

REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LONDON IN ZADIE SMITH'S *NW*  
AND AMINATTA FORNA'S *HAPPINESS*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

SEDEM CENAY UĐUR

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

AUGUST 2024



Approval of the thesis:

**REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LONDON IN ZADIE SMITH'S  
NW AND AMINATTA FORNA'S *HAPPINESS***

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## ABSTRACT

### REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LONDON IN ZADIE SMITH'S *NW* AND AMINATTA FORNA'S *HAPPINESS*

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August 2024, 98 pages

This thesis examines the urban spatiality in line with the portrayal of minorities within the city of London in Zadie Smith's *NW* and Aminatta Forna's *Happiness*, both of which were written after the first decade of the millennium. By investigating encompassing elements of spatiality in terms of thirdspace, mapping, movement, and simultaneity, this thesis aims to study how contemporary London is represented in the twenty-first century in these novels. Both novels reflect the intricate interplay between individuals and the city. Though *NW* is set in a suburban north London and *Happiness* takes place in the central part of the city, this difference in geographical topography provides a more complete comprehension of the fluid metropolis. This study explores how the metropolis is imagined and mapped by multicultural characters through shifting focalizations hence multifarious perspectives, foregrounding the complexity and fluidity of London. This thesis argues that both narratives, interconnecting a diverse group of marginal characters, challenge the oppressive nature of the city through its imagined spatialities in which everyday urban practices and interactions transform and appropriate the urban milieu.

**Keywords:** *NW*, *Happiness*, Urban Space, London

## ÖZ

### ZADIE SMITH'İN *NW* VE AMINATTA FORNA'NIN *MUTLULUK* ADLI ROMANLARINDA ÇAĞDAŞ LONDRA'NIN TEMSİLİ

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE

Ağustos 2024, 98 sayfa

Bu tez, kentsel mekânsallığı, her ikisi de milenyumun ilk on yılından sonra yazılmış olan Zadie Smith'in *NW* ve Aminatta Forna'nın *Mutluluk* romanlarındaki Londra kentindeki azınlıkların tasviri doğrultusunda incelemektedir. *Üçüncümekean*, haritalama, hareket ve eşzamanlılık açısından mekânsallığın kapsayıcı unsurlarını araştıran bu tez, çağdaş Londra'nın bu romanlarda yirmi birinci yüzyılda nasıl temsil edildiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Her iki roman da bireyler ve şehir arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi yansıtır. *NW*, Londra'nın kuzeyindeki bir banliyöde yer almasına ve *Mutluluk*'un şehrin merkezi kesiminde geçmesine rağmen, coğrafi topografyadaki bu farklılık, akışkan metropolün daha eksiksiz bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlar. Bu çalışma, Londra'nın karmaşıklığını ve akışkanlığını ön plana çıkararak, değişen odak noktaları ve dolayısıyla çok çeşitli perspektifler aracılığıyla metropolün çok kültürlü karakterler tarafından nasıl hayal edildiğini ve haritalandırıldığını araştırıyor. Bu tez, farklı marjinal karakterler grubunu birbirine bağlayan her iki anlatının da günlük kentsel pratiklerin ve etkileşimlerin kentsel ortamı dönüştürdüğü ve sahiplendiği, hayali mekânsallıklar aracılığıyla şehrin baskıcı doğasına meydan okuduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *NW*, *Mutluluk*, kentsel mekân, Londra

*In loving memory of my mother*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my advisor Assoc. Prof. Hülya Yıldız Bağçe. Without her support, guidance, and her invaluable feedback throughout this research, this thesis would not have been possible. I have always felt incredibly fortunate to be her student and have had the opportunity to learn from her.

I am also deeply thankful to the esteemed members of my thesis committee Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Öztapak Avcı and Assist. Prof. Şule Akdoğan for their constructive feedback and suggestions.

I would also like to express my gratitude towards my family for their unwavering belief in me. I am thankful to my father, Sencay Uğur, who has been constantly supportive of my dreams, and to my little siblings, Abdülsamet Uğur and Emine İlayda Uğur, for their unconditional love and for patiently putting up with my endless soliloquies over the phone.

Additionally, to my dear friends Simge Irmak Çınar, Pelin Durak, and İrem Gülgün Şalvarcı: without you, I would not have been able to go through this painful journey. I am truly grateful for your support and for bearing with my countless whinings and rants. I cherish each and every minute of our endless quirky conversations. Finally, I would like to thank Uğur Polat, whose constant support has made all the difference. Thank you for all the love, laughter, and snack supplies.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“London goes beyond any boundary or convention. It contains every wish or word ever spoken, every action or gesture ever made, every harsh or noble statement ever expressed. It is illimitable. It is Infinite London.”

(Ackroyd, *London* 778-779)

This thesis aims to explore how contemporary London is represented in *NW* (2012) by Zadie Smith and *Happiness* (2018) by Aminatta Forna in the light of critical approaches to spatiality such as *thirdspace*, mapping, walking, and simultaneity in order to reveal how the city is read and rewritten by minorities. While both novels are set in London, they offer varied perspectives of an unprivileged group of characters navigating the city both in central and rather elite parts of London as well as the peripheries of the city. Investigating these novels elucidates imagined urban spatialities and how they are mapped by multicultural urbanites from diverse backgrounds, challenging homogenous portrayals of London. Such exploration offers a multilayered reading of the complex urban setting consisting of manifold spatial constructions based on nationality, race, and class. This thesis reveals the intricate interplay between literary urban space and characters by exploring the ways in which characters interact with and experience the dynamic and multicultural city.

Studying *NW* and *Happiness* in terms of city literature is significant as these novels weave their narratives around contemporary London, accentuating global experiences. These two novels have been discussed previously by scholars from varying perspectives. *NW* has been mostly read from the points of cosmopolitanism,

identity, and class-based and/or neoliberal subjectivities regarding socioeconomic aspects while taking space into account as well. On the other hand, the existing scholarship on *Happiness* mainly revolves around the readings of trauma and ecocriticism. Not only have *NW* and *Happiness* not been examined in a comparative fashion before, but they also have not been investigated from the perspective of a fictional representation of London. This study discusses how *NW* and *Happiness* build their narrative around London and how they portray the experiences of marginalized groups.

Literary representations of urban spaces are significant as they render the social, historical, and cultural aspects of the city from a variety of perspectives. Cities that are vast and complex geographical entities gain meaning and become legible through textual representations that foreground fragmentary accounts (Moran 166). With the multiplicity of accounts, the literary city is narrated by intertwining real and imagined spaces that underscore a myriad of lived urban experiences rather than an understanding of the city in its totality. Kevin McNamara maintains that “the use of multiple, dispersed, and limited centers of consciousness” provide “a more complex accounting of the city, and yet it resolutely refuses to offer readers the city in its totality” (11-12). This experience of being in the city encapsulates anxieties of migration, class, social mobility, and inequalities. Approaching the city with its intrinsic spatiality that interweaves sociocultural constructions and subjective/collective experiences is significant to read those contemporary urban concerns. As Nora Pleßke puts forward “[t]he metropolis produces social space, either as urban plurality of cultural practices, diversity of lifestyles with inherent characteristics of social injustice, or marginalisation and segregation” (119). By portraying the dynamic and complex city converging many spatial histories, a heterogeneous representation is achieved revealing the invisible. Such heterogeneity enhances encounters with the Other (Pleßke 120).

The image of a city might be constructed through different perspectives in different eras according to the representation of dominant voices. This representation of it, similarly, might be altered or reconstructed regarding the changing ideologies or emerging voices in the urban community in different periods. Even though this representation of the city might change, the literary accounts of the city are undeniably

longstanding. In *The Cambridge Companion to the City in Literature* Kevin McNamara, for instance, maintains that the literary canon of the city is equally wide and varied. In reviewing some of the earliest examples of urban narratives, he mentions the Gilgamesh epic (from around 2150–2000 BCE) and the tale of Inanna and Enki (from around 2500 BCE) from Mesopotamia to draw attention to stories of urban succession and mythical origins of the cities (1), revealing the long rooted representations of cities in literature.

In the case of London, the city had been envisioned and portrayed by British poets, writers, and painters such as Daniel Defoe, Thomas de Quincey, Charles Dickens, William Blake, Virginia Woolf, George Hyde Pownall, etc. for centuries. The city was portrayed as the great capital in the canonical works of British artists, hinting at its nationally homogenous portrayal. In *Imagining London*, John Clement Ball points out that during the fin de siècle and the early twentieth century, London as the capital of imperial power was a grand metropolis, and the nation acknowledged the city of London “as the centre of the world, the fountainhead of culture, the zero-point of global time and space” (4). Thus, writers of this period portrayed the city as the modern-day “Babylonia or as the heart of the Empire, the ‘imperial metropolis’” (Guignery 12). Furthermore, in 1920s and 1930s, as Merlin Coverley indicates, London was mainly portrayed from the points of view of characters who were highly privileged and attending countless dinner parties traversing between Bloomsbury and Mayfair in novels like *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *Point Counter Point* (1928), *Vile Bodies* (1930), registering “the lives or sometimes simply the days of a small coterie of characters with artistic pretensions” (18). Therefore, in such novels, the city is represented from the perspectives of upper-class characters in contrast to its Victorian portrayals by Charles Dickens, for instance.

On the other hand, in contrast to its previous homogenous constructions, the metropolis unquestionably became a more multicultural space with the acts of immigration. These acts were fuelled by decolonization movements and post-war labour migration due to worker shortage in the aftermath of WWII- such as the Windrush generation coming to London from the West Indies. Particularly after the Second World War, with the arrival of intellectuals from former colonies to the metropolis, the aforementioned national metaphor of London being “the heart of the

empire” transformed into “the heart of resistance to empire” (McLeod 6). Therefore, the city became a narrative tool for “writers who emigrated to Great Britain from former British colonies and protectorates (Indians, Pakistanis, West Indians...), or who are children of first- or second-generation immigrants” like Sam Selvon, Doris Lessing, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Andrea Levy, Caryl Phillips, Zadie Smith, and so on (Guignery 13). Upon the attendance of such postcolonial narratives to the British Literature, London started to be deconstructed/reconstructed in the mid and late twentieth and twenty-first centuries through the perspectives of immigrants navigating the metropolis which is perceived as a place of “marginalization, segregation, and solitude; an alien climate and built environment; racism, poverty, and cultural conflict” (Ball 6). As Phil Hubbard highlights through such literary texts by those authors, along with minute portrayals of physical cityscapes, certain social groups in given spaces are represented, “mapping out the fractures of social class, race, gender, age and sexuality which characterize city life” (69). Therefore, it can be stated that while high modernist novels in the first half of the twentieth century portray the city through the perspectives of an upper-class white British coterie of characters, in the second half of the century and the earlier twenty-first century with the Windrush generation and emigrational acts from the ex-colonies, London was envisioned through the eyes of immigrant communities by authors such as Sam Selvon, Hanif Kureishi, and Monica Ali. However, they focus on a particular ethnic group in their representations. For instance, Kureishi mostly portrays postcolonial anxieties and how South Asians interact with white British. Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* describes a more limited locale in the city – a ghetto inhabited by Bangladeshi immigrants – and the interaction with the metropolis is quite restricted as most of the novel takes place within the borders of a domestic space, the house of Nazneen. Hence, these literary postcolonial representations of London mainly revolve around limited localities and immigrants from ex-colonies. There is still a palpable connection between colonized spaces and post-imperial metropolis in these texts, underscoring the concerns of first-generation immigrants and focusing on both colonial and postcolonial experiences.

On the other hand, in the twenty-first century especially after the first decade, London and its literary representations do not consist of portrayals of immigrants from only ex-colonies. Fictional portrayals of the city are more global in a way that they are

not restricted by the dualistic nature of either (ex)colony or imperial metropolis. As a result of postwar impact, decolonization, patterns of migration, and by extension, “London-born transnational communities,” “the imperial metropolis” has transitioned into “a globalized and transcultural ‘world city’” (McLeod 7). Literary texts on the city embrace a more inclusive approach towards minorities and their representations of immigrants are not necessarily restricted to ex-colonies but they come from all over the world. Therefore, today, more so than ever, through transnational mobilization stemming from economic conditions, (civil) wars, oppression, and so on, London is a multicultural metropolitan, and the impact of globalization is remarkable for that as well. The term globalization refers to the fact that the adoption of a capitalist style and free-market system of production have been accelerated through international trade and movement, which compressed the world regarding time and space (Krishna 2). Considering what has been said so far, as a metropolitan city, London is significant since it is a global finance hub attracting “intra- and international migration”; thus, it possesses “an enormous amount of cultural clout” (Johansen 11), and while such cultural clout incorporates migration, it embodies deterritorialization, refugees, and asylum seekers as well. Therefore, as Revathi Krishnaswamy argues, “to be global is first and foremost is to be postcolonial and to be postcolonial is always already to be global” (qtd. in Wilson et al.,1). In line with its multicultural demography, the metropolis is a space in which “a fragmented and stratified location in which cultures, histories, and structures of feeling previously separated by enormous distances could be found in the same place” (qtd. in Johansen 12). Both *NW* and *Happiness* weave fragmentary histories of the characters while portraying both the central and peripheral parts of the metropolis with their globalized and polyvocal layers, accentuating its heterogeneity and fluidity.

In parallel with these discussions, *NW* and *Happiness* represent London by contesting the previous elite and homogeneous portrayals of the city. They integrate dispersed cultures and histories pervading the contemporary metropolis. Subsequently, the city is (re)constructed by multicultural voices as characters shape their lived spaces and experiences within the urban. In this respect, both novels feature the genre of city novels. There are three main criteria for a novel to be classified as a city novel, these are as follows: “(1) the main setting is the city, (2) characters and plot are defined by

the city and (3) the formal elements (style, plot, tone, theme, structure) convey a particular attitude towards the city” (Pleßke 22). While a much more specific and peripheral neighborhood is central to *NW*, the southern central part of London constitutes the setting in *Happiness*. However, as I claim, the metropolis is not a mere backdrop in these narratives. While urban spatiality informs the lived spaces of the characters, they also claim their agency over the city through their spatial practices. Hence, the literary city of London is a main spatial element that shapes and is shaped by the characters as well as contributes to the fragmented narratorial style registering the simultaneity and complexity of the urban.

In this study, *NW* and *Happiness* will be examined comparatively as both novels weave their narratives around the kaleidoscopic urban portrayals, and in so doing, they present unique yet quotidian imaginaries of literary contemporary London through multiple accounts, foregrounding non-dominant voices. Both novels capture the diverse experiences of diasporic communities in the metropolis. Such comparison offers an understanding of multilayered spatial dynamics stemming from intersecting constructions such as race, class, gender, and citizenship within the city. Consequently, both novels highlight intersectionality by focusing on these social constructions. Intersectionality also includes nuances such as illness, aging, psychological disorders, non-human entities, and so on. Yet, this study’s focus will be on time and space and how unprivileged groups in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, and citizenship navigate and negotiate urban spatiality. Subsequently, I argue that *NW* and *Happiness* by way of intersectional portrayals, represent the metropolis through minorities, which facilitates encounters for the reader with them in its portrayal of the invisible instead of the mainstream accounts of the city.

In line with the degree of multiplicity that *NW* and *Happiness* blend, through the discussion of *thirdspace* by Edward W. Soja, the spatial dynamics of the metropolis as represented in fiction will be unveiled, emphasizing the polyphonic nature of the city that is in constant flux. However, an interconnection is composed through simultaneous snapshots against the transient and chaotic quality of the cosmopolis. I argue that the characters in these two novels- who can be regarded as minorities due to being second-generation children, immigrants, or non-British - both shape and are shaped by the urban space, and through their everyday practices, they contest the

oppressive nature of the metropolis as well as challenge the preceding narratives of elite London. Their spatial practices will be read in light of Michel de Certeau's conceptualization of the walker as well as the trope of flâneur or psychogeographer to examine the concept of agency. I claim that these two novels disrupt and appropriate London to the extent that the hegemonic metropolis is reinscribed by practices and interactions of characters regardless of its borders or values such as nation, citizenship, class, and race.

By conducting this comparative research, this thesis intends to address a critical and nuanced perspective on the representations of marginalized groups' participation in the metropolis through interrelated concepts of spatiality. *NW* portrays a notorious suburban estate area within north London depicting "born-and-bred" (second-generation) Londoners struggling with class stratification. On the other hand, *Happiness* imagines the heart of the metropolis, incorporating its southern topography, with immigrant communities from all over the world, creating more multicultural possibilities of representation. Thus, this study underscores how London is envisioned in the literary urban narratives of twenty-first-century English fiction, aiming to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the fluid and complex city. This thesis is constituted of three main chapters which are organized as follows:

In the following chapter, a methodological framework on urban spatiality will be discussed. First, the chapter will provide a discussion of existing scholarship on space and the notion of *thirdspace*. Urban spatiality integrates the concept of mapping and movement through space hence the spatial practice of walking, all of which will also be examined. Lastly, the concept of simultaneity and how it creates interconnectedness through space as well as narrates the urban complexity will be scrutinized.

In the third chapter of this thesis, *NW* by Zadie Smith will be discussed in terms of its representation of contemporary London through above mentioned theoretical underpinnings. After providing an overview of the novel and the existing scholarship, the notion of *thirdspace* will be analysed regarding the novel's multiple shifting perspectives and how each character subjectively perceives and interact with their surroundings as well as its incorporation of real-and-imagined spaces. Next, how London is spatially mapped and how characters claim their agencies through this

enunciative acting-out will be inspected. The final argument of the chapter will revolve around the narrative style and spatial metaphors that reflect the simultaneity and complexity of the dynamic and polyvocal urban milieu.

The fourth chapter will delve into the novel *Happiness* by Aminatta Forna. First, it gives an overview of the novel as well as a brief literature review. The chapter aims to reveal how immigrant characters experience and overwrite the metropolis through their own personal histories and practices. First, the concept of simultaneity through narrative techniques will be investigated to reveal the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities in the urban milieu. Later, its discussion of *thirdspace* mainly focuses on how the city turns into a hybrid meeting point for marginal characters whose distinct past experiences fill and transform the spatiality. Finally, mapping strategies will be explored to approach the lived spaces and spatial practices from a critical and nuanced standpoint.

## CHAPTER 2

### CRITICAL APPROACHES TOWARDS URBAN NARRATIVES

The city of London has been imagined by fiction writers for years. However, the representation of the metropolis has changed substantially because of the transnational border crossings. In this respect, investigating the spatiality and its encompassing elements such as *thirdspace*, mapping, and simultaneity in contemporary literary urban narratives offers a critical and nuanced interpretation of the metropolis. In light of these critical approaches, this thesis aims to explore how fictional characters coming from various minority groups in the city interact with and experience London, and how the city is imagined in English fiction in the twenty-first century. Studying these two novels, both written in the same decade and representing London, reveals how the city is reconstructed through the narratorial perspectives of unprivileged groups and their participation in the fabric of the city. This representation of the city challenges some of the hegemonic and imperial fictional depictions of the city while contributing to the subversion of the image of canonical London. To this end, in this chapter, I will provide an overview of theoretical frameworks and concepts - *thirdspace*, mapping, the act of walking, and simultaneity - which form my methodology for exploring Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012) and Aminatta Forna's *Happiness* (2018).

#### 2.1 Space and Urban

The city as a complex and dynamic entity is a fluid container of space within which its denizens constantly move through and reshape its fabric. In order to explore its fluidity, the concept of space is significant to investigate how characters construct or deconstruct their surroundings while being affected by it simultaneously. The theoretical underpinnings of space emerged in the last century as opposed to the reigning perception of time. The notion of time had been prioritized in the humanities for so long, yet a pivotal shift has been made since the mid-twentieth century by

revisiting the elements of space and geography (West-Pavlov 291). However, the teleological and dualistic notion of time based on the concept of progress and civilization, which had been favored for a long time came to an end with the postmodern turn blurring the sharp distinctions between temporality and spatiality. This relatively recent trend in rethinking space and place in order to understand social, historical, and cultural phenomena is called the “spatial turn” which suggests viewing space as a social construct that is important for comprehending the many trajectories of human history as well as the creation of cultural phenomena. Therefore, to comprehend why and how things happen, one must have a solid understanding of space and spatiality, or the places where things happen (Van Den Heever 74). In other words, “[g]eography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen” (Warf et al., 1, emphasis in original). In line with this emerging significance attributed to space or geography, many scholars such as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Michel de Certeau, and Edward W. Soja to name a few have propounded theories and concepts to understand the significance of it in modern life. Soja claims that the spatial turn marked the demise of historicism, which prioritized time over space, and the re-emergence of space to social theory (Warf et al., 4). It is significant to acknowledge that the space in question is not a mere passive setting for things to happen. In *The Spatial Turn*, Barney Warf and Santa Arias highlight that

Everyday thought and behavior, the unacknowledged preconditions to action, do not simply mirror the world; they constitute it as the outcomes to action. Social structures and relations are thus reproduced, and hence simultaneously changed, by the people who make them; individuals are both produced by, and producers of, history and geography. Given this logic, space could no longer be seen simply as a backdrop against which life unfolds sequentially, but rather, intimately tied to lived experience. (4)

Individuals and everyday life are indispensable factors that both constitute and get affected by space which is intertwined with human actions and experiences. It's not just any space; it's a lived space where everything converges with daily experiences and practices (Hayes-Conroy 00.01.22-00.02.10). Therefore, space is fluid since it constantly evolves due to the quotidian interactions of individuals.

Increasing awareness and use of space as a theoretical framework in social

sciences also affected literary studies, leading to what is generally referred to as “the spatial turn.” Therefore, in contemporary literature, space is seen as an essential “part of a narration” (Havik 129), and it is seen as a significant methodological tool for investigating representations of cities in literature such as the fictional representations of London. Hence, the spatial turn plays a significant role in investigating and narrating the complex interplay between physical surroundings, social structures, and cultural practices both in real and imagined urban milieus. Also, regarding the city and cityspace, spatial and geographical characteristics of cities affect power dynamics, identity formation, and the urban experience. In the Introduction part of *Exploring the Spatiality of the City Across Cultural Texts*, Rohleder and Kindermann suggest that taking a relational approach to space is essential when exploring the idea of the city as a narrated space. That is to say, the elements in the city shouldn’t be regarded separately; rather, they are linked together forming connections that shape the urban environment. So, space is understood to be a dynamic, linked network rather than a static container that is ready to be filled. In a city, space encompasses all its elements, including its parks, buildings, people and their movement, rivers, and other features (10). To be able to make sense of this dynamic force, I suggest making use of the notion of *Thirdspace* proposed by Edward W. Soja is complementary since this concept allows us to trace how various characters position themselves in the city space, and how the space affects their definition of themselves and their surrounding elements.

