female sex workers in the nineteenth-century, 'as contaminated vessels, conveyancing...venereal disease to 'innocent men.' The similarity is in the idea of uninterrupted sex, the, 'criminal, fatal, and irresistibly repeated act. This is of course anal sex...promiscuity in this fantasy, far from merely increasing the risk of infection, is the *sign of infection*. Women and gay men spread their legs with an unquenchable appetite for destruction' (p. 18). AIDS has 'reinforced the heterosexual association of anal sex with a self-annihilation originally and primarily identified with the fantasmatic mystery of an insatiable, unstoppable female sexuality' (p. 29). This presents anal passivity as the intolerable, and contributes to the fantasmatic idea that gay men are killers, which lurked within much of the coverage of the epidemic: 'the impulse to kill gays comes out as a rage against gay killers deliberately spreading the virus among the "general public"' (p. 27). In this way, homophobic violence is perversely justified by its perpetrators as self-defense.

So far I have discussed some of the ways in which these media discourses impacted upon mainstream culture, and more locally, upon the organization of bodies, space, and time, on the Heath. Yet these discourses also impacted upon Jarman's creativity, and on his formal choices when creating. Here, I explore how Jarman responded to, and resisted, these phobic discourses in his diaries by cultivating a promiscuous method. Promiscuity, I show here, was key to Jarman's creativity.

Jarman writes: 'Queerbashing is institutionalized in every walk of British life; if it wasn't, the newspapers couldn't make capital out of it' (*AYOR*, p. 9), and, 'The *Independent's* article on the Heath is very even-handed. The *Times* goes for

³³⁴ A useful example of a novel that deals with this theme is, Renaud Camus, *Tricks*, (Finland: High Risk Books, 1981/1996). Camus's novel records casual, anonymous, pre-AIDS encounters.

³³⁵ Sean Day-Lewis, "AIDS: the price of promiscuity", *Telegraph*, 26/4/83.

shock and horror and quotes *Modern Nature*’ (*Smiling*, p. 98). In both quotes, Jarman identifies the homophobic tendencies of mainstream print media. The second quote refers to an article about an ex-MP ‘caught and cautioned’ on the Heath. Jarman has read multiple newspapers to compare coverage of the story, and takes to his diary to record such instances. The *Times* journalist also takes to Jarman’s diaries, but to illustrate their own negative view of queer promiscuity. This moment points to an indirect dialogue between Jarman and the journalist on the page, as each recourse to the other’s writing to evidence a perceived wrongdoing.

Jarman’s diary entries are often penned angrily in direct response to media hostility. He wakes up to read an inaccurate report of a friend’s death in the *Sun* (*AYOR*, p. 118), or is ‘chased by the radio and papers to comment on the unfortunate young man who is supposed to have given the virus to several young women’ (*Smiling*, p. 153). These stories, and their production of stigma were sticky, lingering with Jarman and informing his artistic output: ‘set up three canvases: one a *Mirror* headline about the Birmingham man...They were painted with rubber kitchen gloves which I was using to protect my hands’ (*Smiling*, p. 167). Jarman’s paintings often viscerally and explicitly registered the traumas of the AIDS crisis, including his black paintings in which needles and condoms were stuck onto canvases, often overlaying cut-outs of phobic news headlines.³³⁶ But news media also informs the content and the form of the *diaries*. There is a sense of being haunted by news coverage on a daily basis. Jarman records sitting for an interview, ‘with a pit in [my] stomach’, the *Guardian* journalist - ‘so obviously disturbed by [AYOR]’ – defending ‘the foolish...article that said a gay man was the end of the line’ (*Smiling*, p. 110). It is a prior article which structures this conversation with the journalist, while this encounter structures Jarman’s reflective diary entry at the end of the day. Six days later, another entry describes: ‘on the train clutching the *Guardian* article. A horrible picture of me grafted on to the body of Michelangelo’s *David*...The phobias leapt out of the journalist’s averted eyes – the interview was so seedy’ (*Smiling*, p. 113). Jarman is *disfigured* by this article, his body cut up and re-rendered on to a classical,

³³⁶ “Derek Jarman”, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 3 February – 18 March 1984, Tate Britain Archives, 955/7/7/22.

healthy but ultimately inhuman body. It is an uncomfortable rendering in its journalistic naivety, insensitive to Jarman's physical vulnerability.³³⁷ The 'grafting' of Jarman's head onto the static sculpture not only performs the dispossession and disposal of the body of a PWA, but also mimics the process by which Jarman feels silenced *by* being interviewed. This emphasizes the use of the diaries as a mode of recording his sexuality frankly, without stigma. He rails against such 'straight media which had already turned me, quite falsely into a dangerous producer of video nasties: *Jubilee, Sebastiene*' (*Smiling*, p. 30). In an office on Old Compton Street, in the heart of London's Soho, Jarman 'picked up [his] silver pen fizzing with fury and took the first stab at *At Your Own Risk*.' The act of writing is a defiant one, a tangible *expression* of frustration, funneling Jarman's fury onto the page with a stab. The printed page offers a retort to phobic myths, extending a queer tale into culture, and ensuring the longevity of Jarman's point of view as a PWA. It is a matter of chance, in part, but the text remains today as a trace, able to generate discourse, enliven imaginations, and influence future cultural productions.

Throughout *AYOR*, Jarman cites and responds to specific news articles. He includes Alexander Walker's 'attack' on *Edward II* in the *Standard*, in which Walker trivialized him as, 'rather extreme...even for those who cruise on Hampstead Heath':³³⁸ Walker also complains of 'Modern Nature', in which Jarman, a 'beacon for gay promiscuity', gives 'encouragement for a night's revelry on Hampstead Heath between 10.30pm and 3am (*AYOR*, p. 142). Jarman writes his response into the diaries:

The *Evening Standard*, 4/11/91...I suggest he...research the HIV epidemic...The first lesson he will learn is that HIV is not linked to promiscuity if safer sex practices, which are widely known by gay men and ill publicized in the straight press are adhered to. (*AYOR*, p. 143).

³³⁷ *Guardian*, 9/4/1992, Tate Britain Archives, 955/7/7/22.

³³⁸ Jarman includes Walker's review of *Edward II* from *Evening Standard*, 17/10/91 in *AYOR*, p. 139.

Jarman's response to Walker is an effort to humanize the epidemic, populating public discourse with the voice of a PWA, the experience of living with the virus, even in the most difficult moments: 'My entire physical self is a ruin that hurts' (*Smiling*, p. 372).³³⁹ Describing the 'notorious volatility and inaccuracy of written responses to AIDS', Woods asserts the 'need for a considered and considerate literature of the crisis' (Woods, p. 361). Jarman's diaries offer this considered, considerate literature, usefully opening up ways of seeing the production of stigmatizing discourse and the phobic regulation of bodies and spaces in London. The diaries illuminate not simply the spatial fallout of phobic discourses, but the ways in which the effects of this might be complicated and resisted, and how such ways of seeing and being in space and time might be reconfigured queerly through the text:

VILE BOOK IN SCHOOL –
PUPILS SEE PICTURES OF GAY LOVERS

More than twenty police raided the Royal Vauxhall Tavern on Friday night wearing masks and rubber gloves.

AIDS BLOOD IN M&S PIES PLOT

Gay men have been sent home from hospitals without treatment because some doctors and surgeons are scared of catching AIDS.

AIDS MENACE: HE CARRIES KILLER VIRUS
YET WORKS WITH SICK KIDS

A man was kidnapped whilst cruising on Hampstead Heath and kept hostage for 14 hours by his attackers who punched and kicked him

³³⁹ See also Oscar Moore, *PWA: Looking AIDS in the Face* (Basingstoke: Picador, 1996), which gathers Moore's weekly column from the *Guardian*, titled, "PWA". Moore's 1990s columns were also intended to give voice to PWAs in national media.

HOLIDAY ISLE IN AIDS TERROR

(*AYOR*, p. 104-111).

In this (seven-page) section of *AYOR*, Jarman writes out tabloid headlines, pasting in-between coverage of other stories from queer publications. This linguistic game of borrowing and rearranging parallels Jarman's use of collage in painting. Here, the effect is to highlight the disparities between tabloid headlines, which were often concerned with outing PWAs, and coverage in low-circulation, free queer journalism, which emphasized how homophobia was increasingly manifest in outbreaks of violence in queer spaces. Jarman cuts up journalism across *AYOR*, creating his own queer collages of newsprint that express his hopes for a more optimistic future. He offers up a space in his text for these articles, disseminating information amongst a wider audience than would have read the free publications distributed in London's commercial queer venues. He includes the sparse statistics available to him, such as a 1984 survey of queer London teenagers, revealing rates of loneliness (38%), abuse (32%), and suicide attempts (19%). And his journals record variously marginal queer figures, including unnamed men met at the Heath. These passages of text collide with scenes from Jarman's earlier life to expose the myths of the 'Heterosoc' critiqued throughout the text: his tumultuous school years, the 1970s in which 'our bookshops and papers were subject to police harrassment' (*AYOR*, p. 89), or the collusion he experiences in adulthood between publishers and marketers seeking to elide frank portrayals of same-sex desire from his texts. This promiscuous form, itself borrowed from earlier twentieth-century collage and cut-up writers such as William Burroughs, offers a view of culture as a mix of competing and divergent views, forms, models, allowing a critique of heteronormative teleology which imagines coherent subjects with common goals.³⁴⁰ It also brings into relief the strategies and assumptions at work in the media discourses on which he is commenting. Jarman reclaims promiscuity as a vital imaginative and creative

³⁴⁰ See, for instance, Edward Robinson, *Shift Linguals: Cut-up Narratives from William S. Burroughs to the Present* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), and, Rona Cran, *Collage in Twentieth-Century Art, Literature and Culture: Joseph Cornell, William Burroughs, Frank O'Hara, and Bob Dylan* (London: Routledge, 2016).

force here, to advance a queer politics which called for new, non-stigmatizing understandings of sexual difference.

Turning now specifically to Jarman's writing of Hampstead Heath, we can begin to see the many ways in which Jarman unraveled these assumptions of an essential promiscuity of queer men, and the ideas of danger that had become attached to sex publics. This discussion posits both the uses of the *Heath*, as a space for queer bodies to convene, and the uses of Jarman's *writing* of the Heath, in reproducing queerness and extending it across time and space. Both of these foreground the uses of promiscuity in everyday life as an affective mode, of cultivating sociality, intimacy, or kinship; framing promiscuity as something that exceeds the erotic in its varied potential. Through the diaries, Jarman invites his reader to look at things again, askance, unsettling narrow modes of gazing at and interpreting bodies, spaces, and everyday life, and encouraging us to look again, to glimpse the strangeness of the familiar:

I went up to the Heath early because I was fed up of getting in so late...Two young men had built a bonfire, others were standing around keeping warm. A young man stopped me. He very much liked *Edward II*. I thanked him and he introduced me to his friend...We talked for half an hour and then he said, "I want to tell you a terrible secret...I've got a boyfriend back home...Three years ago he was diagnosed HIV+" (*AYOR* p. 103).

In this passage, men are grouped around a fire for warmth, sustained conversation and support in a time of need. The comfort offered by the grouping wills the young man to voice his link to the virus, the 'terrible' secret he carries with(in) him. Rather than a space of abandon, Jarman writes a scene of conviviality, and sensitive queer sociability. Even the descriptions of sex acts can be seen as fulfilling a *useful* or educative function for queer readers:

At nine took off for Hampstead Heath. A dull voyeuristic sort of night, two short-haired lads with fine physiques put on a public display, snapped on condoms like surgeons with rubber gloves (*Smiling*, p.45).