Edward W. Soja’s critical concept of *Trialectics of Space* more popularly known as *Thirdspace* is important to explore the dynamism and multiplicity inherent in literary representations of an urban space. His work is based on the scholarship of Henri de Lefebvre who introduced the spatial triad which states three characteristics of space: “experienced space (physical space that can be measured), representations of space (space perceived by planners, etc., and drawn on maps, diagrams), and representational space (imagined by writers and artists)” (Shymchyshyn 20). Lefebvre also coined the term third space which stands for “the relationship between body and material/object” (ibid) and this notion of *thirdspace* is adapted and extended by Soja as follows:

Everything comes together [in Thirdspace:] subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure, and agency, mind

and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (qtd. in Shymchyshyn 20)

Encompassing a variety of interconnected dimensions of binaries, everyday life hence human experiences, transcending the mere physicality of location, *thirdspace* is a lived space. Also, the *thirdspace* is the concurrence of different binaries all at once, and it can be said that the simultaneous existence of all these various dichotomies mentioned above in the context of narrated space and literary urban environments allows for a more thorough investigation of the dynamism and complexities residing in the city space of London. In other words, while building upon Lefebvre's triad, Soja's *thirdspace* slightly differs from that since it integrates multiplicity and fluidity of spatiality through the co-existence of dualisms.

Additionally, Soja incorporates his trialectics with urban space. In his book *Postmetropolis Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Soja uses the term cityspace that "refers to the city as a historical-social-spatial phenomenon" (8), and to make it more tangible he utilizes another notion "urban spatial specificity" which "is the particular configurations of social relations, built forms, and human activity in a city and its geographical sphere of influence" (Ibid.). He asserts that analyzing cityspace involves exploring its different dimensions, known as the trialectics of cityspace. Put simply, *firstspace* is the physical space that is being (re)produced by elements such as buildings, streets, etc. (Ibid., 10). Accordingly, any material component contributing to the physical layout of the city is regarded as firstspace. *Secondspace* is more subjective contrary to the former one since the cityspace is now a place for thoughts (11). Thus, in *secondspace*, the city becomes more than a physical place in which people cast their emotions and reflections. While the firstspace is of a more tangible and objective characteristic of cityspace, *secondspace* incorporates perceptions and reflections about space. As dichotomous as these concepts are, he proposes the concept of *thirdspace* to transcend this binary nature. In order to comprehend the dynamic cityspace, embracing both the *firstspace* and *secondspace* is significant. He highlights that "in this alternative or 'third' perspective, the spatial specificity of urbanism is investigated *fully lived* space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual- and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency" (11, emphasis in original). Thus, the city must be recognized through everyday interrelation between personal and

collective due to varied urbanites and their histories. In this way, the urban space is apprehended as both an inclusive and dynamic space as well as a real-and-imagined space in which possibilities of representational strategies exist.

This newly emerging notion of space focuses on inclusion rather than exclusion by striving to combine opposing ideas and perspectives taking place within the same space at the same time. Each individual in the city has their own representation of and interaction with the city next to the “collective” or dominant representations; in fact, the city is reconstructed as a combination of “these individual and collective experience and agency”. As a result, the fabric of the urban in the twenty-first century transcends the binaries, as Nora Pleßke puts forward in her book, *The Intelligible Metropolis*,

regarding race, ethnicity, or even national identity, processes of globalisation, decolonisation and transnational migration construct new socio-cultural spaces (diasporic, multicultural, transcultural) which – far from the dichotomy of receiving and home country – are complex structures of interconnections and perpetual border crossing. (69)

Therefore, the urban milieu itself can be considered as a *thirdspace* since these socio-cultural environments resist classification by being complex and fluid in terms of class, race, gender, etc. reflecting intricacy since people navigate and negotiate their identities within a globally interconnected setting. In accordance with this, Sara Upstone also highlights that Soja’s notion of space being based on *thirdspace* challenges prevailing ideas about space and identity as it rejects absolute distinctions by embracing hybridity and difference, as Soja claims, “to break open this dualism to a third alternative” (qtd. in Upstone 14). This understanding of difference is related to social constructions like class, gender, sexuality, and race, and in this context, difference suggests different geographies and spatial experiences. Massey argues that “the social relations of spaces are experienced differently, and variously interpreted by those holding different positions” (qtd. in Harris 263). Therefore, spatiality is perceived in different ways regarding “oppressively Othering categories” (Soja 84).

Geography provides both a metaphorical and methodological tool for writing; therefore, Soja’s notion of *thirdspace* is effective in observing how spaces of differences can be imagined in literary works (Harris 265-266) as it creates a fluid space of multiplicity and inclusivity with the incorporation of unprivileged voices in

terms of the oppressive Othering constructions of race, class, gender, etc. It integrates “a simultaneously real-and-imagined space” in which marginalized fictional individuals navigate while reflecting a palpable sense of the city and how characters build their lived spaces. Imagining such spaces underscores a political agenda as the merging of *firstspace* and *secondspace* creates a radically open space as

[c]ombining the real and imagined, things and thought on equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other *a priori*, [...] lived spaces of representation are thus the terrain for the generation of “counterspaces”, spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning. (Soja 68)

With transnational movements and globalization, London has become a fluid and heterogeneous metropolis – a space that defies the established structures and narratives. Therefore, it can be stated that the city of London is not the nation’s capital anymore building upon the binaries of colonizer and colonized hence the centre and periphery. It is a global city and its borders have become trespassed by the transnational migration acts. In light of this, *thirdspace* offers a critical approach called “thirthing-as-Othering”, which suggests a deconstruction or disruption of any “imposed binary” to create a “multiplicity of alternative choices” (Soja 1421). The emergence of this notion which surpasses the dualistic and excluding image of canonical capital is a significant “step in transforming categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open of both/and also...” challenging the prevailing dualistic mode of thinking (Soja 60). The dualistic narrative of the metropolis and the former colony has been subverted and transformed as the urban space of London consists of myriad multicultural communities from all over the world not just the ex-colonies. This critical approach offers new spatial imaginaries by forming spaces of otherness in which nothing is fixed but fluid.

Furthermore, “because of London’s illimitable dimensions, the metropolis must also be imagined” (Pleßke 12) and it can be stated that the literary representation of the contemporary urban space of London, with its globally diverse environment in the fictional realm, bears the *thirdspace* in itself by being both “real-and-imagined” simultaneously. As Pleßke explains:

Aesthetic literature on the metropolis provides selective representations of the city: it creates metaphors to encompass its vast nature, maps narratives that describe urban experience, offers myths that help to locate the Self, and

consequently re-imagines collective urban identities. Fiction shapes our understanding of the city while simultaneously generating an idiosyncratic knowledge on the urban. (12)

Therefore, it can be inferred that literary works are artistic creations that encapsulate and convey the spirit of the city. Through metaphors and narrative maps of urban experiences that help one locate their identity within the urban setting, the city is portrayed fictitiously. As fiction significantly influences how we see and comprehend the city, it not only offers a means of appreciating London's enormity but also adds to the body of knowledge regarding urban living. In a similar vein, *thirdspaces* often involve imaginative reinterpretations transcending the binary oppositions. In fictional representations of London in Zadie Smith's *NW* and Aminatta Forna's *Happiness*, literary imagination becomes a tool for envisioning and constructing urban space perspectives that go beyond historical and physical representations of London. *NW* does so by representing a peripheral London outside the canonical portrayals of London such as Trafalgar Square, Westminster, Piccadilly, River Thames, and so on as well as imaginary routes unknown to the reader. *Happiness* subverts the historical representations of London as it portrays the capital from the view of immigrants.

All in all, adapting the notion of *thirdspace* to the fictional contemporary London diversifies the representation of the city via the enriching perspectives in the globalizing London. In other words, London as *thirdspace* enables the possibility of combining a great variety of perspectives and practices to coexist in the urban setting by interacting with the cityspace and other entities around them. In this way, binaries exist and interact with each other in the metropolis so as to reconstruct London beyond the imperial and glorious representation of it.

## **2.2 Mapping**

The understanding of spatiality encompasses the act of movement through space both physically and mentally. The *thirdspace*, hence, should be mapped as a combination of these two levels of the representation of the space. This understanding complicates the notion of mapping a space since the traditional physical map that defines the city cannot include the required versatility of perceptions of that space; human focalization is required to construct and define a metropolis beyond its city structure. Therefore, the exploration of the city and the mapping process widens

narrative and fiction.

Michel de Certeau claims that each story is a spatial trajectory since stories “traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them” (101). In fiction, a great variety of perspectives that define and redefine the city can be traced to map the space by “travers[ing] and organiz[ing]” it. Similarly, Ricardo Padrón points out that literary texts themselves suggest a sense of mapping. Through such texts, mental images of the places are created and recreated in the minds of readers despite the lack of real illustrations. Padrón highlights the significance of storytelling as a means of space construction by stating that “[n]ot only do they [literary texts] allow us to picture places and spaces, but by telling stories that take place in them, or by sculpting characters associated with them, they give those places life and meaning” (qtd. in Tally 2-3). This contemporary notion treasures the “lived space” which has “life and meaning”, in other words, it signifies stories since they are considered as a part of the cityspace, and they turn these places into a lived space through narrative. Therefore, mapping is a fundamental component of spatiality, including movement, orientation, and lived experiences, as it offers not only a concrete reality but also a mental strategy for being situated.

In line with this, bodily movements integrate mental perceptions of the urban milieu. As Frederic Jameson claims, “the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world” (qtd. in Tally 2) can be achieved through spatial mapping following the individuals’ focalization observing and recounting their space. In other words, the concept of body and space are inseparable while investigating spatial experiences. A body itself does not merely exist in space, instead, it actively produces and is produced by the space it occupies. Mariya Shymchyshyn explores this continuous interaction between humans and space by stating that “discourse of a body, which is produced by and is the production of space, can give us some notion of a *thirdspace* that may signify a fictional space” (20-21). Therefore, the way a body moves in its surroundings contributes to the creation and shaping of the said space. Different bodies have different spatial experiences. To deny the notion that the body is just an object or subject consisting of fragmentary images and words, she refers to Lefebvre because a body is something that is “reflected and

refracted in the changes that it wreaks in its 'milieu' or 'environment'—in other words, in its space” (qtd. in Shymchyshyn 21). The body is a dynamic and interactive entity rather than being static. Hence, there is a back-and-forth connection in which both the body and the space keep affecting and changing each other all the time in everyday life.

Similarly, the body is essential in understanding and navigating space within a city because “the city as personal space is that by immediate experiences through the urbanites’ bodies; without the body the phenomenon of space cannot be grasped, because the body is the base of spatial orientation” (Pleßke 454). Bodily experiences play a crucial role in shaping how denizens perceive and engage with urban environments at a personal level. In fiction, subjective and portrayed aspects of experience in space are related to the characters’ presence and interactions through their fictitious bodies. Sensory depictions play a crucial role here as they enhance spatial experiences since “a verbal, semantic, and semiological space can be enlarged by information from the body (smell, taste, sound)” (Shymchyshyn 21). Hence, there is a dynamic interplay between space and body. In the same vein, Nora Pleßke states that London is a city that baffles logic, much like Charles Dickens describes it as an “unintelligible mess” (qtd. in Pleßke 11). She further suggests that there are ways to read this “multifarious” (11) city, and sensory perception is one of them being essential for navigating urban environments and shaping one's identity. Sensual perception - using the senses to experience the city through sight, sound, touch, etc. - enables people to develop orientation in the urban environment. This sensory interaction is essential for forming and securing a person's identity within the framework of the city (Ibid.). Therefore, this embodied experience, in which bodies engage with the environment through senses, is important because it creates personal and subjective understanding and interpretation of the city. Also, the body links the materiality of space and consciousness together (Pleßke 455). The representation of spatial perceptions through focalization in narration reveals the reflections and points of view of the characters about the very physical space in which they inhabit or move. Each character has a distinct view of the urban space as they come from different walks of life and read and write their spatiality in accordance with their subjective histories. Therefore, investigating how each and every character interacts with the space and how these urban spaces shape their identities as well as the characters’ embodied experiences

within the fabric of the city will provide an understanding of the interaction between body and space in both novels.

Through their bodily movements, characters map the topographical elements of the urban environment such as landmarks or varied public spaces as they navigate the spaces of London. This act of mapping becomes a medium of record registering their surroundings that are in constant flux. In other words, fictional topographies such as cityscapes, public spaces, parks, council estates, etc. show how characters move through and interact with spaces. As Pleßke puts forward,

An analysis of literary topographies explores the representation and function of the landscape or cityscape in fictional texts. The relevance of topographical questions within Literary Studies lies in the interconnection between representations of space with the contextual real world. In that sense, imaginary spaces of literature retain the referentiality or experientiality to the spaces of the lifeworld. ... [T]opography denotes the (de)scription of spaces, and in reference to literature encompasses all means by which spaces are textualised and semantised, especially spacing, (b)ordering, and spatial metaphors. (166)

Thus, literary topographies suggest a connection between real-and-imagined worlds. It is important to understand that topography, in this context, consists of both physical depictions of spaces as well as how they are portrayed and given meaning through language. Such descriptions could be considered mappings because they include enough spatial data that would allow the reader to navigate the space or get a rough outline (Mattheis 485). Mapping, as one of the most important spatial metaphors, imbues space with meaning through characters' interactions with it. In a way, it is a matter of placemaking in which a sense of place is created through the attribution of meaning (Lanigan 34). In like manner, mapping does not solely include the tangible aspects of a city like its physical topographies, but it also covers the intangible parts as well because the city is a dynamic and complex space that transcends its materiality. Therefore, Lanigan elucidates that:

Literary mapping of cities can encompass other aspects of a city's "totality," including its physical, cultural, and economic links to other spaces, subjective representations of urban space, or its history and possible futures. For literary urban studies, "mapping" opens a range of more expansive visual, spatial, and temporal reading strategies. (35)

This signifies that in novels set in the city, the portrayal of urban settings goes beyond static descriptions of concrete locations. Instead, it focuses on its dynamic

characteristics such as the movement of characters and ideas, the exploration of social mobility, the flow of capital, class relations, and considerations of ethnic, social, and gender boundaries; therefore, the city space is explored through varied dimensions of “contesting histories, memories, and possible futures” (Lanigan 34). Similarly, mapping the city requires understanding and representing multifaceted layers of influence because “[t]hings like migration, labor displacement, capital flight and disinvestment, free trade zones, commercial travel, and global finance shape the experience and topography of cities” (Ibid. 36). These narratives convey such complexities that the city bears in itself. In short, in analyzing the novels *NW* and *Happiness*, looking at their literary topographies becomes relevant as they offer several insights into the complexities of literary London since they voice marginalized perspectives in a metropolis that have previously been constructed with myth-like glorious perceptions of the nation for centuries.

### **2.3 The Act of Walking**

Both in the production of *thirdspace* and mapping of that space, the importance of human interaction is emphasized in contemporary discussions. In the contemporary representation of the city, different perspectives, emotions, and subjective experiences have gained importance since they are considered as defining elements for city construction. Therefore, the characters’ personal interactions with the city and its streets; and their positions and silhouettes moving within that space matter to explore how this space is perceived and recreated from different perspectives continuously. In line with the concept of the body in motion through city space, Fran Tonkiss states that “[t]he inert form of the city houses a multitude of little spatial histories told by bodies moving within it” (2). The act of physical movement through concrete topographies is achieved by walking which is an everyday practice among city dwellers. In his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau points out that “[t]he ordinary practitioners of the city [...] walk-an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (93). These ordinary bodies who have different experiences through their ambulatory practices navigate and contribute to the ever-changing urban environment. He also asserts that walking is “a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian” (98) implying that individuals who walk the streets in a city physically engage and interact with the

space. Hence, walking is a type of spatial expression that intertwines with the urban fabric in multiple ways. Traversing city streets, people's embodied experiences engage with the surroundings at a sensory level, which affects how they perceive space.

While distinguishing place and space from one another, Certeau states that "space is a practiced place" (117) because space is shaped and filled with meanings only through human actions. Therefore, "the street [...] is transformed into space by walkers" (Ibid.), which is closely connected to his distinction between "tours and maps". While "the map (a plane projection totalizing observations)" is a detached representation of space from a bird-eye view, "tours" or "itinerary (a discursive series of operations)" stand for dynamic involvement within space through movements and actions. Even though these two modes of spatiality coexist together, the maps become meaningful only through actions that are embodied in the acts of the walker (118-122). In other words, it can be inferred that these geographical locations only become meaningful and turn into lived spaces by way of individuals' movements and activities – in this case walking. Rohleder and Kinderman also highlight that

Walking the streets of the city is, de Certeau argues, "a spatial acting-out of the place" which depends on "relations among differentiated positions" [97-98]. These spatial relations are a prerequisite for the act of walking, but they are also established in the same act of walking—by moving through the city. The city is not a stable, fixed space, then; it is continually reconstituted through various performative acts. (10)

It is safe to assume that walking is a powerful and transformational practice in which individuals shape their urban surroundings that are in a state of constant flux through seemingly mundane acts. Therefore, "the metropolis is an area to be traversed and that the city's labyrinthine complexity only becomes mappable in heterogeneous, highly diversified trajectories" and through walking, "the pedestrian can grasp the meanings of everyday urban life" (Pleßke 277). This act of walking in literature sometimes manifests itself in (solitary) perambulations through the city as McNamara puts "[t]he predominant mode of urban mobility across all genres and periods is pedestrian. One sort of walker seeks contemplative solitude and evocative prospects" (12). It can be said that these contemplative moments represent the perception of the city by the characters.

Moreover, the perception of the city is conceptualized by two different points of view according to de Certeau as *voyeur* and walker. The former is an elevated figure

watching the city from a vantage point just like the figure of Icarus. Therefore, a god-like vision prevails, overlooking the labyrinths of the city since “[i]t’s hard to be down when you’re up” (92 emphasis in original). The latter, on the other hand, is the authentic practitioner of the city as mentioned earlier. In other words, Certeau distinguished “the city as seen from above” and “the fragmentary city seen and experienced at street level” (McNamara 3). While the former is totalizing by nature, in the latter, “the city focalized through a character’s perception is necessarily a fragmentary and subjective experience of the city built from perceptions, emotions, and memories”; therefore, the city is represented “from multiple spatially dispersed perspectives” (Ibid.). Such fragmentary insights of individuals shape the urban space and turn the city into a fully lived space formed by multiplicity and diversity. The walkers as the pedestrians write and read the city as

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these ‘real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.’ They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize. (de Certeau 97)

The footsteps of the walker are a way to reject the totalizing nature of the city since it is a continuous appropriation and transformation of the space by each pedestrian. By way of walking, they take over the city and claim their agency. They construct the space around them through their movements and interactions that cannot be foreseen beforehand, contributing to their lived experiences. Thus, this appropriation of space through walking is likened to a speech act by Certeau as being “enunciative”. Just like the way a speaker utters words and appropriates the language, the walker through their movements within the urban creates spaces of enunciation in which they actively participate in shaping their environs, which is delivered through their “enunciative focalizations” where their bodies actively register the space (97-98,116). Accordingly, the urban environment is a mosaic composed of human recollections, feelings, and views, and this rich tapestry is explored through pedestrian movements going beyond physical acts. Through everyday practices, the walkers recount the complex and dynamic city enclosing them. Therefore, “[l]ayered and heterogeneous, the city can be understood as a subset of multiple urban practices and imaginations” (Prakash 7).

In the novels, characters engage in contemplative ambles providing readers with a distinct perspective on the city. Thereby, it is essential to inspect how these novels explore the act of walking as a spatial everyday urban practice and contribute to the understanding of the dynamic and transformative nature of the urban setting of London. Through their act of walking, they claim their agency over the city as they continuously interact with, and (re)produce the city. In both *NW* and *Happiness*, nondominant voices explore the city which was once defined by its homogenous British inhabitants that belong to a coterie of affluent circles particularly in the high modernist novels. In this representation of London as an inclusive open space, they inscribe the city with their everyday spatial practices with their own experiences.

### **2.3.1. The figure of Flâneur and Psychogeography**

As discussed above, the act of walking accentuates bodily movement through which the spatiality is mapped and overwritten, providing agency for its pedestrian practitioner. In literature, this act of walking is contextualized through the trope of the flâneur – usually a white male wandering around the city leisurely - in the nineteenth century. The emergence of the literary urban walker marks the urbanization of Paris with the Haussmann project in the 19th century. The old medieval fabric of the city had been transformed into great boulevards and arcades where goods and capital began to flow. In this newly redeveloped city, the figure of the flâneur of the French poet Charles de Baudelaire appeared, strolling along the large boulevards and arcades. Its appearance as a critique of modernization found itself a place in literature, and the author – in this case the poet Baudelaire- as flâneur went to the marketplace – malls and arcades of the time- to portray a panoramic representation of the city (Benjamin 66). Thus, the walker practicing the city on the ground level and its portrayal in literature is inherently tied to the image of the flâneur (Pleßke 277). Merlin Coverley defines this figure of the flâneur as “a composite figure – vagrant, detective, explorer, dandy and stroller – yet, within these many and often contradictory roles, his predominant characteristic is the way in which he makes the street his home” (65). Through his sole perambulations, this idle walker traverses the physical topographies of the city which is in constant flux since it transforms all the time in line with modernity and the capital. His walking initiates chance encounters in the urban while he registers the physicality of his surroundings with his reflections and emotions, which makes him feel belongs to the transient and fluid city.