Although the display is uninspiring, these men are nonetheless performing safe sex in public, reduced to ‘surgeons’ by the new compulsion to wear latex, and are one of many images of safe sex on the Heath recorded by Jarman:

You could go to any straight pub and put yourself at risk a hundred times. That’s what happens on Saturday night; straight boys don’t put on condoms – it makes them Queer. On the Heath, I think most people know the parameters (*AYOR*, p. 125).

Here, descriptions of the Heath overturn the stigmatizing of gay men as wanton risk-takers, revealing instead how many gay men were at the forefront of distributing safe-sex information, often through clandestine and informal means. This knowledge exchange was vital, given the lack of clear messages about how to have same-sex sex safely, and also given that the Heath was a popular space for those ‘trapped in the closet’ who had limited access to such discussions. Jarman extends this knowledge of prophylaxis beyond the Heath to his readership, reaching others in different times and places.

Despite such precautions, the space had become a fearful one for many men: ‘the immediate effect [of AIDS] has been to clear the bath-houses and visibly thin the boys of the night’ (*Dancing Ledge*, p. 240). Jarman was less interested in *having* sex by this point, but continued to visit the Heath for conversation, or as one of the few spaces of visible same-sex male intimacy. After a rare physical encounter, he remarks: ‘That’s the best thing that’s happened to me for such a long time’. The woods facilitated powerful affective encounters, contrasting with the harshness of other parts of London at this time. Elsewhere in the city, he writes of being blinded by harsh sunlight, of strangers approaching him on the street to tell him he’s lost weight, or speeding up their cars to try and run him down, and taxi drivers refusing to pick him up as his body starts to register as a *sick* body to others.

To focus on the promiscuous Heath is to *unravel* the notion that men merely used this space for unquenchable sexual abandon. The strangers Jarman encounters in the woods are each exploring and experiencing differently; variously seeking

conversation, amenable strangers, a space of expression. This challenges the condemnations of queers based on phobic assumptions of an inherent sexual promiscuity which made them, to some, deserving of AIDS. These *promiscuous* modes of engagement on the Heath were not solely sexual. And, rather than wasteful, they can be reframed here as vital and generative modes of contact in everyday life.

Un-homely homes

I want to extend these arguments of the vitality of the Heath here, exploring its potentiality as a space of homeliness; and cruising as a mode of dwelling in the city. In this queer time and place, Jarman could glimpse the dissolution of the coherent self, and find alternative modes of encountering strangers and imagining the city than were prescribed elsewhere in daily life. The following quotes can help us to frame this discussion of the Heath as a site of *homeliness* for queer men, and to contrast it with the strangeness that often characterizes normative domestic environments:

Imagine finding yourself refused access to your dying lover by a family that disowned him years ago and then being thrown out of your home by them because it was in his name (*AYOR*, p. 104).

I sat in the empty flat for half an hour, half hoping that HB would return, then went to the Heath in the New Year drizzle....a young man came up, a broad, open smile with friendly eyes, he started a conversation. He'd lived in London for eight years doing odd jobs as, at sixteen, his parents had thrown him out when he told them he was gay...He lived alone, preferred it that way, rarely went out, and if he did, went to the Heath – it was the most honest way to cruise, the meetings uncomplicated, he did not want a relationship. He was emphatic that he was not there because he was repressed. On the contrary, he felt those trapped into the commercial scene were victims of their desires...He said he'd been here many times but had yet to have an orgasm, he was quite happy to just talk (*Smiling*, p. 67).

With HB (Jarman's partner, Keith Collins) away, the Soho flat becomes a lonely, depressing place, leading Jarman towards contact and conversation in the woods. The young man he meets, although a stranger, meets him with 'a broad, open smile' and 'friendly eyes'. Both are exiles from their domestic dwellings, pursuing encounters, and their lone presence in this particular space and time connotes same-sex desire. The encounter is instinctively convivial - a generosity towards strangers, the warmth contrasting with the lonely homes these men have left behind, as well as the commercial queer scene, the 'expensive Soho bars' (*Smiling*, p. 28) which both find alienating:

There's an amazing amount of pretence we go through to meet people in public spaces; the drinks you have to buy, the smoke and noise. On the Heath you can be stone cold sober and meet someone; in the bars you are obliged to drink (*AYOR*, p. 124).

Both of these people desire to inhabit a space unmediated by capital and normative rituals of courtship and sociability. As I have argued in previous chapters, *feeling* at home can happen anywhere, while traditional sites of homeliness are often *unhomely* for their queer occupants, castaways or survivors. Jarman's configuration of home is underpinned less by domestic stability than an ethical openness to alterity, which he explored and expanded in the queer conviviality of the Heath. Cruising is an inherently mobile practice, imbued with a sense of aliveness to chance, and the cruising ground is permeable and constantly in flux. As Binnie writes:

Heterosexual identity is ubiquitous and thereby *placeless*...queer space is intimately dependent on a sense *for* place for its realization...cottages (tearooms) are ephemeral places subject to change by word of mouth, reputation, and above all *gossip*...These pleasure grounds are fragile, ephemeral, *soft* (2001, p. 107).

In these woods, many found relief from experiences of homesickness, dislocation, and being made to feel unwelcome in those urban locations which

were increasingly sites of unease or exclusion for queer men after 1981, more so than they might already have been: commercial venues, workspaces, the street, hospitals (save for specific wards for PWAs, such as the clinic Jarman visited at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London), buses, taxis, and theatres.

Queer homeliness problematizes conventional definitions that emphasize the stasis of repose, imply securely bordered spaces, or the positive affect of quiet contentment, without a place for the unruly. Jarman writes of the Heath, 'I have frequently been stopped by anguished young men...who have confided they are HIV+. I am usually the first person they have told. There is so little support in the home' (*AYOR*, p. 5). In queer literature, the feelings of constraint that normative domesticity creates is a familiar trope, as is the willingness to escape and find alternative spaces. Often these alternative spaces are sought in texts by lonesome readers. The queer characters of *Beautiful Thing* (see chapter one) embody this homesickness, and cope with it by cultivating a metaphysical, queer domesticity through reading habits and imagined wanderings, as does Jeremy Reed (chapter two). Jarman's life writing documents how certain non-domestic spaces in London offered him a sense of home, inscribing a record of sites and experiences of queer kinship in the city. This home-making is a makeshift, creative process, of forging new affective bonds in *other* spaces. Homeliness arrives when we are able to be ourselves, or perhaps, when we are able to escape the pressures to *be* anything in particular, and instead to glimpse the disappearance of self. For instance, the feeling of being 'at ease' that Jarman finds on returning to the clinic for PWA's at St Bartholomew's Hospital: 'I felt comfortable here, just as I did years ago walking for the first time into a room full of queer men' (*Smiling*, p. 264). These feelings are less dependent on long-term habitus in a particular space than on the orientation of bodies towards one another in any given space, as Ahmed writes:

Loving one's home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one's body, saturating the space with bodily matter: home as *overflowing* and *flowing over* (2006, p. 11).

In her study of the *orientation* in sexual orientation, Ahmed illuminates the dynamism of home-making, and the routine failures and excesses of its normative forms. She illustrates how the un/homely spaces of the city are contingent, experienced differently by each of the city's inhabitants. Hampstead Heath offered opportunities for queers to 'saturate' space with bodily matter, and to eroticize other bodies with the possibility of reciprocation rather than the expectation of violence (although this remained an underlying threat). For those alienated by the disciplining of domestic interiors, it is often public space that can feel most homely, and where social, sexual and political bonds might be put into queer configuration.

Home is defined as 'a dwelling place.'³⁴¹ Yet *dwelling*, as a spatial and temporal noun, suggests not only homeliness but also a lingering. To dwell at home is a normative act, the protected privilege of home-owners: accreting affective bonds with a place over time, to produce the 'feeling' of home. But what of those who feel most at home in public? Or who feel, as nineteenth-century nature-poet and wanderer John Clare put it, 'homeless at home'?³⁴² Clare's relationship with nature was also inspired by a sense of dislocation from the domestic, and the hostilities of his everyday experience. For both writers, the prohibitions of normative domesticity are figured as *lacking*. This was an existential condition. Not always homeless in the domestic sense, but often unwelcome, and left imaginatively adrift. And for Jarman, the practice of cruising the Heath brought the corporeal, the spatial, and the temporal into collision, producing a mode of dwelling in the city that was curiously unbounded.

So far, this thesis has focussed on the movement of bodies *through* space. For instance, in Will Beckwith's walk through east London, and in the ways in which planning narratives sought to prescribe ideal forms of corporeal circulation in the docks. To move *through* is always, potentially, teleological, implying some purpose, a process with a beginning and an end, or an attempt to narrativize

³⁴¹ Oxford English Dictionary, "Home. N.1" *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 01/06/2018.

³⁴² John Clare, "Journey out of Essex", in *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Eric Robinson (Oxford, 1983), pp. 153–61, p. 160.

urban experience. Cruising arrests this notion of a teleological form of movement. In cruising, movement might be interspersed with stasis. It is an unpredictable and ephemeral urban dance, rather than an unfolding narrative. Here, Jarman shows us an experience of the city which is less of a purposive *journey through*, than a queer sort of dwelling which evades efforts to arrange the elements of quotidian life into a sensical story. But the temporality of dwelling, when it occurs *outside*, risks interpretation as *loitering*, a vague act which occurs simply by a body being present over time, arousing suspicion, unease, and criminality.³⁴³ The loitering body, when classified, will eventually be arrested, moved on, or otherwise unsettled. The feelings of belonging and comfort that might be felt by a loiterer can therefore become displaced by ambivalence, or mixed with fear of arrest. When dwelling in a semi-public setting is redefined as loitering, certain forms of queer home-making become criminal: cruising, or public same-sex intimacy can too easily become cast as *gross* offences against public *decency*.

Dwelling on the Heath produces a range of familiar feelings. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' describes the organization of dwelling habits, and the ways in which repetition, to some degree, generates cultural practice and identity.³⁴⁴ Bourdieu describes habitus as, 'a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination' (p. 214). His theorizations are useful here in emphasizing the affective experiences of bodies in space-time, and a relational theory of life, rather than a binarizing one. Cruising is also a mode of repetitious, embodied dwelling, something which Jarman occupied himself with repetitiously and semi-regularly. Many diary

³⁴³ For recent articulations of 'loiterature', see, R. Chambers, "Messing Around: Gayness and Loiterature in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*", in J. Still and M. Worton (eds), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 207, and, Campkin and Andersson, 2009.

³⁴⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). This theory of habitus raises several dichotomies: agency and structure, inner and outer, individual and social. These, according to Bourdieu, are in ever-shifting and often unconscious relation to each other. Further, the *concept* as well as the *experience* of habitus is always an evolving one: and thus remains sympathetic to the *unknowable*.

entries describe whole nights spent there: ‘5TH NOVEMBER 1991...I went up to the Heath early because I was fed up of getting in so late’ (p. 104). The Heath exerts a pull, causing cruisers to linger/loiter. Jarman identifies this tendency to loiter in several entries: ‘A tall fine looking short-haired lad – ten spasms shooting off everywhere – we chatted for several minutes then he said he must be off home, but hours later he was still there’ (p. 84). The Heath grips both men for hours in non-routinized, unregulated time. But this is not simply unsated sexual desire. The meanings found in cruising here are many and exceed intelligibility. Jarman and the tall lad cruise queerly through time and space, accumulating chance encounters, sexual or otherwise, as they wander through the woods. To leave is to go *back* to normative time, to acceptable modes of bodies inhabiting London, and more conventional experiences of ‘habitus.’ The man feels a resistance to such a retreat, and Jarman feels the man’s resistance too. A *Cruising Guide* issued in the early 1990s remarked upon the length of time that men often spend wandering around these spaces, offering advice to readers: ‘Realize that sometimes it might be better just to call it a night rather than wait another 10 minutes...another 10 minutes’.³⁴⁵ The *Guide* highlights an ambivalence in cruising: the experience of being unsatisfied and unable to leave, and waiting, just a minute more, which becomes an hour, an evening; because what comes along is not predictable.

Halberstam argues that normative, (re)productive time is structured according to the biological clock, bourgeois respectability and scheduling (Halberstam, p. 2). Queer time is about, ‘the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing.’ Such lives are freed, allowing evenings spent in the woods. Jarman has ‘talked the night away here...But by dawn, Michael Foot walks his dog, all is quiet again’ (*Dancing Ledge*, p. 243). The dawn dog-walk of the politician is of course a playful suggestion of Westminster closeting and the public scandal of MPs caught cruising on the Heath (which Jarman and the media record on several occasions). The nocturnal cruiser is replaced by the morning dog-walker, suggesting the daylight disciplining of the Heath according to spatio-temporal logics of respectability, routine and

³⁴⁵ *Cruising Guide: Protect Ourselves* (London: Health First, 1999), Hall-Carpenter Archives, HCA/BODYPOSITIVE/5/12.

propriety. Jarman notes, 'I've never been adept at cruising, particularly the streets, out of misplaced propriety' (*Smiling*, p. 222). Jarman's false modesty plays with normative codes of place and respectability here. As a cruiser, Jarman feels doubly out-of-place. He is extant from normative models of respectability. But at once, these normative codes linger as traces, such that Jarman feels he can never make a success of cruising. Misplaced in the 'proper' city, yet never feeling quite in-place when cruising, he playfully gestures at the contradictions of binary models of subjectivity.

Rather than simply suggesting a hungry appetite for sex, loitering hints at the intensity of feeling aroused at cruising sites: feelings that were difficult to find elsewhere. As well as a criminal act, loitering is also a psychic process, an affective encounter with a space. It is a form of dwelling, of feeling at-home. To reduce cruising solely to sex acts is to overlook its uses in everyday life for many: nights spent simply wandering, looking, thinking, feeling, talking, with or without sex.

Jarman often visited the Heath in the evenings, when it was less populated by dog walkers, children, or courting couples. This places him loosely in the tradition of the 'noctambulant', who, according to Matthew Beaumont, is one who walks at night seeking pleasure or voyeurism.³⁴⁶ Jarman's Hampstead Heath wanderings are 'noctuaries': accounts of what passes at night. Beaumont traces this tradition back to the end of the seventeenth century, noting how, in nocturnal London: 'the trajectories of the poet and the vagrant in the landscape become closely entangled', and exploring the long linkage of the urban wanderer with deviance, tracing a history of nightwalking to expose the normativity of London's temporalities: the proper times in which to move through the city's parts. Beaumont writes: 'Nightwalking is, in both the physical and the moral meanings of the term, deviant. At night, in other words, the idea of wandering cannot be dissociated from the idea of erring – wanderring' (p. 5). To deviate from normative rhythms is, therefore, to be deviant. Walking alone, in public, at night is the practice of overlooked night-workers, vagrants, sex workers, and

³⁴⁶ Matthew Beaumont, *Night Walking: A Nocturnal History of London* (Croydon: Verso, 2016), xi.

cruisers. By this logic, night-walking is also economically unproductive. It does not generate value for the city, or the nation.

Munoz articulates the queerness of *waiting* in *Cruising Utopia*: ‘Those who wait are those of us who are out of time in at least two ways. We have been cast out of straight time’s rhythm, and we have made worlds in our temporal and spatial configurations’ (2009, p. 182). Munoz uses waiting to articulate the power of *longing* that queers experience in a hetero or homonormative mainstream, and how, ‘We are left waiting but vigilant in our desire for another time that is not here yet’ (p. 182). There is an ambivalence in waiting. In part, it can reinforce a sense of lack, or of being denied something. But it also facilitates an imagining of alternatives, and therefore, according to Munoz, carries a utopic world-making potential. Cruising the Heath also expresses this power of (be)longing: the longing not only for erotic contact but also a longing for the hold of ‘heterosoc’ on all aspects of experience to be loosened. The diary entries therefore articulate the varied kinds of waiting and longing in Jarman’s experience of cruising, which meld in a strange form of homeliness.

For all its homeliness, the Heath was not a utopic space. It was also a site of queer-bashing, police brutality, and a fear and risk that always accompanied, and sometimes contributed to, the thrill of cruising. This was in many ways a limited space, including in its gender-specificity. At once un/homely, exposed to the elements, carrying a risk of violence, and for many, structured by a fear of infection. Cruising the Heath today, older men are quick to remind me of the risks of nostalgizing this place, of the ambivalences of cruising, and how the worlds they escaped outside of the Heath could be more overtly violent and institutionally punishing to queers than the culture they inhabit today. Indeed, cruising the Heath may have signified a return to the closet for many. As Woods notes:

In an appalling way, just as AIDS has returned us to the position in which hostile straights are most happy to confine us, it has returned many of us – particularly those of older generations – to a place where we once felt, if not happiest, most at home. It is where so many of us were brought up, a place we

call the ‘closet’, a lonely space where nothing is (in the ‘old’ sense) gay. It is not a new place; we recognize it. Some never ceased to be nostalgic about it’ (p. 361).

In Jarman’s diaries, the Heath is often described as a site at once un/familiar and un/homely. For instance, as Jarman sits freezing under a tree with another man, drinking from a bottle of red wine, ‘[we] talked for hours in the soaking wet...much good conversation in the shadows...completely lost’ (*Smiling*, p. 19). The moment is at once homely in its production of feeling and unhomely in its material conditions. There is warmth in the conversation, but Jarman is sitting ‘frozen’, outdoors with a stranger, *in public*, and *outside* of the conventions of domesticity.

Although privileged in some ways, the intersectionality of Jarman’s identity sees moments where privilege ruptures or lapses as he moves through London, when his queerness, cruisy-ness, or seropositivity are more likely to be met with violence than conviviality. The cruiser is an illegal body, more complex and less privileged than Baudelaire’s flaneur.³⁴⁷ An unwelcome, illegal, or abject body, signifying perverse sexuality and isolation. Jarman’s writing of the Heath illuminates not only the *Heath*, but also gestures toward the phobic spaces that queers travelled or were exiled *from*, and the structuring and disciplining effects of discourses of propriety and respectability embedded in everyday life. An anonymous cruiser made this point when writing to *The Guardian* in defense of their practice in 1999:

This is not just a result of male sexuality unleashed, but owes more to society’s homophobia than to some kind of hedonistic frolic *al fresco* for the uninhibited.³⁴⁸

In chapter one, we saw how planning discourses sought to regulate the movement of future bodies through regenerated Docklands. Jarman’s writing of

³⁴⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863 (London: Penguin, 2010).

³⁴⁸ Reader response, *Guardian*, 26/6/1999.

cruising shows us the *experience* - rather than the planning – of an unevenness of access in London; that is, how some bodies are more privileged than others in their power to move through or dwell in, urban space-time. Despite the mobility of cruising, that men visited this space for sex and sociability exposes what Massey describes as the, ‘differentiated mobilities’ of the city (1994, p. 156), and the lack of freedom of these bodies to move freely through the city without censure. The anxieties around AIDS narrowed access of queer male bodies to many urban locations. This tacit, and variously mediated, spatio-temporal regulation of London’s bodies affected both the interactions *between* bodies and the possibilities for *feeling* at home in a homophobic city. But cruising also disrupts these conditions. Cruising is both a locative process and an affective accretion: a mode of encountering other bodies and other lives, often in resistance to efforts – however overt or subtle, visible or invisible – to impose order on the movements and behaviours of urban inhabitants, or to privatize and domesticate same-sex intimacy in the late twentieth-century. I now want to explore this potential for ephemeral kinships to emerge in cruising the Heath in some more detail.

Ephemeral kinships and queer sociality on Hampstead Heath

In the following long quotation, Jarman writes an ordinary scene of contact and conviviality on the Heath:

I saw a lad last night surrounded by four or five men. It was raining and terribly cold. He was giving them blow-jobs. He had a great physical beauty which distinguished him from those around him, though behind the looks they were probably the most gentle men. I picked him up off the ground. To my surprise instead of pulling away he complied with a sigh.

I put my arms around him. He offered me his last cigarette. Although I don’t smoke I accepted it and walked with him. I wanted to walk right off the Heath and take him home, but I knew that wouldn’t happen.

He told me a little about himself, just small things. First his name – which on the Heath is a big step...“Why are you up here?” I asked him. “Well I can’t sleep, I have to come up here sometimes, so I’m up here.” “Well I’m the same,” I replied...I walked with him for five or six minutes, then gave him a hug. He said: “To get to King’s Cross I have to go back the way we’ve come.” I felt he wasn’t going to do that but go back to giving those men blow-jobs.

Why can’t those who aren’t here not believe that we who are can take responsible decisions about our sexuality? People have to take decisions for themselves. Even if he was throwing his life away, which is doubtful, it was a decision which he had made, no worse than going to war and dying for a belief.

Why are you doing this, Derek? I asked myself as I walked home...You shouldn’t have the stamina to do this. The answer was that I didn’t have the stamina but throwing my arms around him was an act of defiance that kept me alive. Some shy from this sort of contact, from giving affection to a stranger.

For him the act was no longer limited by choice. It didn’t matter who he loved. All those decisions people make about their partners – they’re acceptable, intelligent, bright – were all cast aside for something else. He was not making judgments. Where does judgment leave those who are excluded? This was a form of socialism, here was equality (*AYOR*, p. 27).

The blow-jobs given to strangers, the embrace, the offer of a last cigarette and a name: the scene is one of erotic exchange and fleeting contact, rather than any *violence* which might be expected in a scene in which five men surround another, more ‘gentle’ seeming man. Although Jarman briefly imagines taking this man home, he appreciates that such encounters mostly dissolve in the space of their creation. Or, that if the man were to be taken home, the goal of any erotic encounter is not an enduring relationship between the two bodies. He records this ephemerality elsewhere: 'a strange encounter: someone came up to me and said how pleased he was to see me out, he spent a night with me in the seventies. I asked where I had met him. "We met on the Heath and you took me home"'

(*Smiling*, p. 15). Bersani writes that cruising is a ‘sexual sociability’: ‘The danger with cruising is not that it reduces relations to promiscuous sex, but that the promiscuity may stop...degenerating into a “relationship” (2010). Bersani inverts the dangers often associated with cruising, instead highlighting the potentiality of promiscuity which is not simply erotic. According to Bersani, there is an *ethical* potentiality in the ‘non-invasive’ sociality of cruising:

In attempting to answer these questions, we would of course be elaborating a new ethics. Let’s call this an ecological ethics, one in which the subject, having willed its own lessness, can live less invasively in the world. If our psychic center can finally seem less seductive than our innumerable and imperfect reappearances outside, it should then seem not only imperative but natural to treat outside as we would a home (Bersani, 2010, p. 62).