In the twentieth century<sup>1</sup>, this figure of urban stroller has evolved into a more political practice called psychogeography. Psychogeography is a term coined by the French theoretician Guy Debord in 1955 in his *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* and defined as follows: psychogeography is “[t]he study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (qtd. in Coverley 1). Ann Tso states that early influencers of psychogeography included renowned figures such as William Blake, Thomas de Quincey, Charles Baudelaire, and Walter Benjamin (16). Guy Debord developed this critical concept based on the prevailing figure of the flâneur. However, while it builds on the idea of the flâneur, psychogeography also problematizes the flâneur’s detachment from the crowd, and it challenges the commercial influences in urban spaces brought about by rapid urban transformation triggered by the flow of the capital (Tso. 17-18) Thus, psychogeography – an interdisciplinary approach merging geography, architecture, psychology, and sociology - is a way to scrutinize how the city affects individuals’ feelings, and it tries to offer solutions for how denizens interact with and explore the city by avoiding the oppressive and commercial part of the city. This interdisciplinary approach informs literature in a way that characters navigating the urban setting reflect their emotions against the hegemonic construction of the city, which shapes the narrative structure creating a more fragmented storytelling. Tso claims that “[t]he implicit purpose of literary psychogeography is to deconstruct all understandings of London that seem too self-evident” (15). It problematizes the neo-liberal oppressive cosmopolis, emphasizing its layered depth (Tso 15).

Regarding the hegemonic construction of the city, Tso states that the city is viewed as oppressive and a panopticon because it governs all movements and (consumerist) desires for the accumulation and growth of capital. “In this respect,” Tso

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<sup>1</sup> The literary walker evolved into a surveillant male gaze in the twentieth-century writings of the Surrealists, for instance, Andre Breton and Louis Aragon. Through their literary works like *Nadja* and *Paris Peasant*, the city turned into an erotic landscape, in which the walkers pursue beautiful women with their “unconscious drives” (Coverley 21). Therefore, Pleßke argues that the flâneur, regarding both his detachment from the crowd and erotic desires, is connected to the notion of voyeurism that is linked to a sense of “panopticism or the objectifying gaze of the heterosexual male” (277). In contrast to the literary playful engagement with the trope of walker by Surrealists who “celebrate[d] urban civilization, explore the unconscious, and spawn a modern mythology of daily life – the “everyday marvelous” – thus achieving Baudelaire’s 1840s project” (Nesci 81), a more empirical and methodological method named psychogeography was created by a group of Marxist intellectuals named Situationists one of whose most notable founders is Marxist philosopher Guy Debord.

argues that “urban living is an exercise in conformity toward which psychogeographers feel ambivalent, while psychogeography is a rejection of the capitalist economic model/order that the city represents” (18). With these points in mind, walking has been considered a political act because the very act of walking is against

the spirit of the modern city with its promotion of swift circulation and the street-level gaze that walking requires allows one to challenge the official representation of the city by cutting across established routes and exploring those marginal and forgotten areas often overlooked by the city’s inhabitants. (Coverley 12)

Therefore, the act of walking which enables the citizens to interact with the city, reshape and define it continuously is considered as a resistance to the “swift circulation” of the modern city through cars. This capitalist mentality pushing people to make use of their time by moving fast is rejected in psychogeographical theory. In this way, people are not alienated from the city, and the interactive process of defining each other between humans and the city is pursued to be treasured against the totalizing capitalist ideology.

To perform such navigation within the urban spaces away from the totalizing nature of the city, the Situationists came up with a way to explore the city without being involved in its commodification, which is called *dérive* or *drifting*. It is simply a practice of ambling in the city without a set goal or route in a politically theorized way so these acts of *dérives* “seek to expose the vicissitudes of the consumer city by enacting an unmeditated ramble through the city” (Hubbard 107). Through this act of drifting, the ordinary and overlooked parts of the city are examined with a deeper gaze. In so doing, everyday life gains meaning through a more observant eye that unveils the familiarity of the city. Tso maintains that “psychogeography is to highlight the spectacular in an urban space that has otherwise grown familiar” (21).

With all these in mind, literary representations of London regarding psychogeography are frequently “truncated in style” as they try to capture “London-ness” which can be “detected only fleetingly, discontinuously, and when it is finally detected, it gives one a glimpse into the ‘foreboding labyrinth’ or the ‘*mélange of ideas*’ which has made London infinite” (Tso 21, emphasis in original). Therefore, narrating London requires fragments as the city is a dynamic and diverse space with

fleeting simultaneous moments recounted by different individuals. In this context, it is significant that both *NW* and *Happiness* employ the trope of walker in subverting ways with non-white characters. As I will discuss in detail in the analysis chapters, they register their fleeting surroundings fragmentarily as they solely perambulate, and sometimes they engage in the act of *dérive* that renders the quotidian qualities of the urban strikingly unfamiliar.

#### **2.4 Simultaneity and Spatial Metaphors**

The contemporary representation of the metropolis is explored as a constitution of different elements and binaries existing at the same time through the depiction of the city as a lived space. This image of the city that incorporates the personal and collective perspectives reveals interconnected dimensions of the urban space, which emphasizes concurrent impressions and experiences taking place within London. Doreen Massey argues that space must be conceptualized “as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global” (264). Therefore, as discussed earlier, space is not a static container and also it is not exempt from time. Both of these entities inevitably and continuously (re)generate each other (Ibid.). In line with this, another way to approach the city in literature is to look at its temporal characteristics in the narrative. In this regard, simultaneity is one of the key concepts when it comes to understanding urban experience in literature (Ameel 2). Georg Simmel describes the metropolis as “the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions” (410). Therefore, the city is a place in which a variety of stimuli occur at the same time, and this complex nature of the city goes hand in hand with simultaneity. What is meant by simultaneity in literature is that several temporal layers or social worlds can appear concurrently to one character or a multitude of characters; events and impressions can occur simultaneously to one or more characters; and reading audiences can experience several temporal layers or social worlds simultaneously (Ameel 2). In his book *Charting Literary Urban Studies*, Jens Martin Gurr indicates that “the representation of co-existing impressions is arguably the crux of any attempt to narrate urban complexity, for simultaneity, the notion of innumerable things – momentous or trivial – happening at the same time, is surely a central characteristic of urban complexity” which comprises multitude of components such as “multiplicity,

density, mobility, intersections of the global and the local, cultural hybridity, violence, conflicts over the use of space” etc., yet the concept of simultaneity is a pivotal concern (30). In a bustling urban environment in which multiple characters are portrayed within the same location engaged in different activities, the focus of the narrative alters between those groups of characters, and this creates a sense of multiplicity as well as the impression of chaos, disconnection, and fragmentation to highlight “a vast network of underlying interconnections, an overall unified mechanism” (Margolin par. 12).

While narrating simultaneity, “fragmentation, intersecting chapters or paragraphs, parallel structuring of sections taking place in different locations or even an unusual page layout can all be used” (Mattheis 484). In line with this, Gurr further classifies how urban complexity is represented in narration as declarative, synecdochic, and experiential representations. The first one called “declarative complexity” makes use of metaphors and similes like “maze” and “labyrinth” to disclose the character’s “sense of being lost”; however, it can be more appealing if the narration adopts such a quality of being labyrinthine instead of conveying that through mere comparison (Gurr 34 35). The second strategy is synecdochic “which consists in narrating one strand of action and suggesting that there would have been innumerable others that would also deserve to be told” (Gurr 35). This strategic representation of simultaneity underscores the multilayered nature of the city, referring to its spatiality in which multiple personal stories of urbanites navigate and fill, and each of those glimpses equally deserves to be narrated.

This second strategy narrating simultaneity reminisces de Certeau’s speech act. Michel de Certeau claims that the spatial practice can be comprehended through speech acts which are conceptualized as walking rhetorics in the forms of *asyndeton* and *synecdoche*. The former linguistically refers to the omission of linking words, which can be applied to pedestrian’s movements since by way of walking, “it selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. From this point of view, every walk constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot” (101). Thus, it, “by elision, creates a “less,” opens gaps in the spatial continuum” (Ibid.) The latter enlarges a spatial element to represent something greater “(a totality) and takes its place (the bicycle or the piece of furniture in a store window stands for a whole street or neighborhood)” (Ibid.). In other words, synecdochic

representation is another way to narrate simultaneity by recounting a portion of something greater. (Mattheis 24) In a way, this suggests that numerous different events happen all at once at the same time in different parts of a city. While narrating one piece of action, a myriad of other things happening here and there imply “a brief glimpse of a story or place, in a pars pro toto manner, stands in for an entire narrative or setting” (Mattheis 484). These simultaneous short actions represent a fragment of a greater totality of human experience occurring at the same time which could be standalone stories themselves.

On the other hand, *asyndeton* -the last strategy to represent simultaneity- is more experiential and recurring and Gurr explains that as follows: “complexity and simultaneity are here frequently enacted by means of a suggestive asyndetic sequence of impressions simulating the chaotic [nature of the city] ..., which allows readers to ‘experience’ the sense of being overpowered by the simultaneity of multiple impressions” (36). Thus, asyndetic enumeration suggests that actions and situations are described without conjunctions leading to a sense of rapid and chaotic flow. It can be inferred that asyndetic representation creates a scenic depiction of space recorded by a camera which shows the turmoil in an urban environment. Later, he exemplifies this type of representing simultaneity in three works to study how they “both descriptively employ the topos of the maze or labyrinth and in various ways and perform labyrinthine complexity” (Gurr 36). It suggests a literary or thematic use of labyrinth which entails a metaphorical depiction of the complex and multifaceted nature of urban representation. The narrative style “through sections with multiple insertions and cross-references” or the portrayal of sprawling streets might resemble a maze, and this could display an intricate and interconnected structure, mirroring the complexity of the characters' movements and interactions in the urban setting.

Also, according to Pleßke, there are some major city tropes in literature, and networks and labyrinths are included in those metaphors as well. She says that contemporary approaches to urban studies focus “on a matrix, which incorporates and connects elements of time and space echoing the chronotopic [the interdependence of temporal and spatial elements] character of the metropolis” (183). She further emphasizes that elements of “space, time, movement, rhythm in the city and the subjective experience” are all intricately linked to one another, and “the city as a stage

[suggesting that urban environments serve as a backdrop for different events and situations] is a ready-made topography, in the network metaphor of the mosaic of the city's connections remains illegible until one sees the whole picture" (Ibid.) She compares the topos of maze and labyrinth as follows:

Maze and labyrinth especially express the struggle for orientation in the city; while the former has a dead end and thus implies that the subject will be lost forever, the labyrinth has a center, a goal, and an objective, as well as a way out. The image of the labyrinth, which often functions as a structuring device, has persisted from classical through contemporary writing. The labyrinth forms an irregular, twisting network with only one path leading to the center. (Ibid.)

Therefore, it can be stated that in the novels, through cross-referencing in narration and the portrayal of the characters in London streets, the challenges in navigating the city and finding a sense of orientation are depicted by adopting a labyrinthine aspect of London with its twisting and intricate network. Such cross-referencings and narratorial insertions, accentuating the labyrinthine London, reflect the interconnectedness of the characters and portray their intertwined lives in the cosmopolis.

Another temporal aspect of the city novel is the concept of palimpsest which is intricately linked to the urban practice of walking and spatio-temporal aspects of the city. As a temporal entity, it emphasizes "the possibility of uncovering illimitable, unexpected inscriptions of past, present, and future within the urban texture" (Pleßke 311). The metropolis is regarded as a palimpsest, acknowledged as one of the major city tropes, because of "its physical layers of materiality, the coexistence of hybrid social spaces, and the historicity of its memory" (Ibid., 184). The city itself is compared to an ancient manuscript that has been written on, erased, and written again. Thus, the city has manifolded layers due to different social spaces and history, and "every individual walking through the city comes across personal and collective memories" (Ibid.) Also, the metaphor of the city as a palimpsest is another dimension in which the metropolis manifests its complexity. Thus, investigating the representations of physical layers of the city and the co-existence of hybrid social spaces in the novels is useful for understanding the intricacies of the fictional cityspace of London.

To conclude, in light of these theoretical underpinnings and concepts, it is

significant to explore how *NW* and *Happiness* employ narrative spatiality and its inherent frameworks such as mapping strategies and the way they narrate simultaneity by integrating multiple perspectives. The conceptual tools I have discussed in this chapter allow us to explore the labyrinthine dynamics within the urban context and how minorities interact with the city's cultural fabric, navigate it, and negotiate it. In the end, these interactions shape the dynamic nature of (multicultural) identity in urban environments. In the next chapters, I will explore how the characters from varied backgrounds regarding class and race in *NW* and *Happiness* engage and interact with the metropolis formed by the fluidity and movement as a result of globalization and multiculturalism.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE URBAN REPRESENTATION IN ZADIE SMITH'S *NW*

The main focus of this chapter is Zadie Smith's fourth novel *NW* and its representation of the contemporary urban milieu of London. In this novel, Smith demonstrates contemporary urban experiences through the intersecting everyday lives of four Londoners and other chance encounters in a suburban area in the metropolis, hence portraying an illustration of modern urban life. To do so, she juxtaposes the imaginary and real by situating the fictitious estate of Caldwell in the capital. The novel, set in a rather confined city district corresponding both to the title itself and the postal code of Northwest, foregrounds how characters experience and interact with the very fabric of the urban through this localized yet multicultural area. Therefore, the intricate interplay between cityspace and individuals is rendered masterfully as the author weaves the narrative around the criss-cross paths of Leah, Natalie (formerly known as Keisha), Felix, and Nathan. They all grew up in council estates and are still dwelling in Willesden located in northwest London inhabited by mostly lower and middle-class denizens. The multifaceted nature of the city is imagined and illustrated through mapping; spatial metaphors; several encounters; and the urban practice of walking. Smith portrays the city, its complexities, and its topographical qualities through distinct narrative perspectives offering diverse perceptions of the space. The use of this very specific geography -NW- illustrates a more multicultural/postcolonial view of London as it embodies intense diversified ethnic variety as well as social qualities hence the characters having different cultural heritages. Thus, as characters navigate the city, questions of identity, belonging, and class come forth. While mapping the city, the characters map their past and present concurrently trying to figure out who they are and what to do with their lives, and this act of mapping evokes reflections, emotions, and memories inscribed in space delivered through narrative focalization. In contrast to existing habitual representations of the central metropolis, the novel encapsulates quite a peripheral part of the city with its housing estates

consisting of multicultural communities and characters coming from varied backgrounds in terms of both class and race. In accordance with this, this chapter will initially provide an overview of the novel and its scope of study to highlight the prevailing perspectives on how it has been read and interpreted by scholars respectively. Then, it will investigate how minorities interact with the city's cultural fabric, navigate it, negotiate it, and how the city is narrated through temporal aspects, spatial metaphors, mapping, and the act of walking in twenty-first-century literature. By examining these concepts in *NW*, this chapter contends that the novel contradicts and subverts the hegemonic paradigms regarding preceding narratives of elite London (as discussed earlier in the first chapter) as it foregrounds diverse experiences of minorities in a suburban urban milieu.

### **3.1. An Overview of the Novel and Existing Scholarship**

*NW* is structured around five parts titled “visitation,” “guest,” “host,” “crossing,” and again “visitation.” Throughout the narrative, Smith employs numerous experimental techniques such as stream of consciousness, vignettes, colloquial texting references, changing first and third-person narrators, non-sequential fragmentary style, calligrams, the recurrent use of the non-sequential number 37, and so forth contributing to her narrative that recounts and re-imagines the cityspace and its intricacies with which the characters grapple. Such techniques entail the impression of chaos and fragmentation of urban complexity while offering multiplicity. The three characters, Leah, Natalie, and Nathan are “born and bred” from the imaginary Caldwell housing estate located in the real area of Willesden in Northwest London, yet they lead their lives as adults in different parts of the same neighbourhood. Despite living in the same estate and going to the same school during their childhood, only Leah and Natalie share a particularly close bond as best friends, while Nathan remains a former school friend. Felix, on the other hand, grew up in the Garvey House in the same local area. His life solely intersects with theirs through a crime incident. Not only do these characters’ lives intersect with one another, but also throughout the novel, as the narrative perspectives register their experiences and interactions with the city, the readers see manifold multicultural intersections in the metropolis. For example, the parishioners are “Polish, Indian, African, Caribbean” (73), or Natalie and Frank’s circuit of friends

are “from Jamaica, from Ireland, from India, from China” (88), Pauline and Leah’s old estate Caldwell is “full of people from the colonies and the Russiany lot” (79), and so on.<sup>2</sup>

The first part “visitation” covering a time span from April to August revolves around Leah Hanwell, an Irish descendant social worker residing in a council flat and married to a French-Algerian hairdresser. In the opening of the initial part, the reader sees Leah lying on a hammock in her communal garden listening to the radio and contemplating what to do with the news of her pregnancy. An unexpected encounter takes place with the doorbell ring introducing Shar – a “second generation” immigrant woman from the subcontinent – begging for help (17). Being utterly empathetic towards Shar, Leah does not understand that she is a swindler, so she invites her in. They exchange a little conversation and share a cup of tea, and Leah sends her by offering thirty pounds for cab fare so that Shar -who happens to be a former classmate- can visit her mother at the hospital. Afterwards, Leah’s husband Michel, and mother Pauline scold her naivety that she fails to realize Shar is a door-to-door drug addict. From this point on, Shar reappears in different parts of the section through chance happenstances in the streets of the neighbourhood, and Leah wants to confront her. In the meantime, Leah conceals her pregnancy from her husband who desires a child rather desperately in order to move forward as the nature of marriage ordains. However, she secretly undergoes an abortion and takes contraceptive pills that she steals from her good friend Natalie. She questions the teleological nature of things hence rejecting moving forward toward a destined cause. Meanwhile, she loses her pet dog beaten to death in the street by a guy whom she and Michel think is the boyfriend of Shar. At Natalie’s place, while watching TV, they hear the news about a man called Felix Cooper who is knifed on Albert Road in Kilburn at the time of the Nothing Hill Carnival.

Felix Cooper, a Caribbean native, is the focal point in the next part “guest”. He is the character whom the reader first encounters over the stabbing incident that made the headlines at the end of the previous section. This part told in the third person

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<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Guignery by pointing out an abundance of examples in the novel reflecting its multiculturalism states that this is a common feature of Smith’s novels creating a “multiverse” (par.29). See: Guignery, Vanessa. “Zadie Smith’s NW or the Art of Line crossing.”

narration consists of three chapters titled with postcodes signifying certain places around which he wanders such as “NW6,” “(W1),” and “NW6,” and spans only a day in the life of Felix Cooper, resembling *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf or more contemporary *Saturday* by Ian McEwan, from the morning until the night at which he is killed. Yet, here the character is not an affluent white English traversing the city. He is a car mechanic, and he attempts to escape from old drug habits; therefore, he wants to build a new life with his girlfriend Grace. Waking up next to her, he begins his quest around the city first visiting his father to hand him a book on Garvey House bought by Grace, then a man named Tom to buy a project car as a gift for Grace, later his former girlfriend Annie. During this tour, he walks around the city and takes public transport. On his subterrestrial journey, he encounters two men on the tube – Nathan (yet the reader is not aware that he is Nathan at that time) and a rather young man- and he talks to them so that they can give the seat to the standing pregnant lady, which results in a quarrel. He gets stabbed while traveling back home to meet Grace so they can join the carnival.

The third part “host”, which includes 185 vignettes across childhood and adulthood, centers on Natalie Blake, whose birth name is Keisha, and when she gets married, she becomes Natalie De Angelis. She is the childhood friend of Leah “with whom she had bonded over a dramatic event” (176). From her infant years, Keisha bears a “mutated will” (180) that she achieves everything she is determined to. Having an Afro-Caribbean origins, she becomes an accomplished barrister as she grows up and she chooses a proper name fitting her social position. She is married with two children and wealthy enough to live in the “posh bits” of Willesden now after being raised in rather humble Caldwell. Even though she seems to possess a significant amount of welfare compared to her past, she does not feel content with her life. Therefore, she starts to engage in swinger sites secretly under her former name Keisha. At the end of the part, her husband Frank, who is of African-Italian descent, finds out about her clandestine meetings with other couples. Subsequently, she leaves the house.

In the following part “crossing”, Natalie drifts around the neighbourhood in an extreme state of emotional turmoil. She meanders through the places once she was inhabiting: “Willesden Lane to Kilburn High Road,” “Shoot Up Hill to Fortune Green,” “Hampstead to Archway,” “Hampstead Heath,” “Corner of Hornsey Lane,”

and “Hornsey Lane” which are also the chapter titles in this particular section. Furthermore, this part is set on the same day of Felix’s murder. As she strolls, her path intersects with Nathan Bogle, and together they wander around all those aforementioned locations taking drugs. In the meantime, Nathan tries to hide from the police due to his participation in the murder. Unlike Natalie, a successful barrister, Nathan has not been able to perform well in life. He doesn’t attend college like Leah and Natalie, yet he becomes a drug addict involved in illegal trajectories. He appears to be working with Shar, as during their walk with Natalie, he pauses at the tube to meet some women for a certain exchange, and Natalie identifies one of these women as Shar. As they proceed, Natalie finds herself on the Hornsey Lane Bridge also known as the “suicide bridge” (148).

The final part “visitation” is the shortest section and takes place a couple of days after the crime. Natalie and Frank are experiencing significant challenges in their marriage following the swinging incident. Leah and Michel are also having problems after Michel learns about the birth control pills. Leah goes through hard times, and she loses her touch with her surroundings. Hence, Michel asks for help from her best friend Natalie. Natalie arrives at their home and finds Leah lying in her hammock beneath the warm summer sun. As they talk about their lives expressing how they deserve better since they have worked hard, Natalie tells her that she knows what happened on the Albert Road. Initially, the two women first send an e-mail, and later Keisha calls the police to report Nathan for the alleged murder of Felix Cooper. The novel ends with Keisha Blake stating, “I got something to tell you” (337).