The discovery of the ‘natural’ here is not simply to be outside and amongst nature, but also to scrutinize the constructedness of ideas of home and domesticity. In finding ‘nature’, Jarman is not simply admiring the greenness of the Heath and, ‘the openness to the clouds’,³⁴⁹ but also claiming the naturalness of men coming together in intimacy in public space. Degeneracy is not attached to gay men and their acts of intimacy, but is instead Bersani’s take on a normative, monogamous relationship. Suddenly, hetero, or homonormativity, becomes the ‘lesser-than’: the dangerous risk posed when out cruising. Cruising is an un-invasive kind of sociability, of encountering others without overly investing in the outcome of a relationship, or attempting to decipher the inner workings of those we meet or become attached to. In *Homos* (1995), Bersani posits this loose connectivity as ‘hominess’:

An anticomunal mode of connectedness we might all share, or a new way of coming together: that, and not assimilation into already constituted

³⁴⁹ Richard Webber, ed., *Section 4: South End Green to Golders Hill Park* (London: The Highgate Society, 2012), p. 22.

communities, should be the goal of any adventure in bringing out, and celebrating, “the homo” in all of us.³⁵⁰

Bersani claims that cruising can interrogate dominant relational modes and their moral categories, elaborating a new ethical vocabulary as it points to the conservatism found in notions of community; a tendency to limit the actors of a community to a basic sameness. He argues that cruising brings bodies together in ‘nameless, identity-free contact’ (2010, p. 61), offering a:

model for intimacies devoid of intimacy. It proposes that we move irresponsibly among other bodies...no longer owned by others, they also renounce self-ownership and agree to that loss of boundaries which will allow them to be, with us, shifting points of rest in a universal and mobile communication of being (p. 128).

Such encounters glimpse the dismissal of moral propriety and a cultural quickness to othering. It is a tentative elaboration of something ‘new’, which *might* emerge: an imagination of an alternative future.³⁵¹ Jarman and Bersani both acknowledge an ethical potential in this mode of connectedness: in the freedom to wander amongst strangers and to share encounters which were not mediated by essential identity categories, and in accepting the impossibility of ever fully glimpsing men met when out cruising. Both record cruising as a moment of meeting, but also one of missing: an excess which cannot be interpreted. Paradoxically, it can feel intimate but also alienating, given the inevitability of *missing* others encountered. There is a limit to the proximity we can gain to others. Bersani and Jarman accept that it is possible to find a closeness to a body if not a mind. Each locates the possibility of proximity to, and sensitive, sensate contact with, potentially very different others when cruising. In these spaces of ephemeral contact is the possibility of a better future,

³⁵⁰ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 10.

³⁵¹ Wiegman has also noted how sex is, ‘an especially fertile ground for producing and contesting optimistic attachments to self-mastery or...sovereignty’. Wiegman, p. 221.

where urban bodies can shed the boundaries of ‘already constituted communities’ and generate instead a non-essential ‘communication of being.’

Cultural production opens up new ways of seeing and of being in the world, by elaborating these models of lessness. By wandering through the undergrowth of one of London’s queer hinterlands, Jarman confronted the *decomposition* of his corporeal self, through cruising not simply as a route to sexual gratification, but as a vital creative mode of *composition*; which expressed an interdependency of cruising, artistic practice, and corporeal contact – sexual or otherwise. In this way, I think, we can see how Jarman, along with queer writers such as Reed, expresses the ways in which art is bound up in the city; producing it, and produced by it.

In the long quote above, the man Jarman meets on the Heath performs Bersani’s homoness: ‘All those decisions people make about their partners...were all cast aside for something else. He was not making judgments.’ Such encounters might be fleeting or enduring; but crucially, for many, they are not *predicated* on an ideal outcome, or a coherent, unified self, and are thus alive to chance. Approaching strangers, the man casts aside judgments, embracing others and generating encounters between bodies that were less available elsewhere in the city’s public spaces. The woods are a productive site: offering freedom to meet strangers and remain strangers while ‘giving affection’, producing a strength of feeling which, for many, was unique to such spaces.³⁵² It is a making-do, and a making of something new, out of hostile conditions in which many queer people and PWAs found themselves living.

Researching queer archives has shown me that these meanings and uses are attested to in London’s queer print cultures which, despite their small audiences and minimal production costs, offered a vital mode of circulating/transmitting/extending queer culture through the city in the recent

³⁵² Alexis Bisticas, dir., *The Clearing* (1993). Bisticas explores the poetry of silently wandering through the Heath and encountering strangers. The camera follows the gaze of Jarman, who is cast in the film, as he wanders past various figures. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ohTjCIgs4w?> Accessed 10/11/2016.

past. For instance, in the 1980s queer magazine, *Men Cruising Men*, a reader who signs off a letter to the editor as ‘Leather guy’ writes:

I can escape to Hampstead Heath...to get away from the noise and the dark and impersonal groping look-a-like crowds... I have had a great time and have formed sexual relationships which have turned into good permanent friendships...I would suggest that the difference is between “cruising” and “social”. The commercial scene is geared towards cruising and so be it.³⁵³

Leather Guy regards the outdoors as more of a social space than cruise and fetish bars. Mediated by commerce, bar culture can be prohibitively expensive. Arguably, the pressure to spend in bars makes them spaces in which loitering is less of a tenable practice or freeing feeling. For Leather Guy, at least, woodland cruising offers contact that exceeds simple sex; a sociability leading to ‘permanent’ friendships, and a ‘network’ that contrasts with the fleeting contacts of the commercial scene. Indeed, cruising is something that he associates less with a ‘cruising ground’ than with commercial gay spaces. This perspective reverses the stereotype of cruising grounds as simply spaces for the procuring of random sexual encounters (and queer bars as utopic sites of community), instead serving as a social space, one of ‘escape’ where ‘happy relationships’ can be made.³⁵⁴

Jarman also prefers encounters here to those with the ‘disco clones’ of ‘middle-class fairyland...their minds...safely locked in the closet’ (*Smiling*, p. 237). Jarman is drawing a distinction here between the supposedly natural space of the Heath and the culturally constructed space of the ‘disco.’ Yet he overlooks how these sites share surprising similarities. If the attraction of the Heath is the silent non-essentialism of cruising, then it is another form of the sameness that is found in bars, where the ‘disco-clones’ who perform a reductive, standardized set of gay ‘types’, often signified by dress and physiology,³⁵⁵ also resist overly

³⁵³ *Men Cruising Men*, Volume 6, Readers page, p. 20. Hall Carpenter Archives, Journals/21G.

³⁵⁴ I acknowledge the limits of these spaces concerning diversity and inclusion.

³⁵⁵ Bear, daddy, twink, sub, dom, leather-queen, pup, etc.

investing in the ‘individual’ subjectivity of the men they are surrounded by. The same curated gay types can be found in bars or on the Heath, and both spaces often reduce their actors to physical exteriors to be cruised.³⁵⁶

Jarman notes the risk to these ‘official’ spaces of queer sociability in this moment, citing a Tory campaign to legislate against ‘gay pubs and clubs’,³⁵⁷ and noting the closure of various other venues such as London’s Lesbian and Gay Centre in 1992 (*Smiling*, p. 273). In moments when queer spaces are ever at-risk in the city, whether in the 1990s or now, it is productive to move beyond their confines and consider the possibilities for kinship and affective encounter offered by public spaces which are unstructured by logics of profit. And to realize the potentiality of other spaces which include, but are not limited to, sex:

What was so exciting was meeting new people with new ideas while Heterosoc felt that all we were doing was putting cocks in each others’ mouths. Before those cocks got into our mouths we were exchanging ideas (*AYOR*, p. 65).

Jarman asserts the varied generative functions of the Heath for cruisers. There is a knowledge production here as well as an erotic fulfillment. Excitement is generated by the possibility of meeting strangers and exchanging and generating ideas outside of a context structured by or saturated with heteronorms, without prior knowledge of who might be met or what acts might be witnessed. Many cruisers do not engage in sex, yet the *possibility* of intimacy and exchange is powerful. Rather than the fulfillment of a sex act, simply being in a space which allows sex to occur, without, for the most part, recrimination, violence, or stigma, engenders powerful affective responses. Bodies can wander freely, queerly, creating a permeable space which does not relegate intimacy to a private, invisible, domestic setting. This produces *feelings*, of ‘belonging, comfort’ and other senses of homeliness. Across the ‘invisible border’, the heart beats faster and ‘the world seems a better place’ (*AYOR*, p. 84). Indeed, these

³⁵⁶ On ‘sameness’ in queer encounters, see Ben Nichols, “Reductive: John Rechy, Queer Theory, and the Idea of Limitation”, *GLQ*, 22:3, 2016.

³⁵⁷ *Capital Gay*, 29/11/85, quoted in, *AYOR*, p. 101

acts, Jarman claims, ‘kept me alive’: acts of defiance that resist assimilation into normative modes of relationship imposed elsewhere, and the arbitration of zones where intimacy is outlawed. I would not be so optimistic to argue that those on the Heath all shared a utopic degree of openness to alterity. Queer-bashers and police aside, the space is also subject to any prejudices that cruisers may have, and so the possibilities of abandon, welcome, intimidation or rejection are in permanent flux. It isn’t possible or productive to speculate here on how convivial or cosmopolitan these men were, from the distance of several decades and with little knowledge of their perspectives. As with many liminal practices, testimony is rarely recorded, and speculation from a distance risks bowdlerizing the nuances of liminal, lived experience which cannot be recaptured. There is an inevitable ephemerality to the Heath as cruising ground; and in the chance meetings of these men, multiple, unreadable experiences of the space are being had at any one time; an affective collage created as solitary figures enter the woodland and meet, merge or wander through un-readable, inherently permeable space. What emerges here is the production of a queer home, one where actors change, and one which is always becoming. The plural functions of the Heath also emerge; an intellectually, socially, and affectively generative potential, one which furnishes many queer lives with meaning.

Landscaping the Heath

Where built structures existed on the Heath, the Corporation of London could intervene and reorganize space to curtail homosociality; including at the men’s bathing ponds, where the removal of the naked sunbathing area was planned (and protested) in the early 1990s. But the woodland of the cruising area of the West Heath lacked such opportunities for architectural manipulation as closing toilets or erecting fences. In an effort to regulate the behavior of bodies here, the Corporation took to tree felling to increase visibility and surveillance

opportunities, and to instill a fear of exposure in cruisers as a deterrent.³⁵⁸ Jarman writes:

25/7/92

came back to write up this diary, heavy with sleep as last night I went up to the Heath, where there has been another massacre of holly bushes by the moral guardians. It's sad to see the place raped by the city which now condemns the old trees to the bonfire if people make love under their branches (*Smiling*, p. 177).

This brief entry emphasizes several things. First of all, Jarman is exhausted from a night spent outdoors, several miles from his Soho flat. Yet he identifies the felt urgency of the will to inscribe here. His reason for returning home, here, is specifically to 'write up this diary'; to record his experience, and to *respond* to the inequities he sees in the reorganization of the landscape. Jarman emphasizes the gulf between these conflicting imaginaries of the Corporation and the cruiser, emphasizing the violence of the Corporation's tactics as 'massacre' and 'rape', in contrast to the 'making love' of those seeking intimacy here. There is also a suggestion of contamination in the razing and symbolic cleansing of a sexualized space through burning. The Corporation of London claimed to be, 'thin[ning] out trees and scrub to return the Heath to its appearance in the 18th and 19th centuries', nostalgizing Victorian models of public parks, and their connotations of respectable, orderly – as well as heavily gendered, classed and racialized – urban leisure and public courtship.³⁵⁹ As we have already seen, the Heath is a heritized space, constructed over centuries through canonical literary representation, which have inscribed a narrative of a bucolic communal space for all Londoners. The Corporation's strategy nostalgically invoked this long history of the Heath's construction, and regeneration, as a pastoral space for the leisure

³⁵⁸ Helen Nowicka, "Heath tree felling "part of gay purge"", *Independent*, 26/7/94.