Existing scholarship on the novel mainly encapsulates the readings of cosmopolitanism, identity, and socioeconomic critiques based on class and/or neoliberal subjectivity<sup>3</sup> acknowledging the notion of space. Most scholarship tends to focus on the cosmopolitan readings of the novel as it depicts four Londoners with varied origins in the global context of a transnational neighborhood through a confined geographical area. This multiculturalism is not approached with a naïve celebratory tone, in contrast, the novel acknowledges “the radical inequalities of transnational

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<sup>3</sup> For a socioeconomic critique based on neoliberal subjectivity and delusion of freedom, see: Beaumont, Alexander. “Placing Politics: Home and the Right to Habitation in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* and Zadie Smith’s *NW*.”

mobility and the actually existing realities” (Shaw 4). Similarly, the socioeconomic concerns reflected in the “everyday lived experiences of cosmopolitan individuals” play a crucial role in shaping identity-building and maintaining communication in society (Sakız 119). It has been argued that “narrative spaces, cosmopolitan characters, identities and the narrator” as well as the notion of class contribute to the illustration of cosmopolitan experiences and viewpoints (ibid., 160). Following the socioeconomic concerns, the class phenomenon in *NW* has been deliberately discussed regarding the period of deindustrialization brought about by Margaret Thatcher that altered the socio-economic landscape of London. As a working-class fiction how it deviates from the generic aesthetics of the genre underscoring the novel’s experimental style once again argued as well. Having examined the social conditions apparent in the novel, Matti Ron, in “Working-Class Fiction in the 2010s”, links the spatial existence to the representation of class since the working-class experience narrated in the novel is intertwined with the “narrative movement around/within space”, offering an angle of “class as identity [...] also as an exposition of the impasse facing the contemporary experience of class as formation” (122). Contributing to the discussion revolving around class and movement, Lauren Elkin, in “Class Mobility and Public Transport”, also reads the novel from a post-Thatcherite Britain, and late-capitalist individualist perspective discussing the relationship between physical mobility and social mobility by focusing on the use of public transport. She also discusses urban mapping and space in a manner that accentuates class dynamics revolving around a critique of the Thatcher period.

Significant spatial readings of *NW* are also present within the scholarly literature<sup>4</sup>. The urban habitation and interpersonal dynamics, highlighting how the environment in urban spaces and interaction between people are represented along with considering the ethical values, and the construction of self-identity have been investigated.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Jordan Spencer, in his “The Spatial and Performative Textualities of Psychogeography”, briefly discusses the spatial practice of walking and how the novel “embraces some of the classic tropes of the psychogeographical novel

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<sup>4</sup> For a broader perspective on Smith’s space of North London encompassing her four novels incl. *NW*, see: Pirker, Eva Ulrike. “Approaching Space: Zadie Smith’s North London Fiction.”

<sup>5</sup> John Hadlock, in his article “Between Urban Ecology and Social Construction”, provides an analysis of the novel, stressing the dynamics between urban setting, social construction, and ethics of representation, underlining “the possibility for art to responsibly project an image of the material world that acknowledges the complexity of the relationship of humans and their environment(s)” (155-56).

but deploys them in innovative and unexpected forms” (102), which is relevant to this thesis. However, Spencer’s study does not focus on *NW*. Following the walking discussion and the novel’s spatial analysis, Silvia Rosivalová Baučková and Pavol Jozef Šafárik argue that urban shapes the narrative in “Wandering through London, Getting Nowhere”. They consider Zadie Smith a literary cartographer who weaves her narrative with movement through geographical topographies. Their work approaches the act of movement as a sign of a pessimistic attempt to escape from the characters’ social backgrounds. It offers insightful an exploration of the urban space and walking in the novel and it seems pertinent to my study. However, it does not offer an in-depth critique and its examination of the wider implications of the urban setting and walking is somewhat narrow in scope.

Most of the studies analyzing *NW* focus on its multicultural aspects and experimental style, foregrounding various dimensions of class, social mobility, racial inequalities, cosmopolitanism, space, movement, ethics, and metamodern elements. In this study, I will also make use of some of these concepts while investigating urban spatiality and the act of walking. However, while in the studies cited above *NW*’s quality of being an urban novel and the city appears to be discussed as a backdrop, in this study, it will be the main focus of discussion. The examinations made by Spencer, Baučková, and Šafárik are significant at this point for my study as they both emphasize the urban spatial practice of walking, yet neither of them provides a thorough analysis of the novel from this perspective. Thus, *NW* is under-examined in terms of literary urban studies. Though some of these aforementioned studies refer to certain concepts to be explored in this thesis such as walking or the connection between urban space and identity, they need to be extended concerning the urban study of the novel in terms of urban spaces, its dynamics, and subjective experiences. Therefore, there seems no work examining the novel (to my present knowledge) from the point of urban spatiality in terms of how the characters navigate and negotiate London regarding the spatial concepts of *thirdspace*, mapping, and simultaneity. By acknowledging these former studies, my main attempt in this study and in the rest of the chapter is to explore the novel with its intrinsic interaction with the urban space and unveil the complex nature of the city centering on the aforementioned conceptual tools.

### 3.2. Urban Space in *NW*

*NW* foregrounds a localized suburban area of the city as well as a day journey to central London through Felix. While portraying the geographical urban area with its physical dimensions, the perceptions of the city by different characters are underscored through varied narrative perspectives. In this respect, Edward Soja's notion of *thirdspace* provides a critical approach in discussing the urban space in *NW* since his concept sheds light on the contested urban space of London encompassing the lived experiences of the characters. He claims that real-and-imagined spaces are intertwined creating an open space where multiple spatial experiences take place (11). With the interconnectedness of real-and-imagined and the multifaceted shifts in narrative perspective, it is possible to investigate how the characters navigate the tangible and social aspects of the city and the intersection of class and race in an urban setting in *NW*. Soja elucidates *thirdspace* as "a space of extraordinary openness and a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable" (5). *NW* renders the invisible visible by representing a cacophony of diasporic communities and imagines the heart of the metropolis by incorporating new spatial possibilities with its portrayal of minorities. In this *thirdspace*, a radical and open urban milieu of London emerges.

Considering the investigation of urban space in *NW*, the narrative's emphasis shifts away from the traditional central metropolis since the novel mainly focuses on the outer suburb of Northwest including the fictional Caldwell housing estate situated in Willesden as well as imaginary virtual street directions such as Bartlett Avenue in NW6 and Yates Lane in NW8. Hence, *NW* demonstrates the urban space through real-and-imagined topographies by blending the tangible and conceptual aspects of space with the inclusion of fictive places, transcending the actual boundaries of the metropolis. Literary space is essentially an imagined space shaped by the author. However, juxtaposing an imaginary area with a real-world counterpart in a metropolis like London invites the reader to rethink the canonical representations of the city through a two-folded imagining in a way to interrupt, appropriate, and transform the space (hooks 23). Situating the characters in a peripheral London outside the classical metropolis, especially in an imagined marginalized space challenges the mainstream

portrayals of the city while deconstructing hence transforming the prevailing perception of the urban milieu of London that has been familiar to the dwellers and the readers. The novel celebrates this unorthodox literary space by blurring the lines between the real and imaginary through its fictitious landscapes in peripheral London, which allows the reader to traverse a space where the authentic and fictional converge offering a new perspective on the urban experience.

Another re-imagined space in the novel is “Garvey House” which the author was inspired by a photobook displaying a residential area of black urbanites in London<sup>6</sup>. This is the council Felix grew up and his father still inhabits. The space is narrated through a photobook named “GARVEY HOUSE: A Photographic Portrait” (107) that Felix’s girlfriend Grace bought for his father Lloyd and it recounts the area as: “This is a photographic account of a fascinating period in London’s history. A mix of squat, halfway house and commune, Garvey House welcomed vulnerable young adults from the edges of” (107). It is clear that the representation of London here is not a canonical one. The abovementioned imaginary lanes and the imagined areas such as the Caldwell and Garvey House project invite the reader to question the constructed map of the city, and these fictional depictions portray a liberated space from the domineering literary representation of the city. In this new and experimental space, both the minorities and Londoners and the reader are levelled at the same extent exploring a whole new setting of the city as the totalizing map/perception of the city is interrupted.

Consistent with the aforementioned break from conventional descriptions of literary London, the novel’s investigation of space and its intrinsic implications defy the perceptions of Englishness stemming from racial and class values. Urban spatiality denotes a certain level of Englishness in accordance with specific locations on the city map. For “real” Londoners, as Felix’s ex-girlfriend Annie condescendingly puts it Willesden is a “dinky part” of north-west London. The residents inhabiting the area W1 -which corresponds to the capital’s heart with locations such as Mayfair, Marylebone, Soho including the Oxford and Regent streets- “probably never heard of” that part of the city, and it is “*very interesting, very ‘diverse’*” (146, emphasis added).

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<sup>6</sup> In acknowledgements, Smith states that *The Black House* by Colin Jones was a model for “Garvey House” (339).

Accordingly, Kathleen Paul argues that a persisting historical perspective classifying certain individuals as more British than others exists regarding the dichotomy of centre and periphery (qtd. in Slavin 100). This idea has been produced and reproduced over the years, and Thatcher's children are still haunted by that very discourse. When Leah and Pauline take the bus to go to the metro station, Margaret Thatcher and her politics are alluded to with a reference to "front of the Mail". Pauline recollects the headline of the day stating "Today this is Brent. Tomorrow it could be Britain!" (45). It is obvious that Kilburn and Willesden Green are located in the borough of Brent, which is either "elsewhere" or outside of Britain and not included in the canonical or national narrative (Slavin 100). Therefore, the description of the neighbourhood in Willesden as an inclusive space in which a sense of plurality exists with its second-generation immigrants, their "born and bred" children, and multicultural communities subverts the elite white London.

Through this seemingly marginal location, the novel offers a transcendent topological representation of the city by blending real-and-imagined spatiality. It does so by employing a fragmented narrative structure with multiple characters being distinct focalizers in different sections; therefore, it maps a narrative portraying the urban experience. In parallel with the idea mentioned earlier that multifarious experiences create a space for open and critical exchange to be embraced and explored, in its imagined urban space, the narrative allows the exploration of diverse perspectives from various dwellers of the neighbourhood such as Leah, Natalie, and Felix. It offers physical descriptions of the landscape as well as exploring socio-economic and cultural dynamics through the illustration of characters' interactions and lived experiences within the said geographical space. Moreover, the urban milieu as a *thirdspace* encapsulates lived experiences bringing together the subjective and collective experience and agency as it recognizes societal, cultural, and subjective aspects of space which are inherently interconnected with individual and collective experiences. In doing so, it invites the reader to "think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose the inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography" (Soja 1). The spatiality of human life constructs and is constructed (by) many factors and they are all intertwined forming individuals' lived

experiences.

In the lived spaces of Kilburn, the characters' subjective experiences differ from one another due to a sense of inequality brought about by spatial arrangements revealing itself as location and socio-economic class, collectively shaping their experiences. For instance, the area in which Leah lives is perceived and experienced in different ways even by her let alone by other individuals' various perceptions of northwest London. She feels estranged from the suburban space but she also feels a sort of comfort as a "born-and-bred" resident. While her memories inscribed in space bring her solace, the realities of class and the idea of moving forward make it difficult for her to negotiate. When she first encounters Shar at her doorstep who is asking for help saying she is a local and cursing at the same time while expressing herself, Leah accepts her:

Leah is as faithful in her allegiance to this two-mile square of the city as other people are to their families, or their countries She knows the way people speak around here, that fuckin, around here, is only a rhythm in a sentence. (6)

Leah feels deeply attached to northwest London since she is familiar with the place as a local inhabitant. Locality is an intrinsic element here that shapes how she perceives the space. This part of the city is not just a mere geographical location, but it is a lived space for her and it is imbued with connections and subtle cultural differences seen in linguistic peculiarities. The social, cultural, and physical aspects of the urban setting blend into each other through their encounter, which makes her feel spatially belonging to her environment. Additionally, while showing her old estate building where she was born to Shar by pointing at it from her window, the spatiality of urban life and its inherent connection to class surface. Though it seems close in proximity, it is harder to navigate in space because "[f]rom there to here, a journey longer than it looks" (13). In other words, acquiring such mobility is not straightforward. Even though she is attached to "this two-mile square of the city", her perception of her residential space contradicts Natalie's environs, which reflects socio-economic inequities, and she experiences a sense of estrangement in Natalie's neighbourhood – which is a part of Kilburn- hence feeling alienated from "[t]his bourgeois existence!" (68).

Furthermore, it is significant to acknowledge that the spatial arrangements reveal social constructions such as socio-economic relations in order to interrogate the

spatiality of human life and the subjective perspectives. Therefore, “how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, [and] how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology” (Soja 6) highlights the interconnectedness of inherently spatial human existence and its political agendas. This interconnectedness is evident in *NW*, where, even though the urban setting is regarded as a marginal and rather notorious location, its illustration reveals disparities and blurred distinctions within itself in terms of social mobility and residential space. While representing a global London where characters from varied backgrounds and ethnicities live, the novel does not celebrate such multiculturalism naively by acknowledging that mobility is limited due to financial reasons. For example, Natalie, portrayed as a socially upward character, inhabits a house with bay windows in “the posh bit, on the park”, on the contrary, Leah dwells in a council estate with a shared garden “fenced in, on all sides” (3). While “Leah passes the old estate every day on the walk to the corner shop, she can see it from her back yard. [Yet], Nat lives just far enough to avoid it” (64). The urban space in which they dwell creates imaginary crossings and plays a crucial role in defining one’s class and forming identity since urban spatiality is not free of social constructions. For instance, Michel does not want to live in a place on which the Brent Housing Partnership is written, and he yearns for more in a city where the capital flows and the “market is so crazy” (30). He seeks upward mobility in a city coded with welfare and a thriving economy; therefore, immigrants strive to accomplish social advancement. The posh area, as well as the domestic space of Natalie’s house, presupposes the actions of Michel who yearns for social mobility as he tries so hard to be a natural extension of De Angelis’ social circle possessing upper-middle-class values and a lifestyle: “On the grandeur of this Victorian house, the length of the garden, that he should know a barrister and a banker, that he should find funny the things they find funny” (61). The architectural aspects of the house with its spacious garden pose certain social values as it implies a level of social status and affluence that Michel desires to adopt as well. Therefore, he feels obliged to find the same things humorous in a way to demonstrate he shares a sense of humour and cultural awareness - which can be seen as signs of cultural capital signifying a social hierarchy between two families - with them. Similarly, they fail to belong to such a cultural and rather refined circuit as they are not accustomed to events like dinner parties or do not know how to act around barristers and bankers and Leah

thinks “she and Michel are invited to provide something like local color” (87) to Natalie’s house. On the other hand, when Natalie and Frank have brunch with their friends Ameeta and Imran at a café engaging in political conversation, Natalie as the focalizer states that “[t]hey were all four of them providing a service for the rest of the people in the café, simply by being here. They were the ‘local vibrancy’ to which the estate agents referred” (255-6). While they are part of the multicultural fabric in this public space displaying so-called diversity, their beings are caricaturized and because of this “they simply were political facts, in their very persons” (ibid.). Yet, their bodies actively engage with the space and construct it at the same time as they provide “local vibrancy” and in a way with their everyday activities and interactions, this public place becomes a lived space for them, which is not exempt from political agendas. Moreover, urban spatiality with its social constructions leads Natalie to self-invention so that she could belong to a certain class and location hence to her new house in the posh bit because “one’s residence is a crucial, possibly *the* crucial identifier of who you are” (Savage et al. 207, emphasis in original). Thus, she struggles to distance herself from “Caldie” and considers the cost of getting a house on the park: “The money was not for these poky terraced houses with their short back gardens. The money was for the distance the house put between you and Caldwell” (255). When she gets accustomed to her new life, in her visit to Caldwell to see her family, she cannot believe how they live in that house in which she was raised. It seems so far to her that “Natalie Blake had completely forgotten what it was like to be poor. It was a language she’d stopped being able to speak, or even to understand” (280). In line with these discussions, it can be stated that the residential space in an urban setting is interwoven with political and ideological ambitions stemming from class, wealth hence social status.

Additionally, space creates cultural dynamics in different parts of the urban, and both bodies and space itself affect and construct one another interchangeably. Leah navigates through cultural spaces constructing her identity as a teen. For example, she goes to Camden Lock – a vibrant neighbourhood identified with intellectuality in contrast to “Caldwell lot”. In an attempt to diverge these environs, as a fourteen-year-old girl, Leah explores the everyday life in the city intertwined with pop culture and intellectual movements. However, Keisha does not feel she belongs to Camden as she doesn’t “care for Baudelaire or Bukowski or Nick Drake or Sonic Youth or Joy

Division or [...] Anne Rice or William Burroughs or Kafka's Metamorphosis or CND or Glastonbury or the Situationists or Breathless or Samuel Beckett or Andy Warhol" (187). Here, the pop culture of the era and the dominance of white artists in Camden are made clear. Keisha feels indifferent towards these popular cultural icons of the time hence the cultural landscape as they do not reflect her lived experiences as a black woman. The fact that the consumption of media and art are racialized makes her disengaged from such spatial dynamics of Camden. In an attempt to blend with this part of the city, "Keisha brought a wondrous Monie Love [a black British hip hop artist] 7-inch to play on Leah's hi-fi there was something awful in the way Leah blushed and conceded it was probably OK to dance to" (ibid.). It is clear that her taste is not refined enough to belong to Camden circuit. In light of these insights, Leah's and Keisha's navigation in the metropolitan space filled with social and cultural dynamics deviates from one another since their experiences of the milieu racially differ.

Besides, evoking a sense of modernist novel with its Woolfian and Joycean techniques, "the alienated modernist observer is replaced by multiple perspectives that produce heterogeneous representations of the city" (Bentley 186) in *NW*, which again aligns with the notion of *thirdspace* formed by a variety of viewpoints that once deemed to be "incompatible and uncombinable" as discussed earlier. However, this time the characters are not distanced white observers of the city registering the space around them, they experience, interact with, and recount the urban from the point of marginalized or rather silenced groups. Through the intersecting lives of these four Londoners depicting their aspirations for upward mobility, Felix's struggle with addiction, Nathan's downward path in life, and Leah's stand against the nature of progress, the narrative embodies the notion of *thirdspace* in terms of diversified experiences in the metropolis. The concept of *thirdspace* emphasizes the "limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalizable" (Soja 70), illustrating how "literary London offers manifold versions of the cityscape because individual city novels present idiosyncratic perceptual cartographies" (Pleßke 271). Hence, *NW* as a city novel offers the complexities of everyday urban experiences through multiplicity of perspectives. As Martin J. Murray also highlights "[t]he quotidian perspective on urban life" is of importance here as it emphasizes the active

interaction with the city, which includes “the processes of ‘place making’ [...], everyday practices of partitioning and enclosure, and inclusion and exclusion” (172). Through varied experiences of characters belonging to different backgrounds, *NW* offers multiple fragmented narratives rather than an overarching one as they move through the city. The city is depicted vividly in most parts of the novel through the characters’ strolls or use of transportation (busses or tubes)<sup>7</sup>. Through their navigation, their consciousness and their surroundings are delivered in a fragmented way. This composition of different perspectives hence the fragmentary narrative technique cannot be considered separately from the act of walking as the characters individually register the urban space in their sole perambulations. Ann Tso states that “psychogeographical writings of London are often truncated in style because the subject of their depiction—London-ness—is detected only fleetingly, discontinuously, and when it is finally detected, it gives one a glimpse into the ‘foreboding labyrinth’ or the ‘mélange of ideas’ which has made London infinite” (21). Therefore, the narrative is fragmented in order to unravel the complex and infinite nature of the cityspace. Consequently, to scrutinize how the characters navigate and negotiate the urban spatiality and interpret the complexities of the city with its various aforementioned dynamics, the concept of mapping and mobility practices are of significance to discuss how the characters reinscribe spatial practices.

### 3.3. Mapping

Movement is a crucial part of spatiality as it encapsulates a level of orientation through the concrete and imagined qualities of space. Christina Ljunberg indicates that “[m]aps and literature are both about orienting ourselves in the world. While a map serves to orient ourselves in real space, a literary text serves to orient us in a fictional space” (95). As a novel offering a glimpse into specific geography and its denizens, the cover of *NW* itself - the most known edition by Penguin Books - serves as a visual gateway charting a piece of London; therefore, the paratext prepares the reader for the cartographic dimension of the narrative. Lena Mattheis draws attention to the cover of *NW* stating how the letters of the author’s name “and the title of the novel” reveal fragments “of a simple black and white map” through a design featuring a bridge

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<sup>7</sup> Lauren Elkin discusses the use of public transport in line with class mobility. Though the characters are always on the move through public transportation, their social mobility is quite restricted. See: “Class Mobility and Public Transport in Zadie Smith’s *NW*”, 2015.

connecting the N and W (125). This rather basic design of a scrappy map evokes a sense of spatial orientation. Also, “[t]he few locations one can derive from the partial letters and structure of the map are locations in London (Mount Vernon Hospital in Northwood, New End in Hampstead) although not all of them appear to lie within the NW postcode districts” (ibid.). Thus, the paratext sets the stage for a narrative revolving around spatial interactions within the urban setting of London from the very beginning.

The sense of movement is textualized through the division of chapters. The circular construction of the five parts “visitation,” “guest,” “host,” “crossing,” and “visitation” establishes a sense of orientation since each section maps out distinct characters’ stories within the narrative landscape resembling “a performative practice of mapping which figures, conceptualizes and transforms texts into mental models” (Ljunberg 95). Additionally, the “guest” section itself is separated into geographies as in postcodes such as “NW6,” “(W1),” and “NW6” as well as the “crossing” part revolving around certain landscapes and directions like “Willesden Lane to Kilburn High Road,” “Shoot Up Hill to Fortune Green,” “Hampstead to Archway,” “Hampstead Heath,” “Corner of Hornsey Lane,” “Hornsey Lane,” suggesting an experiential narrative mapping and movement resembling a major trope of flâneur drifting around in the city while creating a mental image of spatiality. This also invokes what de Certeau calls “spatial stories” as “they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories” (115). Therefore, while portraying a multicultural locality in London through varied landscapes regarding the streets and such, the narrative itself is an imaginary topography as “*NW* designates an area of London (the world as text) and an imagined cartography (the text as world) [...] to remap known relations to place and explore the contested production of localities in a globalizing world” (Knepper 116). The engagement with urban space is enhanced through literary mapping and mobility practices of the characters manifesting itself mostly in the act of walking. While this sense of movement creates mental images in the readers’ mind, the text itself serves as a map to be navigated by the readers to connect the criss-crossings in the novel hence accentuating “the interactive experience of worldly/textual navigation” (ibid.).