³⁵⁹ Helen Nowicka, "Woodman, spare that tree", *Independent*, 7/10/94.

and pleasure of a coherent, unified community, with the promiscuous queer constructed as a perversion of this original, utopic function.³⁶⁰

This urban sanitization involved removing organic elements in order to leave open space, ‘thinning out’ the opportunities for bodies to come together under the concealment of the trees and *scrub*. These are paradoxical scenes of urban waste, rather than familiar manifestations of urban decay such as graffiti, derelict buildings, fly tipping on streets, or uncollected refuse. Unlike the ruined scenes of urban late capitalism, there is an organic cycle of decay and regeneration on the Heath, one which might be allowed to continue perpetually without human effort. Rather than built ruination, it is the behavior of those who visit the space that threatens to plunge it into degradation, whether the perceived depravity of cruisers, or the hacking away at nature by the City.

Plans to remove trees were accompanied by aggressive warden patrols, including one in which queer activist Peter Tatchell was attacked by a keeper’s dog and ‘threatened with arrest for inciting public disorder.’³⁶¹ Interviewed in the *Independent*, Tatchell recalls dozens of complaints against men who were told to leave the Heath because their presence ‘was not conducive to the public good’, and cites the safety implications of casting queers from the Heath: ‘they will go somewhere else, but it may not be so easy to locate them to hand out safer sex advice and condoms as currently happens with great effectiveness on West Heath’ (Nowicka, 7/10/94).

Urban bodies are regulated at all turns in everyday life by the architecture of heteronormativity and the performance of gender, including in London’s supposedly freeing green spaces. Same-sex intimacy has historically been regarded as an *intrusion* upon these mainstream publics, disrupting fragile signifiers of respectability and proper citizenry, and making visible what is often regarded as gross, indecent, or perverse. Although material borders do not demarcate the queer space of the Heath, its permissiveness is localized, fragile,

³⁶⁰ The most famous early paintings of the Heath are Constable’s landscapes which idealize the pastoral qualities of this space *apart* from the city.

³⁶¹ Lucy Johnston, “Gays Clash with police”, *Big Issue*, 2/8/94.

and as a cruising ground stages the two versions of closeting identified by Sedgwick: the closet built around queers by society, and the one that we construct for ourselves, often to avoid violence (Sedgwick, 1990).

In 1994, Chief Inspector Graeme Batt, of the Metropolitan Police's Hampstead division, said: 'We police the Heath as we would any other area, if we get called to an incident we go',³⁶² and Peter Rigby, chairman of the Corporation of London's Hampstead Heath management committee, stated: 'Acts of gross indecency which may or may not take place in certain places that could cause an affront or offence have to be dealt with.'³⁶³ Rigby's assessment reveals how gross indecency remained a crime used against queer men throughout the twentieth-century, and how the act of causing 'offence' or 'affront' to any member of the public could lead to imprisonment and exposure.

Jarman railed publicly and on the page against the hypocritical censure of public expressions of same-sex feeling. Following a rally with the activist group "Outrage!", Jarman wrote: 'Heterosoc fuck in public on any hot day in Hyde Park near-naked without an eyebrow raised' (*AYOR*, p. 23). Indeed, heterosexual acts are ubiquitous in the city's leisure landscapes, often celebrated rather than concealed. Such behavior is not assumed to outrage but rather to *produce* public decency, instead of the revulsion or disease engendered by queerness. One of the simplest routes to social acceptance is the performance of heteronorms, which might include wearing wedding rings, describing your weekend to colleagues, holding the hand of somebody who presents as the opposite sex, or walking a pushchair through Hampstead Heath.

Jarman mourned the changes to the Heath – the thinning of the landscape - in his diaries:

There are to be no lovers' lanes unless they are straight. Heterosoc is cutting down the trees...Heterosoc, if it can't destroy you, will destroy nature.

³⁶² Quoted in, Helen Nowicka, 'Heath tree felling part of "gay purge"', *Independent*, 26/7/94.

³⁶³ Helen Nowicka, 'Heath tree felling part of "gay purge"', *Independent*, 26/7/94.

They've cut down the glades of holly and cleared the undergrowth in Hampstead so that spring looks like a desert.

Friday 5th July 1991...Unable to sleep, I spent most of the night on the Heath, talking to a charming silver-haired man about the past and the razoring that the city has performed here, all the undergrowth burned. The Heath that used to belong to the GLC and was unkempt and romantic; now, under the force of finance, it has received a banker's barbering (*Smiling*, p. 30)

Jarman here equates the Corporation of London, which owns the Heath land, with London's square mile of male-dominated financial institutions and livery companies. He conjures the traditional masculine space of the barbershop, emphasizing the taming influence on the 'unkempt' Heath of the Greater London Council's era. For Jarman, the Heath was a site of natural beauty, and the sex acts which he enjoyed here were a part of this beauty:

Location is the key to respectability, it's like cocaine in the boardroom and the needle of the streets. But for those who know, the alfresco fuck is the original fuck. Didn't the Garden of Eden come before the house that hid our nakedness? Sex on the Heath is an idyll pre-fall (*Modern Nature*, p. 84).

Jarman once again invokes the language of the closet here as the 'house' that hides nudity. Jarman returns to images of private domestic architecture throughout: 'nothing goes on on the Heath that doesn't go on behind net curtains' (p. 84). We can connect the queer texts discussed across this thesis so far in the ways in which they underscore the tensions (re)produced by the *Sexual Offences Act 1967*: its illogical effort to privatize intimacy, and the ease with which public expressions of male-male intimacy can be framed as criminal. Both the Heath and the domestic interior are spaces where sex occur yet the house *conceals* nakedness, and comes after the mythic 'Garden of Eden.' Here, the Heath is figured as utopia or heterotopia, the queer garden is, 'an idyll pre-fall', and outdoor sex 'is the original fuck', overturning the myopia of the 1967 Act. Sex in public is political because it makes visible the *ordinariness* of same-sex desire. The natural aesthetic of the Heath is an opportunity for Jarman to imagine

himself fucking in an ancient past, and to place himself as a queer body in a natural landscape, queering dominant imaginaries of the landscape of Hampstead Heath:

Nature abhors Heterosoc.

The wounded glades are healing.

Nature is Queer (*AYOR*, p. 23).

Rather than simply utopian, however, all of this is written against a backdrop of homophobic violence, and an awareness that this idyll was an ephemeral one vulnerable to persecution. The quietude and conviviality of the Heath, and its relative freedom from stigma, were threatened by increased police attention, civic reorganization of the landscape, and violence. Jarman records being attacked by a gang: 'I stumbled to the station, covered in blood but I was still alive' (*AYOR*, p.113). A common reaction to such violence can be a retreat to the safety of the domestic interior, or a 'safe' public space. Yet Jarman's diaries illuminate the violences commonly visited upon queer bodies in the time of AIDS across the city. And, rather than retreating to the domestic, he continues to visit the Heath:

Deep orange moon full and heavy in a sultry sky. 10.30, I take a deep breath, a double vodka and a taxi to 'The Heath', stop outside Jack Straw's Castle and walk down through the car park...It's here that danger lurks – on the fringes. The dark woodlands seem by comparison safe and friendly. Do the gangs of queerbashers who haunt the mind lie in wait, thwarted and perverted guardians of propriety – or are they just in the imagination? This year's stories flash past. Julian says he was hemmed in this car park by a gang, armed with scaffolding poles, who drove him down shouting abuse; he narrowly escaped being hurt. Someone was murdered here last year (*Modern Nature*, p. 83).

Both cruiser and queer-basher utilize the landscape to carry out their crimes invisibly.³⁶⁴ On these ‘fringes’, Jarman feels a sense of threat. Rendered blind in the darkness, news headlines ‘flash past’ as mental images, lingering as cumulated memories after their publication, structuring imaginaries, and ‘haunt[ing] the mind’ with images of the ‘perverted’ gangs who enforce their visions of ‘propriety’ through violence. But, as we have seen, the Heath also gave Jarman a sense of home, and in the following section, I want to extend this idea, exploring the ways in which the Heath can also be framed as a queer garden.

Queering Derek Jarman’s garden

My garden is a memorial, each circular bed and dial a true lover’s knot
(*Modern Nature*, p. 55).

So far I have explored the ways of dwelling in this space, and the forms of relation this permits and engenders. I want to spend some time now looking at the figuration of the Heath *itself*, and in framing the Heath as a queer garden.

Richard Maguire has discussed the pastoral history of this space, and David Alderson and Linda Anderson have noted the ‘carnavalesque pastoral kinship’ of the Heath for Jarman.³⁶⁵ However, aside from these brief critical glimpses, the Heath has been minimized in Jarman discourse. Yet Jarman’s Dungeness garden, where he spent much of his later years gardening and writing in a fisherman’s cottage along the Kent coast, has featured prominently in popular and critical

³⁶⁴ “Heath Gay Attacks”, *Camden New Journal*, 10/10/82. London Gay and Lesbian News Media Archive. This article reports a savage beating of three men, as well as arrests for gross indecency, on one night.

³⁶⁵ Richard Maguire, *Old Taxi Receipts to Hampstead*, Unpublished talk, <www.mixcloud.com/UCLurbanlab/derek-jarman-sites-and-spaces-richard-maguire-old-taxi-riecepts-to-hampstead/> 2014, accessed 21/8/2016; David Alderson and Linda Anderson eds., *Territories of desire in queer culture: Refiguring contemporary boundaries* (Glasgow: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 58.

discussions.³⁶⁶ Chris Stayaert's recent article usefully points to the heterotopic aspects of gardening for Jarman at Dungeness,³⁶⁷ and Cook explores how Jarman queered this Kent cottage (2014). Yet both studies, although positing queer potential, do so from within the material borders of the domestic home and garden. A 2014 *Guardian* feature describes how, 'He sought refuge in his garden, but chose a setting with no boundaries, where everything is an edge: shingle, sea, sun, wind all shifting and changing.'³⁶⁸ Although the aesthetics of Jarman's seaside home imply wilderness, as a traditional domestic setting it remained an enclosed architectural form.³⁶⁹ I want to move away from this emphasis on a fixed site towards imagining a queerer sort of garden, which pulls at the boundaries of the garden itself. If the home and garden are to be queered, surely their fixed borders must have the potential to disappear? If Jarman indeed sought out the 'shifting' of nature at Dungeness, the Heath deserves renewed attention.

Much press coverage of Jarman after his disclosure of seropositivity narrated a retreat from the city to the garden of Dungeness.³⁷⁰ What is striking is how these descriptions are devoid of any corporeal intimacy. Journalist John McEwan wrote in an article titled, "Dismal, corrupt and childish", how Jarman's 'public persona was of a sex monster'.³⁷¹ Yet McEwan finds a redemptive potential in, 'his...obvious love of landscape...which finally found expression in the modest garden he grew outside his hut on the shingle at Dungeness.' There is a sense

³⁶⁶ Jim Ellis, *Derek Jarman's Angelic Conversations* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), includes a chapter on the Dungeness garden and time.

³⁶⁷ Chris Stayaert, (2010) "Queering space: heterotopic life in Derek Jarman's garden", in *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 17, pp. 46 – 68.

³⁶⁸ Alys Fowler, "Planting on the edge in Derek Jarman's garden", *Guardian*, 24/09/2014.

³⁶⁹ Traditionally, gardens have embedded narratives of nation, gender, heterosexuality and religion. The Garden of England extends its borders to draw citizens into a nationalist narrative and cultivate imagined communities through the landscape. The Eden myth has worked over time to naturalize heterosexual sex, while the normative use of the family home and garden, and the proscription of same-sex intimacy in public spaces, have limited opportunities for expressions of queerness. The garden can be a disciplining space of awkward family gatherings or casual surveillance of neighbours over fences or through windows.

³⁷⁰ Lynn Barber, "Flourishing in the shadow of death", *Independent*, 4/8/91.

³⁷¹ John McEwan, "Dismal, corrupt and childish", *Sunday Telegraph*, 19/5/96.

here of the landscape artist toiling away his last days in the soil, and a maturation of the once ‘dismal, corrupt and childish’ public monster, who has ‘finally’ overcome his immature anti-establishment polemic and promiscuity. The message here: queerness belongs to the realm of the sexual, which is also the fixation of the trivial, and distracts the serious artist.

This criticism and popular writing has centered Dungeness in the official memory and narrative of the artist, inscribing geographical boundaries and normative distinctions between public and private that Jarman rejected in quotidian cruising. This narrowed focus has recuperated Jarman into official, palatable memory; writing a desexualized biography which privatizes sexuality and intimacy within the domestic home (a move that Jarman was deeply critical of), and weeding queerness from Jarman’s legacy. The garden has received more critical attention from mainstream media because it is a desexualized zone attached to a domestic dwelling: a privatized interior space (the proper zone of intimacy), with a beautifully cultivated and photogenic garden.

Dungeness was indeed a site of refuge for Jarman, but the queer garden is *permeable*, metaphysical, and unravels the distinction between public and private spaces that much criticism has inscribed. The ruins of the West Heath, a space derided as wasteland because of the queer bodies that inhabited it, were a part of this queer garden. By turning from the Dungeness cottage to Hampstead Heath, promiscuity comes back into focus as something vital to discussions of Jarman’s work. As men wandered through the woodland, carving out paths and making use of the land, their clandestine creativity was a queer form of gardening, an intimate engagement with nature, cultivating a space of freedom and expression. This space was demarcated less by material borders than by the presence of bodies. A porous space with constantly fluctuating and moving borders, alterable by the shifting of bodies which invested the space with affective potential as they moved between the trees. As George Chauncey writes:

Analyzing the role of the production and contestation of queer space in the everyday life of gay men with a high degree of historical specificity also has implications for the theorization of urban space in general. Most importantly,

it demonstrates the degree to which the boundaries between spaces defined as “public” and “private” are socially constructed, contingent, and contested.³⁷²

By turning attention to the diaries and cruising, Jarman’s homes and gardens are defamiliarized, and reimagined. This enables the city – and its paths and borders – to be retheorized, as Chauncey suggests. Hampstead has long been mythologized as a pastoral space, the inspiration for Romantic artists. But rather than a *natural*, unchanging landscape, this site, particularly in the context of LGBT history and rights, is a contested space, and also a generative space. The earlier sections of this chapter and thesis throw into relief the hostilities of London in the time of AIDS, demonstrating how gay life in London in the late twentieth-century was not simply a case of escaping the suburbs and finding the centre, but was a more contingent experience. Against a backdrop of aggressive homophobia, Jarman created gardens in woods or fields, in the beautiful arrangement of bodies in a natural setting: a multiplicity of forms, acts, affects. These gardens were spaces of enjoyment, making, and tactility. They deployed imaginative and creative play as a reaction to the sterility of domesticity and the architectural closeting of same-sex desire.³⁷³ What emerges here is the possibility of making a home anywhere. Jarman used space in clandestine ways throughout his life, carving out garden spaces as an expression of queerness. He recalls in his diaries, for instance, how as an adolescent:

The violet held a secret. Along the hedgerow that ran down to the cliffs at Hordle deep purple violets grew – perhaps no more than a dozen plants... Day after day I returned from the dull regimental existence of an English boarding school to my secret garden – the first of many that blossomed in my dreams. It was here that I brought him, sworn to secrecy, and then watched him slip out of his grey flannel suit and lie naked in the spring sunlight. Here our hands

³⁷² George Chauncey, “ ‘Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public’: Gay Uses of the Streets.” In *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, edited by Joel Sanders, pp. 224–67, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p. 225.

³⁷³ I am not suggesting that cruising spaces are not highly gendered, but rather that the performances of gender in cruising spaces are often playfully, ironically, or self-consciously performed, exaggerated, produced and subverted; more so than in many heteronormative contexts.

first touched; then I pulled down my trousers and lay beside him...Term ended. I bought myself violets from the florist's and put them by my bedside. My grandmother disapproved of flowers in the bedroom, said they corrupted the air. Violets, she said, were the flower of death. But the violet, I discovered, was third in the trinity of symbolic flowers of purity...A new orchard and garden was mine. That summer, when the wheat had grown waist high, we carved a secret path from the violet grove into the centre of the field, and lay there...rubbing ourselves all over each other's bronzed and salty bodies, such was our happy garden state (*Modern Nature*, p. 38).

This clandestine garden of Jarman's adolescence becomes a locus of queer expression, a tangible space where he brings his lover. The violets are a signifier of queerness, flowering in the writer's 'new orchard'. His grandmother's disapproval of the 'corrupting' violets evokes the association of flowers with feminizing aestheticism, conjuring the decadent eroticism of Baudelaire's flowers of evil.³⁷⁴ These flowers hold the secret of carnal knowledge Jarman's disapproving grandmother seeks to stifle. For the young Jarman, and for the reader who is privileged here with access to his recollections of same-sex contact, they are a vibrant memento of sexual awakening, intimacy and kinship. This garden imagery stresses the naturalness of same-sex desire, inverting the heteronormative classification of the queer as the pervert out-of-nature, and the equation of male same-sex sex with death at the time of the diaries' publication. Rather than equating the violets with death, Jarman associates them with paradise and innocence, a 'garden state.' This queer Eden forms a closet for 'unspoiled' same-sex desire, shielded from prying, condemning eyes. The progression of the seasons frames his blossoming sexuality. Spring turns to summer, bringing images of regeneration: blossom, sunlight, purity. The earth is figured as a source of new life, beauty, and sustenance: of the 'orchard', abundant wheat fields, and the florist's sale of the violets, while the 'Carving' of the wheat field by the two boys, bodies 'bronzed and salty', evokes a homosocial, pastoral image of toil in English fields, of vitality and productivity.

³⁷⁴ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal and other poems of Charles Baudelaire*, Francis Duke, trans. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961).

This 'garden state' is spatial and affective, psychic and geographic. The cliffside field is more permissive than the environs of the family home where Jarman is routinely mocked by his father: 'Don't be such a pansy, Derek.' (*Modern Nature*, p. 29), or the public school where he experiences humiliation and punishment, and where he, 'distanced [himself] from the authorities. I wasn't ducking, I just found it impossible to join in. I stood aside, I formed my own garden.' The making of a garden is the cleaving of a space in everyday life apart from the derision of 'Heterosoc.' The 'safe-house' is not the family home but a space constructed elsewhere. This could be geographic, in escaping to the corn field or cruising the Heath, but it was also an imaginative process: the boy looking at the violets in his bedroom and thinking of his lover, or later, working through his displacement and alienation by producing queer spaces in his films and texts. Filmmaking, writing, cruising: all are forms of home-making and dwelling.

In the last years of Jarman's life, journalists and tourists flocked to Dungeness to concretize the garden as an official space of memorial, recuperating a narrative of the man whose work had denied narrative coherence: 'I'm in the arena, the crowds are watching. My death is an entertaining statistic' (*AYOR*, p. 112). Such attention seemed to be willing Jarman's death: accelerated mortality the only aspect of a gay man that the media were eager to indulge. Fans arrived unannounced, or posted letters daily, while journalists brought photographers, and passersby opened the gate and entered without permission. The scene was one of siege, with Jarman, 'marked out as a public person with HIV' (*AYOR*, p. 116), facing a struggle of 'how to survive as a reasonably intact human being undamaged by popular preconceptions and misconceptions' (*AYOR*, p. 121).

Although a public figure, Jarman could access anonymity and reprieve on the Heath. If recognized, he would often be left to wander alone: 'I don't have to talk—they know I'm the filmmaker' (*AYOR*, p.25), affording a greater freedom to move through public space than he found elsewhere in the city:

After a week's absence I have visited the Heath several times recently, it is always exciting and joyous. The deep silence, the cool night air, the pools of

moonlight and stars, the great oaks and beeches – all old friends. People laughing and shouting, like a midnight swim...

...The noise became too loud and, with blessed relief, I went up to the Heath and sat on a tree and watched the moon and the jets crossing and recrossing the clouds. It was here that calm prevailed in the ABC of HIV. (*AYOR*, p. 96).

Again, the uses of the woods extend beyond sex, the natural elements becoming ‘old friends’, and the sound of others is likened to a midnight swim: the experience of being embraced by one’s surroundings, the pulse quickened and body wakened by cold water. But this noise is also experienced differently to the congestion of the inner city: the calming corporeal utterances heard from between the trees. Jarman ‘shut [his] physical self like a clam...I became frightened of myself, I was potentially lethal and all the advice I got was a muddle’ (*AYOR*, p. 95). Rendered ‘lethal’ and suffering the day-to-day ‘pain of social ostracism’ (*AYOR*, p. 113), the cruising ground engenders proximity, contact, intimacy, while affording a ‘cherished anonymity’. These moments are akin to Jarman’s cruising of Fire Island in the (pre-AIDS) 1970s, where, ‘The silence and deep satisfaction of being alone attracted me as much as the possibility of a chance encounter’ (*AYOR*, p. 80). On the fringes of the inner city, in a scene of quietude and beauty, 1970s London, perhaps, does not seem so far away for Jarman. The night sky is interrupted by busy flight paths, and the tree he sits on grows on land managed by the Corporation of London. Nonetheless, it is a vital, alluring space, a refuge in a chaotic city, attested to by the frequency of diary entries which record visits that would last through the night: ‘Pushed to the fringes, our world existed in the twilight of Heterosoc’ (*AYOR*, p. 66). This garden offered imaginative and physical play: a psychic and geographic space in amongst chaos. Many descriptions illustrate small acts of care, exchange and conviviality, outside of more formalized spatio-temporal urban paths and routines elsewhere in the city. One cruiser says:

I’ve lived near the Heath for a year or two and I often come down, usually very early in the morning before I go to work. There’s always some last

person here, usually they're elderly and cold and I brew up some coffee and bring it down for them in a flask (*AYOR*, p. 127).

This is a semi-ritualized but also ephemeral form of kinship, loosely drawing bodies together in transient intimacy, allowing some of the rigid performances demanded elsewhere in daily life to dissolve. Jarman's health was compromised by his seropositivity and many diary entries detail hospital visits, and the assault on his body of various medications. Yet he continued to visit this space as a ritual: 'Sunday 29th September 1991, Went to the Heath in the pouring rain and spent the night talking to an old friend about the past. Walked back at about three in the morning. The cold has set in.' (*Smiling*, p. 53). These recurrent visits point to the affective, social and cultural value of this space:

All the Cains and Abels you could wish for are out on a hot night, the may blossom scents the night air and the bushes glimmer like phosphorescent counterpane in the indigo sky. Under the great beeches some boys with gypsy faces have lit a fire, which they stoke sending some sparks flying, faces flushed with the heat. In the dark for a brief moment age, class, wealth, all the barriers are down. An illusion you say, I know but what a sweet one...Conversations are brief, though I have talked the night away, here it's quiet, none of the decibels that have invaded every other public space to drown a conversation. (*Smiling*, p. 84).

Jarman addresses the reader here, pre-empting skepticism of his claims for the Heath as a potentially democratizing space, one which can disturb class differences. He acknowledges that this is indeed illusory, arising from a tendency to nostalgize the pseudo-natural space of the Heath. He is aware of its utopic limits. To walk out in public after dark and pick up a casual sexual contact is usually a privilege reserved for cis-gendered white men.³⁷⁵ Cruising grounds are not without discrimination, which emerges and fades according to whoever

³⁷⁵ A man's effeminacy or *perceived* homosexuality would nonetheless put him at high risk of violence from homophobes or police harassment, on the Heath and elsewhere. Jarman acknowledges the exclusion of women from these spaces, recalling a conversation with a friend: 'Sarah said she wished there was a cruising park for women like Hampstead Heath', *Smiling*, p. 92.

wanders through. Some might face repetitious rejection or stigma. And to nostalgize the natural aspects of the Heath risks overlooking its regular maintenance by day as public space, with litter-picking staff, designated pathways, a calendar of events and printed pamphlets for London's leisure-makers. But the chance nature of the space brings people together at random and can therefore yield surprising unions: 'Power, privilege, even good looks, certainly money, disappeared in that dark' (p. 65).