Through the movements of characters, the city is mapped. As they chart the city, urban possibilities of encounters are also enabled. Depictions of movement within the city are crucial to the narratives as the characters employ various modes of transit to explore the urban environment, facilitating encounters with dwellers and the numerous landscapes of the cityscape. (Toivanen 219). As characters navigate, they experience numerous everyday encounters and pass by many landscapes. For instance, Leah comes across Shar multiple times unexpectedly: “in the back of a sweet shop” (20), on Willesden Lane (42), and on Brondesbury ridge (55), she comes across Nathan, too. Felix sees a lot of people on the move, and he encounters Nathan and the other man who murdered him. Natalie encounters Nathan, and so on. All these encounters illustrate the diverse interactions and complexities of the urban space through which the characters traverse its fluid boundaries simultaneously and showcase their interconnectedness. Hence such encounters and means of movement allow for interpreting the diverse (imagined) experiences in the urban. Accordingly, Lauren Elkin draws an analogy between their ephemeral encounters in the city and the lines of an Underground map, highlighting that their paths cross akin to commuters passing each other; yet, with only a vague awareness of each other's presence (par. 1). Regarding the aforementioned interactive experience, chapter nine offers a virtual space in which Google Maps walking directions and suggested routes “[f]rom A to B: A. Yates Lane, London NW8, UK B. Bartlett Avenue, London NW6, UK” (38) are delivered extending the textuality into a digital realm. Yet, neither of those streets - Yates and Bartlett - are real, nor is the road that joins them- Salisbury Road is a major pathway in NW6; however, Edgware Road is located in the W2 area, which is nearer to central London; thus, the directions leads to no destination in particular (Elkin par.16). The given map instructions are parodied, which still suggests a sense of reality, while they also illustrate the differences “between mapped and lived spaces, virtual and material worlds, imagined and actual places” (Knepper 117). This manipulation of virtual walking directions evokes the notion of *thirdspace*, a fluid and interactive space in which the boundaries between real, virtual, and imagined blur and converge in this case, and it underscores a rethinking of how space is constituted and perceived as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Moving through space and registering its aspects is inherently linked to the act

of walking. The characters chart their spatiality both physically and mentally as they practice walking. To experience a place and turn it into a lived space, one must walk because “the practitioners of the city” are the walkers who are reading and writing the city as a text (de Certeau 93). In doing so, they traverse the city “down below” and they weave complex, intersecting networks of paths and experiences composing “a manifold story of the urban” (ibid.) Following the virtual map directions, a journey is narrated by the narrator in the next chapter, and it seems as if Leah performs the spatial practice of everyday urban life, and walks the imaginary distance between A and B. This act of walking is the only way to render the lived experience within the city as “surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by” (De Certeau 97). Thus, the narrator recounts the city on the street level resembling De Certeau’s walker. Like the bustling city itself, the delivery of the physical surroundings is quite transient and fast-paced:

Sweet stink of the hookah, couscous, kebab, exhaust fumes of a bus deadlock. 98, 16, 32, standing room only—quicker to walk! Escapees from St. Mary’s, Paddington: expectant father smoking, old lady wheeling herself in a wheelchair smoking, die-hard holding urine sack, blood sack, smoking. Everybody loves fags. Everybody. Polish paper, Turkish paper, Arabic, Irish, French, Russian, Spanish, News of the World. Unlock your (stolen) phone, buy a battery pack, a lighter pack, a perfume pack, sunglasses, three for a fiver, a life-size porcelain tiger, gold taps. Casino! [...] TV screens in the TV shop. TV cable, computer cable, audiovisual cables, I give you good price, good price. Leaflets, call abroad 4 less, learn English, eyebrow wax [...] Bank of Iraq, Bank of Egypt, Bank of Libya. Empty cabs on account of the sunshine. Boomboxes just because. Lone Italian, loafers, lost, looking for Mayfair. (40)

As it can be seen here, the scenery filled with sensory elements of myriad sights, sounds, and smells – particularly the scents of hookah, kebab, and fumes- displays the inevitable link between body and space as the body moves through, it captures the concurrent images existing around the street while reflecting the crisscrossing multicultural network through “hookah, couscous, kebab”, a variety of national banks and papers. Therefore, as a result of immigration and globalization, the urban space here is appropriated in line with cultural influences, varied languages, and cuisines coexisting through the imaginary route. Smith weaves a literary topography by including those multilingual, multimedia, multicultural aspects of the imagined space brought about by globalization. Through everyday encounters, such heterogeneous aspects of the space are recorded here and they are not free from historicity since

global patterns of movement are influencing and shaping lived experiences in a contemporary urban setting more and more (Shaw 9). Moreover, according to Simon Parker, consumption is one of the most significant components of urban experience consisting of four Cs: culture, consumption, conflict and community (4). Similarly, Leah's street-level walk reminisces a female version of a *flâneur*, which is first emerged as "a product of capitalist society", embodying the notion of "a walking consumer/consuming walker" (Liedke 47). Therefore, resembling a contemporary *flâneuse*, here, the fast-paced life in urban via consumerism is registered and experienced down below street level. As can be viewed in the quote above, the urban area is constituted by several goods and services, which is an inherent condition of being in the city hinting at its very presence rather than being a mere setting. Through the portrayal of transnational banks and globalized markets suggesting a site of capital, the city space of London as a global city <sup>8</sup>is depicted. "The commodification of culture" regarding the ethnic products such as hookah, couscous, and kebab, and "a bulk of merchandise [...] represent London as a consumption space" (Sakız 134-135). In line with this, the city as *thirdspace* is mapped, highlighting how the metropolis becomes a meeting point where different cultures and practices merge through globalized consumption. In this multicultural meeting point, it is evident that immigrants bring their own subjective cultures that shape the very fabric of urban space. Asu Aksoy states that immigrants appropriate the city by commodifying cultural products that emphasize "the extension and enrichment of connections and commercial and cultural possibilities" rather than a sense of disconnection (101). Therefore, the portrayal of the intersection of multicultural and multilingual qualities reflects a social space in which heterogeneous representations are inevitable in imagining contemporary London. Furthermore, as can be seen in the quotation above, a sense of temporary coexistence of impressions reigns in the narratorial account. Michel de Certeau points out that, in line with pedestrian's everyday spatial practice, there are two stylistic figures called synecdoche and asyndeton. Synecdoche expands a spatial element to represent a larger whole, while asyndeton creates gaps in the spatial continuum by omitting conjunctions. Therefore, "[s]ynecdoche makes more dense: it amplifies the detail and miniaturizes the whole. Asyndeton cuts out: it undoes

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<sup>8</sup> Saskia Sassen, in *The Global City*, refers to this term for cities serving as foci globally for economic, cultural, and political activities.

continuity and undercuts its plausibility” (101). In the quotation above, each detail represents a larger aspect of the bustling city’s multicultural fabric regarding different nationalities and cultural aspects as well as the social status of the neighbourhood through the imageries of rising emissions from busses being almost full inside, and an old woman smoking while holding onto her bags full of bodily fluids. This vivid and rich imagery captures the essence of northwest London since certain fragmented entities represent a miniaturized whole. Thus, the fragmentary visions stand for the totality of the chaotic and complex urban milieu in which everything is scattered everywhere and happening all at once. Therefore, as the pedestrian moves at street level, “a synecdochical structure can be observed when totalities are replaced by the walker with fragments” (Liedke 51), hence the practice of walking is closely linked to narrate the flux and simultaneity in the city linguistically. Though it is imagined, the fictional realm produces a body of knowledge about the peripheral part of London simultaneously through snapshots. Accordingly, the choice of punctuation and very short form of sentences without conjunctions in the said passage create an asyndetic form implying a sense of rapid and frantic flow overpowered with senses. These momentary glimpses provided by asyndetic clauses evoke a sense of narratorial focalization rendered through a camera as if “the narrator discerns another composite picture of the world, zooming her unseen camera in” (Sakız 135-136). Thus, this narrative technique utilizing a rather narrow angle illustrates the city in its pieces from a street-level gaze rather than representing the city in its totality from the voyeur’s elevated perspective. Such portrayal is significant since those transient impressions of the city reveal how the metropolis has been transformed into a shared space for varied communities. This complex diversity is textualized and achieved from a bottom-up perspective, which provides a more engaging understanding of urban life.

Furthermore, Kilburn High Road is a global place that is in constant flux since it encompasses a variety of communities owing to globalization and immigration that cannot be separated from the “British Imperialist history” underscoring “a global sense of place” (Massey 154). Accordingly, Natalie registers the interwoven multiculturalism of Kilburn as she walks down the Kilburn High Road:

Walking down Kilburn High Road Natalie Blake had a strong desire to slip into the lives of other people. It was hard to see how this desire could be practicably satisfied or what, if anything, it really meant. “Slip into” is an imprecise

thought. Follow the Somali kid home? Sit with the old Russian lady at the bus-stop outside Poundland? Join the Ukrainian gangster at his table at the cake shop? A local tip: the bus stop outside Kilburn's Poundland is the site of many of the more engaging conversations to be heard in the city of London. You're welcome. (283)

As she walks, she encounters "the Somali kid", "the Russian lady", and "Ukrainian gangsters" and she contemplates possible forms of interactions. As she moves in this imagined diverse topography, she portrays a sense of globalization inscribed in space with its multicultural inhabitants. She does not want to be detached from "the lives of other people" in contrast to a distant walker in the crowd as this microcosm of cultural interaction and human experience attracts her. In fact, it creates a sense of belonging as she is curious to "slip into" their lives. Once again, the urban setting is not exempt from consumerism as it describes "Poundland" which is a retail chain selling inexpensive goods and it targets mostly people of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The fact that interesting talks take place "at the bus stop outside Kilburn's Poundland" suggests a certain influential cultural exchange because of the vibrant nature of the milieu.

Additionally, sole perambulations provide solace to the mind as the urbanites move through the chaotic streets of the city, immersing themselves in deep thoughts. These acts of walking can create new routines and a different way of engaging with the city. After being subjected to violence on the street and losing her dog, Leah, in a mournful state, wanders around the city, yet "she finds herself lost in the back streets" (92). The fact that she is lost represents the sprawling network of the city. As she struggles to manage her encounters with strangers in the streets as a woman to protect herself in her effort to "to lose a surely innocent hooded stranger" (ibid.), she drifts around and takes the turns randomly in Harlesden, and when she comes across the "strange little church again, tolling six o'clock. She goes in. Half an hour later she comes out. She does not tell Michel or anybody. She begins to do this most days" (93). This is the church she discovered amidst the banality of the city with Natalie and the fact that she encounters with this distinct covert landmark through random turns suggests the intricate pathways of the urban landscape in which she practices the act of walking. Eventually, her drifts lead to a private ritual as "she begins to do this most days" without telling anyone because she finds solace in this peculiar landmark. The fact that she goes to church secretly can be read as a form of *dérive* as she wants to

break away from the fast-paced life in the city of London imposing to move forward and progress – an idea adopted by her husband Michel as well especially exemplified by his decision to start a family. Resisting the pursuit of progress because “[f]or Leah, that way is not forward. She wants just him and her forever” (93), those clandestine visits to the church that she has found by chance in the first place imply a detour from the usual course of the day. Also, the fact that she encountered the church while trying to lose a hooded guy in the alleys of the urban might be the indicator of a subverted act of *dérive* because as a woman her motivation in her random turns was not for discovering the city without an itinerary, on the contrary, it was to make sure that she was safe.

In a similar vein, when Leah, Natalie, and her children search for Pauline’s parish -the one that Leah secretly goes as mentioned- to start going to church so that Natalie’s children can attend church school, they traverse rather a banal urban landscape as:

They find themselves on a thin strip of pavement with a bollard at the end, [...] To their right a foreclosed shopping arcade and a misconceived office block, empty, every other window broken. To their left, a grassy island nestled beside a dual carriageway. Intended as a green oasis, it is a fly-tipping zone. (70)

As unremarkable as it seems, the ruinous building and the “green oasis” turned into a dumping waste, and the road leads to an enchanting architecture. As an observant walker, Leah “turns away, lifting her head slowly, and spots it first: an ancient crenellation and spire, just visible through the branches of a towering ash” (71). As she moves a little more “the full improbability of the scene is revealed. A little country church, a medieval country church, stranded on this half acre, in the middle of a roundabout. Out of time, out of place. A force field of serenity surrounds it” (71). Amidst the mundane, this unexpected encounter with the ancient church displays the fascination that the city bears in itself since “such encounters disrupt the banal veneer of urban space” (Mudie 209). The portrayal of the church as “out of time, out of place” almost creates an occult atmosphere, and unearthing the extraordinary within the mundane implies *dérive* (Mudie 209) since “[t]he banal can become fascinating on close inspection, and the *dérive* provides an insight into mundane practices while also offering a form of enchantment” (Rose 160). Moreover, the urban palimpsest is a part of spatial practice as the observant walkers recount their surroundings. Regarding the church, the layer of historical inscriptions is represented as: “Parish founded in 938 . .

. nothing of the original church remains . . . present church dates from around 1315 . . . Cromwellian bullet holes in the door, original” (73). As a palimpsest site, the city space consists of landmarks in which the spatial and temporal are intertwined, and here the church with its mystic sense turns into a living embodiment of the past, present, and future. Another instance of the palimpsest is as follows:

A great hill straddles NW, rising in Hampstead, West Hampstead, Kilburn, Willesden, Brondesbury, Cricklewood. It is no stranger to the world of letters. The Woman in White walks up one side to meet the highwayman Jack Sheppard on the other. Sometimes Dickens himself comes this far west and north for a pint or to bury someone. Look, there, on the library carpet between Science Fiction and Local History: a knotted condom filled with sperm. Once this was all farm and field with country villas nodding at each other along the ridge of this hill. Train stations have replaced them, at halfmile intervals. (55).

As can be seen here, the hills connecting various neighbourhoods allude to the transformation of the milieu. London has been a city narrated by numerous authors for centuries. Here, the layers of history embedded in the northwest landscape are intertwined with literary palimpsest linking past and present as a site of crime. The only way that this geographical place was imagined and made its way through the canon is its notoriety. Even for Dickens, a renowned literary chronicler of London in the Victorian era, this specific topography was usually off the beaten path. Despite the transformation in the cityscape, the “sense of othering” reigns “since the time of Dickens; marginal characters find their way into the area to cover their acts of illegality”. (Sakız 140). Yet, those illegal acts have “become ordinary in the contemporary world of *NW*, where Smith’s characters are somehow involved in crime; they steal money to afford drugs, are accused of murder, and even one of the protagonists is killed by his fellow citizens” (ibid.). As the location is imbued with infamy and hence othered for centuries, the juxtaposition made between the public space of the library and the knotted condom both strengthen the notorious perception of the space and at the same time ridicules the earlier representation of the northwest area as it was not seen that much worthy to be included in the world of letters other than the crime only.

Besides, Felix is the only walker who is able to push off the boundaries of northwest London and the only character who explores central London. He deconstructs the prevailing representations of flâneur - a white wealthy and intellectual

man who leisurely discovers the urban. On the contrary, Felix is far from being affluent and he is not a white British man who has worked in myriad sectors trying to live off. When Felix meets Tom Mercer for the car selling, they meet at the very centre of the city where Oxford and Regent Streets collide in which the cultural elements constituting the multicultural fabric of the city as well as the commercial components forming the urban space are represented. Through Felix's focalization as he inspects the surroundings like an observant walker, the narrator recounts juxtaposed imagery as follows: "the Peruvian holding a twelve-foot banner: bargain carpet sale 100 yards [...] walking through a crowd of Indian girls with luxurious black ponytails and little gold Selfridges badges pinned to their lapels" (121). The scenery signals both diversity and the commodification in the urban with the rug selling and the prestigious department store pins which also suggest a hierarchical consumer culture in contrast to the banner holder. It can be indicated that only a small peek into those popular streets registers the literary portion of the dynamic and multifaceted city while offering a specific knowledge of the urban. As a born and bred Londoner, Felix infers Tom's background as being "not from London, *not originally*" (121, emphasis added) since he tackles to negotiate the chaotic nature -the crowd and the traffic- of London so Felix takes control since he is familiar with the streets and alleys of the city. By way of walking, here he performs his agency over the city. In an effort to avoid this carnivalesque site, they enter another street and move away from Oxford Street. Another rather mystic atmosphere reveals itself juxtaposing the constant flux and ephemerality of the city resembling Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway in terms of location and temporal concerns.

Slick black doors, brass knobs, brass letterboxes, lamp-posts out of fairy stories. Old paintings in ornate gold frames, resting on easels, angled toward the street. [...] Shop after shop without a soul in it. [...] Halfway up, the window glass became clear, revealing a big pink face, with scraps of white hair here and there, mostly in the ears. The type Felix saw all the time, *especially in this part of town*. A great tribe of them. Didn't mix much—kept to their own kind. (122, emphasis added)

The place is described as almost frozen in time. While this part of the city - which is only practiced by Felix in the novel as the other characters only traverse and navigate through the Kilburn area- is completely different from Willesden with its architecture implying economic prosperity, the portrayal of the certain type of the dwellers clearly marks the boundaries of spatiality so as to display who belongs to this particular

community and locality. It is significant to acknowledge that he is not in central London to leisurely walk and observe the crowd and surroundings, he is there because of a ragged car purchase, and he is not even alone. It can be said that he is not that privileged to traverse this part of the capital in an unattended and relaxed way. He is only there for a business. Through Felix's interior thoughts and observations, the city space is rendered through transitory glimpses creating a sense of motion revealing that Felix is not a part of this affluent area as he is confined within the social constraints of class. Thus, as a subverted flâneur, through his focalization, he offers a socio-economic critique of the spatiality.

Moreover, the peripheral locality is also practiced by Natalie. After her husband finds out about her clandestine sexual meetings with other people under her birth name, she leaves the house. She starts meandering around the streets aimlessly.

She turned left. Walked to the end of her road and the end of the next. Walked quickly away from Queen's Park. She passed into where Willesden meets Kilburn. Went by Leah's place, then Caldwell. In the old flat the kitchen window was open. A duvet cover—decorated with the logo of a football club—had been hung over the balcony to dry. Without looking where she was going, she began climbing the hill that begins in Willesden and ends in Highgate. She was making a queer keening noise, like a fox. [...] Now she saw the police car parked in its shadow, roof lights turning silently. A line of police, parked at right angles to each other, making Albert Road inaccessible to traffic. (303)

As can be seen above, her solitary perambulation evokes a sense of mapped-out journey offering visual and spatial elements. Since she is familiar with the surroundings as a born and bred denizen of Willesden, her operation of walking lacking a specific destination displays a precise mental awareness of this certain cartography suggesting “a form of imagined geography, mental maps hold the cognitive images in our minds about a place, a route, or an area” (Reynolds 82). Beating the boundaries of her childhood estate in an almost unconscious state, her path overlaps with the murder scene. Passing by her old estate, she walks through her past. To clear her mind, she wanders and wanders. Her misery, frustration, and shame become external in her walking movement as well as her “keening sound like a fox”. This lamented sound of hers suggests that as if her invented self died with the disclosure of Keisha Blake and her online listings; therefore, she mourns vocally. Soon she transforms herself into a complete walker: “Walking was what she did now, walking was what she was. She was nothing more or less than the phenomenon of walking. She had no name, no

biography, no characteristics” (304). To cope with her identity crisis brought about by her social self-creation aspirations, she engages in solitary strolls. In doing so, she escapes from the constraints of her double identity and just exists freely liberated from all her roles that she has to perform as in “[d]aughter drag. Sister drag. Mother drag. Wife drag. Court drag. Rich drag. Poor drag. British drag. Jamaican drag” (282). Her body drifts in the streets and she becomes one with the space physically without any name or biography hence any roles or norms to confront since “[b]y walking, you escape from the very idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history. [...] The freedom in walking lies in not being anyone; for the walking body has no history” (Gros 12). Through walking, she feels a palpable sense of freedom. Thus, the very act of walking has an emancipatory power for Natalie here as she gets disconnected from any sort of social construction mentally and becomes the very “phenomenon of walking” through solely being in motion. She is deeply engaged in her movement in the city, therefore “Natalie creates a text, a map; she is fully part of the city [...] she is making the city her own through the act of walking, melding with her surroundings rather than ripping through them” through walking (Slavin 109).

Soon her lone urban prowling ends as she encounters Nathan Bogle who is the only character to whom a narratorial space is not given.<sup>9</sup> Together, they crisscross the neighbourhood including their old estate Caldwell offering glimpses into the landscape, yet they stroll to nowhere (314). As they drift, a seemingly detached observation of the Caldwell’s basin is portrayed suggesting a critique of post-war urbanism<sup>10</sup> manifesting itself in the shape of suburban housing estates: “five blocks connected by walkways and bridges and staircases, and lifts that were to be avoided almost as soon as they were built. Smith, Hobbes, Bentham, Locke, Russell. Here is the door, here is the window. And repeat, and repeat” (305). As they walk, Natalie is not detached from their surroundings. On the contrary, like a psychogeographer engaging in the act of *dérive*, she is critically aware of the monotonous structure of the estate buildings lacking aesthetic qualities. To create a sense of belonging against this dreary construction, “[s]ome of the residents had placed pretty pots of geraniums and

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<sup>9</sup> He seems to appear in all the sections quite briefly, and his walk with Natalie is the longest part in which the reader encounters him. Guignery reads his existence as a ghost.

<sup>10</sup>As discussing the concept of *dérive*, Lauren Elkin elucidates how strolling turns into “drifting and detached observation becomes a critique of post-war urbanism” (21).

African violets on their balconies” (305-6). Moreover, the council housing project itself implies localized poverty as it is meant to be inhabited by people from lower classes of society; thus, in her walk, an urban commentary is delivered inevitably.