After-dark fucking here offers imaginative freedom and a sense of how men might have fucked through the ages: in nature, rather than in the backrooms or bedrooms of late twentieth-century London (he likens one man he meets on the Heath to his fictional Edward II). On the Heath, as Jarman turns back to glance at a stranger, he also looks back in time. In the above passage, Adam and Eve are replaced with their mythical offspring and pastoral brothers, Cain the farmer and Abel the shepherd (this same-sex metaphor also suggests two criminals judged by a Christian God). The brothers have become lovers, and the 'hot night' has dispensed with toil on the land by Corporation of London employees who empty bins of waste, tidy borders, and neaten undergrowth. Instead, the 'boys with gypsy faces' who gather around the fire are queer, peripatetic wanderers. But these figures expose Jarman's illusion that 'the barriers are down'. Rather than dismantling 'age, class, wealth', Jarman inscribes fantasies of working-class rough-trade onto these men with 'gypsy faces', inscribing their bodies with fetishistic racial and class differences. The indices of identity are drawn onto these illuminated figures by the fantasizing Jarman, producing a 'sweet' illusion in the firelight. Indeed, the space is one for playing with types and fetishes, with a 'sanctuary' of leatherboys further down the hill, eroticizing masculine/feminine, sadist/masochist, master/slave. Jarman's Heath is *not* a queer utopia. It is a space where identities are constructed as well as dismantled. This moment stages the utopic limits of the Heath, which are set by the imaginations of those who wander through: in this instance Jarman, who draws upon classed and racialized identity categories to playfully enhance his fetishistic wandering. The Heath is not a site where identity falls away. Nonetheless, the ways in which it is used by gay men – often silently and anonymously – offer a

space in which many feel that they do not have to perform aspects or rituals of identity that might be demanded elsewhere in daily life.

This imaginative play across historical time in the diaries invites a comparison between Jarman's cruising, his writing and his film work; all of which traversed historical boundaries. Of course, nostalgizing this landscape risks indulging the conservatism of the pastoral mode, its tendency to overlook the often exploitative labour conditions that have produced landscapes in their apparently bucolic form.³⁷⁶ Shuttleton notes the regressive risks of subscribing to a gay pastoral mode: 'If we are to celebrate a homosexual pastoral tradition we need to be alert to how, in uncritically invoking past representations, we also run the risk of remaining trapped within other repressive technologies of privilege, privatization and exclusion.'³⁷⁷ These trappings are many. For instance, wandering the Heath and talking to men, I have been warned against rendering the cruising ground in overly positive terms by men who lament their felt need to retreat from more visible and public urban spaces to the woods, in order to explore their sexual desires. The Heath was, for many, an ambivalent space as much as it was one of potentiality. Nonetheless, the landscape of the Heath offered Jarman escape – however fleeting - from the historical specificity of the city and its visible location in modernity. Through psycho-geographic wandering and sex acts, Jarman cultivated a sense of queerness that transcended historical time: 'An orgasm joins you to the past. Its timelessness becomes the brotherhood; the brethren are lovers; they extend the family' (*AYOR*, p. 31). Jarman's queer engagement with gardens facilitated a mode of passing out of quotidian ritual into another realm, unravelling the fixity of routinized space and time:

The gardener digs in another time, without past or future, beginning or end. A time that does not cleave the day with rush hours, lunch breaks, the last bus home. As you walk the garden you pass into this time – the moment of

³⁷⁶ See, Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Paladin, 1975), p. 110. For instance, in John Constable's bucolic landscapes of Hampstead Heath.

³⁷⁷ David Shuttleton, "The queer politics of gay pastoral" in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representation Beyond the Metropolis* (King's Lynn: Routledge, 2000), pp. 125-146, p. 143.

entering can never be remembered. Around you the landscape lies transfigured (*Modern Nature*, p. 30).

This transfiguration of the landscape implies movement beyond contained space, and extrication from normative, routinized modes of passing time. Gardening and cruising imply mobility and a corporeal manipulation of the landscape. These modes of escape afford time and space to work through psychologically demanding and traumatic circumstances, and offer powerful affective experiences. Gardening and cruising are alike in their queering of time. The queer garden is a dynamic space of conviviality and kinship amongst strangers - its beauty in part created by the bodies wandering through it - rather than a private, walled, domesticated space. Indeed, a heath is defined as: 'Open uncultivated ground; an extensive tract of waste land; a wilderness'.³⁷⁸

I have been concerned throughout this thesis with spaces that are deemed ruined or wasteful, the unproductive sites of late capitalist London that are presented as decayed in order to promote their regeneration, such as Docklands and Soho. Heath spaces are 'waste land', uncultivated 'wilderness'. Such terms suggest a lack: of interest, purpose or use. Yet it was the queer *bodies* in this space, rather than the land itself, that led to its characterization in this moment as a wasteland calling out for reclamation. In amongst the designated paths and carefully maintained wilds of Hampstead Heath, managed by the Corporation of London, the queer cruising ground of the West Heath, behind the Jack Straw's Castle pub, was the wasteland within the wasteland. However, a turn to Jarman's diaries reveals the contingencies of this space. The Heath is not a heterotopia, for it is not strictly bordered and cruising is a permeable practice. Or a utopia, for the space has limits and was experienced ambivalently by many. And neither is it an uncomplicated space of community: a conservative ideal which overlooks the contingencies of cruising the Heath, the intersectional experiences of those who went there, and the, 'inestimable value of sex as – at least in certain of its ineradicable aspects – anticomunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, antiloving' (*Bersani*, 2010, p. 22). However, what Jarman's writing of this space shows is its

³⁷⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, "Heath. N" *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 02/06/2018.

function as a site of growth and *(re)generation*, rather than a decaying repository of urban detritus.³⁷⁹ This type of generation is one which does not ignore negativity, privilege, or power, as it cultivates sociability, conviviality, eroticism, creativity, and contact between queer bodies and lives. The Heath, and Jarman's writing of the Heath, was generative, but avoided logics of capitalist accumulation, or the heteropatriarchal regeneration of the family. In locating this potential, I am not refuting recent conversations of queer negativity, or attempting to claim queerness as a good and assimilated force of production in the neoliberal present. Rather, I am locating value in those negative and condemned spaces and ambivalent acts (for Jarman and his contemporaries), and in their literary representations which are productive of a future queerness, for myself and other readers. This cultivation of affective ties which traverse space-time is an intangible but nonetheless vital aspect of the production of the queer city. This urban hinterland was one of the growth of feelings of home and kinship, a territory which, over time, became familiar: populated with strangers wandering and meeting and passing together in darkness.

Gardening is making dirt palatable, and rendering waste ground beautiful. Queer gardens look again at the dirt and reconsider what is waste, beyond the superficiality of the surface of flowers. As Jarman gathered waste from the shore and made sculptures with found objects at Dungeness, so he wandered through the Heath making connections with wasteful bodies and making use of dirt. Hampstead Heath was just as much a queer garden for Jarman as the small patch of earth surrounding his Dungeness cottage.

On a visit to Monet's Giverny garden shortly before his death, Jarman arrived too late and was denied entry by an 'American lady in a neat blue uniform' (*Kicking the Pricks*, p. 149). The visit was a disappointing experience – its materiality failing to live up to a prior image:

I've known the garden intimately in my dreams since as a child, mad on flowers, I saw a picture of irises in the blazing sun...I found a second-hand

³⁷⁹ There is a dual functioning here: the generative potential of the heath, and the generative potential of the text.

copy of a book *Monet's Garden*, published by *Country Life*. The second film I made was called *Monet's Garden* (p. 149).

This moment reveals an adolescent, metaphysical concoction of imaginary spaces, inspired by reading habits. Jarman has enjoyed wandering imaginatively through gardens long before he arrives at the proper place in Giverny. This quote elaborates the mixture of geographic, metaphysical, and textual sites to form new worlds. Rejecting the formalism of Monet's heritized, orderly garden, with its obtuse guard and regulated visiting hours, the young Jarman overcame spatial proscription through imaginative inventiveness. His advice to the reader: 'The magic garden, fatal to enter, don't go there 'cos it's fallen into the hands of demons...Just dream of it.' (p.151).

Resisting erasure

Jarman fought editorial judgments to retain mentions of cruising in the diaries: 'When I wrote *Modern Nature*, Shaun, who edited it, took out the pieces on Hampstead Heath; he said he thought it was a byway and it diverted from the book',³⁸⁰ and, 'every lawyer's query about *Modern Nature* was over sexuality' (*Smiling*, p. 19). Shaun's concerns around the Heath are described in spatial terms: the Heath is again framed as a site or *erring*: cruising the Heath becomes a deviation from the serious concerns of the artist. The editorial and legal anxieties about offending an imagined public betrays the 'secret' about sex uttered by Bersani: 'most people don't like it' (Bersani, p. 3). Indeed, Jarman described as 'pathetic' the, 'national inability to describe our sex lives...As I write my diary I'm struggling with Wittgenstein's almost blank biography' (*Smiling*, p. 161). Just as Jarman's *Wittgenstein* queered official biographies of the logician, so he

³⁸⁰ *AYOR*, p. 125. He experienced the same with the films. Jarman details the filming of *Sebastiane* (1976) and the battles with censors, straight actors and crew-members abandoning the set in disgust at the inclusion of an erection. And with the broadcasting of, *Edward II* (1991): 'The BBC wants the beginning of Edward II with the boys fucking recut' (*Smiling*, p. 13).

worked to retain the queerness of his own autobiography.³⁸¹ Jarman's writing of the ordinariness of fucking resists the 'frenzied epic of displacements in the discourse on sexuality and on AIDS', the 'refusal to speak frankly about gay sex' (Bersani, 2010, p. 28). These displacements occurred in mainstream media, but also in liberationist rhetoric in which sex acts and the body disappeared into discourse. Against this setting, Jarman writes the body of the PWA: an *autobiology*. He writes these passages back into the text against editorial advice, 'to open debate not close doors' (*AYOR*, p. 143), enlivening future political discussions, serving a reminder of activist history, and allowing future generations to read the queer topography of London's recent past. By cutting up interviews, he undertakes a rewriting and a re-representation of Jarman by Jarman, recalibrating his stance and defending his politics in response to his skewed presentation by interviewers; attesting to the generative potential of art as a mode of interrogating a narrow public discourse on AIDS - 'My art was an escape out of Heterosoc' (*AYOR*, p. 35) - and the uses of queer autobiographic writing in bringing forth these hidden layers of experience in the city, laying the foundations for London's queer regeneration.³⁸²

These aspects of the text also served as a loose map of the Heath, offering topographical indicators: Jack Straw's Castle pub, the roads leading to the West Heath, the car park, the section dedicated to leather-men, all indicating zones where contact was most concentrated. Those reading *At Your Own Risk* in 1992 would have been alerted to the risks of cruising the Heath, but may also have been guided there. The text may have inadvertently helped to solidify the association of this space with male deviancy, and may have provoked further policing and queer bashing. But it also had a tangible, topographical and immediate effect on the movements of queer bodies through the city, guiding them towards these kinship zones:

³⁸¹ Derek Jarman, dir., *Wittgenstein* (1993).

³⁸² For another example of autobiografiction which blurs the author's identity, see, Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (London: Papermac, 1995).

last night a young man in Hampstead clutching my books. He had come up to sit under the trees as his boyfriend had been diagnosed with HIV and was in hospital after a suicide attempt (*Smiling*, p. 92).

Cruising, reading, writing, are all modes of generating kinship. Both book and Heath offer a space of comfort and extrication from the harshness of routines elsewhere. A sympathetic voice is found in the text but may also be met in the woods. The young man is not solely seeking sex, but chooses a space of queerness in which to read Jarman's books. Reading them elsewhere could have provoked a hostile reaction from a passerby, whereas on the Heath it is likely to be met with interest. Reading queer literature in public is often a moment when passing privilege lapses, and when the reader is 'read' by others in public as queer, their sexual orientation reductively deciphered and marked out by their choice of book. While many chose Jarman's writing for its frank discussion of same-sex sex, his texts could mediate and affect how bodies experienced public spaces, with this reader *retreating* to the safer space of the Heath in order to read a queer text (similarly to Jamie and Ste's private reading of *Gay Times* in the space of the Thamesmead bedroom in chapter one). The text offers the reader dwelling in space a dialogic experience: a point of contact around which to orientate, however fleetingly.

Jarman's battle to retain reference to the Heath in the published diaries demonstrates how queerness is often *at risk* of permanent elision, illuminating the diffuse exclusions of queer art that extend into decisions about what is marketable to imagined publics.³⁸³ A weed is something, 'not valued for use or beauty, growing wild and rank...An unprofitable, troublesome, or noxious growth (formerly often applied to persons).'³⁸⁴ As cruising was a troublesome

³⁸³ See controversy over NYC exhibitions of David Wojnarowicz and Robert Mapplethorpe in Crimp, "Photographs at the End of Modernism", *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 2-41, p. 7. See Watney for a discussion of delays to publishing which Watney faced. Watney describes his text's hostile and dismissive reception by critics as 'self-indulgent hot air' (p. x).

³⁸⁴ Oxford English Dictionary, "Weed. N" *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Accessed 02/06/2018.

‘growth’ on the Heath, so it was an unruly weed to be torn out of the text, a licentious blight on its commercial appeal.³⁸⁵ The diaries reveal how the desexualization of public space in this period was concomitant with the evacuation of same-sex sex from the printed page. There is an overlap between efforts to generate the ideal city and the worlds which editors and publishers are willing to make visible in the literature they print. Jarman illustrates the impact of AIDS on print culture in the 1980s and 1990s, a time when such writing was of even greater significance for many queer readers who were not privileged with access to narratives of same-sex desire elsewhere in mainstream culture, including literature. As Jarman warned his readership: ‘Remember, my generation became infected through lack of knowledge and the next generation will become infected through lack of information’ (*AYOR*, p.126). Sexual frankness was sex-education.

Jarman’s effort to pluralize contemporary AIDS discourses was a means of becoming ‘usefully committed to the struggle for health’ (*Smiling*, p. 369). As Woods notes:

If the term ‘gay literature’ is to have any practical significance during the present epidemic, it must be defined in such a manner as to include documents relating to the health of gay men...If we are to take this proposition seriously in a literary-critical discussion, then we must alter our sense of the types of text it is appropriate to include within our canons (p. 367).

The circulation of these representations impacted upon the circulation of queer bodies through London. In a moment when lives were at stake, Jarman’s diaries and other queer texts intervened in public discourse in useful ways that had implications for the AIDS epidemic. Woods sees Jarman and other queer life writers as part of a continuing and urgent struggle for liberation at a time when their voices were being silenced by media misrepresentation. The printed texts

³⁸⁵ Although an explicit depiction by a PWA in their final years such as *Modern Nature* would arguably have been welcomed by homophobes, confirming a popular equation of promiscuity and AIDS.

linger after these events, material traces of a time which remains difficult for many to revisit and which has largely been written out of national history. They remain at risk of dismissal, as texts not quite literary enough to warrant critical attention, like Reed's poems, or dismissed as unoriginal nostalgia trips (as discussed earlier in relation to *Beautiful Thing*). As in previous chapters, my motivation for incorporating the diaries along with news coverage and other written ephemera comes from a wish to dispel this distinction between high and low forms of culture, or worthy and unworthy objects of study: the very distinctions which often continue to reproduce a marginalization of queer cultural productions. As Schulman writes: 'for those of us writing candidly on queer sexuality, for the most part even our best work will not be reviewed in the most prestigious publications nor sold in most...bookstores.'³⁸⁶ Indeed, most of the literatures in this thesis are not readily available on the shelves of mainstream shops. Sourcing them often occurs through recommendation from friends, tutors, or lovers, through investigation, or a visit to second-hand queer bookshelves. By paying these texts attention in the present, their social, ethical and political messages are retold, and the queer London which Jarman cruised can be reimagined and regenerated.

Jarman's practice and writing of cruising elaborates a queer urban generation, which emerges from the ruins of heteronormative ideas of good living. There is value in this maligned practice. Not only did cruising offer a mode of dwelling in urban space for abjected queer bodies. But this testimony of cruising has a regenerative potential: continuing to produce meaning and to interrogate dominant epistemologies of urban living in the present.

³⁸⁶ Sarah Schulman, *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 166.

Conclusion

Researching and writing this thesis has involved zigzagging through the Docklands, Soho, and Hampstead Heath, punctuating archival research with wandering through London. Both activities have thrown up surprising connections, and each is a mode of ‘zigzagging’ through the city, as Turner puts it, and of exploring the contingencies of London, and a more complex experience of everyday life than a simple binary between the hegemon and the have-nots.

Urban planning can bring new pleasures to spaces, or reimagine a site innovatively for the benefit of inhabitants. But mainstream discourses of regeneration risk nostalgia, and a tendency to overlook the potentialities of the present by focusing on a mythic past. It is often marginal lives that are most affected by this myopia: those deemed wasteful, unfit, undesirable, or disreputable, which perhaps do not *visibly* participate in the routines of good living. We have seen in these chapters how literature can offer glimpses (and extended illuminations) of these marginal lives on the page, resisting their erasure. Queer print cultures can complicate the ways the terms of regeneration are used and defined, and to what ends. In these ways, print cultures function as a mode of resistance to dominant forms of urban regeneration. As the material city is razed or reorganized, demolished or polished, the traces of the text accrete and linger in the imagination, structuring new cities: personal, untranslatable worlds that the writer and reader carry through everyday life. The written text contains a world-making potential. As the text is written and read, it enacts this world-making function. The text facilitates a queer sort of urban regeneration: it takes shape on the page, remains after the event of its writing, and takes on new forms in the mind of the reader, in its discussion socially, and in memory. Writing re/creates the city on the page, propelling new imaginaries, affects, and encounters. Cultural/textual/artistic productions function as a mode of resistance to the hegemonic redevelopment of the contemporary metropolis, regenerating lost lives, histories and experiences.

Studies of urban regeneration have often privileged anthropological, sociological, and empirical methodologies. Literary criticism has been less utilized to advance arguments or theories of urban change. However, it can usefully problematize existing discourses. In these chapters I have offered explored the ways in which a predominantly literary, but also interdisciplinary enquiry, can reformulate epistemologies of regeneration in ways that attend to the corporeal, the felt, the queer, and the marginal. I have turned from a focus solely on architecture and built shifts in the city, to the multiple ways in which regeneration can occur in a city: psychically and affectively. As I have shown, these multiple and varied aspects are not separate or static but intersecting across space-time. Leftist criticism often uses urban regeneration and gentrification as tropes which signal the death of the city's dynamism and potentiality, as it becomes subsumed by neoliberalizing logics and is stripped of its diversity. The embedding of neoliberalism in urban life - since the 1970s - *is* an undemocratic banalizing of city life. Yet an enlivening of possibility and opportunity flourishes in spite of this, which can – potentially, and tactically - enrich quotidian life, glimpsing ways of seeing and experiencing the city queerly, in ways rarely seen or heard. This textual focus enables a mode of urban criticism which prioritizes the felt and the lived. This thesis contributes to the queer regeneration of the city by staging this regeneration - elaborating literature's vital function as a productive, and promiscuous, tool of bricolage.

While the city shifts materially, these texts become repositories of the wasted and abject lives expunged by heteronormativizing processes: recording traces, memories, feelings, ephemeral encounters, peripatetic wanderings, overheard conversations, ruined spaces. The text opens up a site for tactile remembrance, for re/imagining, and re/living - in acts of writing and future readings - what is often no longer traceable on urban maps. These are skewed, intersectional maps of the city, with unsettled coordinates that continually fall in different arrangements. As the city is variously reorganized and restructured, these texts usefully resist the erasure of familiar spaces, queer sites, and precarious or ephemeral zones. While regeneration has often been mobilized in the pursuit of normative gains: the reproduction of the stable, monogamous, straight family, for instance, and the following of the straight line of genealogy, queer regeneration

is not about the reproduction of sameness. To regenerate queerness implies the continual effort to cleave an openness to alterity in a phobic mainstream culture. Queer regeneration is the reproduction of difference. And it contains a potential for living-in-difference.

Jamie and Ste's queer teenage romance in Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing*, Alan Hollinghurst's playful rewriting of Docklands in *The Swimming Pool Library*, Derek Jarman's eroticized dwelling on Hampstead Heath as refuge from stigma, or Jeremy Reed's peripatetic and precarious dwelling in Soho: these texts elaborate some of the ways that queer bodies experience anti/sociality and dwelling – spatially and temporally - in everyday life, and how the body feels its way through processes of urban change. This writing emerges in part as a direct response to the hostile social and material conditions of contemporary London. Jarman wrote his diaries urgently in order to inscribe and extend a queer archive to future readers, responding to the stark absence of any visible memorialization or historicizing of queer community, and as an impassioned rejoinder to the 'heterosoc' he lived amongst. Harvey wrote *Beautiful Thing* in an effort to complicate narrow understandings of the conditions of working-class life in social housing, and to elaborate and fictionalize experiences of British queer youth. In a recent interview, Hollinghurst recalls his fear that *The Swimming Pool Library* would be banned from libraries after its publication in 1988, given the virulence of homophobic discourses circulating around him.³⁸⁷ And much of Jeremy Reed's writing has emerged in the past five years, nostalgically and often melancholically reflecting on the loss of potential for erotic/commercial/convivial queer encounters during chance wanderings through a spectacularly dystopic and increasingly homogeneous Soho terrain.

Coursing queerly through all of these works is the motif of the material text. The queerly coded novel that Will Beckwith carries with him as he walks through Limehouse, the copy of Jarman's diaries that a boy sits reading under a tree on Hampstead Heath, Jeremy Reed's remembrances of William Blake's verse as he wanders through Soho, or his elegizing of poet Adam Johnson, who died of

³⁸⁷ Alex Clark, Interview with Alan Hollinghurst, *Observer*, 22/09/2017.

AIDS at twenty-nine. In *Beautiful Thing*, Jamie and Ste sit in the secrecy of Jamie's room flicking through a copy of *Gay Times*. And throughout his diaries, Jarman records recurrent visits to bookshops, devouring new writers and playfully reading an imagined queerness into the distant past as he does so. Intertextual connections emerge by chance across these writers and their texts. In *White Bear and Francis Bacon*, Reed recalls a brief encounter with Jarman in a Soho alleyway. In *The Line of Beauty*, it is also *Gay Times* that Nick uses to arrange his encounters with Leo and other men around London. Writing these chapters, I have wandered through the ruins of the spaces recorded in the texts I carry with me. Stopping to sit and read, these texts offer a moment's escape, of contact, imaginative play, or a rest from loneliness. Whatever forms future London takes, its queer print cultures remain and regenerate, anticipating and extending threads of intimacy and exchange, generating modes of kinship and dwelling in ways never fully detectable but nonetheless vital.

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