In the end, when they reach Hornsey Lane, the street-level perspective turns into a rather elevated one as in God’s eye view which is the only instance that the city is seen above. This interplay between varied points of focalization contributes to urban storytelling. Therefore, as a method of actualizing urban spaces, “the interchange between mapping of or perambulations through urban spaces is signalled by various focalisations, oscillating between the stability of the god’s eye view and the myriad movements of the interior monologues” (Pleßke 177). Given that Natalie, a strong character having a mutated will, experienced an “authorial omnipotence” as a child in a conversation that her parents and Pauline exchanged, it seems that only through her perspective the urban can be looked at with a narratorial authority from above while Leah and Felix navigate it down below. When she climbs the bridge known as the “suicide bridge” in order “to obtain a particular perspective on the city and by extension her own life” (Sanders 196), the disjointed nature of the city is illustrated:

The view was cross-hatched. St. Paul’s in one box. The Gherkin in another. Half a tree. Half a car. Cupolas, spires. Squares, rectangles, half moons, stars. It was impossible to get any sense of the whole. From up here the bus lane was a red gash through the city. The tower blocks were the only thing she could see that made any sense, separated from each other, yet communicating. From this distance they had a logic, stone posts driven into an ancient field, waiting for something to be laid on top of them, a statue, perhaps, or a platform. [...] Natalie Blake looked out and down. She tried to locate the house, somewhere back down that hill, west of here. Rows of identical red brick chimneys, stretching to the suburbs. The wind picked up, shaking the trees below. (322-323)

From this vantage point, she looks down the urban and recounts the fragmented snapshots of it. Through this position of the voyeur, the city becomes “a readable text” (Gurr 32), however, it is difficult for the voyeur to write it and read it as it is impossible to “get any sense of the whole” evoking Dickensian “unintelligible mess”. Despite the elevated perspective, the city still cannot be portrayed in its totality. It is viewed rather in a disjointed way as “cross-hatched” with fragmented images of landmarks such as “cupolas, spires. Squares, rectangles”, and the isolated towers which are taken as a reference point “to define her centre” (Slavin 110) in her cognitive map. Through her mental map, she also tries to locate the house in a way to locate her sense of place and

negotiate her identity within the urban. The inability to grasp the entirety of the cityscape with its intricate and fragmented illustration reflects a sense of labyrinthine complexity of the city into which the red bus sprawls implying its twisting networks. Later, the setting cultivates introspection as well as the very act of suicide on the said bridge, as she contemplates her “suburban shame” brought about by self-fashioning and the feeling of isolation. Considering suicide as a way out to claim control of her life might be linked to her voyeur perspective as “this perspective, according to de Certeau, allows the viewer to escape the moral complexities of urban life” (Gurr 32). Thus, her internal struggle is intertwined with the urban space, and she tries to make sense of her shattered life and gain control of it within the rambling city. Yet, the sense of control does not last quite long as “the wind shook the trees once more and her feet touched the pavement. The act remained just that: an act, a prospect, always possible” (323). At the end of the stroll, she reaches a sort of understanding, and “it is the hard material reality of the city sidewalk that saves her: Natalie is, certainly, a city creature, one who must merge with the city geography” (Slavin 11). In a manner to address its complexity again, though seems complex, the labyrinth offers a way out as it has a centre or an objective as well as suggesting a self-journey. In her contemplative moment, while staring at this labyrinthine image of the cityscape, she finds her orientation back and realizes “right at this moment there was no one left to do it” (323) and chooses life with laughter.

To conclude, through investigating the everyday practice of movement in the city, it has been argued that varied characters in *NW* offer representations of imagined London diverging from the canonical portrayals. As their bodies traverse the boundaries of the metropolis, the dynamic nature of the city is portrayed as well as the embodied experiences within the urban milieu. In other words, through their physical trajectories, the characters operate as cartographers charting out multiculturalism and complexity within the metropolis, and they also negotiate their identity in the narrated city. In doing so, the novel also allows for layered temporal aspects, that is, simultaneity which has been briefly touched upon before regarding following the GPS results, hence reflecting the surroundings.

### **3.4. Narrating Urban Complexity**

Concurrent impressions are of pivotal point in narrating urban complexity. The

previously discussed idea that the change of narrative perspectives disclosing different characters in the same area yet engaged in various activities underscores a sense of diversity, fragmentation, and chaos to reveal a web of underlying interconnections. This overall unified mechanism is closely related to the concept of simultaneity. *NW* narrates simultaneity in several ways by employing distinct techniques. First of all, it utilizes a fragmentary narrative style as mentioned earlier by way of merging distinct focalizers, and unique narratorial styles in each part. Giving narratorial space to different characters to recount their experiences within the city space is suggestive of different simultaneous spatial dimensions implying “the existence in the lived world of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another” (Massey 3). The narrative style adopts such quality with its intersecting chapters and insertions by establishing connections through juxtaposing (different) locations in time. For instance, in chapter twenty-three, the carnival is taking place and Leah and Michel are at Natalie and Frank’s house. As Leah watches the police barricades out the window, she hears about the murder of Felix Cooper from the television: “On Albert Road, in Kilburn, where yesterday evening hopes for a peaceful carnival weekend were marred by reports of a fatal stabbing, here, on the border of the carnival route through North West London, as people prepared for today’s festivities” (93). The coexistence of the carnival preparations and the violent act is delivered through media.

The insertion of his death is linked to the next part, which is about Felix’s day interrupting the chronological narrative flashing back to the time when he was alive. The fourth chapter aligns with the day of the murder again as Natalie starts her meandering around the streets where Albert Road is closed due to the incident. Also, the fact that she finds herself on Hornsey Lane Bridge is inserted earlier by Felix as he calls it the suicide bridge (Guignery par.23). Such temporal layers and coincidences within the space are illustrated through crisscrossing chapters depicting the simultaneity. Those cross-references imply a sense of labyrinthine topos to represent the twisting and intricate networks in the imagined yet real metropolis. Similarly, the circular structure of the novel starting and ending in chapters called “visitation” both in Leah’s Garden evokes a sense of labyrinthine topos as well. This might be read twofold. One is that it is rather a maze implying a dead end in which the women are

trapped in their struggle for orientation in the city due to their class<sup>11</sup>. The latter is that it is a labyrinth with a centre- a way out as Keisha negotiates her identity. While calling the police “Natalie dialed it. It was Keisha who did the talking” (337), and Leah leaves her paralyzed state and takes action in their decision to call the police hinting at a subtle hopeful tone at the end as they come to terms with their identities.

Moreover, the tube journey of Felix sets an example for the spatial trope of a labyrinthine city. The underground metro and its complex map imply the difficulties of orientation since “subterranean London is a replica of the metropolis above, mirroring its maze of streets, alleys, and lanes” (Pleßke 229) that are challenging to navigate. After several encounters with other people, Felix takes the metro to meet Tom as follows:

Mind the gap. Felix stepped in the second carriage from the end and looked at a tube map like a tourist, taking a moment to convince himself of details no life-long Londoner should need to check: Kilburn to Baker Street (Jubilee); Baker Street to Oxford Circus (Bakerloo). Other people trust themselves. (119-120)

Though he is familiar with the city, he is a denizen of the northwest part; therefore, he has doubts about his orientation within it and checks the tube map like a tourist. “Maps, generally considered coherent images of the metropolis, are employed ‘to tame the urban labyrinth, and to represent its spaces as ‘legible’ and ‘knowable’” (Pleßke 271). In this case, as Peter Ackroyd states “the mapping of London represents an attempt to understand the chaos and thereby to mitigate it” (qtd. in Pleßke 271) since he leaves the boundaries of the peripheral suburbs and goes to the “central” London. When he is done with the W1 district and goes back to Willesden again by metro, he still contemplates the map:

Felix inched deeper into the carriage. He gripped the safety rail. He considered the tube map. It did not express his reality. The center was not “Oxford Circus” but the bright lights of Kilburn High Road. “Wimbledon” was the countryside, “Pimlico” pure science fiction. He put his right index finger over Pimlico’s blue bar. It was nowhere. Who lived there? Who even passed through it? (165)

As can be seen above, in his mental map of the city, he also has a reference point like Natalie and that is Kilburn High Road instead of Oxford Circus. Kilburn is an alternative centre against the affluent area of Oxford Circus to which centrality has

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<sup>11</sup> Baučeková and Šafárik also interpret the novel’s ending, where it returns to the starting point, as indicating that the characters metaphorically and physically get nowhere due to their class suggesting “a pessimistic vision of contemporary London”, as “locality is destiny” (32).

been attributed. While the map renders the hectic city as a legible phenomenon, it also implies where the centre and the periphery are creating a sense of belonging since “Felix layers his own de-centered Tube Map over the official one, questioning its ability to say what is London” (Elkin par.16). Thus, his earlier anxious urge to check the map and the subsequent reflection on it bring to mind that “[w]ho is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of social space” (Sibley 3). Such everyday practices of movement through urban space are not free of practices of inclusion and exclusion. Vanessa Guignery points out that “throughout the novel, characters appropriate London in their own subjective ways but always inevitably come back to NW, their centre of segmentary” (par.31). Felix is the only one leaving the northwest area while the others always stay in the boundaries of Willesden in a way to represent how individualized a person’s interaction with cities.

Furthermore, another exemplary instance that recounts simultaneity is portrayed through Leah’s inner mind at the beginning of chapter eight:

Elsewhere in London, offices are open plan/floor-to-ceiling glass/sites of synergy/wireless/gleaming. There persists a belief in the importance of a ping-pong table. Here is not there. Here offices are boxy cramped Victorian damp. Five people share them, the carpet is threadbare, the hole-punch will never be found. (31)

The image of her cramped office and the ones elsewhere in London are juxtaposed here. It depicts two opposing imaginaries in which one is quite modern with its spacious architecture, yet the other is rather suffocating. The coexisting impression of two offices offers glimpses into different lives that can be told separately; however, the novel takes its stance on representing the second one. It can be stated that both of them stand for something greater implying synecdoche since the first one emphasizes affluence attributed to a certain space in the urban while the latter represents a whole different lived experience in an underprivileged location.

To conclude, in *NW*, the metropolis is imagined in ways that reflect the navigation and existence of minorities within a diverse and bustling setting, and how urban experiences differ. As we have seen, throughout the novel, the characters traverse their locality and in doing so they metaphorically beat the spatial constraints constructing and defining their lives (Spencer 102). Consequently, it “eschews chronology in favour of a spatially coherent account of events” (Knepper 117). Through narrative techniques, the city is represented fragmentarily reminiscing its

very nature. Reading *NW* from the perspective of urban literary studies considering the theoretical underpinnings such as urban space, temporal dimensions, spatial metaphors, mapping techniques, and the act of walking helps us engage in the city of London from multifarious perspectives. This inclusivity invites us to see other realities and lived experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> as the imagined representation of the capital concurrently produces a distinct insight regarding the urban while subverting the elite literary portrayals.

While *NW* reflects the limitations of social mobility brought about by class, *Happiness* highlights yet another restriction of mobility as a contemporary urban concern focusing on migration. In this regard, in the following chapter, *Happiness* by Aminatta Forna will be discussed. In *Happiness*, Forna situates her diverse group of characters – mostly coming from underprivileged parts of the world such as the Global South. As *NW* does, Forna's novel represents the city of London mostly from the perspective of minorities creating a web of interconnectedness among them. However, the map of London differs from the previous novel as the lived experiences of the characters take place in South East London which is a part of the central metropolis. Referring to the former concepts and theoretical tools, how the novel challenges the dominant assumptions regarding the literary representation of urban space will be explored.

## CHAPTER 4

### NARRATING THE METROPOLIS: LONDON IN AMINATTA FORNA'S *HAPPINESS*

This chapter focuses on Aminatta Forna's fourth novel *Happiness* written in 2018 and its representation of contemporary London. Forna imagines a London where a diverse ensemble of characters, mostly from the Global South, experience and (re)produce the city. In so doing, the heart of the nation becomes a site in which multicultural and global encounters take place. Forna depicts some non-native characters who may be deemed invisible or vulnerable such as Adama, Abdul, and Osman, through Attila's and Jean's lenses, and how all these characters interact with each other and the city. In addition to the inclusion of a range of global citizens as its characters, the novel mainly narrates the city from the point of view of Attila Asare – a psychiatrist from Ghana. Attila, a cosmopolitan figure, participates in urban wandering similar to Baudelaire's flâneur, and he registers the city through his main mode of transportation which is walking. Just like *NW*, the novel recounts the urban space by considering its multicultural sphere and mapping the city's spatiality through movement, rendering the city from different perspectives as well as the intersecting lives of the characters. While both novels accentuate diverse perspectives of minorities in an urban setting in contrast to preceding narratives of London, what distinguishes *Happiness* is that it allows immigrant characters to explore and experience central London, unlike the characters in *NW* who were restricted to the peripheries of the city.

With these in mind, this chapter will first provide an overview of the novel and discuss the existing scholarship on this novel. Then it will continue to explore how the complex city is narrated and how central London as a *thirdspace* is represented and reproduced through movement.

#### 4.1. An Overview of the Novel and Existing Scholarship

*Happiness* starts with a disparate story, an analepsis, titled “The Last Woolf”

taking place in Greenhampton in 1834 in order to set the tone of the narration. This section also provides some perspectives on non-human entities by treating them as another group of minorities living in the territories occupied by human beings. Then, the setting switches to the modern-day London abruptly, portraying a trotting fox on Waterloo Bridge, in 2014, as if these two unrelated depictions of the spaces are presented to the reader to introduce a collective memory of the past of these animals. As the story starts, *Happiness* narrates the story of two people – Attila and Jean – who collide on Waterloo Bridge. The story is told in third-person narration with different foci of narration or points of view. Attila, a psychiatrist, who has worked in several war zones in the past decades, is in London to deliver a speech at a conference about trauma. Jean Turane, on the other hand, is an American expat studying urban foxes. Following their first chance encounter, a few happenstances take place again in London streets. In the meantime, Attila fails to reach out to her niece Ama. He finds out that she is wrongfully evicted from her house and detained by the immigration office as her landowner reported that she is an illegal resident to get rid of her so as to raise the rent. After finding Ama, this time, he starts searching for Tano – the son of her niece- since the boy runs away from the social services and is lost in London. Jean, who knows the immigrants working in London streets as doormen, street cleaners, etc. since they help her to spot foxes for her study, offers her help to Attila to find Tano. With the help of the rescue team that they built; they look for the boy in the twisting alleys of London. Eventually, they find Tano taking refuge in the National Theatre.

While all these happening, the novel weaves several subplots as well. For instance, Attila takes care of his old girlfriend Rosie who now suffers from Alzheimer's and stays at a nursing home. He gets help from Emmanuel who is another immigrant working at the same nurse. Moreover, Attila as a trauma specialist incidentally gets assigned to a case in which an immigrant woman Adama Sheriff lost her husband – who was once Attila's driver in a car accident. Through these interwoven subplots, the reader goes back in time with the italic chapters that narrate either Jean's life before her divorce taking place in the states, or Attila's memories and experiences in Eastern Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and Accra. Towards the end of the novel, as a result of their mutual company for each other, Attila and Jean grow fond of one another in a romantic way.

Existing scholarship on *Happiness* revolves around the readings of trauma and ecocritical issues touching upon the shared space and global interconnectedness of humans and non-human entities. For instance, Dominic O'Key argues that by juxtaposing human suffering as seen in immigrant detention and animal movements through foxes that strive to survive in the city, the novel links postcolonial and animal studies, which remain separate from one another in general (563). He also claims that the novel offers a "postcolonial literary intervention into trauma studies" via Attila and his views on the Western understanding of trauma. (565). Similarly, Ankhi Mukherjee acknowledges that trauma and environmental concepts are intermingled in the novel. Therefore, she proposes that an eco-cosmopolitan perspective is significant to read the interconnectedness of humans and non-humans in the novel by foregrounding "a planetary model" and "a cosmopolis of species" regarding the portrayals of extermination of animals and persecution of illegal immigrants in *Happiness*. (415,417). Additionally, Merve Sarıkaya Şen argues that resilience becomes possible through fostering interconnections between humans and animals in *Happiness* (411). As stated earlier, an ample body of studies on the novel concentrates on its trauma and ecological aspects, providing valuable insights into the novel. However, to my knowledge, a gap is yet to be addressed in terms of the novel's reading based on its quality of being an urban novel that portrays the city and the inhabitants from critical perspectives focusing on spatiality such as thirdspace, mapping, and simultaneity. Hence, by employing such concepts, my main attempt in the rest of this chapter is to investigate the underlying relationship between immigrants and London to reveal how spatiality constructs their positions in the city and how these characters shape their environments through their interactions and movements in the urban milieu as well as how the canonical landscapes of London are represented through immigrants' perspectives.

#### **4.2. Simultaneity**

In *Happiness*, London is narrated in such a way that the narration blends migrant experiences and stories with the spatial practices of cosmopolitans, which, overall, reflect the city's multicultural context. To draw attention to its spatiality as a meeting point, the novel deliberately employs simultaneous impressions through shifting focalizations, narrative insertions, and portrayal of several concurrent

glimpses in the city. The spatial aspects of the city are intertwined with its simultaneously temporal depictions that manifest the city as a lived space. As discussed in the previous chapters, the representation of concurrent multiple perspectives suggests fragmentation and interconnectedness. Massey puts forward that “the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it” (3). The shifting focalization between Jean and Attila, and at some point a very limited focalisation of Osman, reveals how they perceive their surroundings through fragmentary interactions. This personal perception of and the interaction with the space are informed and inform the interconnectedness of the city both for the humans and non-human entities.

The first chapter serves as a prelude to the rest of the novel. The narrative resembling a camera records every “perceptible (actions, appearances, etc.)” (Niederhoff par. 11). The external focalisation documents the chaotic and complex nature with the running fox, pedestrians, the passing cruiser's horn, the high-pitched reaction of the smokers to the blast, and the falling of a plastic bag (9). The reader encounters the city in which “the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions” (410) are rendered. Furthermore, “the journey of the fox from the National Theatre to Waterloo Station highlights a sense of close proximity and interaction between humans and animals in a shared space” (Cole 9). In this rather chaotic space, everyday encounters take place, which ties the whole story together. The first chapter narrates the collision of Attila and Jean, and also introduces the fox, “a man painted top to toe in silver”, the Yoruba security guards, and later, a young man pushing the old people in wheelchairs in the Three Valleys Rest Home. Through narrative insertions, their identities are revealed in time throughout the story that is respectively, the Light Bright, Osman, Olu and Ayo, and lastly Emmanuel. From the start, these characters (foxes also resemble characters as they rather dominantly take up narratorial space) are brought together, creating an area of convergence, and through urban encounters, the humans’ relationship becomes more meaningful as they form solidarity. These simultaneous encounters within the space of Southeast London imply interrelations as Cole claims “Forna uses spatial proximity to make a case for a shared space and interconnectedness” (12).

Furthermore, the labyrinthine aspect of the metropolis as a spatial metaphor, suggesting the difficulties of navigating manifests itself through fragments and superimposed paragraphs with shifting focalizations. These simultaneous switches in urban space are evident in the very first parts of the paragraphs. For instance, the focalization starts with Attila facing the window in the hotel watching a falling “bright green feather” on his window (15). Then the focus of narration switches to “[s]omewhere close to the Elephant and Castle, a stone’s throw from the intersection known as the Bricklayers’ Arms...” (16) displaying Emmanuel and again a green bird sitting on the branch. Finally, the point of view shifts to “[h]alf a mile south-east of the Bricklayers’ Arms Jean” as she watches the vixen Light Bright with her binoculars and spots the movement of “a green parakeet [that] had come to rest on the branch of a dead tree” (17). These simultaneous fragmented actions taking place in spatial proximity narrate the complex fabric of the city with multiple perspectives, and they also underscore the synecdochic representation of the metropolis. Concurrent pieces of imageries are portrayed so as to reflect a greater totality of the city. This *pars pro toto* manner unveils the entire urban space of London as a global melting pot with human characters. Furthermore, the movement of the green parakeet from scene to scene suggests a greater coexistence of human and non-human entities in the city. It is also telling that Emmanuel and Attila refer to that as a green bird, yet Jean as a biologist knowingly registers it with its exact type – parakeet - because their personal accumulation of knowledge or experience in line with their own subjective backgrounds affects how they apprehend their circumstances. Later on, in the novel, the reader sees how it is hard for urban foxes and parakeets to coexist with the humans as the former is threatened with culling the latter is removed from its nests, and its eggs are rubbed with oil so as not to hatch upon complaints. The same hostile environment is discussed earlier in the chapter. Those simultaneous glimpses into human and non-human lives stand for the bigger narrative registering both the interconnectedness of species as well as the challenges of co-existence.

The intertwined lives of humans and animals in the city are also evident in the part where a young girl is having dinner with her family at a restaurant on the thirty-second floor. From this point of viewing the panorama city, the external focalisation registers what is happening in the city while humans are engaging in their everyday lives. The scenery depicts a pigeon flying from “the West Cornwall Pasty Company

booth by platform six in the station”, and a falcon “falcon carried the pigeon eastwards, parallel to the riverbank, over the city’s municipal buildings in the direction of Tower Bridge” and it “flew until it arrived at the abandoned gasworks on the Old Kent Road where it perched on a metal strut and with its beak tore open the pigeon’s heart” (86-87). The representation of the city is dynamic and complex. Human and non-human entities simultaneously interact with the space side by side, reflecting the interconnectedness of urban wildlife and the quotidian lives of humans. Though such coexistence is difficult for animals in the city, they map the cityscape in their survival circuit. With this subplot, “Forna maps urban space in a way that maintains its dynamism and multi-dimensionality” (MacVeagh 13).

To conclude, the use of simultaneity brings together the intersecting lives of animals and humans in the novel. Moreover, it interweaves the spatial histories of characters, emphasizing the fluid dimension of the city. Such simultaneous existence contributes to the urban spatiality actively forming real and imagined spaces.

#### **4.3. Representation of Contemporary London as a *Thirdspace* in *Happiness***

London is a dynamic and complex city in which diverse identities and cultures intersect through global acts of movement as the borders have become more fluid in the twenty-first century. In other words, in contrast to being ‘the heart of the nation’ that is homogenous, the city has become heterogeneous, which requires a different reading of its spatiality and a different geographical imagination, subverting the past understandings of its urban space. In accordance with the heterogeneity of London, the physical and social constructions of the city shape the lived and mental spaces of its denizens, who are now coming from all over the world, especially the Global South. While being shaped, individuals residing in the city mutually construct its spatiality as well since with their arrivals, the immigrants bring their own cultures, histories, and practices to London. This continuous flux and changing narratives of the city can be contextualized as a *thirdspace*, attempting “to capture... shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (Soja 2) regarding the prevailing representations of canonical London as in its high modernist literature. The city is now inevitably multiracial, and this imagined literary representation of the city reflects an idiosyncratic perception of the urban, highlighting contemporary realities and concerns. Accordingly, *thirdspace* allows us “to come to terms with the

representational strategies of real and imagined places” (Ikas 3). This critical engagement with the space is apparent in *Happiness* as Forna envisions the metropolis with immigrant communities and their personal histories, which shape the reader’s understanding of the contemporary urban.

With that in mind, London as a *thirdspace* is a ‘radically open space’ and an area of convergence. It emphasizes multiplicity by juxtaposing its inhabitants’ personal and collective perspectives. Soja proposes that

Thirdspace is a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the existing borders. It is also a place of the marginal women and men, where old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge. A Thirdspace consciousness is the precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power. (56)

Forna imagines a vibrant London whose borders are trespassed by immigrants like Osman, Komba, Ama, and Adama, and the metropolis becomes a “meeting point” for the immigrants. While narrating the city, Forna places her characters into a very central location, unlike *NW*’s peripheral environs. She portrays the area of Southeast including the places such as Waterloo Bridge, St. Paul’s Cathedral, National Theatre, and Old Kent Road, symbolizing the nation’s utmost values from religion to culture. In this real-and-imagined space, the locations are genuinely authentic incorporating quite iconic landmarks of the city. They are woven through imagined experiences and perspectives of the characters, foregrounding the possibilities of spatial imagination since all these places are traversed and practiced by the non-British characters, which “disturbs the old” narratives of the metropolis. The city becomes a space for marginalized voices, contesting its hegemonic construction, as the characters become interconnected through their network and form their own connections in this “hybrid place”.

In this “meeting point,” varied backgrounds and cultures coexist. The hybridity and multiculturalism of the urban space are seen in various incidents in the novel. For instance, when Attila and Jean encounter for the second time rather in a chaotic way on an underpass of the Waterloo Bridge, from separate corners, they realize that some boys are startling a homeless man and his dog with firecrackers. In order to help the man, Attila deals with the boys while Jean helps the beggar and his dog. The scene emphasizes the chaotic nature of the city with simultaneous impressions through the

explosion of firecrackers and the dog's frightened and writhed movements as well as the unexpected exposure to violence in the metropolis. Following this transient background resulting in a daily urban happenstance, Attila and Jean notice each other's existence and remember their first collision on the bridge last night. When they arrive at the lobby of Attila's hotel, Attila asks her why she is here in London emphasizing the multicultural fabric of the city in a rather celebratory tone since the city transforms into "a space of individual self-realization regardless of national citizenship" (O'Key 567). He says

You are an American. I am a West African. The barman is South American. And here we are in the middle of London. Not one of us was born here, but we each have a reason to be here. He's learning the hotel business, I am on a junket. What's your reason? (40)

In this multicultural setting, "subjectivity and the objectivity... everyday life and unending history" (Soja 56-7) blend in. They are all in the bar of the lobby located in London, and their subjective reasons for being in this very location are distinct from one another. The barman and Attila are from the Global South. While the former seeks a future in London through a hospitality job, Attila is in London to give a speech for a trauma conference as he is a well-known psychiatrist in his field with numerous war zone experiences. Jean as a biologist, on the other hand, is there for her research on urban foxes that are threatened with culling. As all engage in everyday activities in London such as walking, working, and forming connections over food and drinks in a public space, their lives intertwine. Furthermore, their personal reasons and everyday lives intersect with "unending history" since wider historical circumstances drew them together. In other words, it can be stated that the Latin barman is there probably because of his country's economic situation which might have been affected by the colonial acts in the past. Attila as a West African has been to various war zones foregrounding the imperial legacies and Western political and economic agendas. Lastly, Jean, while researching the habits and mating patterns of urban foxes, also strives to fight against the stigmatization of these species, which has a long history as seen in the first disparate story of "The Last Wolf." All these broader narratives regarding immigration, political conflicts, and the long-standing unwillingness to coexist with animals hence violence against them converge in their subjective decisions and quotidian parts of their lives as the "unending history" is the driving force for the characters to inhabit in London and shapes their interactions with the city.

Similarly, Komba who works as a traffic warden is in London now due to the war in Sierra Leone. He shares his personal history with Attila while searching for Tano on the street and says “First the Nigerians came, they stopped it but not forever. Then the United Nations came and tried and then the British came back. We thought okay, these people from overseas are going to keep coming” (128). Again, the personal and the collective converge together resulting in transnational acts of mobility, forming the ethnically diverse capital. The characters with their distinct histories contribute to the global fabric of the metropolis. Furthermore, much later on in the novel, when Attila is by the river, he encounters Komba. Komba tells the story of how he and Attila first met during the conflict in Sierra Leone. He was a rebel, and he let Attila make it through the checkpoint ignoring his commander. Attila recalls the incident but not Komba as he was much younger. This moment of interpersonal exchange reveals how the urban space is constructed through personal histories. London is not just a physical place. It is a multicultural space where histories and lives intersect as the city contains “a multitude of little spatial histories told by bodies moving within it” (Tonkiss 2). Their stories and experiences intertwine, underscoring the global dimension of the urban space which is a meeting point for multiple narratives recounted by marginal voices.

While their global histories come together, as a result of the porous borders, the cultural products of consumption take their place in the metropolitan spaces. This foregrounds a multicultural interconnectedness as “the locality itself has been globalized, its boundaries dilated by the mass migrants” (Gikandi 32). When Attila and Emmanuel go to a new restaurant in which the clientele looks like they are from North Africa, Mali, Nigeria, etc., the globalized locality reveals itself in the smorgasbord of African cuisine from different parts of the continent: “Four kinds of rice: broken, basmati, beans and rice, country. Couscous, too. Chickpea porridge, fufu, cassava boiled and pounded, yams, plantain, steamed and fried. Mealie meal ... a stew of eggs and coriander ... plasas, okra, potato leaves, and cassava leaves” (194). The owners of the restaurant are Nigerians yet they cook from all over and this suggests a “cultural embeddedness” and “the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture” (Parekh 338). Through the public space of restaurant, the cultural products of migrants are commodified in the metropolis. In other words, Shaw highlights that “all [local,

parochial and quotidian] spaces are now subject to, and offer the potential for, cultural engagement” (qtd. in Toprak Sakız 105). Everyday spaces are localized in a global way, thus the metropolis inevitably transforms into a space of cultural exchange. This manifests itself in Attila’s mapping of the multicultural aspects of London as he visits Ethiopian, Lebanese, Nigerian, and Spanish restaurants and cafes, consuming local cultures, and suggesting a culturally appropriated urban space through commodified global practices.

On the other hand, such quotidian spaces, especially located in the central part of the town, might invoke social constructions like race and class. This is evident in the posh Attila goes. Spaces both inform and are informed by the bodies that fill them, which makes them racialized and denominated. For instance, the clientele of the place that Attila visits manifests its spatial constructions as in “with the exception of a couple ... everyone in the restaurant was white” (12). The elegant upper-class restaurant reveals which walk of life holds the financial and cultural capital mostly. Similarly, the luxurious hotel he stays in discloses the same race and class relationship. In the lobby, he is “the only person of color in the room, with the exception of some of the waiting staff” (31). The lines of the upper class are drawn through race and nationality. While portraying the metropolis as a global place, this scene foregrounds that non-whites except for Attila only appear to be in the same room with affluent white people due to providing service. While in these places, Attila ethnically stands out, in some parts of the metropolis like The Old Kent Road, he draws no glances and blends in because the urban space is also appropriated by diasporic migrants hence the fabric of the city changes. This is the part of the city where the migrants and Attila’s countrymen reside in its southern suburbs. As a result, they bring their own cultures and practices to the area once again: “[y]oung men in white cotton tunics and skullcaps clutched holy books. They walked to mosque with the same head-down gait, like the clergymen in Victorian paintings. Africans mainly ...” (163). Subsequently, while the spatiality of the urban denotes a certain level of Englishness, the urban space itself is also transformed into a more global and multicultural milieu with transnational cultures, and they all come together in the city.

Osman, a Bosnian immigrant character, interacts with the spatiality of London as well. He is a street artist named the silver man performing in public spaces. His

performance is about being as still as a statue in his costume and silver-painted body. While searching Tano in the skate park, Attila sees a man “in a silver suit and bowler standing on a metal bucket.” He remains still when Attila wants to talk to him, and suddenly his inner thoughts are focalized

He had performed in Graz and Munich, Prague and Bruges, nowhere as bad as this. In those places kids pulled faces in front of him or posed for selfies next to him without dropping so much as a euro in his hat. Here he had stood immobile before a drunk’s mooning buttocks, endured the coarse laughter of women on a hen night who flashed their breasts to see if they could ‘make something else move’. Day after day tourists asked him directions, holding their maps up to his face as though he had been placed there by the Mayor’s office. (125)

Through his focalization, his experiences in cities and how people approach him are highlighted. The traditional binary oppositions such as “the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, [...] structure and agency” (Soja 56) are embodied and blurred through Osman and his interaction with his milieu. With his imagined persona, he contributes to the spatiality of public places like parks and squares by blurring the tangible (his body) and abstract (his performance). As an unprivileged resident in the city, he can claim his agency over the city by being a statue or physical landmark. By way of performing artistically, he constructs his own spatial narrative as well as the urban milieu. While interacting with the space through his static body, he experiences undesirable behaviors by the inhabitants of the city to the extent that dehumanizes him, which foregrounds an inhospitable environment. While the city is a space for polyvocal narratives as a global hub, in the novel, the lived spaces of the characters are represented in a way that sheds light on the realities of urban spatiality for immigrants. To put it differently, those multifaceted dimensions of the imagined reality (the aforementioned societal and historical narratives regarding humans and animals) and diverse experiences of the characters lead to a different understanding of spatiality as Soja proposes “[t]his all-inclusive simultaneity opens up endless worlds to explore and, at the same time, presents daunting challenges” (57). While the urban space is represented as a radically open space emphasizing its degree of multiplicity, it might be challenging to navigate such space for the urbanites due to the nation’s obsolete beliefs regarding ethnicity, class, and gender.

Though it is an inclusive space, the urban spatiality poses difficulties for its practitioners. The “daunting challenges” in question here can be viewed as the vicious

approaches towards immigrants in the context of the novel. This circuit of marginalized people helps each other to overcome them and resist the hegemonic power of the city by building connections and solidarity. For instance, Ama Fremah, Attila's niece, is wrongfully evicted from her flat, underscoring the political narrative of the period<sup>12</sup>. This hostile environment towards non-white inhabitants of the city showcases itself in the words of the lawyer with whom Attila talks to find Ama. He explains her wrongful eviction and that "denunciations and deportations" are quite common these days since "the government wants to send as many people away as they can because the whites don't want us" (57). This showcases that "migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space" instead they arrive in "metropolitan spaces that are already 'polluted' by racial power relations with a long colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledge and racial/ethnic hierarchies linking to a history of empire" (Grosfoguel et al. 7). In this respect, thirdspace as a representational strategy that gives place to plurality and multiple narratives is essential to subvert this colonial imaginary. Later, while looking for Tano, a group of immigrant workers that Jean knows become engaged in this search willingly. The doorman of the hotel where Attila is staying also offers his help as he knows the other migrant laborers. For example, Ghanaians work for "the hospitality industry" like himself, while Nigerians "work in security." Also, "the street-sweepers, the traffic wardens are mainly boys from Sierra Leone, they came here after their war so for them the work is okay" (94). In this hostile environment, all these characters can be regarded as invisible and marginalized due to "all oppressively Othering categories" (Soja 84) such as their race and class (in terms of the "menial" jobs they perform to earn their livings). Yet, they build a space "of resistance to the dominant order" (Soja 68) through their search team which is "a telling example of the fruitful and powerful interconnectedness among vulnerable people" (Sarıkaya-Şen 412).

All in all, while *NW* portrays multiple perspectives of a group of Londoners having their roots in the city as born and bred inhabitants, *Happiness* envisages the

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<sup>12</sup> Starting with the year 2017, Commonwealth citizens, known as the Windrush generation, residing in the UK "were being classified by the Home Office as illegal immigrants. Some were being detained and threatened with deportation. Others were being sacked from their jobs, losing their homes, and being denied NHS treatment. Most had no idea that they had been silently 'illegalised' by changing legislation and they were struggling to obtain the complicated documentation needed to prove they had done nothing wrong" (11). See Gentleman, Amelia. *The Windrush Betrayal*.

city through characters some of whom are in a more vulnerable/precarious position trying to be routed in the city. Even though the city is recorded by mainly Attila, a rather privileged character who is on a junket, the accounts of immigrants are also acknowledged, and the characters' personal histories are documented. Those layered and fragmented subjective accounts transform the very fabric of the metropolis since they add to the textuality of the city where everything intertwines. Andrew Gibson indicates that the city has been imbued with "a plethora of global histories, as immigrants bring their histories with them" (qtd. in Pleßke 328). As a result, the nation's capital becomes a palimpsestuous space in which polyphonic histories converge, superimposing the city through "fragments of images" (Pleßke 328) in line with the spatiality and positioning of marginalized characters in the imagined realm of central London.

#### **4.4. Mapping Strategies**

Mapping is an integral part of spatiality. As discussed earlier, the concept of thirdspace as a representational strategy includes the portrayals of multifaceted histories and perspectives on the simultaneously real-and-imagined metropolis. On the other hand, charting the movements of the characters within the imagined space of London foregrounds their quotidian experiences and interactions with the city. The act of mapping accentuates lived spaces and the spatial practices of the urbanites within the city by movement and orientation.

Both *NW* and *Happiness* are reminiscent of city novels. *NW*, through a paratext – the cover with the bits and pieces of the city map- sets the tone of the novel underscoring a level of spatial orientation. *Happiness* creates a spatial movement by combining the topographical aspects of the city and an urban fox with a narrative technique that renders the inaugural part of the story in motion. The landscape of the Waterloo Bridge is first introduced in a panoramic way, suggesting an elevated view of the city by the voyeur "[a]t that time of day Waterloo Bridge is busy with shoppers and weekend workers who make their way on foot across the bridge to Waterloo Station. At that time of year too, dusk comes early, by four in the afternoon" (9). The external focalization implies a lifted God-Eye looking down on the cityscape. However, this is quickly disrupted by the movements of the fox. As it meanders on the

bridge, everyday urban life and practices become more apparent since its movements register the city from the ground level. The way the fox navigates its way within the twisting network of the crowd evokes a sense of momentum through which the everyday actions of the urbanites such as walking, smoking, theatre-going, and traffic are portrayed (9-10). This representation of the dwellers and the bustling urban milieu from down below is important because it allows the reader to engage with the metropolis, and such quotidian practices shape the lived spaces of the urban as De Certeau asserts

[t]o be lifted to the summit (...) is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed [...] by the rumble of so many differences. (92)

Experiencing the city from the ground level is the real practice of its spatiality and emancipating from the totalizing nature of the metropolis. As the fox maps the environs from the Waterloo Bridge to the National Theatre – the main area encompassing the SE1 neighbourhood, the narrative interconnects the animal and the metropolis with the lives of Attila and Jean.

In contrast to other immigrants, Attila is the embodiment of the concept of cosmopolitanism. To discuss Attila's position and lived space in the city, the differences among the transnational immigrant community must be tackled first. Simon Gikandi discusses the concept of cosmopolitanism from the point of transnational mobility acts, and how this mobility is experienced. Is it enriching or limited? In line with this, he addresses two distinct subjects that are cosmopolitans and globals. The former group of transnational people is quite privileged and possesses a certain amount of both cultural and financial capital. Cosmopolitans are “connoisseurs of global culture [...] natives who share the cultural discourse of the intellectual class in the other spaces” (22) and they “are the flâneurs of our age, walking the cities of the world, convinced that their identity can only be mirrored through their engagement with others, sure of their mastery of global cultural flows and their secure place within it” (32). They move across borders freely rather in a refined way, and to be cosmopolitans they need to be willing to engage with the other because it entails certain values. For instance, Attila's intellectual and cultivated lifestyle reflects itself through his internal thoughts revolving around the cultural activities and events in

different countries:

Attila knew the city as a visitor and for visitors all cities were expensive, though in London you could still go to the theatre for less than £20. In Vienna you could attend the opera for a reasonable sum if you booked well in advance. Theatre in New York was unaffordable. Once in Colombo, seeking release from his work in the killing fields, Attila had seen a performance of classical dance for no more than five hundred rupees. (114)

His participation in the city differs from the other characters both in *NW* and here, disclosing how class determines one's interaction with the urban setting. He leisurely moves through urban space which he reads from multiple scattered previous experiences, foregrounding his "mastery of global cultural flows" which is realized through being a citizen of the world. Attila is not rooted in any place rather he reroutes among different places and turns them into lived spaces with his everyday practices. Thus, he manifests being an exemplar "of free movement" (Spencer 39). Furthermore, in contrast to his elite way of life, he subscribes himself to cosmopolitan values that promise to be engaged with the other. As mentioned earlier, in this global convergence point, characters form solidarity. Attila also willingly immerses himself in other people's lives such as Adama, Ama, or Tano with a caring attitude.

On the other hand, refugees in the novel are postcolonial subjects lacking the same set of intellectual values as the cosmopolitans, they are the "Other of the cosmopolitan; rootless by compulsion" even though they share the same global space with cosmopolitans (Gikandi 23,26). Their precarious position problematizes the notion of free mobility and multiculturalism due to "profoundly uneven access to the privileges of travel and cultural eclecticism" (Spencer 39). For instance, Emmanuel has never had the chance to leave London after his arrival. Due to his financial strata, he is not able to afford train fares, which suggests how mobility is limited for globals. In light of this, the urban space of London is experienced and perceived at different levels by Attila and other globals like Komba, Abdul, and Osman, since they navigate the city through their labours by being wardens, sweepers, or street artists. As the immigrant labour force in London, they do not map the city leisurely. Even though they are not given much of a narratorial space, their peripheral accounts and existence in the novel make them a little more visible. Also, as a woman expat Jean interacts with the spatial dynamic of the city in her own way, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The ways in which Attila experiences London from a much more privileged point and maps the central London from his cosmopolitan position are also foregrounded by focalization. Both the external and internal focalization provide insights into his spatiality. After pursuing the running fox, the perspective focuses on Attila for the first time as follows:

A man so tall he appeared to be wading through the crowd was crossing the bridge in the opposite direction to the fox [...] In his pocket Attila carried a theatre ticket. In addition he held a reservation for one at a restaurant in the Aldwych. He had chosen the restaurant after reading the menu displayed outside the entrance and now his reverie was of boiled beef Tafelspitz and chopped-chicken salad. Attila was newly arrived in the country by no more than a few hours and he relished, for the moment, the feel of wind and sleet on his face. He relished, too, the idea that soon he would sit alone in a dark place, surrounded by strangers, where nobody could find him. He moved slowly in the crowd, letting people pass. In the middle of the bridge, just beyond the cameraman standing with his camera on a tripod, Attila came to a stop and turned to admire the view of the Houses of Parliament. (10-11)

As can be seen above, Atilla embodies the qualities of a flâneur emerging from the crowd of the urbanites. Yet, he is the postcolonial subversion of the Baudelaireian stroller traversing London in terms of his ethnicity. He particularly invokes the figure of the cosmopolitan flâneur of Gikandi. Despite the fact that he is as equally global as the other migrants in the story, his socioeconomic class places him in a distinct position that provides a certain set of values and practices. Though he newly arrived, he quickly adjusts to the metropolis because he constantly visits the city hence, he has his classy habits. He navigates central London from its posh restaurants to cultural centers. As a cosmopolitan flâneur, he cherishes the idea of being alone and invisible within other people since such isolation makes him an observant spectator of his surroundings from a detached level. In this respect, as an observant walker, he paces slowly to experience the city mindfully in contrast to its fast-paced consumerist structure. This active engagement with the urban space also suggests the concept of psychogeography – the interplay between the geographical environment and the emotions -, which is evident in his admiration of the cityscape from the vantage point of the bridge. The physical structure and the view it creates evoke exquisite feelings in him. It is also noteworthy that the Houses of Parliament is the first landmark that the reader sees through Attila – a West African intellectual who has been to several conflict areas, implying the manifold history of the country and the notion of democracy. Thus, it can be stated that

as a postcolonial character, through his tactical movement of walking, he claims his agency over the city from the elevated position looking at the notable sight representing the nation's values of democracy and citizenship. He [re]appropriates the hegemonic urban space through enunciative "spatial acting-out of the place" (de Certeau 98) by being a non-British and non-white habitué of the elite London. In other words, Attila, whose main transportation is being on foot, reinscribes the space both through the walker's and voyeur's perspective. The voyeur is associated with the totalizing and hegemonic view of the city from the top down. Ball asserts that "if knowing and feeling empowered in a city are a function of imageability - of clear seeing, especially from a panoramic height to which these basement dwellers never rise - urban knowledge and power are also associated with walking" (115). This demonstrates that the panoramic height is not attainable for every citizen. That's why a bottom-up practice is required to stand against such power and hegemony that penetrates the city, revealing itself in the most iconic structures of London that shape the national narration. Attila, as a West African, walks the city space in which everything – subjective and objective- comes together through personal histories and interprets it from his perspective. Yet it is quite telling that he is also the only character who can access such an elevated position and appropriates spatiality from that scenic height in contrast to other dwellers who do not have the ways and means neither ethnically nor financially. As discussed earlier, Natalie is the only character who views the urban space from the top of the bridge with a panoramic height. At that point, she feels empowered claiming her agency since she has risen enough in her social strata to achieve such a vantage point.

As a walker practicing the urban space at street level, Attila registers his surroundings. When he moves through the city charting its elite environs, the focalisation reflects his spatial perceptions. In so doing, the focalized city from his point of view surfaces his own subjective and fragmented memories and emotions in line with the milieu. As a pedestrian navigating the *thirdspace*, he "enunciates and writes the city in the image of his ... own story" through his "unique itinerary" (Ball 115). For instance, when he solitarily ambles the streets of London after midnight upon his dinner, he engages in contemplative thoughts:

When he was away, in the places where he worked, places lost in the moral darkness, London seemed unreal and distant. Even street lighting struck him as

an improbable luxury, lights left burning so the population of a city could walk home without fear of injury or crime. When he was in London, going to see plays and eating in fine restaurants, the city itself began to feel like a stage set, whose denizens enacted their lives against its magnificent backdrop. A theatre of delights, where nothing surely could go wrong, and if it did, all would be put right by the end of the third act. (14)

As discussed earlier, the characters bring their own subjective histories to the metropolis. Attila, a war zone psychiatrist and a stroller, reads and writes the city through his own personal experiences. As he walks, he maps his past and present, which constructs his comprehension of the spatiality. He juxtaposes the places in moral darkness and the metropolis to shed light on their realities. The real-and-imagined aspects of the city become intertwined. London is perceived as an abstract faraway ideal with its tangible aspects like its lit streets in contrast to unprivileged territories of the world. When he practices the city and builds his own lived space through his routines, a sense of assurance is felt, suggesting the power of the nation. London as “a theatre of delights” both moulds and gets moulded by the personal and collective experiences of its urbanites. Accordingly, for Attila, who is not rooted anywhere and is always on the move, the idyllic perception of the metropolis intermingled with his own retrospections feels like a transient refuge at every footstep.

Furthermore, when he is in London, he performs his certain habits as well as the urban practice of walking. Michel de Certeau asserts that “[t]o walk is to lack a place”, therefore, as a postcolonial flâneur, Attila “makes the street his home” (Coverley 65) to be grounded on this “stage” ephemerally. He spends most of his life on airplanes and in hotels, and when he is away from Accra – his home – he does not feel unsettled. In fact, he realizes he is not longing for a particular place in its absence (90). With the everyday routines that he has created in the metropolis such as walking, going to plays, restaurants, or concerts, he constructs his lived space within the urban. These embodied experiences encapsulate his spatial practices that capture “a fleeting glimmer” (de Certeau 108), offering a sort of ease and happiness. In other words, he creates homes within different fragmentary cities of the world.

In line with the previous magnificent and almost mythical impression of London, Attila, seeking solitude in his contemplative perambulations through the labyrinthine city, playfully engages with the urban space like a psychogeographer. Such walking practice aims to “overcome the processes of ‘banalisation’ by which the

everyday experience of our surroundings becomes one of drab monotony” (Coverley 13). When he drifts on the bridge and feels cold, he suddenly looks

over the balustrade in both directions and forgot the cold. This view: the Eye, the sinuous curve of the river, the Houses of Parliament lit with gold, and on the opposite side amid the dense constellation of lights, St Paul’s and the behemoth towers of the City. (33)

He maps central London through his bodily movements and recounts the canonical landmarks of London all of which are portrayed through Attila. During this navigation, he knows when to stop and appreciate his surroundings. While that view might be regarded as banal for the usual denizens who are caught up in the chaotic nature of the city, Attila explores and perceives what lies behind the mundane through his gaze. Therefore, the representation of the cityscape reflects London “as a site of mystery” revealing “the true nature that lies beneath the flux of the everyday” (Coverley 13). Against this ordinary yet beautiful cityscape, he even forgets he is cold.

On the other hand, Jean is not able to perform such leisurely walks as a woman residing in the city. As part of her job, she also traverses the streets in order to track foxes, and she goes for a run habitually as a part of her everyday routine. When the search crew including her and Attila look for Tano in the streets at midnight, Jean suddenly goes into the park as she hears the barking dogs and sees a running fox. She encounters two illegal hunters with their dogs chasing urban foxes. Upon this encounter, she gets assaulted by the two men in the park where there is no light, and she tries to get away from them in horror (137-139). At this point, her interaction with the city contrasts Attila’s “unheeded” footsteps at night. The public place turns into a gendered space where the navigation of a woman urbanite becomes daunting and hostile. In *NW*, Leah also struggles to manage her navigation within the neighbourhood in order to lose sight of a stranger when she gets lost. Even though Leah does not necessarily experience such an act of aggression, she feels an intrinsic urge to protect herself as a woman, revealing the gendered mapping of the urban.

The diasporic community of migrants practices and experiences urban spatiality in their chartings of the elite environs of London like Trafalgar or Old Kent Road. The portrayal of their interaction with the city problematizes the notion of multiculturalism since their lived spaces are mostly shaped by their labor, underscoring the relationship between race, class, and citizenship. Abdul, James, Olu, and Ayo know

the streets of the capital quite well. Their jobs require them to move through its space all the time. When the volunteers gather for their search again, Jean shows them a map of the city highlighting the possible locations in which the boy can be found. Yet, she is interrupted by a voice saying “[t]hese are our streets, we know them” (127). The totalizing and detached physicality of the map is juxtaposed with the migrant workers’ spatial trajectories or itineraries brought about by their jobs. It is not the map that makes the city legible, it is their spatial practices that transform the twisting urban into knowable. Though they remain invisible passersby within the city, they claim agency through the act of walking, which creates a sense of belonging. The nation’s portrayal of the metropolis is disturbed here and (re)imagined from the point of lower circuits of global capital. This simultaneously real-and-imagined space of London is traversed hence overwritten by Tano as well. He navigates the maze-like alleys of the city and finally finds his shelter in the National Theatre. This cultural site of the nation is contested in a way that it protects a wrongfully evicted migrant child. These acts of mappings and spatial interactions with the metropolis give way to imagining a contemporary representation of the city that equally belongs to migrants, too. Urban spaces are transformed, imagined, and appropriated by them.

To conclude, considering what has been discussed so far, it can be indicated that movement becomes a strategic practice for the transnational characters in their reading and writing of the city. They map the canonical surroundings of London whose borders have become permeable, and through such charting, contemporary London is portrayed as opposed to older narratives of the city that are traversed by white upper-class subjects. The metropolis is constituted by subjective fragmented histories, everyday urban practice of walking as well as the simultaneous glimpses and coexistence of rapid yet interconnected impressions, which all contribute to its spatiality. Contemporary London is represented as an interconnected space in which minorities – both humans and animals- navigate its borders. By portraying the heart of the metropolis with its iconic landmarks, Forna reconstructs the spatiality of the urban with her diverse group of characters, particularly Attila. They experience the city through their lived spaces and mapping tactics in this simultaneously fluid setting.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, Zadie Smith's *NW* and Aminatta Forna's *Happiness* are analysed in terms of how both novels represent contemporary London regarding spatiality and its enriching critical concepts in order to foreground how literary geography is (re)imagined in the twenty-first century. Both novels underscore the intricate relationship between characters and the urban space, and they approach the city not as a static dimension but as a fluid and dynamic space encapsulating its plurality and heterogeneity. Even though the cartographical elements of these two novels differ from one another, such distinction reveals a multilayered literary portrayal of the city by way of shifting narratorial perspectives of varied marginalized characters. Subsequently, the intertwining nature of the urban milieu and multiplicity of voices recounting London constitutes spaces of differences in which a great deal of subjective histories, perceptions, and experiences, are represented strategically, contributing to the lived and openly radical spaces. While acknowledging hybrid representations of the city through ethnically diverse characters, both *NW* and *Happiness* address such multiculturalism carefully by emphasizing the challenges of social mobility and navigation for rather underrepresented communities.

The methodological framework of this thesis revolves around the concept of urban spatiality. Accentuating the fluidity and diversity of the city, Edward W. Soja's notion of *thirdspace* has been discussed to reflect new spatial imaginaries as well as representational strategies regarding minorities' perceptions and construction of the metropolis. In this respect, spatial movement is contextualized and explored through literary mapping, both disclosing physical navigation and mental comprehension of the tangible space and the narratorial style creating spatial trajectories. As the representational *thirdspace* and spatial mapping manifest characters' everyday interactions with the city, the spatial practice of walking and its relevant literary tropes have been explored in order to interpret those urban interactions and how characters claim their agency over the oppressive metropolis imbued with national, racial, class

values. Lastly, through the scope of simultaneity, the illimitable, labyrinthine, and complex dimension of London is textualized through a series of transient glimpses narrating concurrent impressions taking place within the urban milieu. All of these theoretical underpinnings highlight how the city becomes a site of transformation, appropriation, and imagination in *NW* and *Happiness*.

In light of these critical discussions, Chapter Three argues that *NW* integrates real-and-imagined spaces intertwining physical elements of geographical place and mental perceptions of the space. These perceptions are of the characters registered through varying focalisations. This intersection of tangible and conceptual forms a “fully lived space” or *thirdspace*. While merging multiple viewpoints that shape and are shaped simultaneously (by) the urban milieu, *NW* blurs real and imaginary boundaries to convey an imaginative representation of northwest London as in the fictional estates of Caldwell and Garvey House. Within this regard, it is put forward that such intersections of both real and imagined (lived spaces merging concrete aspects of geography with conceptual) as well as actual and fictitious (recognizable locations in real London such as Kilburn and imaginary areas of Caldwell) disrupt the totalizing comprehension of London. While contributing to an idiosyncratic understanding of the peripheral location of the city, this intertwined spatiality reinscribes a new metropolis that is unfamiliar yet real. To render the spatiality of London, the narrative is textually mapped creating a sense of orientation in the twisted networks of the city through chapters named after locations following the movement of the characters. Furthermore, the lived space manifests itself in the bodily movements of Leah, Natalie, and Felix as they spatially map out the places. Through their enunciative spatial trajectories, they negotiate their identities as well as challenge the figure of the upper-class white (male) stroller. These charting acts highlight the complexity of the urban that lies in the simultaneous and fragmentary accounts. It is observed that *NW* portrays an underrepresented locality of London that emphasizes spaces of differences stemming from class and race through the multifaceted perspectives of Leah, Natalie, and Felix. This marginal urban space and the plurality of accounts underscore contemporary possibilities of the spatial imaginaries of London.

Chapter 4 focuses on *Happiness* by Aminatta Forna. It is argued that the novel

reconstructs the metropolis and its spatiality by immigrants. As opposed to the limited locality of the city in *NW*, *Happiness* narrates the canonical topographies of the city. The real-and-imagined spaces of the novel are formed by distinctive perspectives of the characters whose subjective histories, cultures, and practices – particularly Attila – are brought together to weave the twenty-first-century fabric of the city that is informed by global acts of immigration. The novel acknowledges that such global mobility is quite limited for many of the migrant characters, yet the loosened borders of the nation emphasize a meeting point where marginal voices come together. The representational *thirdspace* that is constituted by plural multicultural portrayals lies in the intermingled global accounts. The metropolis and its complexity are relayed through fragmented concurrent images of the city that create an interconnectedness among the rather unnoticed and precarious characters and non-human entities. In the novel, especially Attila as a postcolonial intellectual reads and writes the city through his sole perambulations. It is discussed that reading the novel from the angle of urban spatiality discloses how literary London is represented as an interconnected space in which minorities traverse its boundaries and transform the metropolis through everyday spatial practices.

To conclude, studying *NW* and *Happiness* comparatively has problematized the earlier high-modernist narratives about the city, focusing on privileged characters. In that sense, this study foregrounds the contemporary concerns of urban life and how they are represented in literary texts through ethnically diverse characters. Both novels portray a multicultural London. While one of them (*NW*) addresses an overlooked racialized, notorious, and isolated neighborhood emphasizing class mobility, the other (*Happiness*) displays the central part of the city accentuating immigration issues. In line with this, it is stated that these two novels feature marginalized voices distinctively. *NW* integrates characters who are second-generation immigrants or Irish like Leah in a way to draw attention to their social strata. *Happiness* incorporates a variety of immigrant characters questioning the concepts of citizenship, race, and class. Portraying and charting the metropolis through non-dominant voices belonging to different socio-economic constructions in two disparate geographies manifest a polyvocal representation of the city, highlighting the intersecting lives of the urbanite characters. This reveals an interconnected yet diverse or in other words collective and subjective experiences of the city. In light of these, the comparative study of *NW* and

*Happiness* contributes to a greater understanding of the textual representation of the city as well as constructs an accumulation of knowledge on the quotidian urban.

This study has examined urban spatiality focusing on the literary representations of London and how the city is practiced by marginalized voices in twenty-first-century English fiction, underscoring the urban complexities stemming from race, class, and gender. However, this study provides a variety of discussions on the textual representations of cities. Further research might explore transnational cities such as New York and Paris in comparison with London from a wider point of intersectionality including other minorities such as LGBTQ+ communities to trace the urban intricacies and practices in literature.



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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezde, Zadie Smith'in *NW* ve Aminatta Forna'nın *Mutluluk* romanları, yirmi birinci yüzyılda edebi coğrafyanın nasıl (yeniden) hayal edildiğini ön plana çıkarmak amacıyla, her iki romanın da mekânsallık ve zenginleştirici eleştirel kavramlar açısından çağdaş Londra'yı nasıl temsil ettiği açısından analiz edilmektedir. Her iki roman da karakterler ve kentsel mekân arasındaki karmaşık ilişkinin altını çizmekte ve kente statik bir boyut olarak değil, çoğulluğunu ve heterojenliğini kapsayan akışkan ve dinamik bir mekân olarak yaklaşmaktadır. Bu iki romanın kartografik unsurları birbirinden farklı olsa da, bu ayırım, çeşitli marjinalleştirilmiş karakterlerin değişen anlatıcı perspektifleri aracılığıyla kentin çok katmanlı bir edebi tasvirini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, kent ortamının iç içe geçmiş doğası ve Londra'yı anlatan seslerin çokluğu, çok sayıda öznel tarihin, algının ve deneyimin stratejik olarak temsil edildiği, yaşanmış ve açıkça radikal alanlara katkıda bulunan farklılık alanları oluşturmaktadır. Hem *NW* hem de *Happiness*, etnik açıdan farklı karakterler aracılığıyla şehrin melez temsillerini tanıırken, daha ziyade yeterince temsil edilmeyen topluluklar için sosyal hareketlilik ve navigasyonun zorluklarını vurgulayarak bu çok kültürlülüğü dikkatle ele alıyor.

Bu tezin metodolojik çerçevesi kentsel mekânsallık kavramı etrafında dönmektedir. Kentin akışkanlığına ve çeşitliliğine vurgu yapan Edward W. Soja'nın üçüncü mekân kavramı, yeni mekânsal tahayyüllerin yanı sıra azınlıkların metropol algıları ve inşasına ilişkin temsil stratejilerini yansıtmak üzere ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda, mekânsal hareket, hem fiziksel gezinme ve somut mekânın zihinsel kavranışını hem de mekânsal yörüngeler yaratan anlatı tarzını açığa çıkaran edebi haritalama yoluyla bağlamsallaştırılmış ve keşfedilmiştir. Temsili üçüncü mekân ve mekânsal haritalama karakterlerin şehirle gündelik etkileşimlerini ortaya koyarken, bu kentsel etkileşimleri ve karakterlerin ulusal, ırksal, sınıfsal değerlerle dolu baskıcı metropol üzerinde kendi eylemliliklerini nasıl iddia ettiklerini yorumlamak için

yürümenin mekânsal pratiği ve ilgili edebi mecazları araştırılmıştır. Son olarak, eşzamanlılık kapsamında, Londra'nın sınırsız, labirentimsi ve karmaşık boyutu, kent ortamında gerçekleşen eşzamanlı izlenimleri anlatan bir dizi geçici bakış aracılığıyla metinselleştirilmiştir. Tüm bu kuramsal temeller, *NW* ve *Mutluluk*'ta kentin nasıl bir dönüşüm, sahiplenme ve hayal gücü alanı haline geldiğini vurguluyor.

Bu eleştirel tartışmalar ışığında Üçüncü Bölüm, *NW*'nin coğrafi mekanın fiziksel unsurları ile mekanın zihinsel algılarını iç içe geçirerek gerçek ve hayali mekanları bütünleştirdiğini savunmaktadır. Bu algılar, farklı odaklanmalar yoluyla kaydedilen karakterlere aittir. Somut ve kavramsal olanın bu kesişimi “tamamen yaşanmış bir mekân” ya da üçüncü bir mekân oluşturur. *NW*, kentsel ortamı şekillendiren ve aynı anda (bu ortam tarafından) şekillendirilen çoklu bakış açılarını birleştirirken, kurgusal Caldwell ve Garvey House gibi yerleşim yerlerinde görülebileceği gibi kuzeybatı Londra'nın hayali bir temsilini aktarmak için gerçek ve hayali sınırları bulanıklaştırır. Bu bağlamda, hem gerçek ve hayali (coğrafyanın somut yönlerini kavramsal olanla birleştiren yaşanmış mekânlar) hem de gerçek ve hayali (Kilburn gibi gerçek Londra'da tanınabilir yerler ve Caldwell'in hayali alanları) bu tür kesişimlerin Londra'nın bütünleştirici kavrayışını bozduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Bu iç içe geçmiş mekânsallık, şehrin periferik konumunun kendine özgü bir şekilde anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunurken, tanıdık olmayan ancak gerçek olan yeni bir metropolü yeniden tanımlıyor. Londra'nın mekânsallığını ortaya koymak için, anlatı metinsel olarak haritalandırılarak, karakterlerin hareketlerini takip eden ve mekânların isimlerini taşıyan bölümler aracılığıyla şehrin kıvrımlı ağlarında bir yönelim hissi yaratılıyor. Dahası, yaşanan mekân, Leah, Natalie ve Felix'in mekânları mekânsal olarak haritalandırırken yaptıkları bedensel hareketlerde kendini gösterir. Şehirdeki gündelik hayat pratikleri aracılığıyla kimliklerini müzakere ediyor ve üst sınıf beyaz (erkek) gezgin figürüne meydan okuyorlar. Bu haritalama eylemleri, eşzamanlı ve parçalı anlatımlarda yatan kentin karmaşıklığını vurguluyor. *NW*'nin, Leah, Natalie ve Felix'in çok yönlü perspektifleri aracılığıyla, sınıf ve ırktan kaynaklanan farklılık alanlarını vurgulayan, Londra'nın yeterince temsil edilmeyen bir yerelliğini resmettiği gözlemleniyor. Bu marjinal kentsel mekân ve anlatıların çoğulluğu, Londra'nın mekânsal tahayyüllerinin çağdaş olasılıklarının altını çiziyor.

Dördüncü bölüm Aminatta Forna'nın *Mutluluk* romanına odaklanmaktadır.

Romanın metropolü ve onun mekânsallığını göçmenler tarafından yeniden inşa ettiği savunulmaktadır. *NW*'de kentin sınırlı yerelliğinin aksine, *Mutluluk* kentin kanonik topografyalarını anlatır. Romanın gerçek ve hayali mekânları, öznel tarihleri, kültürleri ve pratikleri -özellikle Attila- küresel göç eylemleri tarafından bilgilendirilen şehrin yirmi birinci yüzyıl dokusunu örmek için bir araya getirilen karakterlerin farklı bakış açıları tarafından oluşturulmuştur. Roman, bu tür bir küresel hareketliliğin göçmen karakterlerin çoğu için oldukça sınırlı olduğunu kabul ediyor, ancak ulusun gevşemiş sınırları marjinal seslerin bir araya geldiği bir buluşma noktasını vurguluyor. Çoğul çokkültürlü tasvirlerin oluşturduğu temsili üçüncü alan, iç içe geçmiş küresel anlatılarda yatmaktadır. Metropol ve onun karmaşıklığı, fark edilmeyen ve güvencesiz karakterler ve insan dışı varlıklar arasında bir bağlantısallık yaratan, şehrin parçalanmış eşzamanlı imgeleri aracılığıyla aktarılır. Romanda özellikle Attila postkolonyal bir entelektüel olarak kenti kendi gezintileri üzerinden okur ve yazar. Romanı kentsel mekânsallık açısından okumanın, edebi Londra'nın, azınlıkların sınırlarını aştığı ve gündelik mekânsal pratikler aracılığıyla metropolü dönüştürdüğü, birbirine bağlı bir mekân olarak nasıl temsil edildiğini ortaya koyduğu tartışılmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, *NW* ve *Mutluluk*'u karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemek, ayrıcalıklı karakterlere odaklanarak kentle ilgili daha önceki yüksek-modernist anlatıları sorunsallaştırmıştır. Bu anlamda, bu çalışma kent yaşamının güncel kaygılarını ve bunların etnik çeşitliliğe sahip karakterler aracılığıyla edebi metinlerde nasıl temsil edildiğini ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Her iki roman da çok kültürlü bir Londra portresi çizmektedir. Biri (*NW*) sınıfsal hareketliliğe vurgu yaparak göz ardı edilmiş, ırkçı, kötü şöhretli ve izole bir mahalleyi ele alırken, diğeri (*Mutluluk*) göçmenlik konularına vurgu yaparak şehrin merkezi kısmını göstermektedir. Bu doğrultuda, bu iki romanın marjinalleştirilmiş seslere belirgin bir şekilde yer verdiği belirtilmektedir. *NW*, Leah gibi ikinci kuşak göçmen ya da İrlandalı karakterleri toplumsal katmanlarına dikkat çekecek şekilde bir araya getiriyor. *Happiness* ise vatandaşlık, ırk ve sınıf kavramlarını sorgulayan çeşitli göçmen karakterleri bünyesinde barındırıyor. Metropolün iki farklı coğrafyada farklı sosyo-ekonomik yapılara ait baskın olmayan sesler aracılığıyla tasvir edilmesi ve haritasının çıkarılması, kentli karakterlerin kesişen yaşamlarını vurgulayarak kentin çok sesli bir temsilini ortaya koyuyor. Bu da kentin birbiriyle bağlantılı ancak farklı, diğerk bir deyişle kolektif ve öznel deneyimlerini ortaya

koymaktadır. Bunların ışığında, *NW* ve *Mutluluk*'un karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesi, kentin metinsel temsilinin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmanın yanı sıra, gündelik kent üzerine bir bilgi birikimi oluşturmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Londra'nın edebi temsillerine ve kentin yirmi birinci yüzyıl İngiliz kurmacasında marjinalleştirilmiş sesler tarafından nasıl işlendiğine odaklanarak kentsel mekânsallığı incelemiş ve ırk, sınıf ve toplumsal cinsiyetten kaynaklanan kentsel karmaşıklıkların altını çizmiştir. Ancak bu çalışma, kentlerin metinsel temsilleri üzerine çeşitli tartışmalar sunmaktadır. Daha ileri araştırmalar, New York ve Paris gibi ulusötesi şehirleri Londra ile karşılaştırmalı olarak, LGBTQ+ toplulukları gibi diğer azınlıkları da içeren daha geniş bir kesişimsellik noktasından inceleyerek edebiyattaki kentsel inceliklerin ve pratiklerin izini sürebilir.

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**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):** REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY LONDON IN ZADIE SMITH'S *NW* AND AMINATTA FORNA'S *HAPPINESS*

**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** **Yüksek Lisans / Master**  **Doktora / PhD**

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